Aesthetics between Art and Society

Perspectives of Arnold Berleant's Postkantian Aesthetics of Engagement

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Introduction to Arnold Berleant's Perspective

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> "Aesthetic engagement thus pervades human experience and it accounts for both the appreciation of the arts and the appreciation of environment. Leading us beyond the arts, aesthetic engagement can also illuminate and enrich social relations. By recognizing the experience of aesthetic engagement, its presence can be valued and its influence encouraged" (Berleant, CSA, 2016).

Arnold Berleant's philosophy should be viewed as rather a broad and profound, engaged and subtle philosophical perspective, than a detailed theory. Within this perspective there is an elaborated theory of an aesthetic field, with detailed categories[1], but the overall perspective encompasses all human sense experience in the horizontal line, and social, ecological, political conditions and contexts of different kinds of experience in the vertical one. Berleant's view on aesthetics comes back to its core, which is aesthetical experience not limited to art.[2] Broadening the scope of aesthetics, Berleant shows its possible social and political role in contemporaneous reality. Berleant's aesthetics of engagement is argumentative and convincing, offering an analysis of aesthetic experience immersed in the everyday world, conditioned by the environment and having a reciprocal effect on the environment. The proposal is appealing and it gives space for development of analysis of various spheres of human life and experience. It inspires its use in particular research and the following issue of the "ESPES" journal is the evidence of the theoretical fruitfulness of Arnold Berleant's aesthetics of engagement.

Berleant's aesthetical approach allows one to investigate, very profoundly, social and cultural environments, giving way to a deep political critique of harmful environments in which people live. The direction, which Berleant gives, is oriented towards democratical aims. Berleant's claim that the main goal is human satisfaction and fulfillment is based on a kind of epicureism – I would say (not hedonism). However this what, for Epicurus, was a personal ideal becomes for Berleant a political, democratical goal.

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[1] Berleant describes the aesthetic field as "*characterized by an actively perceiving human participant within and part of a sensory environment*" (Berleant 2013b, p. 50) and as exhibiting four prinipal factors: the appreciative factor, the focused factor, the creative factor and the performative factor (see also Berleant 1970).

[2] Wolfgang Welsch states barefacedly this what Berleant subtly conjectures that modern Western aesthetics was invented as an advertising agency for *public relations*, but it is not its neither necessary, nor essential feature – W. Welsch, *Estetyka poza estetyką. O nową postać estetyki,* transl. to Polish by K. Guczalska, ed. by K. Wilkoszewska, Cracow: Universitas 2005, [Title of the original: *Grenzaenge der Aesthetik,* 1996], p. 5-6.

Such a broad understanding of aesthetics is evidently opposed to the tradition of Kant's and Hume's aesthetical reflections on taste and beauty. Berleant confronts directly Kant's idea of subjective universality of the judgement on the beauty (Kant 1951, § 1) and Hume's belief that judgments, differnetly to sentiments, can be (should be) universal, because "[t]*he general principles of taste are uniform in human nature*" (Hume 1961, p.17). The ground from which Berleant steps out of is pragmatist, drawing from John's Dewey approach, oriented philosophically towards life itself, not to the problems inherent to the strictly theoretical sphere, and from William James' recognition of the limitation of the notion of independent objectivity.[3] For this, Berleant argues that „aesthetics is itself grounded in experience" and criticizes both Kant and Hume (Berleant 2013b, pp. 42-44), but especially Kant, for subordinating the empirical data and the live experience to the logical desideratum of universality. This logical desideratum is the normative ideal, which cannot be attained, because for Berleant "*the requirement of universality is ungrounded and* […] *it engenders a philosophical problem that is false and therefore insoluble*" (Berleant 2013b, p. 42).

The differences in our aesthetic judgements rests on the disparity between various experiences of beauty, which take place in different cultures, surroundings, times, places, in different moods, dispositions and interests, which cannot be universalized, but at most generalized. This, what for Hume and Kant was a disability, which needed to be trespassed from the rationalist standpoint, which is the variability of aesthetic judgement "[f]*rom an empirical standpoint* [it] *is no disability; it simply reflects the motile conditions of appreciative experience*" (Berleant 2013b, p. 50).

Opposing traditional philosophical aesthetics, Berleants ponders what philosophy can contribute to aesthetics, on which development in recent century pshychology and sociology had an important impact. This move shows how much Berleant's perspective is non-canonical and that his prior interest is human perceptory experience and not philosophy as such. The centrality of sense perception causes the reorientation of classical aesthetical views asking for "*perceptual experience as the basic constituent of appreciation, perceptual experience as underlying the creative proces* […], *and perception as central for practice of art criticism*" (Berleant 2013b, p. 46). From this point of view, he rejects the separation of that which is aesthetic from other kinds of human experience, pointing at the essentially aesthetic character of all human experience. This separation, as is well known, was sanctioned by the Kantian division of the realm of knowledge, morality and aesthetics, but pragmatism challenges it showing those values, which we experience are both, in their contexts and forms, simultaneously ethical, social and aesthetic (Berleant 2004). Insisting on the inclusion of a body and its senses into aesthetical experience and noticing moral ties binding art in its social context, Berleant introduces that which is aesthetic into the area of activities and practices from outside of the artistic realm.

Kant can be considered as Berleant's major oponent, because the proposal of aesthetics of engagement stays in obvious contradition with the Kantian idea of the disinterestedness of aesthetic judgement, which in Kant's view assures the possibility of achieving really universal judgements. Berleant then posits aesthetic evaluation and judgement in the light of aesthetics of engagement and not aesthetical disinterestedness, facing in the book *Re-thinking of Aesthetics: Rogue Essays on Aesthetics and the Arts* one by one traditional categories of: contemplation, distance, universality and disinterestedness, searching what can be preserved from them, becuase in their traditional form they do not conform to the reality of human aesthetical experience. Therefore, in place of contemplation, Berleant proposes orientation and focus on the attention, and openess of mind and receptivity (aceptance of this, what we experience)

[3] "[T]*he general law of perception, which is that, whilst part of what we perceive, comes through our senses from the object before us, another part (and it may be the larger part) always comes out of our own mind*" (James 1892, p. 329)

(Berleant 2004, p. 62); in place of distance – a call to focus on the inherent qualities of objects and situation, without isolating the object of aesthetic appreciation or our own objectives and aims, if they are active in the current perception (Berleant 2004, p. 64); in place of universality – an empirical generalization; and in place of disinterestedness – an engagement, which is not just mental or somatic, but which demands an engagement of the whole body in an experience, which is both total and integral (Berleant 2004, p. 67). Such understanding of aesthetical experience is not searching for aesthetic values in the object, is not essentializing aesthetical qualities and is not treating art as an etity separate from other domains of human lives.

Arnold Berleant broadly explained, in his books, the idea of aesthetic engagement[4] and applyed it to parcticular analysis of aesthetic perception of art, landscape, and urban environment. "Aesthetic engagement is the idea that appreciation in the arts, in nature, and, indeed in any aesthetic context, elicits an involvement that is participatory, engaging the appreciator's active contribution in the event" (Berleaant 2016a, p. 5).

Our participatory involvment is always an involvement in a certain environment, with which we are continuous, because of the air we breathe, the water we drink, the sounds we hear and so on. Then the idea of aesthetical engagement guides Berleant to the aesthetics of the environment, because appreciating perceptual qualities of the environment demands physical engagement (Berleant 2014, p. 66). The pragmatist view opposes dualism of traditional philosophy and perceives the world holistically, binding together body and mind, knowledge and practice, nature and culture, human and environment. The idea of an environment offers the broadest grasp on the living perceptual human experience in everyday life and the idea of aesthetic engagement allows one to focus on various forms of human involvement in the environment. Then, Berleant writes that "*the engagement with the object of art or with the envoronment becomes an ecological event or an ecological cultural phenomena*" (Berleant 2011, pp. 135-136).

Berleant explicitly acknowledges this line of development of his thinking, from critique of traditional Kantian aesthetics contained in *Re-thinking Aesthetics* (2004) to special concern paid to the environment in *Aesthetics and Environment* (2005). The environment – as understood by Berleant – can also be theoretized with the use of phenomenologist categories originated by Maurice Merlea-Ponty "*as the flesh of the world, as well as the <chiasm>, which denotes the reciprocity that permeates human relations of self, other living beings, and the features and objects of the natural world*" (Berleant 2013b, p. 48). I agree with the reference to Merleau-Ponty identifying continuities between the perceiver and the perceived world, because they express embeddedness of humans in the world so important from Berleant's point of view. They also give room for analysis of different forms of human perceptual, sensual engagement with the environment.

> "*People are embedded in their world, their life-world, to use an important term from phenomenology. A constant exchange takes place between organism and environment, and these are so intimately bound up with each other that our conceptual discriminations serve only heuristic purposes and often mislead us. For instance, we readily speak of an interaction of person and object or person and place, but the term <interaction> presupposes an initial division, which is then bridged. Yet in the most basic sense of existence, there is no separation but rather a fusion of things usually thought of as discrete entities, such as body and consciousness, culture and organism, inner thought and an external world. Therefore we may understand the sitting of*

[4] Particulary in: A. Berleant, *Art and Engagement,* but also in: *The Aesthetics of the Environment* (1992), *Living in the Landscape: Toward an Aesthetics of Environment* (1997), *Re-thinking Aesthetics: Rogue Essays on Aesthetics and the Arts* (2004), *Aesthetics and Environment: Variations on a Theme* (2005), *Sensibility and Sense: The Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World* (2010) and in others.

> *human life as an integration of a person and her or his environment. As we have seen, they also include somatic, psychological, historical, and cultural conditions. Environment becomes the matrix of all such forces. As an integral part of an environmental field, we both shape and are formed by the multitude of forces that produce the experimential qualities of the universe we inhabit. These qualities constitute the perceptual domain in which we engage in aesthetic experience*" (Berleant 2005, p. 115).

Environment is not just a nature opposed to culture, it is not a recreational space separated from other domains of everyday life, but it is our dynamic surroundings, in which we are immeresed and with which we permeate mutually. It has a profound influence on human health, well-being, possibilities of fullfilment and mood – the influence not limited to individual persons counted singularly, but embracing human communities and societies in their live complexities. The state of the environment and the set of perceptual qualities sensed by humans in it has, then, together aesthetic, social and political effects. Aesthetics is, for Berleant, the theory of sensibility (Berleant 2013a, p. 329) and that which is sensible, perceptual in a wide sense, is aesthetic par excellence. Aesthetic perception is not just personal experience, but it has a social dimension, too. When we engage ourselves in art or in the environment with our knowledge, beliefs, opinions and attitudes – which have a social and cultural dimension and historical roots – they direct our attention, open or close us for that which is taking place, prepare us for experience or disturb it (Berleant 2014, p. 67). This knowledge, these beliefs and opinions do not enjoy universal value but are constructed and reconstructed in a broader context of socially dominating practices of understanding the world, perceiving art in museums, galleries and concert halls, enjoying qualities of the natural and urban environment. "*Our social dimension is inscribed in our aesthetic experience of both art and environment* […] [because] *the environment as integrated whole is the unity of people and place, connected with each other with various relationships and dependences, and affecting one another*" (Berleant 2014, p. 68).

Recognition of cultural and historical variables influencing aesthetic experiences of people in different places in the world and in different times, which serves as the naturalistic basis for rejecting the idea of the universality of aesthetic judgement, does not lead Berleant to utmost relativism. He recognizes the existence of perceptual common ground, i.e. the perceptual ground of all experience. Perceptual common ground "*do[es] not have recourse to a <state of nature>;* [and its'] *claim does not rely on a constructed history*" (Berleant 2013a, p. 325), but it relies on human perceptual condition and on simple human presence, resting on the biological order. The idea of perceptual commons allows one to build on the vision of aesthetic polity, oriented towards democratical aims – not first of all in the legislatory space, but from the point of view of lived human experience. The most valuable objective for Berleant is human satisfaction and fulfillment, so that the deliberate consideration of aesthetic qualities of environment has important social and political aspects. Berleant states firmly that "*perceptual equality preceeds and underwrites political equality*" (Berleant 2013a, p. 326) and conjectures that aesthetic critique of the social environment and the new aesthetics (of engagement) can promote new patterns of life and new models of culture, which would provide more perceptual equality and justice for all (Berleant 2013a, p. 327).

Berleant's perspectives on politics of aesthetics are very different from the famous view propsed by Jacques Rancière staying in the line of French post-structuralism. For Rancière, the division of sensibility has a political implication imposing the struture of that which can be seen and represented in the social space (Rancière 2007), while for Berleant, sensibility has a strong somatic character not limited to just visual properities and is the basis for the political claim for perceptual equality. Aesthetic judgement occupied with experienced aesthetic qualities is appreciative and aesthetic features are not possible to be

grasped within the contemplative approach, but only in the engaged one, both with art[5], and with environment (Berleant 2014, p. 73). This move gives way to a normative hold on aeshetical values, because air pollution, sound pollution, land (the urban landscape, too) pollution are negative conditions of the aesthetic experience of the environment.

Berleant moves away from art, building up an aesthtic model for crtical analysis of human environment, the model focused on aesthetic properties of the environemnt. This model he applies to contemporary cultural, technological, social ecological conditions in the world, reflecting the specifically developed consumerist environment creating loud, polluted cites and areas of exclusion. In the book *Sensibility and Senses*, he broadly describes the so-called "negative everyday aesthetics", which refers to daily perception of negative aesthetically, and harmful for the health or morally elements of the environment (Berleant 2011, p. 171-189). The situation (environment, landscape or the object of art) has a aesthetically negative value "*when the aesthetic situation has got a prevailing negative character, dominating over the positivity, for example when it is banal, shallow perceptually, offensive, humilating or even harmfull, becuase the value defines here the character of the whole experience*" (Berleant 2011, p. 173).

Then, the negative character is not only affecting a psychological level, because perceptual experience involves the whole human organism in its cultural modalities and biological properties. Sense perception is an ability developed within certain historical, cultural and material conditions, which are not universal but shared by many people living in these conditions. Sharing of these common conditions and enjoying common abilities (which are never the same) causes that the aesthetic judgement of aesthetic negativity gains a normative value and can be used to criticize various forms of violence against human sensibility (Berleant 2011, p. 178). Berleant consequently shows the mutual permeation of aesthetic and moral values, presenting how aesthetic critique can have social and political goals, when it turns to visual and sound pollution, crowded and oppresive life and work space, advertisments and media, and so on. Discovering negative aesthetically values can give an impulse for rejecting practices, to which there are serious moral objections (Berleant 2011, p. 186).

Berleant's aesthetics is then connecting the human and his/her environment, aesthetics with morality, individuality and social, communal perspective, what characterizes pragmatist aesthetics. He shows and analyses human aesthetical engagement in his/her contemporary life-world, which embraces art, but which is not limited to it. This understanding gives great power to aesthetics, which oriented that way becomes not mere artistic critique, but rises up to the critique of contemporaneus civilization.

Arguments for such a perspective are developed by Arnold Berleant himself in the article: *Objects into Persons: The Way to Social Aesthetics*, where he shows the path leading to social aesthetics. The redefinition – he proposes – of traditional aesthetics approaching objects in a cognitive way, towards analyses of a complex aesthetic field, in which different forces are in power, is intriguing. It starts with a discussion of Kant's idea of disinterestedness, and ends with invitation to transform human relations in an aesthetical way. "*A social aesthetic may characterize personal relationships, vocational situations, educational, therapeutic, and creative activities and, ideally, political processes. Because human life is thoroughly and pervasively social, social aesthetics offers a basis for a humane world view, one that both redeems our humanity and guides us in fulfilling it*" (Berleant, Objects into Persons: The Way to Social Aesthetics, this volume).

[5] "*Paintings require a beholder, and the mode of the viewer's bodily perception, multi-sensory and kinesthetic, is the pivotal factor in the experience of engagement*" (Berleant 1993, p. 73).

A deep, sensitive and wise analysis of human environment focused on an appreciative engaged experience is the theme of an article following Berleant's own words. Yuriko Saito refers to Berleant's social aesthetics and to the related with it the concept of negative aesthetics as the practical theory on human experience oriented towards human well being. The author also shows and analyses the deep connection between Arnold Berleant's social aesthetics and the Japanese approach towards aesthetics, art practices and everyday interactions, because in both attitudes similar understanding predominate on the world and the human. The fact that the human is not opposing the world – according to subject-object divide – but is immersed in the environment is recognized by Berleant and is present in the core of the Japanese understanding of the human existence as characterized by "betweenness", being inextricably intertwined with the entire cosmos (Saito, *The Ethical Dimenssions of Aesthetic Engagement*, this volume).

These reflections related to Japanese tradition are, in a way continued, in the discussion between Berleant's aesthetics of environment and contemporarily developed ecoaesthetics, presented by Cheng Xiangzhan (Xiangzhan, Some Critical Reflections on Berleantian Critique of Kantian Aesthetics from the Perspective of Ecoaesthetics, this volume). Since the 1990's, when Berleant visited top Chinese academic institutes such as Zhejiang University and Shandong University (two books: The Aesthetics of Environment (1992) and Living in the Landscape: Toward an Aesthetics of Environment (1997), were translated into Chinese and published in China in 2006), he was "taken as the main theoretical resource for the construction of Chinese ecoaesthetics" (Xiangzhan, Some Critical Reflections on Berleantian Critique of Kantian Aesthetics from the Perspective of Ecoaesthetics, this volume). Representing another side in these matters, Xiangzhan develops a sympathetic critique of Berleant's critique of Kant's concept of disinterestedness, showing the possibility of using a transcendental Kantian approach for the construction of eco-aesthetics, and discusses the ways of understanding environment in close affinity with Berleant's sense.

The validity and significance of Berleant's view for the far-Asian one is an interesting reapproachment of Western and Eastern thought. However, there are more affinities that may be traced with reflection by the American philosopher. One of them is brought up by Madalina Diaconu, who offers an interesting insight into the comparison of Hartmut Rosa's theory of modernity, brought up on the Frankfurt School, with Berleant's perspective on social, environmental, cultural aesthetics, charged with pragmatism and phenomenology (Diaconu, *Engagement and resonance: two ways out from disinterestedness and alienation*, this volume). In doing so, Diaconu contributes to the research on finding analogies between different theoretical, philosophical traditions, not contenting oneself in finding apparent differences, but going deep into essential perspectives on human life and experiences expressed in different words.

Another bridge is construed by Katarzyna Nawrocka, who uses Arnold Berleant's urban metaphors to show movement in cities as choreographed by architects and urbanists. Applying aesthetics of engagement to contemporary dance strategies and design practices in architecture and urban planning Nawrocka develops a metaphor of urban mobility as choreographed and experienced by living bodies, creating a greater whole. Different kinds of cities evoke different kinds of movement, different "dances". Described by Berleant, metaphors of the forest city, garden city, asphalt jungle, and wilderness combined with the vision of urban mobility as a dance, in which many individuals participate, and of a city as a stage for that dance, enables – according to Nawrocka – the deeper analysis of the social and economic dimension of life in different kinds of cities (Nawrocka, *Architecture of Movement*, this volume).

The social face of Berleant's aesthetics – developed in the intercultural and interdisciplinary way by Saito, Diaconu and by Nawrocka – turns towards analysis of human life conditions, well being and urban

environment. Besides it does not overlook the experience of art and art practice. The insightful article by Benno Hinkes expounds how an environmental approach to aesthetics in the theory can support research in and on contemporary art practice, especially working with instalations, as in case of Bruce Nauman and Ilya Kabakov. He argues that the transformations in art that took place in 20th century are parallel to the transformations in philosophy and art theory, and notices that cooperation between environmental theory and environmental art practice could lead to fruitful research (Hinkes, *Installation Art and Aesthetics*, this volume).

While Hinkes recommends an engaged environmental approach for the understanding of contemporary art and art practice, Thomas Leddy enters into personal philosophical dialogue with Arnold Berleant, concerning Berleant's discarded ideas of disinterestedness, contemplation, distance in analyses of aesthetic experience and experience of art. Leddy agrees with Berleant about the importance of engagement, the necessity of its recognition after being neglected in modern aesthetic reflection, but he advocates for an understanding of aesthetic experience as formed with engaged, contextual sensual perception AND with contemplative, disinterested attention that gives rise to "free-play of imagination" and allows for the the object to be noticed (the situation, the view, the person, etc.) suspending practical interest. Therefore, Leddy wishes to complement Berleant's view in a return to Kantian aesthetics, though devoid of transcendentalism (Leddy, *A Dialectical Approach to Berleant's Concept of Engagement*, in this volume). However he also recognizes that Berleant's writings on aesthetics are practically engaged and that they are 'political' in a way on stressing the side overseen in modern times. Berleant not only proposes aesthetics of engagement, but he personally, as an aesthetician and philosopher, is engaged in moral character of human being in the world.

I have a similar sense noticing that the American thinker does not undermine the importance of language and culture, although they are essential for the view he hold of human beings in the world. It is just something he does not discuss, because he wishes to present a certain perspective, to open us to attentive perception of our environment and critical thinking on its condition and values. His perspective is calling out, inspiratory, inviting metaphors and opening paths for individual development. The views he opens up fascinate many theorists on various continents. I wish to contribute to that dialogue with this collection of articles discussing Arnold Berleant's ideas of aesthtetic engagement, social aesthetics, negative aesthetics, and environmental aesthetics.

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Objects into Persons: The Way to Social Aesthetics

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Abstract: This essay traces the steps to social aesthetics. It begins by affirming the central place of sense experience for aesthetics and its refinement in the perceptual acuity of a developed sensibility. This leads to associating aesthetic appreciation with such perceptual experience. Rejecting the identification of disinterestedness with such appreciation, the present paper proposes the full participatory involvement in the experience of appreciation as expressed by the concept of aesthetic engagement. This describes the appreciative situation as an aesthetic field in which the perceptual, creative, focusing, and activating factors are in reciprocal interaction. It characterizes not only appreciation in the arts but occurs as well in appreciating natural, built, and social environments. Aesthetic engagement in social aesthetics is exemplified by the gaze in the experience of four well-known paintings I shall consider. Following these a series of related ideas are developed that lead to the concept of a social aesthetics. Finally, the essay returns to the paintings for an enhanced understanding of social aesthetics.
Keywords: Sensibility, perceptual experience, aesthetic appreciation, aesthetic engagement, social aestheticwords.

Aesthetic sensibility

Social aesthetics may seem a strange combination of terms. People usually associate aesthetics with the arts--their experience, their appreciation, their value. What can this have to do with society except in the most general sense? Actually, this customary way of thinking about aesthetics is needlessly narrow as well as vague. The purview of aesthetics can be broadened to embrace the natural and built environments, and the social environment, as well. Not only do activities concerned with the arts and natural beauty have a place in social life, but the values we recognize in such experiences are found more widely in social experience.

It might be useful to begin by explaining this by turning to the meaning of 'aesthetics.' Definitions do not solve philosophical problems, nor do etymologies. They can, however, help us recover the scope and issues with which we are concerned. The word 'aesthetics' comes from the Greek word aisthēsis, which literally means "perception by the senses." It began to be used in the mid-eighteenth century to refer to philosophical problems concerning the meaning and judgment of beauty in art and nature, although those issues had been discussed by philosophers since classical Greece. It is important to keep the etymology of 'aesthetics' in mind in dealing with such questions because it reminds us that sensory experience has a central place in the meaning and value of art and natural beauty.

Another important concept here is 'sensibility.' Sensibility is at the center of the aesthetic values we ascribe to art and nature. That is because sensibility connotes more than simply sensation; it includes a developed awareness of perceptual experience, something more like perceptual acuity. That is why we can understand aesthetics to involve the philosophical study of both sense experience and its refinement, in brief, as the theory of sensibility. Aesthetic sensibility is a valuable dimension of human experience. Most people have a strong response to the beauty of a colorful sunset and a panoramic landscape. It is also clear that such appreciation need not be limited to nature or to the arts. Acute perceptual awareness can

be part of all experience, including social experience. Some of the arts exhibit the aesthetic force of social relations in powerful ways, arts such as theater and film, and, perhaps less directly, poetry and the novel. Moreover, a sensitivity to the perceptual nuances in human relationships adds greatly to the richness of social experience, and this sensibility can be called aesthetic.[1]

These above-mentioned experiences are generally called "aesthetic experience." They are regarded as valuable and so may be considered a form of normative experience. It is important to recognize that acknowledging aesthetic experience as valuable does not commit us to considering such experience as necessarily positive. It is possible, and even common, for aesthetic experiences to be negative to varying degrees, although this is not often recognized or discussed.

Aesthetic appreciation is the valuing of such experience, from basking in the warming brightness of spring sunshine to discerning the weariness in the sitter's eyes in Rembrandt's late self-portraits. Although such experiences are widely had, there is considerable debate about how they are to be understood and explained.

Since the eighteenth century, aesthetic appreciation has commonly been explained by following a cognitive model. On the one side stands the appreciator and on the other the object of appreciation. It is claimed that appreciating an object aesthetically requires that one regard it for its own intrinsic qualities and on its own terms independent of its utility or other extrinsic values. The word usually used to describe this attitude is 'disinterested.' Kant proposed the concept of disinterestedness to identify the specifically aesthetic character in the appreciation of beauty: appreciating an object for its own sake and not for external reasons or uses. Disinterestedness does not mean lack of interest but rather not having appreciation distracted by outside interests. One should appreciate the object for its own sake, not for its extrinsic value. Disinterestedness thus is a kind of aesthetic objectification. While aesthetic value may be found in practical objects and situations, it is considered to have a lower value than "pure beauty."[2]

Although still widely accepted, disinterestedness has been strongly criticized in recent times for widely disparate reasons. Bourdieu developed a sociological critique of disinterestedness, regarding it as a social construct that is class-oriented, an insidious intellectual basis for bourgeois self-esteem. Disinterestedness, he held, is a means of supporting the social status quo by using an aesthetic criterion to mask and justify class taste and its superiority (Bourdieu 1979).

For many years I have been developing an alternative approach to understanding aesthetic value that I call "aesthetic engagement." Rather than using a cognitive model or a sociological analysis to explain aesthetic appreciation, this approach uses an experiential model. It is based on a phenomenological analysis of the direct experience of aesthetic appreciation, an experience commonly had of full participatory involvement in a situation that may include a work of art, a performance, an architectural or environmental location, or a social situation. In aesthetic engagement there is no separation between the components but a continuous exchange in which they act on each other. I call this situation 'the aesthetic field' (Berleant 1970, and 2000).

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[1] Sensibility is capable of being influenced and even manipulated by social forces and practices. I have explored such influence on aesthetic perception in what I call "the co-optation of sensibility" in an essay from 2017 called *The Subversion of Beauty* (unpublished, first presented at the XXth International Congress of Aesthetics, 2016).

[2] Kant was the principal advocate of disinterested appreciation, part of a philosophical tradition that goes back to Aristotle's elevation of the highest form of knowledge as contemplative. Using disinterestedness as the criterion of aesthetic appreciation, Kant called the aesthetic value in practical objects "dependent" beauty, in contrast with the "pure" beauty found in disinterested contemplation (See: Kant 1790).

The aesthetic field recognizes four principal components. There is an appreciator, the person experiencing aesthetic value. Then there is the focus of that appreciation, usually an object such as a work of art, a building, or a landscape. The object, however, need not be physically separate, as in appreciating a poem, a novel, or music and, indeed, it may even be a mental thought or image, as in conceptual art. Nor need it literally be an object. It is, rather, the point of focussed attention. A third component is the activity or event that brings the object of focus into experience: the artist, the processes of nature, or the perceptual act of identifying an object of appreciation, as in found art. Finally, the fourth feature is the factor that activates the field or situation, such as the performer or the engaged perceiver. It is important to note that a performative element is present in all art and aesthetic appreciation, for the appreciator who is actively engaged is, by that fact, "performing" the work by attentively viewing a painting or reading a novel.

This brief account is only a bare outline but it is enough to show the integrative nature of the aesthetic situation and the interconnection and interdependence of all its components. For the aesthetic field is not a combination of separate elements but a single whole.[3] That is what is implied in describing the appreciative experience by the term 'engagement.' Aesthetic engagement, then, conveys the integrative involvement in the normative experience we call "aesthetic."

While aesthetic appreciation as engagement is, perhaps, more readily associated with our experience of the arts, it is not confined to them, for we can have such appreciation with nature. People are often powerfully affected when encountering natural beauty in a sunrise or sunset, a flower, or a dramatic landscape, but aesthetic appreciation also occurs in other contexts. There is aesthetic value in a fine meal, in the pleasure of driving an automobile that functions perfectly, and in the somatic satisfaction of participating in a group activity, such as a sports team or a social organization. The fact that aesthetic value in these cases is not the only value involved does not diminish its significance but rather recognizes its pervasive presence.

In recent decades, environment has emerged as a major interest in aesthetics. Questions have been raised about what is included in the meaning of environment and how environments can be appreciated aesthetically. Consider first the idea of environment. You will notice “the” environment is not refered to but simply “environment” Is used. This is not done s deliberately because to speak of "the" environment turns environment into an object separate from the perceiver. This practice of objectifying things in order to study them, a cognitive model, is a long-established feature of scientific inquiry. It has obviously had considerable success in the physical sciences and in some practical situations. Whether that approach should be used in the human sciences, however, is open to question.

In my view, the world in which humans participate cannot be entirely separated from the human presence. There is rather a reciprocal relation between people and the things and conditions with which we live. And when environment involves human interests, it must necessarily be understood in relation to humans and not as an array of independent objects. We can find support for this in the work of social psychologists such as Kurt Lewin and J. J. Gibson. The social psychologist Kurt Lewin envisioned a social world comprised of vectors of force between participants and the things and conditions with which they interact. These vectors invite particular behaviors and this led Lewin to call them by the German term Affördungsqualitäten, translated into English as "invitational qualities." More recently, the perceptual psychologist J. J. Gibson studied the ways in which the design and appearance of environmental

[3] I articulated this view was more fully in *The Aesthetic Field: a Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* (Berleant l970) and in later publications.

configurations and objects encourage particular responses in human behavior. He called these connections "affordances" for behavior, clearly influenced by Lewin's terminology and resembling his observations. The work of Lewin and Gibson is important and instructive for it suggests that environment is not just open space filled with arrangements of independent objects but rather is a field of forces in compelling relationships of attraction, repulsion, and neutrality or indifference. Environment is, then, a field that includes the human participant.

When environment is experienced aesthetically, sensory features assume primary importance. This is the environmental meaning of aesthetic engagement. The human environment not only includes things in the natural world; it comprises most significantly humans as individuals and groups in their social and environmental relationships. For the human world is a social world. Moreover, there is an aesthetic dimension in human relations that often goes unrecognized. To point this out does not mean that human relations are always necessarily or primarily aesthetic but that an aesthetic factor may be present and at times may predominate (Berleant 1999).

The aesthetic occurs as a condition that has different aspects that are depicted in the aesthetic field. That of focus is critical here. The human is the center of attention, both perceptually and psychologically, as a physical, biological being and a cultural construction, and as a behavioral entity in our actions and responses.

As the aesthetic of humans becomes more pronounced in experience, it may merge with the moral, since the human presence is the focus of both aesthetic and moral value. For the irreducible value of human being is inseparably moral and aesthetic. There is a moral obligation, indeed a moral compulsion, to preserve and to honor a human life as there is to preserve and honor an outstanding artistic achievement. Their very existence is their aesthetic and moral claim.

Social aesthetics

It is now easier to see how aesthetic engagement relates to human relations and may, at times, suffuse a social situation. This may occur in group activities as when a shared enthusiasm develops that leads to a sense of expansiveness in a common situation and delight in its pursuit. This can be seen in team sports, in choral singing, between individuals in amorous relations, and perhaps in a most negative manifestation, in the total self-abnegation of a terrorist group (Berleant 2009).

What becomes clear is the pervasiveness of aesthetic engagement and its value in describing aesthetic appreciation both in art and nature and in human relations, as well. In the most general sense, aesthetic engagement occurs in social situations that lie outside the arts when aesthetic perception predominates in social relations. Some psychological theorists have recently identified similar occasions as "direct social perception" (DSP) and "basic empathy" (BE).

The idea of the aesthetic field can be useful here. As we have seen, the aesthetic field describes the context of interacting perceptual forces, and aesthetic engagement may at times characterize the perceptual experience of a social process. When it is an integral part of social relations, aesthetic engagement transforms that process, turning relationships governed by a utilitarian standard that objectifies people into a perceptual context of interdependencies. By recognizing the presence of the aesthetic, its influence can be enhanced by creating conditions that encourage aesthetic engagement. This may be through educational practices and environmental designs that facilitate an awareness of the

aesthetic dimension of experience in situations that may be personal, social, natural, or cultural, and that transform people as objects into people as persons.

To return to the paintings with which I began, we may ask if these images look any different now. Do they have anything significant in common? There are, of course, many common features. All the paintings are figurative; all depict people in various places and situations. As art works they were made using similar materials and techniques, and much more that is of varying and perhaps lesser relevance. But there is one feature of each image that has special significance.

Japanese print makers have noted that there is a feature in a print called the "crying point." This is the specific place that brings the entire print together and makes it work, activates it, so to speak. What makes the crying point important here is that it is not just a visual feature but the place in a print that evokes a visceral awareness that connects the print to the viewer, the work to its act of appreciation.

Now each of these paintings has a feature that acts in a similar way: the eyes. Each painting is not merely an object that depicts the likeness of the sitter. It invites the viewer to make contact, to engage with that person. The eyes in each painting are not just a feature of the face: they look at us. They look at and connect with us and we are led to gaze back at a person. The eyes are the crying point, so to say, not just the crying point of the painting but the crying point that activates the aesthetic field in which the painting and the viewer participate. For the eyes create a human relationship in which the image ceases to be simply a likeness, an object, and becomes a person with whom we enter into a relationship. This is a vivid instance of aesthetic engagement.

The aesthetic is not a substance, an object, a quality, or a feeling but the distinctive experiential character of a situation. The aesthetic does not displace the occasion on which it occurs but, so to speak, colors it, gives it a special, distinctive tone that we call aesthetic. An environmental situation is no less an environment when it is experienced aesthetically; it acquires a different, distinctive character. What is it that makes a social occasion aesthetic? To answer this question we must return to the field experience that describes the aesthetic.

As noted earlier, aesthetic engagement is an experience that displays four principal aspects: creative, performative, appreciative, and focused. While we can distinguish these aspects, they are not separate but thoroughly interpenetrate each other in aesthetic experience. Such experiences are most widely recognized in our engagement with the arts, but they also occur in different environmental settings, both natural and built, and in everyday life situations. Moreover, as this essay endeavors to show, the aesthetic may have an often unrecognized presence in a social environment. We can find it coloring the complex features of many social occasions. And when they are strongly present as a perceptual ensemble, we can consider that situation aesthetic.

Consider common social situations that typically evoke conventional, impersonal roles that position people as objects. Education easily devolves into teacher and student, commerce into salesperson and customer, business into representative and client; entertainment into performer and audience, a work environment into supervisor and worker; a medical visit into doctor and patient. These are binary types of relation between people objectified in impersonal roles whose places are occupied by human objects, relationships in which mechanical patterns replace the human exchanges and in which one of the pair is dominant and the other subordinate. How could this be otherwise? How can there be an aesthetic in such relationships? Don't we need these templates to conduct typical human affairs easily and efficiently?

Efficiency, however, is a mechanical value, a value in which the smooth operation of its parts is the mark of success. Yet efficiency is not a human value but a mechanical one. People require time and attention, time to acclimate themselves to the conditions of a situation and adapt to its requirements in order to function easily and well. And the unique value in and of individual people needs to be recognized and honored. How can the aesthetic transform such situations?

Consider the case of education.[4] What would transforming the student from a receptive object of education into an interested, attentive learner? An aesthetic model would display curiosity about the investigative process underlying the material being studied with interest in how it develops into justifiable knowledge, joining teacher and student in a collaborative quest. Such a situation would exemplify the four functional features of an aesthetic field: the scholar or scientist being the creative factor, the material being studied the focus, the teacher the performative factor, and the student the appreciative one. All join together, sharing their functions in the pursuit of understanding as a perceptual experience. It is important to acknowledge the powerful influence of environmental factors in conducing to aesthetic engagement: space, quiet, visual and physical comfort and stimulation all contribute. This analysis is, of course, abstract and minimal, but perhaps it shows the interdependent character and condition of aesthetic education.

Efforts are being made to recognize a social aesthetic in medical situations, particularly in patient care.5 What would change the stereotypical roles of medical professional and patient into an occasion of aesthetic engagement? As in the aesthetic appreciation of art, there is a focus of attention, in this case on the medical situation: the disease, infection, abnormality, disability, or other condition. A professional who is aesthetically aware performs a function by actively pursuing a plan of treatment designed to take into account not only the standard protocols but the particular characteristics, needs, and perceptions of the person being treated. The term 'patient' tends to institutionalize and prescribe a passive role. When aesthetically engaged, the individual undergoing treatment becomes an active participant, a collaborator in the process, understanding and appreciating everything that is done and making every effort to promote the optimum conditions for successful treatment. In this situation, as in all instances of aesthetic engagement, a human exchange takes place on a perceptual level, with eye contact, shared feeling, and interest that is palpable. Environing conditions also play a critical supporting role, where the space and decorative features of the treatment facility are carefully chosen, and distracting ambient sounds and other common disruptive conditions are monitored and modified so as to be conducive to healing.

The aesthetic field can illuminate and transform other social situations: in business, in commerce, in entertainment, and in routine activity involving manual labor or regular, simple patterns of activity. It is important to see the aesthetic not as a mechanical operation but as an experiential, perceptual process in which all four factors reciprocally influence each other. Such active perceptual engagement can transform the experience and influence the outcome. Perceptual awareness in human exchange can transfigure mindless, mechanical action, turning it into an activity of creative engagement. Such a social aesthetic expresses Aristotle's description of true friendship as between "*friends* [who] *wish alike for one another's good*" (Aristotle 1962, p. 219).

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[4] I explored this in an early study in social aesthetics, *Education as Aesthetic Process* (Berleant 1971) reprinted as *Education as Aesthetic* (Berleant 1997).

Conclusion

Aesthetic engagement is an experience of aesthetic appreciation that transforms a physical juxtaposition into a social relationship in which a personal encounter takes place. It projects the aesthetic connection we can experience in the arts into our engagement with other people and with things, as well, turning our encounter with separate, impersonal objects into personal relationships. Moreover, the paintings with which we began are not anomalous cases peculiar to portrait and figure painting; in a manner of speaking every painting looks back. So does every art work. So, too, can every thing in the human world. This is implicit in the idea of aesthetic engagement and why it is central to a social aesthetic. Indeed, a social aesthetic shows us how to create and live in a human world: how to humanize the world. By centering on the aesthetic, we see how human relations may resemble the experience of the holy in religion, the recognition of the sanctity of human life in ethics, and the ultimate value of the individual in the philosophy of democracy. The aesthetic embodies the defining value in each.

We have now traversed the conceptual stages that lead to an understanding of social aesthetics. Beginning by recognizing sense perception as central in aesthetic experience, we came to see how a developed sensibility underlies aesthetic appreciation. Acknowledging the participatory nature of such appreciation led to rejecting disinterestedness as its defining feature in favor of aesthetic engagement. The idea of an aesthetic field provided the basis for describing the complexity and the integral, contextual character of aesthetic experience.

This understanding of the aesthetic leads to the realization that such experience is not confined to the arts but extends to environments and to the human world, more generally. The pervasiveness of the aesthetic thus provides a different model for grasping human values. For aesthetic perception pervades the human world and, because experience is broadly social, we are led to recognize the omnipresence of a social aesthetic.

This is not simply a conceptual relationship. It has endless practical ramifications for all human activities, both necessary and freely chosen, and for the quality of human life most generally. A social aesthetic may characterize personal relationships, vocational situations, educational, therapeutic, and creative activities and, ideally, political processes. Because human life is thoroughly and pervasively social, social aesthetics offers a basis for a humane world view, one that both redeems our humanity and guides us in fulfilling it.[6]

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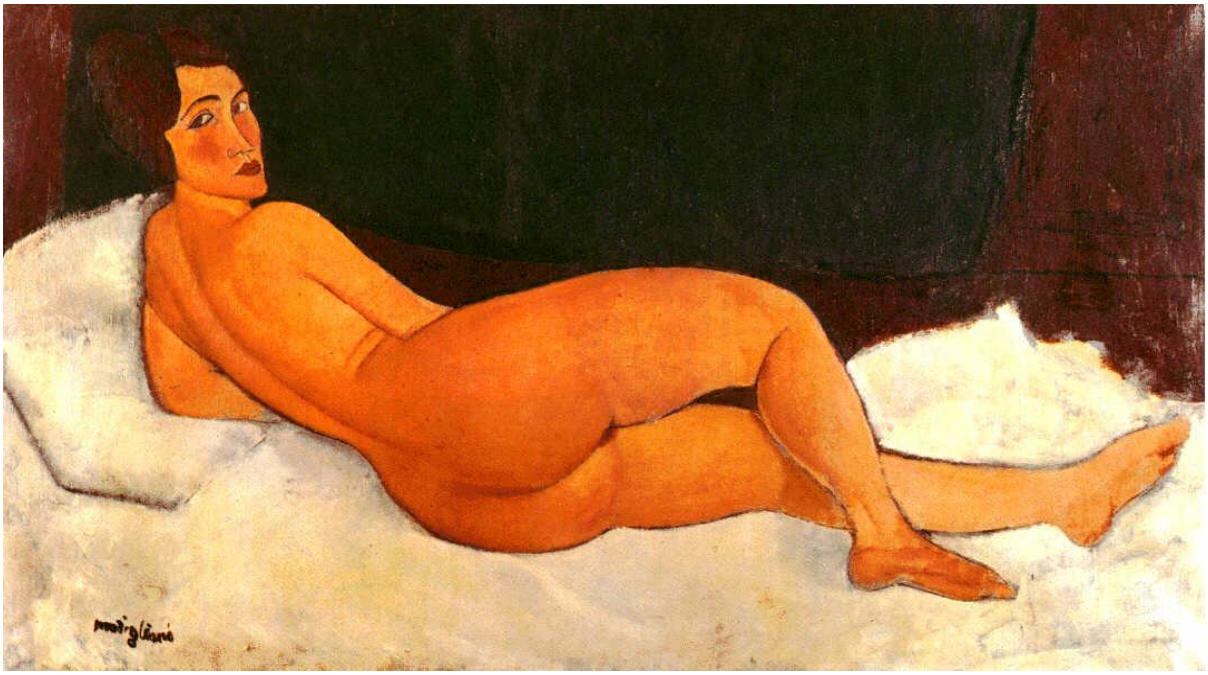

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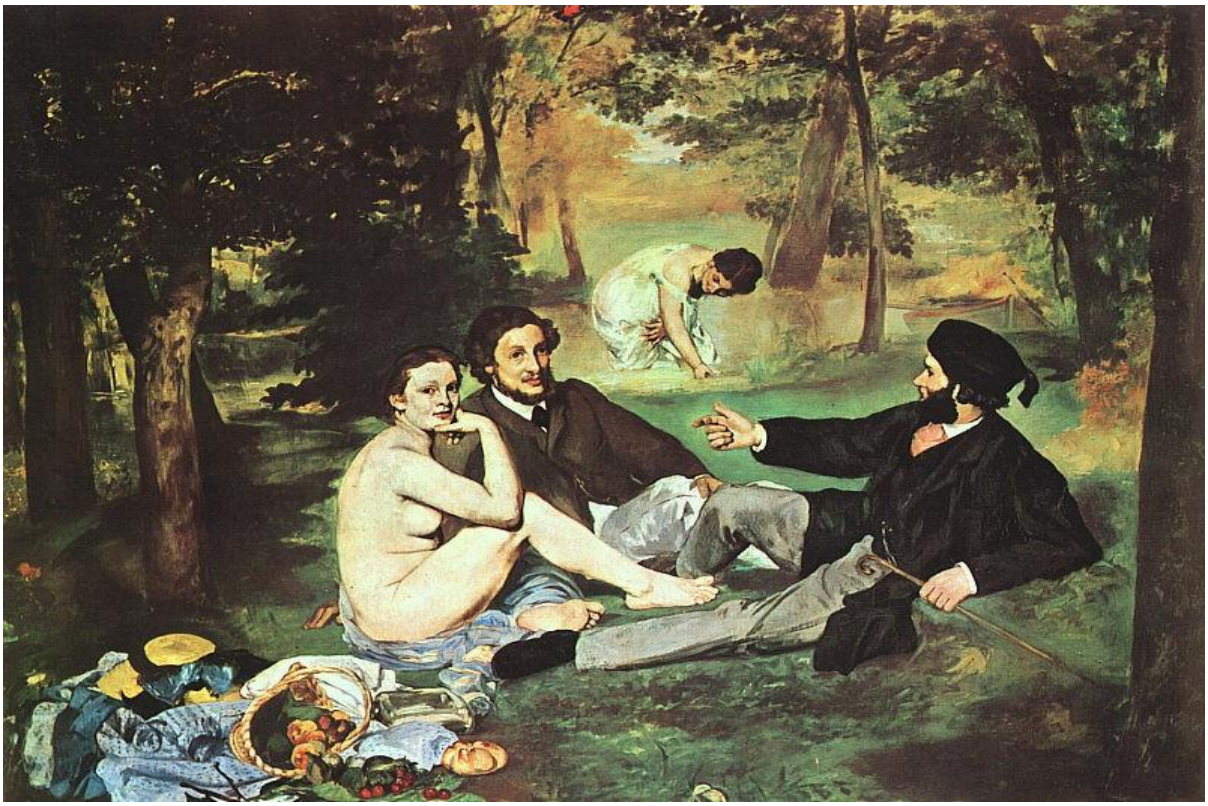

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The Ethical Dimensions of Aesthetic Engagement

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Abstract: This paper explores the ethical dimensions of aesthetic engagement, the central theme of Arnold Berleant's aesthetics. His recent works on social aesthetics and negative aesthetics explicitly argue for the inseparability of aesthetics from the rest of life, in particular ethical concerns. Aesthetic engagement requires overcoming the subject-object divide and adopting an attitude of open-mindedness, responsiveness, reciprocity, and collaboration, as well as the willingness and readiness to expose negative aesthetics for what it is. These requirements characterize not only the nature of aesthetic experience but also, perhaps more fundamentally, our mode of being in the world and the accompanying ethical responsibility. Among the present paper's principal aims is to show how this view of aesthetic and ethical stance is also shared by the important aspects of the Japanese worldview, aesthetics, and artistic practices.
Keywords: Aesthetic engagement; Arnold Berleant; Japanese aesthetics; negative aesthetics; social aesthetics.

Introduction

In recent years, aesthetics has become liberated from the focus on fine arts that dominated its Anglo-American discourse throughout the past century. Starting with nature aesthetics and more broadly environmental aesthetics, aesthetics as a discourse has been steadily expanding its scope by including popular arts, sports, body appearance, consumer aesthetics, and everyday activities. While this expansion is often considered to be a new development, it is more accurate to characterize it as restoring the original meaning of aesthetics: a study of sensory perception.

Throughout his career in aesthetics spanning several decades, Arnold Berleant has been arguing for such a restoration of aesthetics with the notion of aesthetic engagement. Recent challenges to the art-focused aesthetics and its assumptions and implications can be interpreted as variations on his notion of aesthetic engagement. I, for one, owe my work on everyday aesthetics to his trailblazing oeuvre.

My particular interest here is to explore aesthetic engagement as an ethical practice. Although initially proposed as a characterization of aesthetic experience, Berleant's notion of aesthetic engagement has always been ethically-grounded, and his recent works on social aesthetics and negative aesthetics make this explicit. I find it illuminating to consider the ethical dimensions of aesthetic engagement along with some aspects of the Japanese worldview and aesthetics. There are remarkable commonalities and resonances between them that are not mere coincidence. Specifically, both locate aesthetics in its intimate, intricate, and intertwining relationship with other life concerns, namely moral, social, and existential. I hope to shed some light on their shared insights.

Overcoming the Subject-Object Divide

One of the dominant frameworks governing the Western philosophical tradition is the dichotomy and separation between a subject and an object. The reach of this dualistic framework has been deep and

extensive, including aesthetics. Despite the controversies regarding the ontological status of music, literature, and contemporary art consisting of happenings, events, and people's participation, all of which lack material existence, the persistent paradigm of aesthetics is that there is an object distinguishable and separable from an experiencing agent and that the subject takes in whatever is provided by the object. As a result, events, situations, and activities that one performs, that is, those aspects of our life experiences that are not directed toward a clearly defined or framed object, become a kind of 'inconvenient truth' and they are made to disappear from the aesthetic radar. Furthermore, this model of aesthetics based upon an independent object-hood tends to direct its inquiry toward making a judgment regarding beauty or artistic value, instead of savoring the process of experience.

In contrast, following John Dewey, Berleant characterizes aesthetic experience as a dynamic process that emerges from the collaboration between the object and the subject facilitated by reciprocal responsiveness.[1] It is never a one-way street; that is, it is neither object-driven nor subject-driven. Instead, the process is like a dialogue between them, the object speaking to the subject and the subject in turn responding to the object. As an experiencing agent, I approach the object with an open mind, respond to what the object offers me with the most effective mode of what Paul Ziff calls "aspection" (1962, p. 75), sometimes scrutinizing details while at other times taking a sweeping look, or sometimes letting the whole body become engulfed by a swelling musical passage while at other times keeping up with a regular rhythm of a meticulously performed tune. I also activate my imagination and fuse it with the sensory experience, thereby creating a rich layer of associations. While making a judgment of the aesthetic value of an object is not anathema to aesthetic engagement, the emphasis is on the experience which may or may not lead to a judgment.

One example of aesthetics' inconvenient truth is atmosphere, which is gaining more attention today. Though atmosphere is constituted by identifiable items, such as a spatial environment and its ingredients, including non-material factors like sound, light, smell, and temperature, as well as human interactions at times, an atmosphere itself lacks object-hood. It is sensed and felt by an experiencing agent who unifies various ingredients into a harmonious whole. As such, atmosphere effectively illustrates aesthetic engagement by emphasizing the interdependence of all the elements and parties involved.

Advocating atmosphere as the fundamental aesthetic concept, Gernot Böhme claims:

> "[…] *atmospheres are neither something objective, that is qualities possessed by things, and yet they are something thinglike, belonging to the thing in that things articulate their presence through qualities*. […] *Nor are atmospheres something subjective* […] *and yet they are subjectlike, belong to subjects in that they are sensed in bodily presence by human beings and this sensing is at the same time a bodily state of being of subjects in space*" (Böhme 1993, p.122).

In addition to overcoming the subject-object dichotomy underlying the conventional art-centered aesthetics, the aesthetic experience of atmosphere is directed more toward savoring than judging. We simply envelop ourselves in a particular atmosphere. Hence, Böhme observes that "*the old aesthetics is essentially a judgmental aesthetics, that is, it is concerned not so much with experience, especially sensuous experience* […] *as with judgments, discussion, conversation*" (Böhme 1993, p. 114).

What is particularly noteworthy for my purpose is that Böhme compares atmosphere, "the prototypical 'between'- phenomenon," to the Japanese notion of inbetween, "aidagara" (Böhme 1998, p. 112). Indeed,

[1] Because of the sheer volume of passages in Berleant's oeuvre that informs my discussion, in this paper I shall present his view in my own words rather than providing many quoted passages.

the Japanese worldview, particularly reflecting Buddhism, characterizes reality as consisting of relationships rather than discrete individual beings and objects. Robert Carter summarizes the Japanese worldview as a "*declaration of interdependence*," that is, "*a recognition that we are not only inextricably intertwined with others but with the entire cosmos*" (Carter 2008, p. 5). The best illustration reflective of this worldview is the Japanese term for human beings, 'ningen' **人間**. The first character designates "human" and the second one "between," indicating that an individual is defined by the relationship she holds with others. The Japanese ontology, therefore, does not subscribe to the Western dichotomy of the subject and the object. Tetsurō Watsuji, one of the most influential Japanese thinkers of the twentieth century, refers to human existence as "betweenness," ('aidagara' as referenced by Böhme), leading one commentator to remark that the precise translation of 'ningen'**人間** should be "human being in betweenness" (Inutsuka 2017, p. 103).

This de-emphasis (looked at from the Western viewpoint) of an independently existing self is further reflected in the Japanese language usage. As Augustin Berque points out, it is customary for a well-formed Japanese sentence to lack a subject pronoun, "I," that is required in English and many European languages. For example, instead of saying "I am going," it is more common and natural to say "going." The (sometimes exclusive) focus on the predicate indicates the primacy of what Berque calls "*a scene*" or "*a particular set of circumstances*" (Berque 2017, p. 16).

The Japanese aesthetic tradition reflects this primacy of scenes, circumstances, or atmospheres in its preoccupation with a seasonal atmosphere, no doubt due to Japan's distinct four seasons comprised of meteorological phenomena, plants, and events.[2] For example, *Kokinshū* **古今集**, the first court-sponsored anthology of poems compiled in 905, is organized according to seasons. *The Pillow Book* **枕草子**, a collection of observations and essays written by a court lady in the eleventh century, is full of sensitive observations of seasons, with its well-known opening section that extols the best of each season consisting of the time of the day, natural creatures and phenomena, people's activities, and objects.[3] Both are classics and their influence on subsequent Japanese literature and aesthetic sensibility in general is immeasurable.

This long-held aesthetic sensibility regarding atmosphere is still alive and well in Japan. In his discussion of the Japanese sense of beauty, Shūji Takashina comments on agricultural research devoted to people's attitude toward non-human animals. In response to the question about which is the most beautiful non-human animal, American respondents immediately chose horse, lion, and so on, while the same question puzzled Japanese respondents. What they finally came up with was an answer like: "*little birds scattering and flying against the sky lit with sunset*" (Takashina 2015, p. 164, my translation). Commenting on this anecdote, Takashina discusses how the Japanese aesthetic sensibility is directed toward 'jōkyō' **状況** (variously translated as the state of things or affairs, conditions, situations, circumstances) rather than 'jittai' **実体** (translated as substance, subject, entity). That is, the aesthetic qualities of birds cannot be determined apart from the relationship with their surroundings.[4]

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[2] Haruo Shirane points out, however, that the idea of a seasonal order also resulted from the Heian court's (794-1185) strategy for expressing its power by giving an organizational order to nature (Shirane 2012).

[3] See Sei Shōnagon's (1982) *The Pillow Book*.

[4] It is interesting to note that Kenya Hara, one of today's leading designers in Japan, puts priority on creating 'koto' (variously translated as affairs, circumstances, events, occurrences) over 'mono' (objects, things). He derives this idea from medieval Japanese art practices, the subject discussed in the next section (see Hara 2012, p. 74). A good empirical study regarding the appreciation of atmospheres can be found in Miyahara and Fujisaka 2012 and its English summary (Miyahara and Fujisaka 2014). I should also note that a similar aesthetics was proposed by

We may call this aesthetic sensibility 'situational aesthetics,' and we can interpret aesthetic engagement similarly. A situation arises when I offer myself to open-mindedly accepting whatever various players are approaching me with, and I weave them into a unifying theme that casts a color over them. This is decidedly a creative act on my part, but my experience is not a pure construct of mine, either; it is created in response to what I accept from others. As Berleant puts it, "*humans' relation to things is not a relation between discrete and self-sufficient entities. On the contrary, just as people impose themselves on things, so, too, do things exercise an influence on people*" (Berleant 2012, p. 85).

In light of the Japanese notion of interdependence, I suggest that aesthetic engagement characterizes not only an aesthetic experience but also, and perhaps more important, the authentic mode of being in the world. That is, one's self is not a monad-like isolated center of the world but exists and is defined only in its interaction with others. Herein lies the first existential dimension of aesthetic engagement: the interdependent relationship between the self and the other.

Transcendence of Self

There is a further ethical implication of aesthetic engagement understood as our authentic mode of existence in this world. As an experiencing agent, I have to make an effort to facilitate successful aesthetic engagement. Specifically, it starts with suspending the world familiar to me and transcending my own horizon. I am willing to meet the other, whether a work of art or another person, on its own terms, rather than bringing in and imposing my preconceived idea. I approach the other as "Thou" rather than as "It." I actively render myself receptive to what the other offers. This open-mindedness paves the way for a reciprocal exchange and a collaborative effort to bring about an aesthetic experience. This process often enables me to discover new connections and a vision of the world different from mine. This attitude toward aesthetic engagement takes an ethical stance and its importance is recognized and urged by many thinkers and practitioners from different disciplines. What is noteworthy for my discussion here is that they all point to aesthetic experience as the most effective means of cultivating this ethical mode of being.

Zen Buddhism characterizes this ethical stance as a necessary preparation for enlightenment, describing it as overcoming, forgetting, or transcending one's self.[5] The favored vehicle for Zen discipline is artistic practice because it aims not so much at an acquisition of skills but rather at becoming a person whose mode of being in the world is ethically and aesthetically grounded. Commenting on Japanese artistic training, Robert Carter points out that "*ethics is primarily taught through the various arts, and is not learned as an abstract theory, or as a series of rules to remember*" (Carter 2008, p. 2). I believe what is true of artistic practice is also applicable to having an aesthetic experience.

Iris Murdoch's notion of "unselfing" can be understood similarly. Concerned with the fact that "*our minds are continually active, fabricating an anxious, usually self-preoccupied, often falsifying veil which partially conceals the world*", she claims that "*anything which alters consciousness in the direction of unselfishness, objectivity and realism is to be connected with virtue*" (Murdoch 1970, p. 82). Consequently, she regards the appreciation of good art as the reward of successful unselfing that helps one "*transcend selfish and obsessive limitations of personality and can enlarge the sensibility*" (Murdoch 1970, p. 85).

Archibald Alison in the eighteenth century. He points out, for example, that the circumstance, such as the time of the day or the spatial environment, affects the character of the sound animals make. I give specific examples from his work in Saito 2007, p. 121.

[5] The best primary text is *Shōbōgenzō* (*The Storehouse of True Knowledge*), the major work of the thirteenth century Zen priest, Dōgen. The most important chapters are translated and compiled in Dōgen 1986.

In this regard, consider John Dewey's view that "*the moral function of art* […] *is to remove prejudice, do away with the scales that keep the eye from seeing, tear away the veils due to wont and custom, perfect the power to perceive*" (Dewey 1958, p. 325). Specifically, "*works of art are means by which we enter, through imagination and the emotions they evoke, into other forms of relationship and participation than our own*" (Dewey 1958, p. 333). In order for good art to take us out of our own familiar world, however, we must be able and willing to practice aesthetic engagement. The invitation of good art for us to enter its world, in the words of Joseph Kupfer, places "*the burden of entering into an open-ended, indeterminate creative process*" without any rules to follow (Kupfer 1983, p. 71). We do gain "responsive freedom" but it comes with an "aesthetic responsibility" (Kupfer 1983, p. 73, p. 77).

In a somewhat surprising context, Kenya Hara, one of the leading designers in Japan today, advocates "emptying" oneself when designing. He explains how communications with users of the designed products, rather than concern with the expression of his ideas and creativity, guide his practice:

> "*'Emptiness' (utsu) and 'completely hollow' (karappo) are among the terms I pondered while trying to grasp the nature of communication. When people share their thoughts, they commonly listen to each other's opinions rather than throwing information at each other. In other words, successful communication depends on how well we listen, rather than how well we push our opinions on the person seated before us. People have therefore conceptualized communication techniques using terms like 'empty vessel' to try to understand each other better*" (Hara 2010, Prologue).

This minimization of the designer's ego is reflected in 'anonymous design' embraced by his firm that does not identify the designer of a product.

All these characterizations of the ethical stance needed for one's successful interaction with others are the requirements of aesthetic engagement: open-mindedness, acceptance, humility, respect, and mutual collaboration. This ethically-grounded interaction with the world is most explicitly illustrated by human interactions. While exemplifying an inconvenient truth for the object-driven aesthetics discourse because of its lack of an object to speak of, human interactions not only have a bona fide place in aesthetics discourse but also provide a vivid indication of the ethical responsibility involved in aesthetic engagement.

Aesthetics of Human Interactions

As much as Böhme's aesthetics of atmosphere overcomes the subject-object dichotomy, his discussion often refers to "aesthetic workers," those professionals working on "*design, stage sets, advertising, the production of musical atmospheres (acoustic furnishing), cosmetics, interior design – as well* […] *as the whole sphere of art proper*" (Böhme 1993, p. 123). His aesthetics thus seems to be more directed toward those atmospheres created by professionals. This emphasis on designed atmospheres, however, tends to neglect the fact that, even without specific training as aesthetic workers, all of us are also producers, not just spectators, of an aesthetically-charged situation. The clearest example of our co-creation of an aesthetic situation is human interactions.[6] This situation provides another layer of a person's ethical responsibility when practicing aesthetic engagement.

[6] I limit my discussion here to human-to-human interactions, although I believe that aesthetic considerations can be present in human-to- non-human interactions, such as with non-human animals and objects.

Take a conversation as the most recognizable form of human interaction that is experienced by all of us almost daily.[7] A successful conversation consists of a give and take when each party is willing to listen and build upon the other party's thoughts and ideas, even including criticism and disagreement. As it is the case with successful aesthetic engagement with a work of art, my experience here is a process in which I proceed with "undergoing" and "doing" by fully attending to what the other party is saying, sometimes discovering new things along the way, adjusting my initial reaction in light of the new discoveries, and mobilizing my imagination and going beyond what is immediately available to my senses. There is neither a list of specific topics suitable for an aesthetically satisfying conversation nor a set of formula to follow because the aesthetics here is more concerned with the form of exchange, such as rhythm, development, and culmination, as well as the style that includes gesture, facial expression, and the tone of voice.[8]

Furthermore, as Ossi Naukkarinen points out, "*tactful behavior cannot be planned in advance, but it is always an art of acting in the here-and-now*", requiring "*good situational sensitivity*" (Naukkarinen 2014, p. 32, p. 36).[9] For example, although modesty is often regarded as necessary for a successful interaction, what is required is not modesty per se, but the ability and sensitivity to grasp the situation and atmosphere quickly and adjust one's participation accordingly to contribute to the mutual and reciprocal creation of a certain atmosphere.[10] In some situations, it may be appropriate and desirable for me to talk about myself and my accomplishments. What matters is when and how. As Marcia Eaton points out, "*both aesthetic and moral sensitivity are demanded in making judgments such as 'This situation calls for bold action' or 'This situation calls for subtlety'*" (Eaton 1997, p. 362).

I do admit, however, that a general characterization of civil, rude, polite, disrespectful, or thoughtful behavior and demeanor has been integrated into the fabric of each culture and society. Matters of proper behavior are usually relegated to etiquette and manners and they are often criticized for being superficial or, worse, a means of discrimination and exclusion based upon gender, race, and social class. However, I believe that the aesthetics of human interactions, or social aesthetics as termed by Berleant, has a much deeper ethical significance in our lives. Here, again, the Japanese aesthetic tradition is instructive.

As Eiko Ikegami argues in her historical and sociological exploration of Japanese traditional arts (Ikegami 2005), people from all social ranks and educational backgrounds participated in artistic practices, particularly since the fifteenth century, the middle of Japan's medieval feudal period. Through perfecting artistic skills, the ultimate goal of various artistic practices was to sharpen the sense of civility and sociability and the skills necessary to act on them. The most prominent examples are the linked verse composition and the tea ceremony, both flourishing from the late medieval period to the Edo period (1603-1868). Although linked verse is no longer practiced, the tea ceremony and its accompanying aesthetics continue to inform Japanese cultural sensibility today.

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[7] An excellent discussion of the aesthetics of human interactions can be found in Naukkarinen 2014 and Puolakka 2017.

[8] Georg Simmel in his discussion on sociability also emphasizes that it is the form of conversation that determines its aesthetics. However, he also denies that "*the content of social conversation is a matter of indifference; it must be interesting, gripping, even significant*," although such content is relevant insofar as it aids in creating an aesthetically positive form (Simmel 2000, p. 126). Kalle Puolakka also observes that "*conversation can be aesthetic even if its material* […] *does not, in most cases, have intrinsically aesthetic quality*" (Puolakka 2017, sec. 2).

[9] The spontaneity required in an aesthetically engaging human interaction is also stressed in the aesthetics of the Japanese tea ceremony that I discuss below. We may also understand why Roquentin's rather strenuous verbal effort to create perfect moments with Anny fails, as depicted in Jean-Paul Sartre's (1964) *Nausea*.

[10] The importance of modesty in a sociable interaction is brought up by Simmel in *Culture of Interaction* (Simmel 2000, p. 109-135) and David Hume in *Of Qualities Immediately Agreeable to Others* (Hume 1970, p. 263-67).

Linked verse is a form of parlor game in which a group of people of all social ranks gather and co-create a series of poetic verses. One person starts with a few lines, followed by the next person who continues the theme or image while adding his own contribution, which is followed by the next person, and so forth. This communal activity goes on for many hours, sometimes all night resulting in as many as ten thousand links.[11] What is critical in the successful linked verse co-creation is to adjust one's contribution to the preceding lines composed by others without sacrificing one's own voice. Good listening skill is required, in addition to poetic imagination and creative power. As Ikegami points out, "*in order to make a good poetic sequence, the participants had to develop a willingness to listen attentively to others and to appreciate their poetic creativity*" (Ikegami 2005, p. 78). Thus, with the pretext of participating in a poetry-making communal activity, "*socialization through the composition of linked poetry was an ideal vehicle for creating an atmosphere of civilized fellowship*" (Ikegami 2005, p. 78).

If linked verse practice resembles "*an educational program for developing civility in public space*" (Ikegami 2005, p. 78), so does the tea ceremony. The aesthetics of tea ceremony, however, adds another layer of human interactions: non-verbal communication through the mediation of objects and body movement. In the tea ceremony, the significant portion of interactions between the host and the guests takes place through what Ikegami calls "*tacit modes of communication*" (Ikegami 2005, p. 221-235). Such interactions include the host's thoughtfulness expressed in the specific choice of various items used for the event and preparation of the garden and the tea hut suitable for the guests and the occasion (such as the season and the weather). Every aspect of the host's body movement in making and serving tea also communicates his thoughtful regard for the guests. That is, "*the host's care and consideration is expressed through artistry of motion and gesture*" (Ikegami 2005, p. 226). The guests in turn show their gratefulness and appreciation through the gestures involved in receiving and holding the tea bowl, drinking tea, eating the snack, and bidding farewell. The tea ceremony thus creates an occasion where "*the deepest human communication took place through silent aesthetic communion*" (Ikegami 2005, p. 227).[12]

The tea ceremony provides an artistic microcosm in which the aesthetics of human interactions is crystallized. It also reinforces the preponderance of human interactions without verbal communication in Japanese culture and aesthetics, variously referred to as indirect communication, suggestion, implication, or accomplices of silence. However, we should note that non-verbal communication is integral to human interactions beyond this specific cultural tradition. Regardless of a specific cultural context, we often experience that the nature of a verbal exchange is determined by gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, pause, and the like, in addition to, or sometimes irrespective of, the verbal content of the conversation.[13]

Regardless of the mode of communication, however, both linked verse and the tea ceremony show that successful human interaction requires the full aesthetic engagement of all parties. Whether in a conversation or in the tea ceremony, the interaction fails if one party refuses to or is unable to participate in the reciprocal collaboration effort. A one-way conversation or parties talking past each other never makes for a satisfying and fulfilling experience. The tea ceremony will not succeed if the host's utmost hospitality is not graciously acknowledged and appreciated by the guests. The chain of verses is broken by somebody who strikes a false note by failing to submit her imagination and creativity to the collaborative

[11]For specific examples of linked verse, see Donald Keene 1955, as well as Ikegami 2005, p. 84-93.

[12] I discuss this point in more detail in Saito 2017, p. 150-51 and 184.

[13] I explore this issue in Saito 2016, p. 225-42.

creative process. In these examples, the interaction fails both aesthetically and morally. Although this ethical concern was always present in Berleant's work, social aesthetics, the subject of his recent work, makes this abundantly clear, as indicated by the following passages: "*the aesthetics has expanded to include what I call social aesthetics, social values manifested in the relations among people, individually and in groups, and in discussions that recognize aesthetics and ethics are inextricably intertwined*" (Berleant 2010, p. 49); "*many common social occurrences* […] *also fuse moral and social values with aesthetic ones*" (Berleant 2005, p. 155); "*Indeed, in the human environment, the moral, the social and the political are thoroughly interwoven* […] *Our world is first aesthetic but at the same time moral*" (Berleant 2012, p. 190).

Social aesthetic sensibility is not grasped conceptually but rather cultivated through practice. And this practice is guided by the engagement of one's entire being, body and mind, perception, sensibility, emotion, and imagination, as well as intellect. As advocated by Friedrich Schiller, moral education is inseparable from aesthetic education, and Berleant's social aesthetics also provides a foundation for moral education. The requirements of successful aesthetic engagement are also the requirements for a successful moral engagement with the world. The sensibility required for aesthetic engagement must be cultivated and developed for civil, respectful, and humane interactions with others, without which a civil society cannot exist.

Negative Aesthetics

There is one final layer of the ethical dimension of aesthetic engagement. So far I have been focusing on the ethical responsibility placed on me as an experiencing agent when aesthetically engaged with the other, whether a work of art or another person. But what happens if my effort for co-creating a satisfying aesthetic experience is not reciprocated by the other? Clearly, in the case of a human interaction, the result is a failure. When the other with which I try to engage aesthetically is art, a satisfying aesthetic experience cannot occur unless the work of art meets me half way. That is, my willingness and effort to engage in a collaborative experience has to be rewarded with certain qualities of the object. If the object is a case of what Kupfer calls "cheap" or "vulgar" art, it "*dulls the sensibility, inhibits imagination, and disposes toward intransigence*" (Kupfer 1983, p. 68), because it merely presents a world all-too-familiar and all-too-comfortable to me and exacerbates my complacency and lethargy. Murdoch also condemns bad art for providing forms that are "*the recognizable and familiar rat-runs of selfish day-dream*" (Murdoch 1970, p. 84). Or the work of art may be too esoteric, elitist, or idiosyncratic to be capable of inviting me to enter its world. As a result, my readiness to be engaged with the object is not responded to and I have to decide that it is not worth the effort.

In cases of built environments and artifacts, the responsibility of ensuring successful aesthetic engagement is weighted more heavily toward the designers and creators. I think I am justified in expecting that these objects meet my needs, whether they be functionality, comfort, or pure delight. I don't think I am responsible for exerting the same kind and degree of effort I make when interacting with other people or works of art. Unfortunately, the world we inhabit is not an aesthetic utopia and it is populated by things that cause negative aesthetic experiences, ranging from shoddily-designed artifacts and user-unfriendly products to banal streetscapes with cheap commercialization and mindless muzak piped into shopping malls. Berleant calls attention to these and many other examples of "negative aesthetics" and urges us to

recognize their presence in our lives and societies because aesthetics is the best tool we have to expose what harms our sensibility, experience, and ultimately our well-being.[14]

Professional aesthetic workers are largely responsible for creating these instances of negative aesthetics. Does this mean that I am a victim and thus exempt from any responsibility? Even in these cases, I think all of us are still participants in the world-making project because we need to sharpen our aesthetic literacy and sensibility to highlight these pockets of negative aesthetics in our lives and society and work toward improvement, even if indirectly. Our participation in mitigating, reducing, or eliminating negative aesthetics can take many forms: organizing a communal resistance to a proposal that would destroy the ambiance of a townscape; boycotting companies that produce products that are poorly-made and cheap-looking; appealing to lawmakers to pass an environmental regulation to guarantee a minimum standard of aesthetic decency for all citizens; encouraging school officials to include aesthetic education beyond art education in their curriculum. The point is that a failure of a satisfying aesthetic engagement, even if it is not a fault of my own, should inspire me to expose negative aesthetics for what it is and to encourage those professional aesthetic workers to improve the quality of life in society.

Aesthetics is thus an indispensable means by which we can evaluate and improve our quality of life. It is not sufficient for a society to have just laws, a good political system, and other social amenities, such as educational and economic opportunities, guaranteed health care, and the like, unless they are grounded in and accompanied by what Yrjö Sepänmaa calls "aesthetic welfare" (Sepänmaa 1995, p. 15). We should be able to enjoy aesthetically fulfilling experiences, whether through engagement with artifacts and environments or human interactions. Hence, contrary to the unfortunately widespread view of aesthetics as merely an icing on the cake or trivial fluff, aesthetics provides the very foundation of a good life. Berleant's aesthetic engagement, social aesthetics, and negative aesthetics together propel aesthetics toward a long overdue re-engagement with life and the world.

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Some Critical Reflections on Berleantian Critique of Kantian Aesthetics from the Perspective of Eco-aesthetics

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Abstract: In order to develop environmental aesthetics, Berleant takes environment as an aesthetic paradigm. His understanding of the nature of environment decides the nature of his aesthetics of engagement, which emphasizes experiential continuity and rejects the separation between subject and object. Based on these ideas, he criticizes Kant's core idea of disinterestedness in his series of books. Berleant's environmental aesthetics has a significant impact on ecoaesthetics in China. However, Berleant's criticism of Kant's core idea of disinterestedness is a misunderstanding and his conception of environment is not fundamentally sound. The future of ecoaesthetics is taking ecosystem not environment as a new aesthetic paradigm.
Keywords: environment; aesthetic paradigm; environmental aesthetics; ecoaesthetics; ecosystem.

Introduction

Since the first national conference on ecoaesthetics (i.e. ecological aesthetics or eco-aesthetics) in 2001 in China, this newly emerging field has attracted more and more scholarly interest in the subsequent 16 years. In order to construct ecoaesthetics in an academically reasonable way, at least two related theoretical issues must be considered carefully. The first one is the difference between ecological aesthetics in China and environmental aesthetics in the West. The latter began to be introduced into the Chinese academic world at the beginning of the 21st century. Is it necessary to make a new phrase beyond environmental aesthetics, say, ecological aesthetics, if the two terms mean the same story? The second one is the revolutionary nature of ecological aesthetics compared with modern aesthetics: why is modern aesthetics "non-ecological" or even "anti-ecological" if there really is a kind of new aesthetics which can be called an "ecological" one?

Interestingly, answers to the above two questions in China both have close connections with Arnold Berleant's works. Berleant was invited to give lectures at some top Chinese academic institutes such as Zhejiang University and Shandong University in 1992 and 1993 separately, and two of his major books about environmental aesthetics, *The Aesthetics of Environment* (1992) and *Living in the Landscape: Toward an Aesthetics of Environment* (1997), were translated into Chinese and published in China in 2006, and both of them were taken as the main theoretical resources for the construction of Chinese ecoaesthetics.

Berleant's critique of Kant's core idea of disinterestedness in his series of books is one of the key points of his influence in China. As is well known, Kantian aesthetics is the peak of modern aesthetics, which is certainly the focus of critical reflection0s on the nature of modern aesthetics from the perspective of ecological awareness in general. So, at least three related questions should be investigated one by one: Firstly, why does Berleant criticize Kant's core idea of disinterestedness? Secondly, what does Chinese ecoaesthetics borrow mainly from Berleantian environmental aesthetics? Thirdly, how to evaluate Berleantian critique of Kantian aesthetics from the perspective of ecoaesthetics? Based on the three

questions, the last one should be, what is the future of ecoaesthetics? The article will discuss these questions and might be viewed as a friendly polemical exchange with Arnold Berleant.

The Nature of Environment and the Aesthetics of Engagement

If we understand what we called generally "aesthetics" as "aesthetic theory," then, it is very reasonable to ask a question at the beginning of our aesthetic research: what should be taken as the "aesthetic paradigm" for the construction of an aesthetic theory? Unfortunately, this question of great importance had not been discussed for a long time, until Berleant's statement of "Environment as an Aesthetic Paradigm" was proposed as chapter 10 in his 1992 book, *The Aesthetics of Environment*. It is in this chapter that Berleant makes his brief declaration as follow: "*By taking aesthetic experience of environment as the standard, we are led to abandon the aesthetic of disinterestedness in favor of an aesthetic of engagement*" (1992, p.157).

In the Berleantian context, what is called "aesthetic experience of environment as the standard" actually means the title of the chapter, "environment as an aesthetic paradigm." Meanwhile, what is called "the aesthetics of disinterestedness" is mainly Kant's aesthetic theory and "an aesthetic of engagement" is Berleant's own position. It is a very good way to take the above brief declaration as the guideline for our discussion. The first question here is what does it mean to take environment as an aesthetic paradigm? The exploration also asks, before "environment" is taken as an aesthetic paradigm, what objects have been taken as aesthetic paradigm(s)?

Historically speaking, we can find at least three aesthetic paradigms. The first one is poetry, which is proposed by the German philosopher Baumgarten in his *Philosophical Meditations on Some Matters Pertaining to Poetry*, where he applies the term "aesthetics" to the sensory realm for the first time. Although Baumgarten also suggests ways that would also apply to painting, sculpture, and music, it is clear to see that poetry is his "aesthetic paradigm" when he tried to propose a science of the perceptual realm. The second aesthetic paradigm is nature, which is proposed by another German philosopher, Kant. Kant borrows the term "aesthetic" from Baumgarten, but shifts it to his own account of sensibility and the conditions of knowledge. In his "Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment," the first part of his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant takes nature as aesthetic paradigm to develop his aesthetic theory, which clearly declares the priority of nature over art. Hegel's *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* asserts clearly that the term of "aesthetics" proposed by Baumgarten is not proper for the new discipline, which should be replaced by "philosophy of fine arts," or briefly, "philosophy of art." The five kinds of "fine arts" in Hegel's "aesthetics" are architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and poetry, which indicate his aesthetic paradigm very clearly. To sum up, poetry, nature, and fine arts are the three aesthetic paradigms before the emergence of environmental aesthetics.

Based on the above historical narration, we may briefly define what is called "environmental aesthetics" as "aesthetics taking environment as its aesthetic paradigm." The nature of the new type of aesthetics depends mainly on the nature of its aesthetic paradigm, environment. So, what is the nature of environment? In order to discuss the question, Berleant quotes the definition of environment as stated in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which is "*the object or the region surrounding anything.*" Berleant asserts that "Cartesian dualism remains alive and well" in this definition (Berleant, 1991, p.81). What he calls "Cartesian dualism" here mainly means "*the dualism of subject-object.*" Within the Cartesian philosophical framework, the environment is usually viewed as a kind of "object" which can easily be objectified, and the appreciator is viewed as the subject outside it.

However, Berleant declares that "*The very notion of environment is problematic*" at the beginning of his 1992 book (p.2), because according to his understanding, to think of environment in the usual sense as "*physical surroundings or external world*" suggests that it lies outside the person, it is a container within which people pursue their private purposes (p.3). On the contrary, Berleant defines environment as "*a seamless unity of organism, perception, and place, all suffused with values*," which is very different from such expressions as "setting," "circumstances" and the like. Briefly, Berleant refuses to think of environment objectively and dualistically, in the sense of regarding humans as placed in it rather than as continuous with it (Berleant, 1992, p.10). So, there are at least two key points in Berleant's conception of environment: the first is that environment is not an object and cannot be objectified, and the second is that humans are not separated from environment but are continuous with it. The new understanding of environment and its significance to aesthetics is expressed clearly in his following words:

> "*Environment, in the large sense, is not a domain separate and distinct from ourselves as human inhabitants. We are rather continuous with environment, an integral part of its processes. The usual tradition in aesthetics has difficulty with this, for it claims that appreciation requires a receptive, contemplative attitude. Such an attitude befits an observer, but nature admits of no such observer, for nothing can remain apart and uninvolved*" (Berleant, 1992, p.11-12).

Here, Berleant views environment as a synonym for "nature" and declares that everything, including that which is human, is "involved in it." In a word, "involvement in environment (nature)" should be taken as the proper starting point for the discussion of the aesthetics which takes "environment as an aesthetic paradigm." As a matter of course, the nature of environment decides nature the new type of aesthetics. The technical term selected by Berleant in his official expression is not "involvement,"[1] but its synonym, "engagement." Berleant asserts that: "*This aesthetics of engagement, as I call it, leads to a restructuring of aesthetic theory, a revision especially congenial to environmental aesthetics, in which the continuity of engagement in the natural world replaces the contemplative appreciation of a beautiful object or scene*" (Berleant, 1992, p.12).

We can see clearly that there are two related points contained in the new type of aesthetics (i.e., the aesthetics of engagement), especially in what Berleant calls "environmental aesthetics," which are, first, "*the continuity of engagement in the natural world*;" second, "*the contemplative appreciation of a beautiful object or scene*." The fundamental reason for Berleant's critique of Kantian aesthetics lies in his thought of Kant's aesthetic theory as the theory which can lead to "*the contemplative appreciation of a beautiful object*." The next section moves to his criticism of Kant.

An Overview of Berleantian Critique of Kantian Aesthetics

From his first book *The Aesthetic Field: A Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* published in 1970 to his 2012 book *Aesthetics beyond the Arts: New and Recent Essays*, over the course of half a century, Berleant's philosophical approach can be summed up as adopting Husserl's phenomenological method and Heidegger's criticism of Western cultural detour into subjectivism. With this as his theoretical background, Berleant has been trying to revise modern aesthetics with a series of criticisms of Kant's aesthetic theory. The focus of his criticism is on Kant's famous notion of disinterestedness and its philosophical limitations. According to Berleant's criticism, Kantian aesthetics contains the dualism of subject-object

[1] Berleant also sometimes calls his "aesthetic engagement" "aesthetic involvement." See his *Art and Engagement*, (1991, p.17).

inherently and treats aesthetic experience as merely subjective feeling. Berleant, on the contrary, emphasizes the contextual character of aesthetic appreciation, which involves active participation in the appreciative process, sometimes by overt physical action but always through creative perceptual involvement. Meanwhile, by absorbing the theory of perception proposed by Merleau-Ponty, Berleant views aesthetics as a return to its etymological origins by stressing the primacy of sense perception. In a word, by emphasizing the importance of participation and involvement, Berleant proposes a new aesthetic phrase, "engagement" or "aesthetic engagement." Briefly speaking, the three key words used by Berleant, participation, involvement, and engagement mean almost the same story, all of them emphasize the continuity between appreciator as subject and artworks as object. Based on this understanding of the nature of aesthetic experience, Berleant asserts that Kant's theory of disinterestedness leads to the separation between appreciator and artworks. He asserts that the famous notion of "disinterestedness" is:

> "[...] *an attitude denoting the perception of an object for its own sake without regard to further purposes, especially practical ones, and requiring the separation of the object from its surroundings in order that it may be contemplated freely and with no distracting considerations. Disinterestedness began to emerge as the mark of a new and distinctive mode of experience called "aesthetic," a kind of awareness distinct from more commonly recognized alternative modes, such as instrumental, cognitive, moral, and religious experience. It was in the work of Kant, however, that the concept of aesthetic disinterestedness became fixed and assumed a distinct and integral place in aesthetic theory, just as aesthetics itself was integrated in his philosophy into a comprehensive system"* (Berleant, 1991, p.12).

According to Berleant's understanding, "disinterestedness" or "aesthetic disinterestedness" is not only an "attitude" but also "*a new and distinctive mode of experience*." The core of disinterestedness is what he calls "separation" or "isolation." So, this kind of experience might be called "experience of separation." However, Berleant argues that empirical tradition and traditional aesthetics prejudge "*our experience by imposing on it a division between person and world*." Berleant points out that "*this dualistic tradition of separating consciousness from an external world*" is "*so deeply ingrained in modern thought*," which cannot be assumed as given (Berleant, 1991, p.14). In a word, "*the pattern of separation*" which continues to prevail in the way the arts are explained and treated should be reflected and criticized. In contrast to it, Berleant proposes "continuity of experience" as the clear alternative to the dualistic tradition, which emphasizes "*joining* [the] *perceiver with the world in complex patterns of reciprocity*." He declares that "*experiential continuity in the arts can serve as a model for other areas of inquiry*" (Berleant, 1991, p.15).

It is not hard to see that Berleant's two early books (the 1970 book and the 1991 book) as not being "aesthetic theory" in general but "philosophy of art," which can be viewed as the starting point of his study of environmental aesthetics. Compared with art forms such as music and literature, the nature of environment is more helpful for him to criticize the "*tradition of separation in modern philosophy*" and to propose "*the idea of experiential continuity*," because it is much easier for us to see the ordinary fact that, whenever we enter into an environment, the environment is no longer an "object" in it general sense, because we are in the environment and surrounded by all kinds of its factors. In this case, what Berleant calls "*the pervasive dualism of the modern period*" is no longer reasonable for us to explain the "*the meaning for aesthetics of the continuity of experience*," which should be described in a more proper way by such keywords as "involvement and engagement" (Berleant, 1991, p.15-16).

What should be mentioned here is Dewey's role in Berleant's aesthetics of engagement. In Berleant's view, Dewey exhibits a more explicit recognition of total organic involvement in art. He asserts that what

underlines Dewey's account of experience is the biological, evolutionary model. He cites Dewey's famous statement of "*the interaction of the live creature with his surroundings*" to support his idea of "engagement between perceiver and object" (Berleant, 1991, p.17). In this sense, "engagement" may be taken as a synonym for "interaction." Some sentences in the "preface" to the 1991 book, *Art and Engagement*, can show Berleant's train of thought very clearly, which goes as follow:

> "*In developing a theory that responds to the unpremeditated experience of art, then, we confront the larger philosophical structure of which the tradition in aesthetics is but one part. We face, in particular, an array of tendentious and obstructive dualisms, especially that of subject and object, which are widely accepted as fundamental truths.……Aesthetic engagement challenges this entire tradition. It claims continuity rather than separation, contextual relevance rather than objectivity, historical pluralism rather than certainty, ontological parity rather than priority*" (Berleant, 1991, p.xiii).

Berleant realizes very clearly that his theory of aesthetic engagement is primarily a new theory of art. Then, how is it possible to apply this art theory to those things beyond arts, say, nature or environment? Berleant explains this possibility in his 1991 book *Art and Engagement* as follow:

> "*Despite the reference to art in the title, this book moves freely at times between the arts and aesthetic experience in nature, especially when discussing landscape, architecture, and environment. This is not a careless disregard for their differences but a deliberate bridging of what I consider to be another of the misleading divisions that dog aesthetic theory. For the natural world does not stand apart from human presence and action. We are increasingly aware of the inescapable and pervasive effects of human agency, both local and global, on our natural environment. In nature as in arts there is an active transformation of materials in the shaping of experience, and the same conceptual structure of an aesthetics of engagement applies as readily to the one as to the others"* (Berleant, 1991, p.xiv).

In Berleant's view, nature, the natural world and natural environment are the same; there is only one kind of aesthetics, aesthetics of engagement, which can be applied to both arts and nature. I think that his above statement is very problematic, because I believe that nature is natural fundamentally, which is very different from arts made by human agency. The next part of the paper will criticize Berleant's core idea mainly from the perspective of Chinese ecoaesthetics.

A Criticism of Berleant's Aesthetics from the Perspective of Chinese Ecoaesthetics

Chinese ecoaesthetics emerged in 1994 and has grown rapidly in the 21st century. Berleant's aesthetics of engagement played an important role in its theoretical construction, which is mainly embodied in Zeng Fanren's 2010 book *An Introduction to Ecoaesthetics* and Cheng Xiangzhan's works.

As the leading scholar in the field of Chinese ecoaesthetics, Zeng's core idea is founded and represented by his conference paper in 2001 when he participated in the first National Conference on Ecoaesthetics, which is entitled "*Ecoaesthetics: A New Aesthetic Conception of Ecological Existence in the Post-modern Context.*" In a subsequent academic career of nearly 10 years, Zeng has absorbed, firstly, the postmodern philosopher David Griffin's thinking and proposes a "view of ecological existence," then he takes it as an entry point to absorb the existential philosophy of Heidegger, later he treats the view of "ecocivilization" as a theory guideline. By borrowing theoretical resources from western environmental aesthetics and emphasizing its differences from ecoaesthetics at the same time, Zeng proposes nine basic categories in his 2010 book to build up his framework of ecoaesthetic, such as "ecological view of existence," "poetic dwelling," "sense

of place" and "aesthetics of engagement." It is noteworthy that Zeng, twice, directly declares that Berleant's "aesthetics of engagement" is "aesthetics of ecological existence" (Zeng, 2010, p.343, 346), which means that in Zeng's view, Berleant's environmental aesthetics should be called "ecological aesthetics." According to Zeng's understanding, Berleant's "aesthetics of engagement" is a response to Heidegger's famous statement of "being-in-the-world" in the field of aesthetic theory. As an aesthetic model, it breaks through the model of the dualism of subject-object.

Cheng's theoretical train of thought of developing ecoaesthetics is to consult the more mature discipline of environmental aesthetics. He thinks that the objective of study of environmental aesthetics is "environmental appreciation," which is clearly different from "art appreciation." It critiques and transcends the Hegelian philosophy of art, which views an artifact as an object of study. For scholars of environmental aesthetics, the main issue concerns the distinction and relationship between environmental appreciation and art appreciation. As for the study of ecoaesthetics, its object of study concerns how to appreciate aesthetically and ecologically. While it disapproves of traditional aesthetic appreciation that is not ecologically oriented (or without ecological awareness), it does not necessarily oppose a form of aesthetic enjoyment based on artistic form. In a nutshell, the argument of environmental aesthetics centers on the issue of the aesthetic object: is the object for the study of aesthetics artwork or the environment? By the same token, the argument of ecoaesthetics concentrates on the issue of the aesthetic way (or manner) and asks how to engage an aesthetic activity governed by an ecological awareness. In other words, it asks how to form an ecological aesthetic way (or manner) by letting ecological awareness play a leading role in human aesthetic activity and experience. So, his major argument is that ecoaesthetics is different from non-ecological oriented aesthetics (or "traditional aesthetics"). It is a new type of aesthetics and conception responding to global ecological crises, using ecological ethics as its theoretical foundation, relying on ecological knowledge to inspire imagination and elicit emotions, and aiming at conquering conventional, anthropocentric aesthetic preferences. He asserts that: "*The first keystone of ecoaesthetics is that it completely abandons a conventional aesthetics that is predicated on an opposition between humanity and the world. Subsequently it is replaced by the model of aesthetic engagement that promotes the idea of the unity of humans and the world*" (Cheng, 2013, p.86).

By taking Berleant's aesthetics of engagement as his theoretical support, Cheng argues that only through an aesthetics of engagement that transcends the subject-object opposition can an intimate relationship between humans and the world be established, through which to experience the interconnectedness of all life explained by ecology and deep ecology. He even declares that this is the fundamental contribution of aesthetic activity to ecological awareness.

The major reason for both Zeng's and Cheng's interest in Berleant's aesthetics of engagement is one key point, the criticism and objection of the model of the dualism of subject-object, which is proposed mainly by Berleant's criticism of Kant's notion of disinterestedness. In Berleant's view, the notion stresses distance and separateness not just from the other areas of experience, but from the very person of the perceiver. He declares that like architecture, environment cannot be objectified. Reciprocity is, in fact, a constant feature of environmental experience. I appreciate Berleant's phenomenology of environment which implies an aesthetics of environment. However, I don't think his criticism of Kant is totally acceptable, because I think that Kant's theory of disinterestedness has been misunderstood by many theorists since Hegel, and Berleant is no exception. Berleant thinks that the Kantian model of disinterested contemplation contains a contemplative, distancing attitude. However, this is a misunderstanding, at least an over-interpretation of Kant's original text. The best way to clarify this key

point is return to Kant. The first step is to grasp the real meaning of what Kant calls "interest." At the very beginning of the section 2 of his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant asserts that: "*The satisfaction that we combine with the representation of the existence of an object is called interest*" (Kant, 2000, p.90).

According to Kant's own official definition here, "interest" is a kind of "satisfaction," which is connected to "the representation of the existence of an object." So, the object of the "interest" is in nothing but in the "the existence of an object." Kant makes this point very clear. He continues, "*But if the question is whether something is beautiful, one does not want to know whether there is anything that is or that could be at stake, for us or for someone else, in the existence of the thing, but rather how we judge it in mere contemplation (intuition or reflection)*" (Kant, 2000, p.90).

Here, "the existence of the thing" means exactly "the existence of an object." "Contemplation" is a special way of appreciating the thing, or the object's representation in Kantian philosophy. What Kant emphasizes here again and again is "the existence of an object." He repeats this key point below,

> "*One only wants to know whether the mere representation of the object is accompanied with satisfaction in me, however indifferent I might be with regard to the existence of the object of this representation. It is readily seen that to say that it is beautiful and to prove that I have taste what matters is what I make of this representation in myself, not how I depend on the existence of the object. Everyone must admit that a judgment about beauty in which there is mixed the least interest is very partial and not a pure judgment of taste. One must not be in the least biased in favor of the existence of the thing, but must be entirely indifferent in this respect in order to play the judge in matters of taste*" (Kant, 2000, p.90-91).

By three repetitions of the "the existence of the thing" or "the existence of an object," Kant asserts that in order to use our taste to make an aesthetic judgment about something, we must have no interest in its existence. So, the object of Kantian interest is very clear, which tells us that what is called "disinterestedness" is not about "desire," but about "the existence of an object." In a word, the real meaning of the traditionally called the notion of "disinterestedness" has nothing to do with subject's desire, but with the existence of the aesthetic object. The fundamental reason for Kant's emphasis on the disinterestedness in the existence of the object lies in his basic belief in the dualism of phenomenon and the thing-in-itself. What human agency can know is not the thing-in-itself, but a phenomenon or representation constructed by human *a prior* frameworks.

The purpose of the above re-interpretation of Kant's third critique is not to deny the fact that the subject-object dichotomy is intrinsically contained in his aesthetic theory, but to revise Berleant's criticism about Kant. From the perspective of Chinese ecoaesthetics, the Kantian notion of "thing-in-itself" is very attractive, because it is the best and most powerful way to explain human limitations and to make us realize our limitations, which is very helpful for us to reflect the defect of anthropocentrism and move to ecological humanism or eco-centrism. It is in this sense that Kantian philosophy should be viewed as the philosophical base of ecoaesthetics. An ecoaesthetics based on Kant might be possible.

The Future of Ecoaesthetics

The construction of ecoaesthetics is an ongoing project internationally. For my research project of ecoaesthetics, both Kant and Berleant are inspiring resources. Inspired by Berleant's idea of taking environment as aesthetic paradigm, it is very reasonable to raise a fundamental question as below: What kind of aesthetic paradigm is the most suitable one for ecoaesthetics? My tentative proposal is ecosystem.

The basic guideline of this proposal is to develop Heidegger's idea of "being-in-the-world" and Berleant's notion of "being-in-the-environment" to a new conception, "being-in-the-ecosystem."

In Heidegger's philosophy, "being-in-the-world" is a metonym for "Dasein," which signifies the holistic or unified phenomenon in terms of which Heidegger explicates Dasein's worldhood. Being-in-the-world is an *a priori* and necessary constitution of Dasein. "*As being-in-the-world Dasein exists factically with and alongside beings it encounters within-the-world*" (Dahlstrom, 2013, p.37). Berleant usually cites Heidegger in his series of works. When he discusses swimming in his 2005 book, *Aesthetics and Environment*, he asserts that, "*No environmental experience involves a more direct physical encounter. The eye of minor importance for one, as the physical urgencies of "being in the world" usurp the relative safety of visual distance*" (Berleant, 2005, p.62).

Although Berleant does not give a note for his citing here, it is clear that he is quoting Heidegger's idea. Swimming as an activity of being in water (water here certainly is the swimmer's intimate environment) indicates clearly the potential expression of "being-in-the-environment."

There are many ways of defining the keyword of "environment." From the perspective of ecology, we can view any environment as an ecosystem to emphasize the interconnectedness of all the elements in the whole environment. Meanwhile, environment can be defined by "the" and can also be objectified with the changes of human scale. Berleant always insists that environment cannot be objectified and does not have clear boundaries. However, it is not true in our society. For example, Central Park is an urban park in Manhattan, New York City. Its boundaries are very clear, which are described as follow: It comprises 843 acres (341 ha) between the Upper West Side and Upper East Side, roughly bounded by Fifth Avenue on the east, Central Park West (Eighth Avenue) on the west, Central Park South (59th Street) on the south, and Central Park North (110th Street) on the north. If we read its location on a map of Manhattan, or if we view it from Rockefeller Center, we can have a panoramic view of the park. Berleant might argue that these two ways of appreciation of the park are not "appreciative;" the only appreciative way of appreciating the park is entering into it and immersed in it. However, just like the terms "environmental justice" and "political ecology" show, the boundaries of environment are defined very clearly by political, economic, even military forces. What we experience in the reality is various kinds of "the" environments, say, those beautiful and healthy ones inhabited by the rich, and those polluted ones inhabited by the poor. What Heidegger declares as "poetic dwelling" is our ideal.

The contribution of Berleant's aesthetics of engagement is mainly its focus on continuity, i.e. experiential continuity. He even calls his aesthetic theory as "aesthetics of the continuity of experience" (1991, p.15). In brief, Berleant's aesthetics of engagement is based on his key idea of the continuity of appreciative experience. From the perspective of ecoaesthetics, it is proper to raise a more fundamental question: Is it possible to reinterpret the idea of continuity from the perspectives of scientific ecology, philosophical ecology, and ecosophy? The answer might be yes. Taking ecosystem as the aesthetic paradigm, ecoaesthetics might have a more productive future.

Conclusion

The paper's thread of thought is to reflect on Berleant's critique of Kant's idea of disinterestedness from the perspective of Chinese ecoaesthetics. The purpose of the paper is to search for new directions for the future development of ecoaesthetics based on the reflection. The author believes that ecoaesthetics is different from environmental aesthetics because it takes ecosystem, not environment as its aesthetic paradigm.

Ecosystem is one of the keywords in ecology as a branch of science. It shows that the human is only one species in the whole system. Without a healthy system as precondition, it is impossible for human beings to emerge, to exist, and to survive. In this sense, ecoaesthetics is a new type of aesthetics facing the global ecological crisis. If we say that saving the global ecological crisis is primarily an ethical consideration, we can say that ecoaesthetics should reflect the close relationship between ethics and aesthetics, between ethical norms and aesthetic norms, and between ethical judgment and aesthetic judgment. To some extent, ecoaesthetics is an ethical-aesthetic theory with what I called the "ecological aesthetic appreciation" as its core. Both Kant and Berleant play significant role in my construction of ecoaesthetics. I believe that ecoaesthetics is open to any theoretical resources.

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Engagement and Resonance: Two Ways out from Disinterestedness and Alienation

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Abstract: Arnold Berleant's enlargement of the scope of aesthetics to environments and social relationships opens the way for associations with approaches from other human and social sciences. One possible term of comparison is Hartmut Rosa's theory of modernity, which applies the concept of resonance to various fields, including nature and art. At the beginning, their aims appear to be different and their alternatives slightly different: engagement stresses the continuity between the embodied self and the world, whereas resonance is primarily based upon a model of communication. Nevertheless, their relational theories converge in several respects: they focus on experience, defend participatory models against objectifying and merely contemplative relationships, and practise social criticism in their search for a meaningful and good life.
Keywords: aesthetic experience, engagement, resonance, Arnold Berleant, Hartmut Rosa.

Hartmut Rosa's latest book, *Resonanz. Eine Soziologie der Weltbeziehung* (2016), expounds on over 800 pages the results of ten years of reflection, and ambitions not only to integrate previous theories, but also to find, in the concept of resonance, the answer to all major problems of our age. Even before the publication of this book, Rosa's ideas gave rise to controversies because of their "normative monism" (Rosa 2016, p. 756), that made Rosa suspect of having proposed a "doctrine of salvation" (*ibid.*, p. 750).[1] Why should one compare, then, his sociology with Arnold Berleant's social and environmental aesthetics? Would such a comparison make sense and would it be at all possible? The present paper is an attempt to argue that, on closer scrutiny, their conceptions present several similarities.

Aesthetics and sociology

Let us start with the obvious differences between Berleant and Rosa. Not only is their disciplinary background different, but they also belong to other generations (Berleant was born in 1932, Rosa in 1965). Also the genealogy of their ideas leads back to different schools: Berleant is indebted to pragmatism and phenomenology, in particular to Dewey and Merleau-Ponty, and he appreciates phenomenology as a method of describing, free from presuppositions and prejudices, the structures of experience, mainly perception. Rosa, however, declares his continuity with the emancipatory ideas of the Frankfurt School, which he claims to overcome through a systematic approach and an optimistic attitude. Nevertheless, Rosa also extensively resorts to the phenomenology of corporality in the first part of his book, while Berleant occasionally appreciates Marcuse and Fromm for their non-egocentric ethics (Berleant 1997, p. 140). Finally, both appreciate the legacy of the Aufklärung.

Further on, their purposes seem to be different: Berleant aims to extend the scope of aesthetic theory beyond art and beauty and elaborates the program of a new aesthetics, which he calls – depending on the

[1] All translations from Rosa belong to me, M.D.

discussed topic – environmental, social or cultural. Rosa, at his turn, rejects the exclusion of happiness and wellbeing from sociology due to an over-simplified Aufklärung (Rosa 2016, p. 37-38). The Enlightenment had indeed committed itself to acknowledge the autonomy of the individual, but it also emphasized the limitation of this autonomy by the Vernunft, nature, or the public good. The theories in its wake preserved only autonomy; the issue of a good life was, however, hitherto considered a private matter and bound to individual choices and options, being relegated to psychological or even esoteric companions. In reaction to this historically distorted development, Rosa brings to the foreground of his sociology the subject's relationship to the world (*ibid.*, p. 56) and ambitions to establish resonance as a "metacriterium of a good life" (*ibid.*, p. 749). From this perspective, Berleant's and Rosa's final objectives actually converge, because Berleant, too, regards aesthetic values as inextricably linked to moral values and as a powerful instrument to shape a human life.[2]

Obviously, Rosa is not an aesthetician, let alone an exponent of environmental aesthetics. His reflections start with the subject's basic strategies to assume the world in modernity: by dominating it (*Weltbeherrschung*) and by appropriating it through transformation (*Weltanverwandlung*). While the first attitude ends in alienation, the latter implies experiences of resonance, provided that the subject would follow intrinsic interests. Against the mainstream that regards the domination of the world as the "normal," "natural" and rational pattern of handling and is obsessed with accumulating resources, Rosa argues that an alternative – called resonance – is, well, possible. Further on, he follows its forms along three "axes of resonance:" "horizontal" (family, friendship and politics), "diagonal" (relationships to objects, at work, in education, sport, and consumption), and "vertical" (religion, nature, art, and history). However, Rosa's genuine contribution to sociology and even philosophy concerns less his considerations on art and nature, where he mostly relies upon few German philosophers like Christoph Menke or Angelika Krebs, and ignores Berleant, but in the conceptualization of resonance, in his theory of modernity and, of course, in the analyses of particular social fields. Conversely, even if Berleant defines himself as an aesthetician, his broad definition of the aesthetic, rooted in perception, enables him to also address issues of social ethics and political theory. Berleant even calls for involving other sciences in order to stress the social dimension of the person and the cultural embeddedness of aesthetic sensibility.[3] In his view, the self is "*a social construct and even a social product*", and the person is always related with others, like a "*node of intersecting connections*;" as a result, self-sufficiency turns out to be no more than a "*cultural myth*" and "*a false ideal*" (Berleant 1997, pp. 139, 146, 143). The same statements might have also been signed by Rosa.

Finally, a comparison between Berleant and Rosa may be obstructed by their distinct style. On one hand, Berleant is used to publishing collections of essays revolving around a few themes; general introductions into the "new aesthetics" alternate with analyses of fine arts, music and architecture, landscapes, other environments and social phenomena. On the other hand, Rosa's book on *Resonanz* – the only to be considered in the present paper – is composed as a symphonic work having resonance as leitmotif. Its first part describes basic elements of human relationships to the world, including the dichotomy of resonance and alienation, the second part goes into different spheres and axes of resonance, as described before, the third part reconstructs the history of modernity, finally, the fourth aims to put forward a critical theory of the relationships to the world.

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[2] According to Berleant, "*ethical values lie at the heart of social aesthetics*" (Berleant 2010, p. 95).

[3] "*Foremost in this rethinking of ethics is the recognition of the essential sociality of human life. Philosophy lags far behind what the human sciences have established here*" (Berleant 1997, p. 138).

The aforementioned complications in comparing Berleant with Rosa may be simplified if we confine the discussion to a few selected topics that connect both theories: their relational character and the primacy of experience, the role of sensibility, the nexus between person and society, and critique of dominant life models in contemporary society.

The primacy of experience

Berleant's aesthetics and Rosa's theory of resonance may both be considered "phenomenological" in the broadest sense of a theory that stresses experience as a relationship between an embodied self and the world. Under the influence of the artistic developments of the 1960s and 1970s, Berleant required very early to replace the aesthetic of objects with an aesthetic of experience, that is, to go beyond pleasing objects and social objective structures and describe the manner how these are experienced. In particular, *aesthetic* means neither an attribute of objects (works of art), nor their psychological effect, but "*a mode of experience that rests on the directness and immediacy of sensuous perception*" (Berleant 2010, p. 195).

Rosa even lifts experience to a specific relationship to the world (*Weltbeziehung*, Rosa 2016, p. 289). Resonance is only one version of this relationship, one that finds the meaning of life not in the appropriation of the world and in the extension of power, by heaping "resources" and feasible options, but in a mutual relationship and transformation of the subject and the world. This reciprocity evolves in two "steps": I let myself be affected by the world and answer to it.[4] It goes without saying that Rosa uses the concept of resonance not primarily for a material-physical phenomenon, but in order to describe a specific relationship: Humans are "resonating bodies" (*Resonanzkörper*, *ibid.*, p. 269), in the sense that they gain identity from their relationships to others. As a matter of fact, both the subject and the world "*are formed, coined by and even constituted in and through their reciprocal relation*" (*ibid.*, p. 62). With respect to the relational conception of the self, both Berleant and Rosa occasionally quote Martin Buber. In any case, they both agree that no good life can be achieved by shutting oneself from the world, and respectively the environment.[5] For Berleant, biological life itself would not even be possible if one would be cut off from the environment, without eating, breathing or moving. Rosa's stress, however, lies elsewhere: even the opposite of resonance, alienation, is a kind of relationship, namely – with Rahel Jaeggi's expression – the "relation of non-relatedness" (*ibid.*, p. 316). When the basic relation of resonance fails, the world is experienced as mute (*stumm*), repulsive or indifferent.Sociology would not only have to identify and describe these basic types of relationship to the world, but also their causes and consequences on a macro- and microsocial scale.

A relational approach also implies the critique of essentialism. In his early work, Berleant replaced the subject-object-dualism with the aesthetic field, in which the artistic object, the appreciator (collectively, the audience), the creator and the performer modulate each other in specific contexts and situations. The aesthetic situation is as such devoid of essence, but a "*contextual theory*" may assign various features to it (Berleant 2005, pp. 149-153): 1) Acceptance, i.e. "*openness to experience while judgment is suspended*," a kind of

[4] Here is one of the definitions of resonance: "*Resonance is a form of relation to the world that is constituted through af←fection and e→motion, intrinsic interest and perceived self-efficacy, in which subject and world at the same time touch and transform each other*" (Rosa 2016, p. 298).

[5] However, while Berleant often resorts to ecological knowledge in order to clarify the meaning of environment and describes the world as "*a dynamic nexus of interpenetrating forces to which we contribute and respond*" (Berleant 2005, p. 13), Rosa is tempted to ascribe a transcendental-phenomenological meaning to the world, regarded as the last horizon in which things can appear and be experienced (R, p. 65).

intentionality ("attention") that is freed of practical interests and akin to what Kant called "*purposiveness without purpose*;"[6] 2) The central role of perception in the aesthetic appreciation, following from the redefinition of aesthetics as aisthetics; 3) Sensuousness: to accept the pleasure derived from the senses (nota bene: from all senses), against any intellectualism in aesthetics; 4) Discovery: the sense of wonder, to detect features that previously passed unnoticed; 5) Uniqueness, meaning that each experience is unrepeatable; 6) Reciprocity or the interplay of the factors that constitute the aesthetic field, as described before; 7) Continuity: the factors can be discerned in the analysis, but in the experience they "*blend into one another*;" 8) Engagement: the aesthetic experience excludes psychological distance and implies an intimate, direct and "participatory involvement" with the object; and finally 9) Multiplicity: aesthetic experiences can take place everywhere and anytime and be basically unleashed by everything. The last feature derives from regaining perception as the center of aesthetics. On one hand, this deprives aesthetic theory from an own aesthetic realm, on the other hand, it extends its object to various things, activities, situations and environments which all have a sensory dimension. If Terentius stated that as a human "*humani nihil a me alienum puto*," Berleant claims that "*nothing in the human world is excluded*" on principle from aesthetics (Berleant 2010, p. 46).

The similarities of this approach with Rosa's concept of resonance can be identified first and foremost at the level of openness, when the subject is willing "*to enter into appreciation with an open mind*" (Berleant 2005, p. 149). Perception is, for understandable reasons, less important for Rosa than for aestheticians. One may even cautiously advance the hypothesis that affectivity and not perception is primary in resonance. To be more specific, Rosa explicitly denies resonance the character of an emotional state (which would downgrade it from the existential to the psychological level) and would probably prefer the Heideggerian understanding of *Befindlichkeit* and *Stimmung*.[7] Yet the strongest difference to resonance can be found in the concept of engagement that Berleant described as a fading away of boundaries and an "intimate absorption" (Berleant 2005, p. 152). Although resonance certainly "touches" (*berührt*) the subject, and its existential "depth" implies intimacy with the world, Rosa repeatedly insists on the difference between the self and the cause of resonance: "*Resonance is no echo, but a relation of answer; it presupposes that both sides speak with [their] own voices*" (Rosa 2016, p. 298). The subject and the world have to be at the same time "'*closed' or consistent enough in order to speak with their own voices, and open enough to be affected*" (*ibid.*, p. 298). Therefore, this relationship never reaches the state of a fusion, but its poles enter a kind of dialogue that transforms both of them. Put differently, resonance is a mutual, "bidirectional vibration" (*ibid.*, p. 279) on the levels of corporality, affectivity, evaluation and cognition. To be engaged in a relation of resonance means to feel addressed (*angesprochen*) by something valuable that affects me and to respond to it by acting adequately. The independence of the source of value implies that the resonating experience has to acknowledge a moment of unavailability (*ibid.*, p. 295): this experience can neither be forced nor induced voluntarily.

Another possible analogy between Berleant's aesthetics and Rosa's sociology of resonance regards the social and cultural conditioning of perception and experience in general. According to Berleant, perception is never pure, like the activity of a subject that would be tabula rasa, but it is a basically

[6] However, it would be misleading to infer from Berleant's reference to Kant in this context that openness to experience could be plainly equated with the Kantian disinterestedness. Cf. the differences between engagement and disinterestedness.

[7] Somehow misleading is also the terminological couple used by Rosa for resonance, "Af←fizierung" and "E→motion." Both are interpreted in the light of their Latin etymology: af←fection refers to affect in a broad meaning (being affected by something, including by perceiving it), e→motion stems from *emovere,* meaning 'moving away,' 'removing' or 'dislodging' (*hinausbewegen*, Rosa 2016, p. 279).

"acculturated experience" (Berleant 2010, p. 28). Perception and meaning are conditioned by social, historical and cultural filters, not to mention the filters of personal experience, habits, etc. (*ibid.*, p. 110). Individuals incorporate traditions, culturally established hierarchy of values, and norms through education, media and various practices, and this multilayered conditioning implies that perception is from the very beginning imbued with meaning and value. Applied to the aesthetic realm, this explains why no universal standards of aesthetic evaluation could be set so far. Rosa, too, acknowledges that all human relations to the world are shaped by cultural and social factors. In particular, resonance can be roughly characterized from the perspective of Western modernity as "*catholic, feminine, young and, besides, rural*" (Rosa 2016, p. 659). The professor of sociology in Jena does not exclude the existence of further sociocultural patterns that would produce other forms of resonance. For that purpose, he urges social scientists to conduct historical and comparative research, in order to extend his project on a global scale (*ibid.*, pp. 654, 752-753).

If Berleant and Rosa meet in the primacy they confer to experience, their examples partly diverge. During the past few decades, Berleant has relentlessly brought into light new "case studies" for aesthetics, from urbanity to ecological catastrophes and terrorist attacks. The social aesthetics can be found, according to him, "*not only in friendship, family, and love, but even in education and employment*" (Berleant 2010, p. 95). The same phenomena listed here by Berleant were devoted specific analyses in Rosa's book, however, without mentioning the concept of aesthetic, not even in the chapters on art and nature. Regarding the situations and practices used as examples, Berleant focuses on everyday life, following the phenomenological "zunächst and zumeist," whereas Rosa also pays attention to practices of specific groups, always keen to detect what German philosophers in the 19th century used to call *Zeitgeist*.

Sensibility and its distortions

The distinctions between engagement and resonance appear attenuated if we describe them as participatory relations – a word both Berleant and Rosa use in order to delimit their model from a distanced spectatorship and from the objectification of nature and human beings in the scientific, technical and economic patterns of activity. Irrespective of the differences between their approaches, both scholars rediscover the power of sensibility. Berleant even defines aesthetics as the theory of sensibility that "*focuses on the range, qualities, and nuances of sensory experience, and on its discrimination, acuteness, and subtlety, its perceptual, experienced significance and its emotional component*" (Berleant 2017, p. 2). As a result of the equation of the aesthetic with perceptual experience, cognitive factors (e.g. knowledge of art history and painting techniques) become relevant "*only insofar as they enhance direct perceptual experience*" (Berleant 2017, p. 2). Intellectual knowledge is also secondary in Rosa's sociology, where being able to resonate with something is opposed to indifference and alienation, and sensitivity acquires an existential dimension. In this respect, it is worth taking a look at the opposites of engagement and, respectively, resonance.

Berleant's concept of engagement emerged from his critique of Kantian aesthetic disinterestedness, considered as typical for the strong intellectualist bias in traditional modern aesthetics. Kant's tendency to ascribe "*universality, distance, and contemplation*" to aesthetic experience (Berleant 2004, p. 48) ends up, according to Berleant, in an attitude of indifference and apathy toward the aesthetic object. On the contrary, Berleant explicitly requires to engage oneself in an "intimate involvement" (Berleant 2010, p. 30) – one might say, "resonating" relation – with something different and extract a specific rewarding experience from the interplay of perceptual, emotional and interpretative factors. However, in his more recent work, Berleant increasingly shifted the attention to another possible opposite of the aesthetic experience, which is particularly powerful in the mass culture and consumerism of late modernity: The

engagement is namely compromised not only by cold indifference, but also by being compelled to enter a relationship, as when the sensory overkill in public and commercial spaces, let alone media, keep our senses in a permanent state of alert. "Co-optation of sensibility" calls Berleant (2017, p. 3) those practices that make profit by manipulating people's emotions and sensory pleasures. Gastronomy, technology, and media "*undermine the free sensibility*" (Berleant 2017, p. 4), subvert the real aesthetic values, and subjugate the energy of sensibility under the interests of corporations. Advertising does not only intensify common desires, but also creates new desires and unnecessary needs in the process of the "*commodification of the human sensorium*" (Berleant 2017, p. 8). In general the practices of a "negative aesthetics"[8] produce "*sensory intrusion, sensory manipulation, sensory alteration, and sensory numbing*" (Berleant 2017, p. 8). Sensibility takes offence for the moment and becomes distorted in the long run, "aesthetic pain" is accompanied by "moral suffering," and deprivation goes hand in hand with depravity (Berleant 2010, p. 88; 2012, p. 198 sq.). From this process, the result is damage to humans' health, social relationships, as well as urban and natural environments. This also explains Berleant's reference to Marcuse in a context in which aesthetic theory are assigned both analytic and critical tasks: to study the mechanisms and agents of contemporary anesthetization, but also to become "*an incisive force in social criticism*" (Berleant 2010, p. 88) and "*an instrument of emancipation*" (Berleant 2017, p. 9).

Rosa is all the more rooted in the emancipatory tradition of the Frankfurt School. He is convinced that an alternative *In-der-Welt-Sein* to the current obsession with resources, power, and control is highly feasible, even if not merely by thinking differently, but through a "*simultaneous and concerted political, economic and cultural revolution"* (Rosa 2016, p. 56). Rosa is not particularly interested in the description of alienation (*Entfremdung*) as a negative effect of modernity, given its "career" in the Frankfurt School. At the end of the 1970s, alienation even became inflationary, and this "notorious imprecision" compromised its use for a time (*ibid.*, p. 300); more recently, alienation was brought again into circulation. Rosa confines himself to associate it with depression and burnout. Also, he invalidates the essentialist interpretations of alienation: Entfremdung does not imply deviation from the alleged "true nature" of human. Instead of opposing alienation to identity, authenticity, autonomy, acknowledgement or meaning, as other German scholars – from Heidegger to Rahel Jaeggi, Martin Seel, and Axel Honneth – do, Rosa prefers to contrast it to resonance and calls it the "falling silent of the world" (*das Verstummen der Welt*, *ibid.*, p. 75). As a matter of fact, resonance and alienation are dialectically interrelated: "[…] *resonance is experienced momentarily on the background of something Other that remains alien and mute, yet no resonance could be concretely felt without a deep trust in resonance, in the meaning of a fundamental disposition*" (*ibid.*, p. 325).

If Berleant praises engagement, Rosa recommends on principle resonant experiences. However, after his critics feared he was advocating a rather irrational attitude, he concedes that "alienation" (or objectification) underlies important cultural achievements in various fields, medicine being just one of them. Finally, Rosa admits the individual's "*basic right to refuse resonance*" (Rosa 2016, p. 742). Still he does not agree with the objection that resonance may favor mass hysteria and fascism, because – as emphasized before – it does not reach self-oblivion in merging with the Other. Admittedly, not all his answers to the critics in the afterword of the book succeed to convince. For example, the reader is entitled to doubt that collective acts of violence can simply be put down to an emotional contagion that would be essentially different from resonance (*ibid.*, p. 758). For Rosa there simply is no such thing as negative resonance, just like Berleant would probably reject an engagement with false causes and false (aesthetic and moral) values.

[8] See in particular Berleant's "The Negative Aesthetics of Everyday Life" (Berleant 2010, pp. 155-174).

Continuity and dialogue

Two special fields for experiencing resonance and engagement are art and nature. To begin with art, both Berleant and Rosa emphasize the dynamics of its experience and regard it rather as a force than as a static domain of objects. For Berleant, all arts are processes that imply temporality (Berleant 2004, p. 67). From this, even in fine arts, Berleant prefers to speak of "working of art" instead of artistic objects; following Dewey and Heidegger, the 'work' has to be conceived "*as a verbal noun that incorporates activity in its meaning*" (Berleant 2004, p. 7). For Rosa, too, art is a form of experience and an event (*Kunstgeschehen*, Rosa 2016, p. 478) that may take place, but may fail as well. The latter happens in two cases: first, when the subject is superficially involved and projects his/her own feelings into the work[9], instead of opening him/herself to it, and secondly when the appreciator wants to be affected and even simulates, more or less consciously, this experience, without again being deeply moved by it (*ibid.*, p. 479). Typical situations for such failures can be found in music, and Rosa's book abounds in musical examples from all genres, with particular stress on popular music. Berleant, on the other hand, is a professional musician and composer, who dedicated several analyses to the listening of classical music. The fact that the authors' own musical taste is very likely to differ remains, however, secondary for the structure of their theories.

More important is that even if Rosa regards art as the most important and all-pervading sphere of resonance in modernity (Rosa 2016, p. 473), he still confines it to rare experiences, while Berleant does not seem to operate with such a strong concept of art experience. Also Rosa's book chapter on art experience (*ibid.*, pp. 472-500) is suffused with Romantic concepts: art moves, touches, makes one happy, and transforms one's life, it has beauty as its only value, and the "*forces of what lies beyond the subjective*" are "deep" and "demonic" (*ibid.*, p. 499). On the contrary, Berleant's approach is more appropriate to art experience, in which he includes cognitive, evaluative, affective, performative-kinaesthetic and, naturally, perceptual moments. Without going into detail on their analyses – finally, only Berleant is an aesthetician –, it strikes that for Rosa, too, the art represents a privileged experience, in the sense that it provides a field for experimenting different patterns of relation to the world (*ibid.*, p. 483).

More clearly, differences appear between engagement and resonance when it comes to natural environments. Here again Rosa can hardly leave behind the Romantic cult of nature in his examples and terminology. Cognitive processes and rational approaches are plainly excluded, resonance with nature results solely "*from practical-active and emotionally significant experiences*", so to speak "behind the agents" (*ibid.*, p. 460-461). The author even takes into consideration an alleged correspondence between our inner nature and the outer world, i.e. the "elements." However, as much as Rosa rejects the scientific concept of nature for its "muteness," he still finds no relevance in the suppression of the dualism between nature and culture. Instead, he prefers – rather unconvincingly – to exemplify the "voice of nature" with media comments about natural disasters. Also modernity appears to him somehow simplistic as an oscillation between understanding nature in science, technology, economy and commodifying activities, on one hand, and a "psycho-emotional relation to nature" (i.e. resonance) in the free time, on the other (*ibid.*, p. 467).

In contrast, Berleant's contribution to this field is for good reason unanimously acknowledged. First of all, he replaces the traditional concepts of 'nature' and 'landscape' with the broader 'environment', which includes beyond the natural setting complexes of artifacts, architectural works and cities. Given that the

[9] The critique of sentimentality in art has constantly preoccupied German aestheticians, from Kant to Moritz Geiger's "inner concentration" and the theory of kitsch.

environment bridges over the metaphysical dichotomy between nature and culture[10], environmental aesthetics can serve as an umbrella term for various aesthetic domains and unify the previously distinct theories of art and beauty. Also the environment is, like art, dynamic, "a field of forces continuous with the organism, a field in which there is a reciprocal action of organism on environment and environment on organism, and in which there is no sharp demarcation between them" – what Berleant calls "*a participatory model of experience*" (Berleant 2005, p. 9). This means that environment includes humans: people move through it and live in it, they inhabit it and can neither escape it, nor find there refuge from potential enemies. In other words, the environment refers to the medium we live in and have to engage with for the very purpose of surviving and living a human life. Strictly speaking, "*there is no outside world*" (and thus no "correspondence" between an inner and an outer nature either, as Rosa supposed), but only continuity between person and environment (Berleant 2012, p. 51). It would be wrong to suspect Berleant here of wishing to suppress the borders of the body and dissolve them into a fluid continuity with the rest; the borders do exist, but are only relative, as the communication between the embodied consciousness and the world demonstrates. Even if Berleant declares his interest in the indeterminacy of boundaries and ambiguous borders (Berleant 2010, p. 74 sq.), his world never reaches the "grotesque" openness that is proper to some excessive postmodernism. At this point, Berleant meets Rosa again, and both are indebted to the contribution of phenomenology and in particular Merleau-Ponty.

The "continuity" with nature accounts for the material exchanges of body with the environment, phenomena also discussed by Rosa (2016, pp. 83-108). This continuity is both spatial – e.g. when breathing, eating, eventually reintegrating ourselves into nature after death – and temporal (in the form of memory, tradition, and history). The continuity, in any case, does not exclude differences or even contrasts, but these become features that are integrated into a more encompassing harmony, a vision that entitles Berleant to proclaim the environment (in singular or in plural) as "the true *Gesamtkunstwerk*" (Berleant 2012, p. 57). To conclude, selves are related to the environment neither externally, like separate mechanical parts, nor by being assimilated into an organic whole, but they manifest the "connectedness within a whole" (Berleant 1997, p. 148).

This continuity between the self and the environment cannot be fully transferred to the model of resonance, in spite of the fluidity of the sound. Invoking the "voice of nature" as a modern novelty, Rosa recalls that the poles of the resonant relation are supposed to be "*closed, each one speaking its own language, and therefore they can contradict each other*" (Rosa 2016, p. 455). The double structure of resonance (af←fection and e→motion) and other concepts used by Rosa (to address, respond, react, etc.) suggest a dialogue between the self and the Other; Berleant's continuity is thus replaced by communication. Rosa even requires that the poles of relation would speak with different voices, because only then would the experience enrich both, instead of slipping into a passive, uncreative echo. In spite of such differences, both the continuity of engagement and the dialogue of resonance oppose the mystical fusion and the hypostases of dualism ("disinterested" spectatorship, neutral observation, ruthless exploitation, insensible to the Other's "voice," etc.).

[10] The environment is "*the physical-cultural realm in which people engage*" in all their activities, which makes necessary its interdisciplinary study (Berleant 2012, pp. 53, 57).

Conclusion

To sum up, Berleant and Rosa suggest alternatives to the distanced relations to objects, persons, facts or environments, be these objectifying or contemplative. In contrast, engagement and resonance designate participatory, active, and contextual (situated) relations and are fundamentally relational: we can engage or resonate only with something different than us. The denominations of these relations, however, stress the subject's activity and integration into the whole in the case of engagement, and respectively, the reactivity or responsivity in the resonance. In both cases, the Other is a genuine source of value, but for Rosa – presumably in Adorno's footsteps – the Other ultimately escapes our will, remaining "unavailable." The relevance of these relationships derives from their ubiquity and power, since they can (or could) be encountered in most various fields of individual and social life and touch the "existential" level, determining one's attitude to life. Given their positive dimension, they should not remain mere enclaves of contemporary life, so-called "oases of life" in the "desert" of alienation (Rosa 2016, p. 615), which are confined to recreational situations and leisure experiences. On the contrary, they deserve to be multiplied and generalized, yet not for hedonistic purposes, but in order to collectively shape a new politics and a good life for each person. At this point of argumentation, Berleant resorts to theories that find, in the aesthetic, the model for politics, beginning with Schiller's aesthetic state.[11]

The alternative means for Berleant "to engage in openness, cooperation, connectedness, vulnerability," and to promote an ethics of profusion, care, and justice (Berleant 2010, p. 219). This statement brings him near to Rosa, who carefully advances political solutions for the widespread contemporary crises in ecology, politics and personal relationships, by confessing, at the same time, that his theory "*does not follow an own political agenda*" (Rosa 2016, p. 760). If Berleant occasionally defends himself against the objection of being idealistic and "naïve," though "noble" (Berleant 2005, p. 159), the much younger Rosa is eventually optimistic with respect to the comeback of resonance. This trust is based upon his interpretation regarding the ambivalence of modernity: on one hand, the moderns fear that the world would "lapse into silence" and they would lose their axes of resonance; on the other hand, the accumulation of resources, chances and power goes hand in hand with an increasing sensibility to resonance.[12] Apart from the general impression that engagement stands for an enlightened humanism and resonance for a romantic vision, Arnold Berleant and Hartmut Rosa are both in search of ways of making aesthetic, moral, social and political values become convergent.

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[11] Berleant shares Schiller's conviction that a good social order can be grounded on an aesthetic paradigm. This would imply reciprocity among the participants and reconcile the individual with the social, against the "rational" model of state and the "moral" model that either privilege the individual or dissolve it into an organic community. On the "politics of aesthetics" see: Berleant 2005, p. 147-161; 2010, p. 213-223; 2012, p.185, etc.

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Architecture of Movement

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Abstract: This paper describes the general concepts of Arnold Berleant's urban metaphors (garden city, forest city, asphalt jungle, wilderness) in order to use them as a background for presenting a different perspective on the aesthetics of engagement through the prism of contemporary dance strategies and design practices in architecture and urban planning.
Keywords: Environmental aesthetics, aesthetic experience, dance, aesthetic engagement, choreography, architecture, urban planning, Arnold Berleant.

This paper describes the general concepts of Arnold Berleant's urban metaphors (garden city, forest city, asphalt jungle, wilderness) in order to use them as a background for presenting a different perspective on the aesthetics of engagement through the prism of contemporary dance strategies and design practices in architecture and urban planning. Among insights presented are those of Juhani Pallasmaa and Peter Zumthor, who particularly value the sense of touch in architecture, which, from my point of view, is essential for understanding corporeal and conscious movement in the environment. I will use the design of the Serpentine Gallery Pavilion, authored by the Japanese team of Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa, as well as the Skygarden development in Seoul by the MVRDV studio, in the context of forest city and garden city metaphors. These designs will be compared with Boris Charmatz's and Paul Kaiser's dance strategies. Referring to Heidegger's philosophical thought expressed in Building Dwelling Thinking, I will reflect on how architects, through urban design, effect a profound influence on the imaginary space people create, and therefore on the movement within the human mind. I will also discuss negative urban space using the example of Chongqing architecture, and I will describe Anne Imhof's performance work Angst II, which, in my opinion, accurately reflects the atmosphere of the asphalt jungle and the wilderness.

1. Choreography

The body is a living material form through which people experience the surrounding world via sensory engagement. This living form embodies thoughts while moving in the fluid medium of the environment. This process manifests itself in the continuity of endless experience, which is determined by a number of filters including human physiology as well as cultural and emotional determinants. The city becomes not only a product of our civilization, but above all, a concentration of matter that affects our senses and at the same time draws us into a vortex of mutual relationships. As a complex urban organism, endowed with its own logic, expressed in its architectural design, the city stretches out its communication nodes, thus influencing the pace and manner of our movement within the city. Arnold Berleant focuses on the importance of architecture, which helps us experience the urban landscape as a consciously constructed environment:

> "*Architectural dynamics lead easily to the distinctive dances that emerge from the human activities that go on in every environment. To grasp the city as a mobile environment involving the interplay of bodies and other objects in various patterns of movement is to see the urban dynamic as an endless, complex array moving from one transformation to another. Indeed, the forms of urban mobility display characteristics of various dance forms*" (Berleant 2010).

Thus, urban planning starts to resemble an open stage. Such a comparison was already proposed in 1968 by the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre, in his famous book Right to the City. He views the urban environment as an enormous stage where the longest and the most complex, multi-dimensional show of human civilization is performed. In this performance, the main roles are played by the community. From the perspective of an architect creating the space, the stage becomes a paste-up table: "*In other words, the stage is a surface upon which to inscribe and to erase, to add and to take away, to place and to replace. The stage is a "propo-site," a notebook in which to jot down propositions, a worktable full of unfinished attempts and leftovers*" (Ritsema 2004).

Every location, occupied or not, active or passive, becomes equally important. In this context, there is no need to refer to a particular point in space, because in the urban fabric all points are changing, and the movement itself undergoes constant transformation.

In the process of directly experiencing architectural space, there occurs a continuous interpenetration of multi-sensory experiences and a blurring of the contours of the shapes, a blurring of boundaries between the objects and the background. This phenomenon can be illustrated with a figure–ground problem example from psycho-physiology of vision. When we see a black vase on a white background, we automatically recognize it as "figure", and the surrounding white becomes a "background" behind the figure, devoid of form. Looking at this situation from another perspective, i.e. assuming that the white is the "figure" and the black acts as a background only, as a filler between the parts of the figure, the situation changes completely, the vase disappears and two face profiles appear in its place. Consequently, we can manipulate our perception and seeing a vase at one time and two facial profiles at another time. Unfortunately, shifting perception in relation to urban space is more complex. It is impossible to simultaneously see two figures as mutually complementary beings. I believe that the problem of the separation of these two fields was perfectly illustrated in the work of Judson Dance Theater, which began in the 1960s. I'm referring to the innovative approach of Trisha Brown, who introduced dance to the public space, opening up a new perspective on the architectural environment. In Roof and Fire Piece (USA, 1971) we are dealing with a certain splintering of dance into individual units that are scattered and even entered into the structure of buildings. The apparent stasis and severity of the shapes are permeated with the softness of the movement of the body freed from pre-imposed style. The human skeleton becomes a moving form, while the body adopts the shape of the architecture of the place and becomes its extension. The moving bodies, placed in unpredictable locations, for example on facades or roofs of buildings, focus our attention in a special way. At the same time, the bodies become beings balancing on a fluid line between the architectural figure and its background. Dance allowed for shifting of perception within a given urban environment. In this way, something that normally was a figure for people, suddenly became a background. This approach opened up unlimited possibilities for seeing the city and for a conscious exploration of the environment.

Arnold Berleant proposed a metaphorical conceptualisation of the city as a forest, garden, asphalt jungle, primeval forest, and wilderness. It is worth considering how human movement shapes up within particular

urban metaphors, since diversifying the forms of dance in the architectural space enables the discovery of many perceptual aspects of the environment.

2. 1 Forest city

A forest city encourages integration with nature, not only through its design incorporating small parks or gardens into the city area, but most of all by encouraging active participation in the creation of large areas of woodland, as well as planting trees in the immediate vicinity of high-rise office buildings or shopping centres. In this model, a harmony of nature is seen, intertwining with the body of architecture. The human work manifests in taking care of nature, land, fauna and flora. However, the work does not consist in controlling and forcing unnatural shapes on nature, just the opposite. Nature freely permeates the landscape by indirectly influencing the movement of people and their sensory polyphony. Below, I am quoting the words of Juhani Pallasmaa, who makes the importance of the sense touch in architecture the main concern of his research.

> "*A walk through a forest is invigorating and healing due to the constant interaction of all sense modalities;* [...] *The eye collaborates with the body and the other senses. One's sense of reality is strengthened and articulated by this constant interaction. Architecture is essentially an extension of nature into the man-made realm, providing the ground for perception and the horizon of experiencing and understanding the world.* […]"(Pallasmaa 2005, p. 41).

The structure of the natural vegetation, the fabric of the mutually permeating buildings, their surface, colour, the play of light, the shapes of the paths that lead us, all of that affects the movements that make up the dance of human bodies.

The designs of the Japanese architects Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa, who together run SANAA studios, are an unusual example presenting human dance in the space of the forest city metaphor, and at the same time, the symbiosis of architecture with nature. They start with the innovative assumption that architecture is an environment. (Sejima, K. and Nishizawa, R. 2011) The buildings they design permeate the surrounding nature, and their material form becomes the background for human activity. The organic shapes encourage people to embark on a journey, where the interior almost merges with the external surroundings. The transparency of the construction can often influence the way of thinking of a person following the fluid boundary between two entities that encourage participation. The irregular metal roof surface of the Serpentine Gallery Pavilion in London 2009, creating an impression of movement and supported by thin posts, perfectly flows around the shapes of trees, influencing the fabric of the environment while its architectural design outlines endless possibilities for human movement.

Ill. 1.: SANAA, Serpentine Gallery Pavilion, Kensington Garden, London, 2009.

The support posts continue and extend the rhythm of the trees growing in the park, they also mirror the trees in their repetition, and in the image of nature gleaming on the chrome coating. The roof is a mirror which on one side focuses the light of the sky and on the other - that of the surrounding greenery and people. It acts as a certain kind of filter transforming the existing reality. The movement of the body creates invisible lines, defined by their organic character, asymmetry, roundedness and unpredictability akin to a winding forest path that meanders between trees. Those invisible lines would naturally fit into the structure of the architectural complex. Although the shape of the concrete floor mirrors the form of the roof, thus defining a certain traffic path, our body, initially staying on the designated line, breaks through the immaterial barrier between the concrete floor and the grassy lawn. A person "inside" sinks into shade, and the only thing they see looking up towards the sky is their own reflection merging with the reflection of nature.

According to the architects, "*the Pavilion is floating aluminium, drifting freely between the trees like smoke*" (Sejima and Nishizawa 2009). It takes the form of a changing and at the same time open area, which, under the influence of weather, fuses with the environment. The "in-between" line, due to the lack of structural walls, is almost intangible, and only determines the pulse of the changing play of our perception.

Similar ideas appear to be expressed in thinking of the contemporary choreographer Boris Charmatz, who claims that dance is a type of an "in-between" place, a place of knowledge and ignorance, from which we can experience, and at the same time, [a place] which becomes a building block of "intellectual space." (Charmatz 2017). Treating dance as something ephemeral, something that is not subject to definition but reveals itself in a process, in relationships and in contradictions, Charmatz points out that the physical movement of the body translates into movement within the mind, and thus into a certain dynamics of thought:

> "*For me, dance belongs to the space of contradiction, and it's not just about the physical movement, but also the intellectual movement. When the body moves, the head moves - you can change positions, concepts, thinking.* […] *Movement is something that emerges from your thinking and vice versa, it is a factor that changes you and your thinking. For me, dance is not about visual or technical effects, beauty or what's outside. It is closer to the inside, to what's within"* (Cielątkowska and Charmatz 2016).

It appears that the idea of interactive determination of body movement and thought can be realised without disruption within the space of the Pavilion which embodies a similar idea of being "in-between", manifested in the pavilion simultaneously merging with nature as well as being the product of human hands and of unique thinking about architecture. Thus, a very important concept comes to be realised here, one also emphasised by Berleant, that the understanding of the environment must come from the inside perspective, being located in a fluid environmental medium. From this perspective, man becomes an integral part of the natural world, thus being included not only in the local but also in the planetary ecosystem. Observing this seemingly simple principle requires special sensitivity and aesthetic engagement which undoubtedly manifest in the architectural design discussed above.

Contemporary architecture is characterised by specific imagination, which draws on technological materials that create the impression of lightness, with varying degrees of transparency, gently permeating the environment, thus creating a sense of spaciousness and changing light and movement. The Pavilion's design definitely belongs to the type of architecture that increases sensitivity and develops a new kind of experiencing of spaces and places. The project discussed here breaks away from ossified principles of symmetry, rejecting the monumental axis. It creates wavy long lines assuming diverse, gentle, almost

vegetal shapes. Looking at the Pavilion from above, an aerodynamic composition emerges, based on the curved line of the roof surface. Its shape resembles a lake whose surface has retained only one feature - the reflection. This linear drawing based on curves brings direct associations with the undulating softness of a body. The aforementioned aesthetic sensitivity also manifests in the practice of Peter Zumthor, who bases his designs on bodily experiences, which according to him form the core of architecture: "*So when I'm working, I keep reminding myself that my buildings are bodies and need to be built accordingly: as anatomy and skin, as mass and membrane, as fabric, shell, velvet, silk, and glossy steel.* […] *I like the idea of arranging the inner structures of my buildings in sequences of rooms that quide us, take us places, but also let us go and seduce us.* [...]" (Zumthor 2010, p. 86).

Undoubtedly, the human body moving in the urban sphere creates invisible abstract patterns that write themselves into the space previously designed by the architect, who has constructed a skeleton of a kind, suggesting directions of travel and thus limiting the area for activity. It would be possible to translate this situation onto a surface of a drawing. With a blank page we are able to create countless compositions, but they are always limited in some way, even if by the availability of tools, or the size of the piece of paper. We define the lines on paper with the movement of the hand holding the pencil. Similarly, architects define the format and lines of our movement with their design practice. Our bodies draw transparent lines that create the fleeting shapes covering streets, pavements, city squares, that wrap around buildings, and immerse themselves inside them.

Paula Kaiser's and Shelley Eshkar's Ghostcatching, (New York, 1999) attempts to depict those invisible lines using motion capture technology to create a fixed three-dimensional record of Bill T. Jones's choreography. This work allows for an in-depth observation of movement in the generated virtual, transparent skeleton frame. The body of the dancer has been stripped of its corporeality, and his movement is only drawn as the lines recorded in space. They create abstract drawings of varied colours. Various lines express the mood and reflect the movement of a person changing with the passing of years. At first we can observe a calm figure made up of blue and white lines, which comes out of a linearly outlined three-dimensional shape in which copies of the figure are located. Once outside the structure, the figure performs a jump, followed by a whole series of poses, positions, body swings. Then other figures appear, plotting new lines: red, orange, yellow, purple. They are characterised by a diverse structure: there are straight lines, long, and short, as well as springy and undulating. One might get the impression of being inside a complex tangle of thoughts. The diverse nature of the dancers' movements can be recognised in the linear recording. The overlapping streaks of movements create a linear, multicoloured maze. It is worth remembering this experiment during the analysis of other urban metaphors.

2.2 Garden city

The next example of Berleant's metaphor is the garden city. Similarly to the forest city metaphor analysed above, it reveals a model of harmony between nature and society. Man adopts an engaged approach towards the environment, controlling the vegetation, shaping it, giving it new aesthetic forms and new meanings (often culturally determined). At the same time it deprives the plants of their natural environment, moving them to places that become its representation. As a botanically diversified product, the garden can display a multi-faced character, from wild to idyllic to useful, geometrically shaped. Thus shaped, the garden vegetation is undoubtedly subject to the process of humanisation. Therefore, it would be wrong to treat the garden only as a natural environment and the city as an artificial environment. Undoubtedly, the garden is link between the two, and at the same time it is located somewhere between

the extra-urban area and the city centre. From the point of view of nature, the garden is an artificial organ, but from the perspective of the city, the garden is very definitely a natural organism. Based on Berleant's ecological aesthetics, it can be said that the environment, whether natural or humanised, is a multi-level network of relationships involving human beings, other creatures, and all physical, geographical and cultural conditions. The relationship between urban planning and nature is a focus of interest for architect Anne Whiston Spirn, who writes: "*Nature is ubiquitous and cities are part of nature. Nature in cities should be cultivated, like a garden, not dismissed or subdued. The garden is a powerful, instructive metaphor for reimagining cities and metropolitan areas*. [...]" (Spirn 2007, pp.43-67).

The garden becomes an inspiration for designing colourful patterns of urban life. The designated area becomes a purposefully designed oasis, an Eden which affects the way we move and develop, that is our original home. Berleant tries to stimulate the need to cultivate the urban environment, emphasising the need to:

> "[...] *It suggests the need to deliberately shape the urban environment, including its aesthetic dimension, so that it offers conditions for people to grow and flourish. This is not a call for a rigid plan or a prescriptive order. Humane environments require time to develop and they must reflect local needs, conditions, and traditions*. […] *Planning under these conditions demands a gardener who is talented and sensitive, one who nurtures a balance among the components of environment by being responsive to their distinctive qualities, to their interrelations, and to the unpredictabilities inherent in a complex, temporal process*. […]" (Berleant 2005, p. 31-40).

Ill. 2.: MVRDV, 2015, Seoullo 7017 Skygarden, Seoul, South Korea

An example of just such a maintaining of the balance of the natural environment within a city is the design for a motorway viaduct in Seoul (2015) created by the Dutch firm MVRDV. The raised botanical garden extends over a kilometre-long viaduct, which, although brutally cleaving the city, is softened in its form by a variety of plants, encircling the tectonic structure of the surroundings. The viaduct appears to be a fluid river that transforms the grey of the concrete city. The linear garden influences the nature of the landscape changing in relation to the seasons. Cherry blossom and rhododendron flowers dominate in the spring, varied shades of maple yellow in the autumn. In the summer, the aroma of fruit trees and, in the winter, the scent of conifers attract the visitors. The architect integrates the landscape without ignoring the context with which the garden comes into direct relationship, constructing an unbroken thread of communication. Movement and scale are felt by the body even through the position the skeleton assumes in space. In other words, the architectural scale influences the unconscious measurement of space and objects man performs using one's own instrument - the body. One could say that we feel pleasure and security when our body finds itself in a space, discovering its own reflection. Pallasmaa describes it vividly:

> "*When experiencing a structure, we unconsciously mimic its configuration with our bones and muscles: the pleasurably animated flow of a piece of music is subconsciously transformed into bodily sensations, the composition of an abstract painting is experienced as tensions in the muscular system, and the structures of a*

> *building are unconsciously imitated and comprehended through the skeletal system. Unknowingly, we perform the tasks of the columns or the vault with our body"* (Pallasmaa 2005, p.67).

The garden city tangibly affects the sense of security and thus stimulates the character of movement, determining the pace and structure of human steps, gestures, poses, arrangements. The shape of the viaduct creates a minimalistic pattern floating in the air, triggering a sense of weight, and the awareness of gravity that connects us to the earth. As we walk along the concrete surface, the movement of our body is limited by the path laid out by the architect, rising and falling, allowing for the perception of the sensation of changes in the height at which the body is located.

A person approaching its edge can, at most, lean their trunk down to contrast the surroundings of the garden with the lower sphere of public transport and cars. Direct contact with nature is somewhat limited, even by the shape of huge pots that make touching trees difficult. Note that the human body is located on the concrete structure of the viaduct between two levels, the lower surface of the roads and at the same time the upper layer adjacent to skyscrapers.

In the context of all the analysed urban metaphors, the aspect of "location" that Heidegger discusses also seems to be very important. In the essay titled "Building Dwelling Thinking", he states:

> *"Man's relation to locations, and through locations to spaces, inheres in his dwelling.* […] *If all of us now think, from where we are right here, of the old bridge in Heidelberg, this thinking toward that location is not a mere experience inside the persons present here; rather, it belongs to the nature of our thinking of that bridge that in itself thinking gets through, persists through, the distance to that location"* (Heidegger 1971, p. 154)

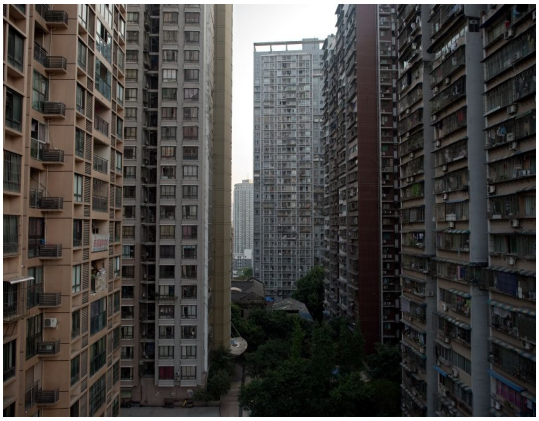
Thus, dwelling is living and thinking in specific locations and spaces, not only within our home, but in many locations in the experience of everyday life, for example urban spaces, streets, buildings, etc. Man is never physically present in the abstract world, for it is always a world of tangible things around which thoughts circulate and near which the body is physically located. In other words, these material beings and physical experiences determine thoughts. Therefore, the architect as a designer of locations influences the imaginary space we create, and therefore the movement within our mind. Mundanely, this effect can manifest in memories, for example recalling route we walked yesterday, or remembering the construction of a building that impressed us. All these images are recorded in our mind during human movement. Those recorded images not only connect real spatial constructions with our bodies, but also become filters through which new emotional experiences are processed. We can assume that a space designed in opposition to the environment will cause negative aesthetic feelings in a person not only when in direct contact with this space, but also in the sphere of imagination, which functions outside the reach of such space, at another time and place. The Skygarden design consists in a change of function: a viaduct that would, had it existed, constitute an aggressive intervention in the urban fabric, has been transformed into a viaduct of calm and balance; a wedge against the hectic urban structure of Seoul.

2.3 Asphalt jungle

Observing the rapid development of modern metropolis, I notice many dangers that adversely affect the natural environment. Car parks often replace green spaces, and the continuous increase in the number of present cars transforms the streets into amorphous asphalt outflows for vehicle use only. The city undergoes a painful deconstruction and the central districts are appropriated by machines, destroying the

natural urban life. The space becomes unified - its constituent parts become astonishingly similar. Relational spaces- meaning places to which we relate and connect on a daily basis, such as places of residence, work places, schools, cultural institutions, etc. - are brutally separated. Cars become our portable homes, providing us with a sense of security from vast spaces of roads, viaducts, tunnels, etc., and at the same time create traffic and destroy the natural environment. It is in this context that Arnold Berleant presents a metaphor of the city as asphalt jungle. In his view, it is characterized by vicious social patterns, which -- like predatory gangs in the city -- exploit the weak. (Berleant, A. 2005, p. 64) I will try to briefly describe movement in one of the largest and fastest growing megacities in the world, Chongqing, located in southwestern China.

Ill. 3.: Jin, L. 2016, Chongqing, China.



Ill. 4.: Asfouri, N. 2016, Chongqing, China.

Ill. 5.: 2015, Huangjuewan viaduct in Chongqing, China.

Chongqing covers an area of 82,000 square kilometers, and the constantly growing population is currently about 5 million. The city attracts people from the countryside and uses them as cheap labour to supply the nearby manufacturing complexes. Formerly a neglected inland port, the city has become China's economic capital, transformed into a gigantic building site under the watchful eye of radical architects creating a city "befitting the future". The Huangjuewan viaduct is the backbone of the agglomeration. It is a "blood-carrying organ", connected with kilometres of asphalt expressways. It makes life circulation possible. Its tangled system spreads through five levels and twenty platforms. It can be compared to a natural jumble of vines covering trees a tropical rain forest. The tangled mass of the road channels leads the traffic in various independent directions. It takes the form of a maze, which man conquers in a static position behind the wheel, seeing only the grey of the passing structures. Due to the limited surface area and continuously growing population density, the city keeps spreading upwards, unrestrained.

Building megastructures reduce and even brutally seize the natural living space. Small apartments become cages that restrict the movement of the body. Glass windows lose their basic function, becoming only an ornament on the facade. They let in the constant traffic noise, but at the same time, they don't let light into the rooms because the walls of the very closely adjacent buildings limit access to natural light. The plan of the metropolis creates an abstract delta of out-flowing lines.

As the manufacturing industry develops, the problems of the ecological system pile up, including instability, the threat of water shortage, or environmental pollution, leading to the degradation of the plant sphere and general depletion of natural resources.

The space is devoured by the immense skyscrapers crammed into crowded neighbourhoods, where the surfaces of the buildings are connected by walkways of bridges running at height. Incredibly high and massive tower-block estates completely block the natural light and at the same time create feelings of anxiety, entrapment, and danger. A similar feeling accompanies us as we force our way through a jungle, where trees block the light, and movement is limited because of the rampant vegetation. In the case of a metropolis, it is the infrastructure that is the analogue of vegetation, creating a coherent organism of mutual relations (Berleant 2005, p. 67).

Referring to the example of linear recording of movement in Ghostcatching, we could imagine that we are releasing the human body from the field limiting its movement in the space of the urban jungle. In such a case, the linear motion capture would have a completely different connotation. Most likely, the line would be nervous, jagged, disturbing. Perhaps it would also take a form including sudden sharp angles and reversals of direction. I imagine a person who wants to cross a four-lane roadway built of an unimaginable number of overlapping lines that together form something resembling a thick cable. I have the impression that this powerful linear structure would tear at, even destroy, the thin personal line. The private line, exposed to such clusters of other linear constructions, becomes invisible and irrelevant. Chongqing creates lines reminiscent of a matted tangle of hair, except that each single hair comes from a different head and is of a different thickness and length, which makes it impossible to untangle them. All we can do is passively follow each of these lines, deceiving ourselves that it will lead us to our destination.

In such an unfriendly environment, a person grows an artificial skin of sorts, becomes separated and inserted into transportation "capsules", for example cars, elevators, trains or the underground. This problem is addressed in a metaphorical way by Gilles Jobin, whose Moebius Trip, (Théâtre de la Ville Les Abbesses, Paris 2001) project highlights the relationships between the body and its surroundings. The importand part of dance that I have analysed begins with a woman in a static position touching the ground with her bare hands and knees. Next, a dancer lifts the parts of her body that directly touch the ground, raising the consciousness of her body's memory, trying to bring out movement. But the stationary body can not, or will not, go. It only performs the first gesture when the dancers slip material objects under the woman's knees and hands, shoes that separate her from a direct contact with the floor. This allows the woman to slowly move forward. However, the path of her movement is determined only by sequentially placed footwear on which she steps with her hands and feet. The movement gains momentum, and when the dancers no longer manage to place the objects in time for the woman's next step, they use their hands on which the woman walks. We are dealing with a constantly developing path built by the bodies lying themselves down. The number of dancers is limited so they need to swap their positions faster and faster to maintain the pace of the woman's movement.

These "capsules" mentioned before mean that, despite bodily stasis, or movement inadequate to the distance travelled, observations of moving images of the reality, man can still "dance", but in another

dimension. Physical tiredness becomes fatigue with the onslaught of jumping, "biologically" diverse images, which can result in anaesthetising of sensory perception and stimulating the thinking of our mind. In this trance-like state our body remains in one position, while the sight is attacked by rapidly disappearing images that influence the creation of our thoughts and memories.

2.4 Wilderness

Movement acquires an entirely different dimension when one looks at the city from the perspective of the wilderness metaphor, most often revealed in the sections of the physical movement of man between the "capsules" I mentioned earlier. I mean routes along the streets and in-between the buildings. Dance practices within this metaphor often take a form of sensory engagement with negative connotations; moving in the urban space, even during mundane activities such as entering an underground station, crossing the road, or even simply walking on the pavement, due to the crowd of people who accidentally touch or nudge our bodies. These involuntary touches stimulate unpleasant feelings of danger and being overwhelmed. Man moves forward along a narrow line, smoothly avoiding the obstacles in the form of other traffic participants, and the path defined by this movement is erased as soon as it's created. The variable speed of movement, due to the mass of people present, especially during the peak hours, results in unplanned slowdowns. The constant hostile hum of the vehicles subdues our alertness, but the sense of threat, the sense of danger, remains in the subconscious, as described by Berleant: "[...] *Constant alertness influences our passage through both city and wilderness, while the background apprehension of danger from motor vehicles and muggers parallels the constant threat, real or imagined, from the deadly creatures thought to inhabit a wilderness. In both city and wilderness, feeling out of place is a vivid component of the experience"* (Berleant, A. 2005, p. 65).

The situation described above brings to mind the uncertain movement in the high undergrowth of a primeval forest, where the mobility is hindered by abundant vegetation. Our body, pushing through the dense growth, marks a trail, a natural record of the route being taken, which disappears after a while.

Consequently, we lose sight of where we are coming from and where we are headed. Plants rise back, obliterating the path our weight created. At the same time we hear the constant hum of the wind bending the plants, perhaps announcing the approach of the rainy season. This hum may also result from overlapping sounds made by the insects hiding in the greenery.

Both the Wilderness metaphor and the Asphalt jungle metaphor reveal all pathologies resulting from economic inequalities, and thus often criticise: the existing space, and the global capitalism, which puts its brand on the human body.

These metaphors are exemplified by the work of Anne Imhof, a contemporary artist who combines complex performance forms with the examination of gesture and movement of the body in a surprising multi-sensory way. Angst II, presented at the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin, 2016, reflects a crowded city immersed in smog. The interior space was divided by a tightrope, stretched very near the ceiling, on which a female dancer in heavy leather boots walked steadfastly, seemingly floating above the gathered crowd. The direction of her movement could have brought associations with a route of an invisible transportation line. The crowded interior was filled with dense fog, blurring the architectural boundaries of the building, and simultaneously revealing chaos and social instability. I feel that, just like in a big wilderness city the multiplicity of phenomena distracts our attention, so in the case of Angst II there occurs certain de-focusing, distraction. Contemporary culture is characterised by such continuity of mutually penetrating stimuli coming from different directions, multiple simultaneous narratives, a high pace of life, and all that

is highlighted by the artist in her performances, prompting reflection. Multiplication of various activities taking place at the same time launches the process of extracting a new type of energy, a feeling that may frighten. It is difficult to tell apart the observers and the dancers, who, devoid of emotions, have been scattered in the crowd of the gathered audience, the audience participating in and at the same time excluded from the event which is controlled by flying drones monitoring a situation which at first glance can resemble a rock concert. The space was dominated by loud experimental music, which, along with the monotonous voices of the dancers, introduced a rhythmical element. Sculptural and architectural elements were interwoven in the project, and the dance itself remained in a dangerous relationship with elements of violence. The heavy atmosphere was emphasised by the realism and dignity of the dancers who highlighted their differences by performing their individual movements.

Conclusion

The city metaphors I have presented have a significant influence on human movement and thought. It is impossible to develop a conscious dance attitude without taking into account the fluid medium of the surrounding environment. Such attitude, however, requires one to be located in the in-between space, as part of the the ecosystem, thus forming a link between its nodes. It is only when a person, with their body, becomes a certain kind of a transmitter, they achieve the ability to participate in a particular environment, so that the city and its urban layout cease to be fixed determinants existing outside the influence of the individual, and become flexible fabric that can be transformed. The body provides versatile opportunities for the expression of creative opposition and critical approach to reality. Movement is the simplest and most widely available tool for expressing one's attitude. It politicises the individual by including them through non-verbal communication. It would not have been possible, however, without contemporary dance, which definitively breaks with classical rules.[1]

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Approaching Aisthetics

Or: Installation Art and Environmental Aesthetics as Investigative Activity

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Abstract: The article discusses installation art and its potential contribution to a transdisciplinary research practice, in which not only artistic, but also aesthetic theoretical approaches could play a central role. However, as the article shows, this firstly requires a change in perspective concerning the way we approach art. Secondly, it entails changes to a common understanding of aesthetic theory and, thereby, philosophy. A term of central significance in this context is the notion of *aisthesis*. The article will illustrate these thoughts through the examples of Bruce Nauman, Ilya Kabakov, and Arnold Berleant.
Keywords: aisthesis/aisthetics, installation art, built environments, environmental aesthetics, philosophy.

The arts have changed over the course of the twentieth century. This is particularly true for the second half of the century, in which a broad range of new formats and artistic media started to develop, such as performance, action art, happenings, environments, conceptual art, and new media art. The process of transformation is unbroken, and different forms of artistic articulation are often hard to distinguish from each other. Therefore, it is probably advisable to speak rather of "fields of action" than of clearly identifiable "genres" or "art forms."

One such field of action is only now, in the present day, starting to reveal itself as such, though important contributions were already made in the late 1960's and 70's, and distant antecedents may be found even earlier:[1] this is the field of installation art, and more specifically of architecture- and place-related installation. What the expression refers to is artistic works that are strongly reminiscent of everyday places or architecture, visually, but most importantly due to the fact that they are three-dimensional, spatially vast, and, in many cases, physically accessible.

Such installations are an oddity. After all, the difference between the means of representation and the object represented is minimal in this case. Unlike painting, for example, where a three-dimensional subject – a person, an animal, a landscape – is transformed and captured on a two-dimensional canvas, architecture- and place-related installations use the same means that are also utilized by the real object: and so a door can serve to depict a door, a window can show a window, and an entire living room nothing other than: an entire living room.

This convergence is perplexing, and it conjures up the question: what distinguishes art from reality, replica from original? And, secondly, what, other than copies, superficial imitations of the familiar, are such artworks, really?

[1] Some authors refer to the spatial setups of Dada, Surrealism, Constructivism, while others look even further back to the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* or the rituals of the Catholic church. See, for example, Archer, De Oliveira, Oxley & Petry (1994), De Oliveira, Oxley & Petry (2003), Bishop (2005).

Now, one could continue, as already suggested above, and apply a traditional perspective – the one of art history or of a philosophical reception aesthetics – and indeed, depending on motivation and point of view, this might prove an interesting and certainly not easy undertaking. However, there is another option which, unfortunately, in traditional approaches, is too-often left unconsidered, not to say intentionally rejected, though it may – possibly not concerning all, but certainly concerning some questions – offer the most interesting insights. This is the possibility of switching perspectives, and instead of inquiring into the artistic product, its historical development and effect on recipients, asking what artists who create architecture- and place-related installations do in their daily work; or in other words: it is the question not of the work of art but of the artistic working.

I. Installations as Means of Artistic Working and Investigating

Some of the first architecture- and place-related installations were created in the late 1960's by the American sculptor, performance-, installation-, photo-, and video-artist Bruce Nauman. As the range of media indicates, Nauman is a very versatile artist and certainly can also be considered one of the most influential representatives of his generation. Characteristic, especially for the early Nauman, is his open manner of approach: rather than working in a particular medium and searching for "new modes of expression" or "subjects," he starts out with an initial interest – a concrete question, or a not-yet-specified, nonetheless specific curiosity – and explores various means and media to determine the most appropriate to pursue this interest.

Such a manner of approach also becomes apparent in the genesis of his "corridor" pieces, which were created in the late 1960's and 1970's. Nauman's starting points, in this case, were simple physical actions and the experiences they enable (such as: changing the position of his body relative to wall and floor by leaning, bracing, squatting, or sitting; or standing in a corner and letting his back bounce against the wall). Nauman's interest here, as he explains in interviews, relates to a physical "awareness" which "*comes from a certain amount of activity and you can't get it from just thinking about yourself. You do exercises, you have certain kinds of awareness that you don't have if you read books*" (Kraynak 2005, p. 142). But how to convey this physical awareness to others? Nauman initially experiments with "instructions for action": short texts presented in an exhibition space so that visitors can read them and perform the described activities themselves. However, this does not ensure that recipients will actually experience what the artist wants them to experience (they could misunderstand an instruction, interpret it differently, or simply ignore it). Nauman sees another possibility in filming himself performing an action and then presenting the result to others. But this too does not guarantee that an experience is conveyed. (For example, the activity of lying on the floor and imagining that one is slowly sinking in may be a strong – also physically strong – experience. But when captured on video, all the viewer sees is: a person, motionless, lying on the floor for an hour.) Even carefully instructing others and then presenting the result as a live performance yields only limited success.

This situation changes with the construction of the first corridor, which is more or less a chance discovery made along the way: In fact, Nauman is in the process of filming one of his actions. To this end, he erects a backdrop in his studio consisting of two simple wooden walls for the performer to move through. Soon, however, Nauman recognizes the true potential of the setup: Namely, that the walls not only optically limit the activity for the camera, they also – very literally – limit the physical range of motion and thereby the range of potential actions. Not just Nauman himself but any person who enters the setup can do nothing other than walk into the corridor and then – since the far end is blocked by a wall – move out again. The experience of a linear movement between two physically perceptible, narrowly-spaced walls –

this is all there is to be experienced. This limitation is, however, precisely the advantage of the setup, as Nauman explains retrospectively: "*I wanted to make kind of play experiences unavailable, just by the preciseness of the area*" (Kraynak 2005, p. 167).

The first corridor, which made Nauman recognize that, by using a material construction, it is possible to create a "preciseness of the experience" through a "preciseness of the area," provides the initial spark. Soon he starts experimenting with narrowing corridors whose walls converge towards a shared point, so that an increasing physical oppression when going in and a spatial widening when going out can be experienced; or he uses special materials that manipulate the acoustics inside the corridor – to name just a few examples.

Nauman's early experiments still have the character of rather simple artistic test setups. The potential complexity of such installations is in contrast made clear by another significant figure from this field of action: the Soviet-born painter and installation artist Ilya Kabakov. With him, the medium transforms from plain spaces to detailed interiors, which at first glance appear almost real, while in fact, they consist of specially-built walls, ceilings, floors, and of a myriad of "banal things," as Kabakov puts it, meaning "*tables, chairs, couches, shelves, beds,* […] *cups, plates, lamps, books* […] – *the infinite sea of all types of things, mechanisms, home appliances, clothing, furniture, [the] millions of objects surrounding a person* […]" (Kabakov 1995, pp. 244, 292).

Kabakov explains the necessity of this flood of details by analogy to the theater. After all, his work, too, is concerned with telling a story, the difference being that Kabakov's installations are "places of halted action." The narrative that the artist wishes to convey does not develop successively, with one scene following another; rather, it is simultaneous, compressed into a single stage set that can be walked into (while the temporal dimension is displaced onto the recipients, the place of halted action becoming slowly comprehensible to them as they walk attentively through it). There are also no actors to convey the action. In entering one of Kabakov's installations, we walk onto a "stage without actors." Or more precisely: The stage itself and all the details gathered there are the actors. And so one can imagine "all the objects in the installation as actors, playing the types of roles common to all theater: soloist, chorus, supernumeraries." A superfluous object then would be like an extra who suddenly pops up in a scene where he doesn't belong; likewise, a missing object would be like an actor who fails to appear on cue, though the plot doesn't make sense without his presence. So, in order to develop his silent narrative stringently, and to make the characterizations of the people that his installations are concerned with as precise as possible, the space of the installation must be, as Kabakov puts it in a nutshell: "an entirely reworked space" (Kabakov 1995, p. 243).

But what exactly is being "reworked" here? Unlike many other artists, Kabakov gives detailed information on this question in the form of texts and books; the publication of his lecture series On the "Total" Installation is one such example. As Kabakov explains here, installations are about something quite different than just a "silent stage" – and in this sense, the comparison to the theater is as helpful as it is misleading. For beyond such illustrative descriptions, Kabakov's installations are actually complex perceptual networks in which each detail, no matter how minor, is arranged according to how it relates to another detail and according to what effect these together have on the recipient as she moves through the installation – respective to how they are perceptually experienced by her. No aspect is unimportant or negligible. And so Kabakov applies the same degree of attention to the walls as to the floor, the ceiling, or such details as windows, lamps, and doors. Ultimately, "[…] *each place has its own clearly defined face* […] *the proportion of the walls and windows, the quality of the materials and their condition, the peculiar paint on the walls, ceiling,*

and floor, the neglect and appearance of small details, almost unnoticeable – all of this creates the special atmosphere of [a] *place*." Also, intangible components, separately or in their synthetic interactions with each other – questions of light, color, sound, and potentially of smells – are considered. And even that which is lacking or entirely nonexistent must be taken into consideration and included in the installation's total effect on the recipient: "*the gaps between objects, the intervals, empty spaces, corners, curves, spacings, in short – the very air around the objects*" (Kabakov 1995, p. 243).

To come back to the question posed at the beginning: what distinguishes art from reality? And secondly, what are installations other than copies, superficial imitations of real built environments? After this brief cursion to two prominent representatives of the field, the answer should be evident, for neither Nauman nor Kabakov is after superficial mimicry. Rather, both artists use artistic-empirical means to investigate the way built spaces affect human perception.

As each of the examples shows in its own way, neither artist is aiming for a "simple sensory effect"; rather, they explore the sensory and the cognitive in connection: from Nauman's corridors, where we do not just sense "something" at a particular distance to ourselves, but rather a "restriction through walls" (or, in other words: the sensory aspect is interlinked with a comprehending element, whereby a seemingly banal situation turns into an existential one), to Kabakov's complex installational arrangements, which address us on a sensory-cognitive level to convey entire narratives and offer insights into characters (more on this below, under the term "aisthesis").

II. Arnold Berleant's Approach to Built Environments

At this point, I will turn to Arnold Berleant. The fundamental role that the American philosopher, aesthetic theorist, and practitioner (musician and composer) has played in the development of the fields of environmental- and everyday aesthetics need not be specially noted here. Also, it will be impossible to delve deeper into Berleant's work, which is concerned with a vast breadth of topics, from his critique of traditional approaches and his proposals for a contemporary philosophy of the arts, to his more recent work taking everyday- and environmental aesthetics into the domains of ethics and social philosophy.

Instead, I wish to address a specific question that is as simple as it is fundamental, and in view of which Berleant's approach, as shown below, can be seen as exemplary. This question is: How do aesthetic theoretical approaches relate to built environments? The danger that they, like installations, may be taken for real should be rather small. After all, philosophical investigations do not take shape in material form. How else, though, can they operate?

In Berleant's case, the answer seems clear: it involves "experience" and "engagement," and thereby leads right into the complex network of terms that Berleant develops – not as a static theoretical edifice, but rather as a carefully woven fabric – which is more concerned with "continuities" than with "breaks," more with "differences" than with "divisions," more with "distinctions" than with "separations" (Berleant 2010, p. 7). Trying to extract a fixed definition from such a structure – which is in constant movement and in which terms are continually being redetermined in relation to others – would be an illegitimate intervention.[2]

[2] In addition, this would run counter to Berleant's basic epistemological beliefs, which are generally ontology-critical and, at least to me, also show anti-essentialist traits (see: Berleant 2007 and 2010, p. 56).

Nonetheless, I believe that what Berleant is aiming at with the term "experience" can be illustrated well with reference to his book Aesthetics and Environment. Here, he distinguishes between three different models of experience: 1. a contemplative model, epitomized by the concept of distanced, disinterested pleasure; 2. an active model, taking into account the involved role of the perceiver; 3. a participatory model – Berleant's own approach. The first model, most prominently represented by Kant, has, according to Berleant, become a convention today whose lasting popularity in aesthetic theoretical circles is disproportional to its utility, for it does not offer a satisfying explanation for aesthetic experience: neither in daily life and environments nor in the arts. In contrast, the second model, significantly developed in the 20th century, is characterized by the fundamental insight that the supposedly objective world of the natural sciences does not accord with the experienceable world of everyday life:

What is common to the various forms of the active model is the recognition that the objective world of classical science is not the experiential world of the human perceiver. Thus, there is a sharp difference between space as it is presumably held to be objectively and the perception of that space. A theory of aesthetic experience must thrive from the latter, rather than the former, from the manner we participate in spatial experience rather than from the way we conceptualize and objectify such experience (Berleant 2005, p. 6).

The thought that human experience cannot be conceived according to the model of a seemingly objective world can be found in the pragmatism of John Dewey, as well as in the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty. To Berleant, both approaches are crucial, yet not to be followed unconditionally. In particular, Berleant sees the phenomenological tradition as characterized by a tendency to absolutize the body as a priori of experience. In comparison, Berleant's own participatory model of experience emphasizes the constellational relationship between person and environment:

Environment is not wholly dependent on the perceiving subject. It also imposes itself in significant ways on the human person, engaging one in a relationship of mutual influence. Not only is it misleading to objectify the environment; it cannot be taken as a mere reflection of the perceiver, either (Berleant 2005, p. 8).

For the twofold manner in which a person, via perception, is open towards an environment which conversely imposes itself on that person, Berleant uses a second term central to his work: "engagement." This expression rather describes a state of continuity and connection in which perceiving subject and environment take place (as one could say with reference to Heidegger's "Ereignis") as the conjunction of two dualistic, self-contained entities. In this sense, engagement is something that plays a role in a wide range of human experiences, such as in the arts, sports, and social activities. Nevertheless, it is also and particularly significant for an understanding of environmental perception.[3]

Now I would like to turn to the question raised above: What can Arnold Berleant's work tell us concerning the way aesthetic theoretical approaches relate to built environments? To start with, it is remarkable that Berleant does not deny the discrepancy – or let's say, at least the distance – there is to be bridged between a discipline like philosophy, which operates reflectively by means of language, and an

[3] In more general terms, Berleant explains the role and meaning of the term as follows: " *'engagement,' later specified as 'aesthetic engagement'* [...] *became the central concept of an aesthetic that emerged as an alternative to the aesthetic disinterestedness that was central to traditional aesthetic theory. Aesthetic engagement rejects the dualism inherent in traditional accounts of aesthetic appreciation and epitomized in Kantian aesthetics, which treats aesthetic experience as the subjective appreciation of a beautiful object. Instead, aesthetic engagement emphasizes the holistic, contextual character of aesthetic appreciation*" (Berleant 2013). "*It claims continuity rather than separation*, *contextual relevance rather than* objectivity, historical pluralism *rather than* certainty, ontological parity *rather than* priority" (Berleant 1991, xiii).

empirical subject like human environments. Instead, he deals with the problem productively. After all, any investigation of natural and built environments must admit the empirical dimension of its subject – unless it aims to be pure transcendental philosophy, which seeks for the most fundamental modi and conditions of human knowledge but has rather little to say when it comes to our everyday life. And for this, even a discipline like philosophy must pass through the needle's eye of perception.

Berleant accepts this problem and, through the terms "experience" and "engagement," even makes it the central subject of his theoretical inquiries. But he does more than that. For as Berleant himself repeatedly makes clear, experience is something that cannot only be theorized; rather, in order to be theorized, it must be practiced in the first place. Accordingly, his theory of engagement is also ultimately a "descriptive theory," which deals with nothing other than that which, in concrete contexts, is experienced as "engaged experience" (Berleant 1992, p. 25 and 2004, p. 19).

Fechner's[4] apt remark that the great philosophical systems of Kant and Hegel were outstanding giants "with feet of clay" (that is, impressive constructs of terms and thoughts lacking an empirical basis) thus certainly cannot be applied to Berleant (Fechner 2013, 1). He too is concerned with exploring the "conditions of possibility." Unlike Kant, however, he does not proceed on the purely mental path of transcendental philosophy, but rather on the practical, phenomenological one of examining physical conditions: And so Berleant exposes himself – on foot, skis, by car or canoe – to various possibilities of experiencing environments that, in this particular manner, can only be explored – and not imagined from the desk (Berleant 1992, pp. 25-56).[5]

III. Artistic and Philosophical Approaches – and Their Common Field of Action

To summarize, at this point I'd like to return to installation art: a shift in perspective from a reception aesthetics to the question "What do artists actually do in their daily work?" can, as has been shown, yield interesting insights. Art then does not present itself as the creation of objects to be received and interpreted, nor of products to be commercialized; it is not even, when it comes to artists' writings, art theory. Instead, art-making can be described, in Bruce Nauman's words, as investigative activity: "*Art is a means of acquiring an investigative activity.* […] *my attitude comes from being an artist and not a scientist, which is another way of investigating.*" (Kraynak 2005, p. 188)

Certainly, not all artists would subscribe to this statement (also, different art forms may imply different forms and subjects of investigation). Nevertheless, the examples of Nauman and Kabakov show what is decisive at this point: the fact that it is at all possible to conduct a specific kind of investigation by installational means – one that is related to, yet to be distinguished from other forms of research.

For when artists like Nauman and Kabakov investigate human environments, they use their own perceptive body – and that within a perceptual context which they can precisely shape and reshape, like an experimental setup. The fact that the experiences they have this way – and the insights that lie embedded in these experiences – are not merely "subjective" is proven by the fact that installations are experienced by exhibition visitors the very same way they are by the artists (there may be variances, yet no fundamental

[4] Gustav Theodor Fechner is generally considered the founder of an empirical-experimental aesthetics whose scientific orientation distinguishes it from the aisthetic approach discussed here.

[5] Certainly, it is not only a phenomenological impetus that can be observed here, but also a pragmatist one. After all, it was already John Dewey who argued against a Platonic-Aristotelian tradition and its incisive distinction between theoria, praxis, and poiesis. Berleant's above-described undertakings are in this sense by no means trivial, but consequent applications of a theory-critical theorizing.

deviations[6]). Nonetheless, such an investigative approach, which works with a first-person perspective and its collective significance, differs from other systems of validation, in particular from the methodology of natural sciences.

No fundamental difference exists between this and a philosophical aesthetic-theoretical approach, which for its part investigates the relationship between perceiver and environment. For ultimately, the latter approach too has no other means than to explore natural or human environments from a first-person perspective and to base its reflections on individually-made experiences that aspire to collective validity.[7]

As far as the degree of empirical validation is concerned, philosophical approaches come in second to installational ones, for the latter carry out intensive investigative and experimental examinations which can – as the example of Kabakov shows – be seamlessly extended into language-based textual reflections.[8] Philosophical approaches, for their part, have the advantage of having a differentiated terminological and conceptual set of tools at their disposal, gathered over two and a half millennia, which allows them to analyze, systematize, and critically reflect on empirical experiences.

However – and this is the crucial point – both artistic and philosophical approaches ultimately do not operate in different spheres, but rather on one connected scale. To use an image: Think of a piano keyboard. Installational approaches may usually move in the lower range of the black keys: the "depths of empiricism," philosophical aesthetics in the range of the upper white ones: the "heights of mental reflection." Nonetheless, it remains a single continuous and interlinked scale. And in this respect, aesthetic theoretical and installational approaches that aim at investigating built environments could in the future perfectly complement each other.

Concluding Remarks

In my book Aisthetics of (Built) Human Environments: Foundations of an Artistic-Philosophical Research Practice, I examine the questions raised above in detail, referring to a range of artistic and philosophical approaches. In conclusion, I put forward the claim that methodological commonalities (as well as conceptual ones which could not be explicitly addressed here[9]) suggest the possibility of something that does not yet exist as such: namely, a collaborative research practice in which installational approaches that utilize language to report on their reflective side, yet have particular strengths in the realm of empirical investigation, work together with philosophical approaches in which the competencies are distributed in the opposite manner. What we commonly call "art" and "philosophy" would neither risk losing any of their other specific qualities, nor would they merge into one – but: they would meet in view of a certain aspect that they, contrary to the way they are stereotypically portrayed, already today possess – and in a manner appropriate for partners: namely standing hand in hand, facing a common field of interest (instead of one turning the other into an object of inquiry, as in a traditional philosophy of art). Conversely, looking at things from the standpoint of this common field of interest – which consequently should be called a potential field of common action – the question of provenance, may it be artistic or philosophical, no longer arises. The only question that does matter is the one of validity.

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[6] Note: The talk is not of an interpretive level here, but of the level of perceptual experience.

[7] Certainly, as done in scientific surveys, it is also possible to interview third parties. But this does not solve the problem; it just multiplies it.

[8] On the question of how artists not only work with installative set-ups in the studio, but also investigate real existing built environments through physical explorations and in-situ interventions (see: Hinkes 2017, pp. 274-342, 377-414).

[9] Such as the recognition not of a supposedly predominantly visual and passive, but rather active, physical, multisensory, synthetic perception. For details, see Hinkes (2017, pp. 307-375).

Conceptually promising in this context is a term familiar to the discipline of aesthetics since its very beginning: aisthesis. One may translate the term with "perception by the senses" and understand it as core of aesthetic experience, as Arnold Berleant does – thus turning it into a key concept of aesthetics. One may also, as theorists like Wolfgang Welsch and Gernot Böhme have done, interpret it in a broader sense, whereby it becomes the foundation of its own (sub-)discipline: aisthetics.[10] Or one can subscribe to the second interpretation, as I do, but nevertheless – distinct from Böhme and in critical continuity with Berleant – emphasize the inextricable connection between sensory and cognitive aspects of perception. In this sense, "aisthesis" would better be translated – as probably all authors would agree – not as "sensual perception," but as "sensual understanding" – "sinnliche Erkenntnis," or as Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, the founder of the philosophical discipline of aesthetics, already put it, "cognitio sensitiva."[11] (A view, by the way, that the artistic approaches discussed above are also likely to subscribe to. After all, they do not conceive of their installations as mere sensory stimuli but rather as subtle and precise means of sensory-cognitive address.)

Regardless which interpretation exactly one chooses: the epistemic quality that lies intrinsically embedded in perception, and which the term aisthesis draws our attention to, is something that cannot be simulated by the purely mental act of "reflecting on." It must be explored in practice, through physical experience and – at least when taking things seriously – also through experimental investigations (experimental, of course, not in the sense of the natural sciences but in the previously explained sense of a critically reflected first-person-perspective).

To conclude, let's return to the beginning: it is not only the arts that have changed over the course of the 20th century. Philosophy too left behind formerly paradigmatic – even transcendental – points of reference or, according to one's perspective, renewed and intensified its critique of reason through movements such as phenomenology, existentialism, hermeneutics, pragmatism, analytic philosophy, critical theory, structuralism, post-structuralism, deconstruction, post-colonial-, and gender theory. A transdisciplinary, artistic-philosophical approach that proceeds not just reflectively, but investigates aisthesis empirically, and , also in respect to its reflective components, remains close to what can be experienced in perception, would certainly mean a logical continuation and even further radicalization of a critique of reason, with consequences not only for aesthetics, but equally for fields as epistemology, ethics, social-, and political theory – as well as for our understanding of philosophy.[12]

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[11] This should not be confused with a "cognitive approach." On the contrary, aisthetics aims to gain insights into "sensory-cognitive"– or as they are also termed, "pathic-gnostic" processes; in so far as the pathic (i.e. the physically experiencing) making of a perception is always accompanied by the gnostic (recognizing, understanding) grasping of an object of perception. In this sense, language too should not be understood as a closed system alien to experience but rather – as in late Wittgenstein – should be investigated in its interconnectedness with perceptual experiences. Quote: Baumgarten (2007, 10).

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A Dialectical Approach to Berleant's Concept of Engagement.

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Abstract: Arnold Berleant shares much in common with John Dewey. His notion of aesthetic engagement, which is central to his philosophy of art, is, like Dewey's concept of "an experience," an attack on dualistic notions of aesthetic experience. To the extent that Berleant and I are both Deweyans, we agree that we need to turn from the art object to art experience. Art is what it does in experience. Yet appreciative experience of art cannot happen without, at some point, focusing on the art object as such, and this means bracketing context. Engagement is important, but so too are contemplation, disinterestedness and distance. Contemplation, for example, is a moment both in the creative process and in the process of appreciation. Moreover, following Brand and Gracyk, it will be argued in the present paper that only through toggling between contemplation and engagement can we obtain a full experience of art, nature, or of the everyday.

Keywords: Arnold Berleant, engagement, John Dewey, contemplation, imagination, aura, Petty Brand, Ted Gracyk.

Arnold Berleant shares much in common with John Dewey. His notion of aesthetic engagement, which is central to his philosophy of art, is, like Dewey's concept of "an experience," an attack on dualistic notions of aesthetic experience (Dewey 1934). To the extent that Berleant and I are both Deweyans we agree that, as he puts it, we need to turn "*away from a focus on the art object, which came to be called by the assumptive term 'artwork,' and to the appreciative experience of art"* (Berleant 2013, Par. #2). Art is what it does in experience. Yet Berleant and I perceive experience in different ways. For one thing, I do not believe that appreciative experience of art can happen without at some point focusing on the art object as such, and this means bracketing context, at least at some point. For another, I do not look as harshly on the related concepts of contemplation, disinterestedness and distance. Yet I agree with the stress Berleant places on engagement. How can that be? For me, contemplation is a moment both in the creative process and in the process of appreciation. Its value should not be erased by recognition of the value of engagement, but should be seen as equal to it. Moreover, only through toggling between contemplation and engagement can we obtain a full experience of art, nature, or of the everyday. This point will be developed later in the paper.

Berleant's great contribution to aesthetics has been his systematic advocacy of the importance of engagement. Engagement was not recognized by previous philosophers who overemphasized disinterestedness. Berleant's commitment was partly inspired by an intense fascination with engagement in the avant-garde art of the second half of the 20th century, and his aesthetic theory is a great example of what philosophy can gain from reflecting on innovative artwork. Berleant speaks of innovative practices that "*gave rise to new perceptual features in the arts, breaking out of the frame of the canvas and extruding from its flat surface, descending from the proscenium stage into the audience, and other such modifications of appreciative experience that discarded the traditional separation of audience and art object"* (Berleant 2013, Par. #1), and it can be agreed that these were good things. Yet, unlike him, I believe rejection of the traditional separation of audience and art object left an opening for new forms of distancing, contemplation and disinterestedness that are not susceptible to criticisms of the older forms.

Berleant and I also have somewhat different views of the history of aesthetics, particularly with regards to Kant's Critique of Judgment. He stresses "The Analytic of the Beautiful" with its talk of disinterestedness. But this is to neglect Kant's actual discussion of art, which only appears formally in „The Analytic of the Sublime." Berleant says Kantian aesthetics "*treats aesthetic experience as the subjective appreciation of a beautiful object"* (Berleant 2013, Par. #3). This is right up to a point, and yet the center of art for Kant is less subjective appreciation of a beautiful object than the creation of a beautiful object by an artistic genius. After all, one cannot create except through being engaged, i.e. with materials and subject matter. Kant's thought is of course infected by the dualism he inherited from Cartesian rationalism, but the act of the artistic genius is one of creating a world out of the materials of our world, and, in a way, nothing can be more engaged than that.

The idea that "*aesthetic engagement emphasizes the holistic, contextual character of aesthetic appreciation"* (Berleant 2013, Par. #3) exemplifies Berleant's position. That position is no longer as radical as it once seemed, for contextualism can be seen as the dominant position today: formalism, disinterestedness, and contemplation all seem to be part of a distant past. Contextualism, though, is not the whole story of our proper experience of art. Nor is it the whole story about our proper experience of nature or of everyday life. To be sure, when I appreciate a painting, I love knowing more about the artist, the culture, and the history behind it. There is, however, also something to be said for the formalist insistence that I must focus on the work itself: that to fully experience the work, I need to bracket all of the background information and just be with the work; that is, let it speak to me directly. Too much contextual information can deaden experience, can make it seem as though we think we know the object when we really only know how to relate and relate to the information about it. The object becomes too familiar, too easy to categorize. To contextualize is to put in a box, even though that box can seem quite rich. Contextualism, by itself, can lead to smug knowingness. Moreover, with all this emphasis on context we can lose sight of the imagination. There is a sense of "imagination" or "seeing with imagination" which involves seeing something as going beyond itself, as having what can be termed an "aura." I have argued elsewhere that this kind of experience is essential to, even defining of, aesthetic experience (Leddy 2012). Contextualism can easily fall prey to determinism; and the freedom of the imagination, for interpreter as well as artist, is lost. In short, contextualism by itself is as false as formalism by itself.

Berleant writes that "[a]*esthetic engagement* […] *returns aesthetics to its etymological origins by stressing the primacy of sense perception, of sensible experience. Perception itself is reconfigured to recognize the mutual activity of all the sense modalities, including kinesthetic and somatic sensibility more generally"* (Berleant 2013, par. #3). I mostly agree, yet am worried about the limitedness entailed by the phrase "primacy of sense perception."

I put the core of aesthetics in another idea, not in the root of the word as it was invented by Baumgarten or as it was used originally by Kant in the 'Critique of Pure Reason', but in Kant's notion of aesthetic ideas as it appears in the 'Critique of Judgment', specifically in Paragraph 49 (Kant 1952, pp. 175-182). Aesthetic ideas are certainly connected with sensory perception, but they also go beyond sensory perception. You could say that, for Kant, the primacy is not in sensory perception but in what he calls the productive imagination, particularly in its free play. Sensory perception plays a role, and Kant, notoriously, under-rates that role: for example in understanding color as mere charm. But to place the center of aesthetics in sensory perception is to forget the centrality of imaginative engagement with the world of sense, i.e. to forget experience in the broader sense than mere sensory perception. I favor and applaud the way in which Berleant stresses the sensory perception aspect of experience, and the way in which the artists he favors do this as well. Yet this approach is limited in ways I find problematic. The aesthetic idea, as Kant

describes it, is basically the sensuously perceived object as symbol. It relates in important ways to his notion that, although the transcendent or supersensible realm cannot be approached by reason, it can be approached via aesthetic experience. I do not follow Kant in his continued belief in a transcendent realm, but I do favor a dialectic (to follow Hegel for a moment) in which the position of Berleant is sublated: in which the thesis is formalism (Kant misunderstood), the antithesis engagement theory and contextualism, and the new synthesis a return to Kant, but Kant properly understood in terms of the centrality of the aesthetic ideas, those ideas providing the closest thing we will ever get to a transcendent realm.

How does the synthesis work? Here is an example. In the aesthetics of nature, Berleant encourages us to descend *"from the contemplative distance of a scenic outlook to tramping along a woodland trail or paddling a meandering stream"* (Berleant 2013, par. #5). I agree that tramping and paddling were neglected and now are rightly emphasized. Yet I still want to enjoy the contemplative distance of the scenic outlook. Not only that: I think there is a contemplative dimension of my experience of nature through tamping and paddling. I also think there is an engaged aspect of my scenic observation. The scenic observation can include aspects of the experience that is continuous with the paddling part of the day.

Some of our disagreement is just a matter of preferences. I like to keep the word "contemplation," but have no problem perceiving it as more engaged: so that contemplation of dance may include somatic dimensions that might not have been included in previous views of contemplation. Berleant and I again are both Deweyans in that we see humans not as dualistic paradoxes but as live creatures interacting with the environment.

Berleant attacks the concept of disinterestedness and its relatives at many points in his writings. He writes approvingly of an expansion of aesthetic experience that has entailed rejecting disinterestedness both because of its psychologism and because it unduly restricts aesthetic appreciation to exclude functional or practical objects (Berleant 2012). While I agree with including functional objects, I do not see this as requiring a choice between disinterested and interested perception since such objects may be perceived in a disinterested way where the functionality is de-emphasized or bracketed. As argued above, I believe that the concept of disinterestedness, along with such related ideas as distancing and the aesthetic attitude, should play a role in aesthetics, although perhaps a less exalted one than previously. I am inspired in this by two articles, one by Peggy Brand and the other by Ted Gracyk, where a role for disinterestedness is allowed even in the context of concern for larger social issues (Brand 1998 and Gracyk 2011). My own view is that disinterestedness is a moment or aspect of aesthetic experience, to be taken as equally important to the moment of engagement so well advocated by Berleant. Again, allowing for disinterested perception in this way (and not as exclusively defining of aesthetic experience) is not inconsistent with the aesthetics of engagement, if taken broadly. Taken broadly means that engagement includes the imaginative as well as the sensuous and the physical.

One could even argue that disinterested perception can contribute to engagement with an aesthetic object. How can this be? Brand and Gracyk have suggested that taking a disinterested stance can open one up to new perspectives. It can reduce the way in which prejudices blind us to certain ways of looking at things. To this I add that it allows for a freer operation of the imagination than is allowed in an approach that focuses exclusively, as Berleant does, on sensibility. Brand holds that if you can see the work of the controversial performance-artist ORLAN as aesthetically valuable from a disinterested perspective then perhaps you can consider its deeper feminist meaning when contextualized. Similarly, Gracyk holds that disinterested pleasure taken in popular music can allow for a deeper understanding when one discovers that the musician is, for example, promoting a gay perspective. For Gracyk, disinterested attention can

work together with interested attention. It is not an either/or proposition. As he notes, popular music is made to reward listening through disinterested attention.

Berleant complains that Kant's idea of disinterestedness rests on his „ "*distinction between objective and subjective sensation, and on excluding the aesthetic from all but humans*," and that this involves "*imposing external strictures* [by which Berleant means rationalistic and system-generated preconceptions] *on experience"* (Berleant 2012, pp. 150-151). He insists, contra Kant, that function plays an important role in, for example, architecture.

Function does play such a role. However, Kant himself recognized this with his idea that there is such a thing as dependent beauty, architecture being a key example. This can be taken to mean that one can see a church both in formalist terms (focusing on our immediate response to design features and the look of purposiveness) and, alternatively, in functionalist terms. Thus, regardless of what Kant actually thought, architecture can be seen both in a disinterested and in an interested way when these alternate. Moreover, to only see architecture in one of these ways is to miss out on a lot. The other arts, as well as nature and everyday aesthetics, also have these two moments, although perhaps less obviously, since we cannot think long about architecture without paying attention to function. To draw on personal experience, the best way to view an aesthetic object is to toggle (following Brand's term, which Gracyk and I have adopted) between disinterested and interested. I grant that overemphasis given to disinterested attention is guilty of the charges Berleant places against it. However, once disinterestedness is restrained and balanced against interested attention, it can be seen as having great importance. It is not clear that using disinterestedness in this way commits us to rationalistic preconceptions. Nor is it required to see humans as radically different from animals in order to give disinterestedness this role. Disinterestedness, as a moment in the aesthetic process, allows us to bracket issues of existence, morality, and knowledge (as Kant observed), in perceiving an aesthetic object, thus allowing us to break away from certain prejudices and preconceptions, to see things in a fresh way, and to allow imagination to do its best work.

Brand and Gracyk allow the return of the concept of disinterestedness only as instrumental to a deeper interested perspective. This is not the direction I take here, although disinterestedness can certainly serve this purpose. Rather, disinterestedness can be viewed as a necessary element in aesthetic experience generally. Agreement can be found with Brand that it is valuable to toggle back and forth between interested and disinterested perspectives. However, the disinterested attention can frame the subject in broader ways that actually take in things commonly associated with interested attention, thus allowing for an almost paradoxical fusion of the two, for example in distancing oneself from, and contemplating, contextual aspects of the work as well as its functional achievements. Nonetheless, and to repeat, one can agree with Berleant that disinterestedness has been overemphasized in the history of aesthetics.

Berleant writes that Kant fails to account for beauty that derives from what he calls perfect functioning, as is found in sport, religious art, and civic art (Berleant 2012, p. 154). Presumably, he thinks that perception of perfect functioning can, in these cases, be sufficient for legitimate aesthetic appreciation. What is troubling here is the idea of "the beauty of perfect functioning." Although perception of perfect functioning can give rise to experiences of beauty, things can function perfectly and be perceived to do so without being beautiful. There is nothing beautiful, at least to me, in the seemingly perfect functioning of the program I use to play solitaire on my computer. More importantly, the idea of perfect functioning leaves out the component of the free play of the imagination which Kant correctly saw as necessary for aesthetic experience.

Part of the disagreement between Berleant and I might stem from differing ideas about how to define aesthetics itself. As we have seen, Berleant favors seeing aesthetics in Baumgarten's sense, as a science of sensory knowledge. As he puts it, the "*aesthetic begins and ends in sense experience"* (Berleant 2010, p. 27). At the same time, he recognizes that there is no such thing as pure perception, and acknowledges the role of culture and meaning in aesthetic experience. Thus, what experience, then, is excluded from the domain of aesthetics? If no experience is excluded then the concept of the sensory as distinct from the experiential becomes meaningless. Moreover, if all experience begins and ends in sense experience, then sense experience alone cannot define aesthetics. In short, aesthetics cannot have the same extension as sense perception. We need to know what distinguishes aesthetic from non-aesthetic perception. Perhaps Berleant's answer is that non-aesthetic perception is any perception where the "sensory base" is obscured (Berleant 2010, p. 29). I have no problem with this, but this formulation does not characterize disinterested perception in all its forms (although it does for Kant's version) and that's the point at issue.

In arguing for identity between aesthetic experience and sensory perception, Berleant appeals to the meaning of "aesthesis." Yet Baumgarten's own understanding of aesthetics was not fully determined by the original meaning for "aesthesis." As Berleant himself observes, Baumgarten also associated "aesthetics" strongly with the concept of beauty and with the appreciation of the arts. Neither of these ideas is included in the concept of sense experience. Moreover, this three-way association of Baumgarten's, i.e. between sense perception, beauty and art appreciation, continues with us today, as shown by its common presence in dictionary definitions of aesthetics. However, unlike Baumgarten, Berleant does not give the concept of beauty a significant role in his own account of the nature of aesthetics, for he drops it in favor of simply talking about sense experience. This has the effect not only of excluding disinterestedness insofar as it is associated with the concept of beauty but also of downplaying the central role of imagination in aesthetic experience, since, on my view, a certain kind of imagination (that associated with the experience of what I call "aura") is essential to the experience of beauty. Although Berleant does talk about imagination, he does so to distinguish imaginative from actual perception, thus failing to recognize any imaginative dimension to actual perception especially of the aesthetic sort (Berleant 2010, p. 37). Furthermore, he allows imagination a limited role in our aesthetic appreciation of the heavens as long as this is consistent with science (Berleant 2010, p. 44), and often speaks of imagination as contributing to the fund of meaning content passed on by a culture, neither of these uses allow imagination much role in the act of appreciation.

If the domain of aesthetics and that of sense perception are taken as equivalent, as he wants, then Berleant is inconsistent when he also says (correctly, I believe) that "aesthetic experience seems to transcend the barriers that ordinarily separate ourselves from the things we encounter in the world" (Berleant 2010, p. 29). In this case, aesthetic experience is a special kind of perceptual experience. The second position would, therefore, lead more in the direction of my own emphasis on imagination as equal in importance to sensibility. Berleant also talks of aesthetic experience in terms of "feelings of uplift and wonder," mentioning "the shiver of delight" from "mysterious contact" with a great work of art, "wonder at the beauty of nature," and awareness of "delights of ordinary life" (Berleant 2010, p. 36), all of which goes far beyond the flat idea of the aesthetic as equivalent to perceptual experience. He even refers to aesthetics as the "capacity for distinctive perceptual experience," which would not make sense if aesthetic experience were simply the same as perceptual experience. If we use "beauty" to symbolize the factors just mentioned, then we should recognize that this concept is as central to our understanding of aesthetic experience as is that of immediate perception.

There is one important advantage to retaining the concept of disinterestedness even if it is no longer the sole defining notion of aesthetics. Berleant is quite ready to classify certain kinds of objects as ugly or aesthetically wrong without considering the possibility that these objects can, too, be experienced as beautiful under certain circumstances. He has a very large category of what he considers "unqualifiedly negative" in urban experience, for example. He says, "[t]*here is not a sense modality that remains unscathed in the urban environment, from the cacophony of the roar of traffic and the blaring of loudspeakers in public places to the soporific blanket of canned music and intrusive private conversations over cell phones"* (Berleant 2010, p. 46). It is true that all of these things can be very upsetting and aesthetically negative. How, then, can someone who, like Berleant, believes that there is no pure aesthetic experience, who believes that aesthetic experience is always mediated by culture (Berleant 2010, p. 45), and who is willing to entertain value even in Hummel figurines, be so sure of his unqualified negative judgments of these everyday urban phenomena? Doesn't their evaluation depend just as much on personality and culture as that of a Hummel figurine? When Berleant declaims against "gaudy, intense colors of advertising circulars" (Berleant 2010, p. 46) one can only think that, to use the words of Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour he is unable to "learn from Las Vegas" (Venturi, Brown and Izenour 1977). These architects were able to see beauty in gaudy electronic billboards, but Berleant cannot. Thus he speaks of "the profuse vulgarity of the commercial landscapes of industrialism, from the shopping mall to the commercial strip, the trailer park, and the slag heap" (Berleant 2012, p. 206). It cannot be denied that these things can be vulgar, but it also strikes me that all of them can also be experienced aesthetically in a positive way. How can we do this? Well, one needs to avail oneself of an ability which has been variously described as aesthetic contemplation, disinterestedness, distancing, and taking the aesthetic attitude. Although Berleant excludes this move in the name of contemporary art as an art of engagement, it is noteworthy that contemporary artists themselves commonly use these very strategies to render otherwise ugly, crude and disgusting subject-matters sources of inspiration and delight – Robert Rauschenberg's combines are just one example. Much of ordinary life in our culture is empty and crass. However, the phenomena Berleant describes do not present just one face.

So how can disinterestedness play a role in appreciation of nature or everyday aesthetic phenomena? As we move through a landscape, whether urban or rural, we can and should, if we want a rich and full experience, toggle between contemplative perception of what we perceive and perception that takes into account various contextual and relational matters. In the contemplative mode, we become more aware of the formal relations and also the sensuous surfaces of what we see. (Kant failed to emphasize the second of these). Moreover, (and this is an important addition) we are aware of these things in a way that can allow an experience of what, I have called "aura," to emerge, or, to use Berleant's language, to allow wonderment. Similarly, when switching to the engaged model of appreciation, we become aware of such things as how the look of something fits its function or how cultural meaning is incorporated. The richest experience of art toggles between the two. Imagination in the sense of metaphorical seeing plays an important role in this dialectic. There is neither time nor space here to develop this notion further, but the suggestion can be made that metaphorical seeing or seeing charged by the imagination plays a role both in interested and in disinterested attention and that the main role that disinterestedness plays is simply as a method for highlighting certain sensuous and formal features and freeing up the imagination from the dominance of historical features, allowing for actualizations of the aesthetic object in new ways.

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