

AESTHETIC VS. NON-AESTHETIC: A PHILOSOPHICAL DISTINCTION

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Chapter 1

Introduction: The Aesthetic vs. the Non-Aesthetic

§ 0. Philosophical style in Aesthetics

Philosophers have asked many different questions in aesthetics. They range from "What is Art?" and "What is a work of art?" to "What are the activities relevant to the discovery of the aesthetic elements in art?" and "What is the proper aesthetic attitude toward art?" It is probably too much to expect that philosophy can, by itself, lead to a full appreciation of art, or a definition of the roles of artist, observer or critic. Philosophy has a peculiar style of questioning that leads one to expect both depth and absoluteness in its answers. In aesthetics, we will argue, philosophical questions sometimes make us muddy a clear issue, sometimes demand clarity from a satisfactorily muddy issue; and sometimes they make a muddy issue out of nothing at all. Good reasons, then, for a philosopher to pursue aesthetics are to clear the name of philosophy, to escape 'got up' ways of thinking about art, and to examine what happens and what worries us about it. In this paper we will be concerned with a general philosophical tendency in art; in particular, with its manifestation in a family of theories which elevate some part of art, or some way of looking at art, to a position of being characteristically aesthetic. We shall also make some short suggestions about a better approach for philosophy.

In general the philosophical word 'aesthetic' identifies certain features of art and our relation to it, and contrasts these features with others, the non-aesthetic ones, which are supposed

to belong to other fields of discourse. Traditionally the philosophical problems surrounding the words, and hence surrounding art, have been problems of definition and classification. We will argue that to define 'aesthetic' or to separate a class of 'aesthetic x's' is to further the as yet unjustified idea that there is, in fact, a meaningful distinction between 'aesthetic' and 'non-aesthetic' as applied to elements, attitudes, standards, or activities in art. Determining to what end the distinction has been put is an investigation prior to any theory about how to make the distinction sharp; it is prior, that is, so long as there is any doubt about the validity of the dichotomy.

Philosophers have been diligent and thorough in dividing all sorts of things related to art into aesthetic and non-aesthetic heaps. Some theories, now evidently in disrepute¹, hoped to find a feature, the aesthetic feature, which pervaded all works of art, and by virtue of which all works had their aesthetic character. Phrases like 'significant form', 'communication of emotion' or 'art as illusion' come to mind. Aesthetic judgements, too, are theoretically distinguishable from other sorts. An easy way to characterize an aesthetic judgement about an ordinary object, say a car, is to tell all the things it is not. Thus, an aesthetic judgement cannot be a practical observation about the car's speed or efficiency, or a moral pronouncement that such fast cars ought not to be allowed on the road. An aesthetic judgement, the theory might read, is "It looks graceful and beautiful" or "It has a fast look about it" (said in an aesthetic tone of voice?) Perhaps a distinction between aesthetic and non-aesthetic judgements can be made here; but what happens if we leave cars and consider works

of art? A painting lends itself more naturally to aesthetic judgements than a car. For example, "The colors and illumination are beautifully handled." "The face has an expression of such anguish." "I can lose myself in this painting; it has depth." Other judgements have a doubtful place in the proposed classification. "The painting is a bit old and shabby (and looks it) though that doesn't hide its brilliance." "The painting is so vast that I can't take it in." Are these aesthetic judgements, or only partly so, or what? Observed distinctions fade into theoretical ones. We are told that the aesthetic/non-aesthetic distinction is applicable in a similar way elsewhere. Thus, we think in aesthetic concepts; we speak of aesthetic attitudes towards art, of aesthetic experience, of the aesthetic criteria for judgement, of criticism of a work on aesthetic grounds, advancing aesthetically relevant reasons. The structure is built up until we see everything from its roof. That is, we have already taken a philosophical step when we set out to elaborate the distinction. The prior problem is: what good does it do? What has so much as suggested separating art this way?

We will consider in detail theories which prescribe certain activities and attitudes as aesthetic, that is, as necessary to aesthetic experience.* The tendency to claim that a given activity has more aesthetic relevance than another is clearly a special case of the more general move above. There are two sorts of problem in investigating this special case. First, what does it mean for any

*We must apologize, given our overall aims, for repeated use of the words "aesthetic experience." We may understand this in an intuitive sense as whatever experience we consider relevant to art. Dewey is a good teacher for the meaning of these words. (Art as Experience, New York, 1934, Chapter III)

given activity to be aesthetically important, relevant, or necessary? There are a number of confusions. Consider a given work of art, say, a poem. There is, of course, no reason to suppose that the things we do with regard to a poem will be the same as those we do with, say, a symphony; though the activities may indeed be the same, or analogous, or similar in other ways. How broad the application of a given activity is must be shown by the aspiring theorist. A theory might say that the appropriate activity for this poem (and is it just for this poem, theorist?) is to attend to the sounds of the words, i.e., to listen to them, say them in the mind, see how they fit together, tap out their rhythm, etc. Do we suppose that one would thus be missing something of the poem by ignoring its formal structure, its meaning, its symbolism, its imagery? Must we then add attention to these other things to our list of aesthetic activities? Cohen speaks of a "narrowest conception of aesthetic judgement."² Does such a conception specify a certain minimum level of activity for aesthetic experience? How broad is an 'aesthetically relevant activity' to be? How much can it miss? Worse still, our experience with art involves choosing activities in another more difficult sense. For it has been clearly shown that, taking only paintings for example, we should contemplate some paintings, where for others the thing to do is survey, or peer, or scrutinize, etc.³ The determining factors of what activity will be fruitful instead of limited lie not in philosophy but in the individual work. The upshot of all this is that we can question any theorist about how far he intends his 'aesthetically relevant activity' to be relevant. The notion is by no means an easy one, unexplained.

The second part of this investigation will be taken up with

looking into some activities that have been advanced as aesthetically relevant. What are the activities? We hope to understand what motivates the theorist to propose them. In particular, we will consider three sorts of theory which describe features, activities, or attitudes which are somehow understood to underlie all true aesthetic experience. Briefly, they are as follows.

(a) Appearances. Consider J. O. Urmson's dictum that for "simple cases" we turn for grounds for aesthetic judgements to "the way it /the work of art/ looks, sounds, smells, tastes or feels."⁴ In painting, for example, we consider the way the thing looks or appears. A philosophical move is often made at this point. We say: we are concerned with how it appears; hence, we must attend to its appearance. The operative word is changed to a noun: the appearance, whose properties we can presumably explore. Certain questions come immediately to mind if we are to make the theory do what it says, i.e., isolate certain activities (attending to appearances) and certain 'parts' of works of art (appearances) as supremely important in aesthetic experience. (i) How deep are appearances? On one extreme the appearance of an object may be a hovering shadow; it may exist in the mind, not really a part of the object. On the other the appearance may penetrate to every feature of the object's existence, or perhaps, of its surface. Do we hold to the distinction between appearance and reality? A whole cloud of epistemology drifts in. (ii) Must we take all of a work's appearance, or can we isolate aesthetic features of an appearance, along with those elements which, to use Sibley's phrase, have nothing to do with the aesthetic? For example, what of Cohen's point that sometimes we must ignore a painting's faded look?⁵ (iii) Furthermore, even if we work it out in

detail, how far will the notion of 'appearance' take us into film, drama, dance, literature? The question becomes: does the notion take us anywhere, or is it merely what Cohen calls an "impediment to critical thinking?"

(b) Attitudes. Much effort has been spent on the problem of defining the 'aesthetic attitude'; it has been represented as everything from a kind of perception to a psychological state. Some have felt that the notion is a myth in any form. Early examples of the theory, following Kant, include Bullough's famous doctrine of 'psychical distance', and softer theories in the same tradition which talk of the 'disinterestedness' presupposed by aesthetic experience. These theories have been widely discussed, and we will concern ourselves with a few of their confusions. A more interesting case of an attitude theory advocates a kind of 'seeing-cum-knowledge.' Thus Marshall Cohen notes, in opposition to Bullough, that what the yokel needs to keep him in his seat at a play is not necessarily a certain 'distance' to attenuate natural feelings, but "(i) the presence of knowledge of what a play is, and (ii) how one behaves in a theater."⁷ (Numbers mine.) Certainly it seems fair to claim that such knowledge is a prerequisite for even the beginnings of aesthetic appreciation. Furthermore, nothing seems mysterious here: a play is a play. We learn about drama early in our cognitive development. Similarly, a portrait is a portrait (not a person). However, we wonder how far to push either part of the requirement. If we carry (i) to other art we are faced with a demand on the listener to know what a symphony is, and, one supposes, what music is. We might ask, for example, whether modern music or modern plays are accessible under our ordinary notion of what music is or plays are. What does one

know with one's knowledge; what sort of ignorance are we ruling out? Similarly we may push the second part of Cohen's requirement, that the yokel know how to behave in a theater. All sorts of behavior might be in order, depending on whether our instructor is a critic or a cop. Nor is it clear that the requirement is strictly behavioral. We must be clear about the following model: the yokel, wanting very much to free the heroine and punch the villain, knows that one just doesn't do that in a theater. (What is being ruled out? Doing it at all? or just in a theater? or even wanting to? The impulse doesn't come up; but doesn't it?) Does "knowing what an x is" determine a mode or form of behavior?

(c) Aspects. A typical retreat from an attitude theory runs as follows: 'We cannot isolate 'aesthetic attitude' as a special sort of attention. Really, what we thought were different attitudes were really nothing but different aspects and the modes of perceiving them.' Paul Ziff and others seem to advance a theory which places prime aesthetic importance on aspects, or points in dimensions. Not to be misled by the form of words "seeing aspects", we might shift the weight to Ziff's special word "aspection": to look "in some way", with verbal emphasis.⁶ What range of things are we referring to as 'aspects'? Ziff's suggestions, as we shall see, seem a bit narrow. The problem is difficult enough for painting. (And 'aspects' get us into a worse muddle in other arts.) Surely we make aesthetic judgements which do not report on aspects in any simple sense. The sadness of a painted face, the sloppiness of execution, the structural unity of a painting: these are aspects which are not obviously similar. To catch such things the notion of 'aspect' must accordingly be broad. On the other hand, my

judgements be aesthetically relevant and yet not report on any aspect of a painting? Are we to say, for example, that a statement about artists' intentions is relevant; what place might it have in aesthetic discussions? (Ziff seems to say that only a report on certain aspects of a painting can be a reason why the painting is good or bad. This does not preclude non-critical aesthetic judgements which are unrelated to aspects.) Again, are all these to count as aspects: a color, an organization, a feeling, a feeling of motion, an illusion of life? The notion of 'aspect' must, then, be narrow enough not to let everything in. Finally, along with 'seeing aspects' the locution 'seeing...as...' (do you see the moon as a face; are you seeing that as art?) bears some investigation.

In (a)-(c) we have suggested some fairly broad areas of inquiry into theories that might be proposed under the philosophical distinction between aesthetic and non-aesthetic. We will consider them in some detail in Chapter III, after a survey of the general philosophical approach to art in Chapter II. There we will be concerned with the characteristic pull of absoluteness which colors the answers that philosophy will accept. We will make something of a plea for another approach, a critical one; a kind of aesthetic liberalism.

It is an interesting philosophical question to ask why there has been an attempt to separate the aesthetic from the non-aesthetic. Are there philosophical reasons for making a cut between art objects and other objects? Do we feel a need to define the difference between things (events, people, feelings) as they really are and as they appear in art? Or does the distinction grow out of some need in art itself? Once we uncover the motivation, we may ask what good the aesthetic/non-aesthetic distinction does us with respect to our

objectives in art. Philosophy can question theoretical notions and describe facts in art to see whether they coincide. In Chapter IV we shall initiate some philosophical inquiries into aesthetics which seem to give us some understanding of art. This understanding is our goal; perhaps we can rescue philosophy in reaching it.

Art, in a very obvious sense, is a public institution. This fact provides the basis for criticism. We should further like to say that the fact that talking about art is social results in certain rules --- grammatical rules --- governing the way we talk. Determining such rules, if they exist, would be both interesting and profitable. Lastly, we will make some brief comments about the search for criteria of aesthetic relevance, a somewhat more fashionable way of continuing the distinction between aesthetic and non-aesthetic.

We need finally to mention what sort of solution we seek. One suspects to begin with that the traditional way of looking at art is the obscure way. For one can approach a painting, a poem, a play, a sonata, in depth and successfully, never troubling oneself over the distinction between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic. It is as if philosophers, intent on spoiling a good thing, say "No, you really don't know what you are doing. You are confusing purely aesthetic elements with non-aesthetic ones." Similarly, the philosophical way of looking at a painting seems to be concentrating on (or, as we might say, attending to) this or that aspect of a painting (or, maybe, of its appearance), keeping all the while the proper (aesthetic) frame of mind. The ideal solution to these philosophical problems would seem to be a return to the untroubled state, where we do not merely theorize about what is going on, but we look and

if it qualifies as perspicuous.

Chapter II

A Philosophical Quest

§ 1. Definitional Questions

Titles and catchwords in aesthetics often betray the nature of the theories which they name. We need not go far to get an idea of what philosophy and art do for one another. Thus Tolstoy, an artist, in a fit of theory asks "What is Art?" Articles and books abound which track down 'The Nature of Art' or which pursue 'Art as' where various words fill in the blank. Some blank fillers which have enjoyed a measure of success include 'Experience', 'Intuition', 'Significant Form', 'Illusion' --- and many others. We may see the grander theories in aesthetics as definitional in a number of useful senses. The usual philosophical motivation for a theory in aesthetics is an urge to mark off art from whatever seems to threaten its pure existence. Kennick¹ quotes DeWitt Parker as a sparkling example of an unenlightened definition-seeker.

"Every single work of art, it is admitted, has a unique flavor, a je ne sais quoi which makes it incomparable with every other work; nevertheless, there is some mark or set of marks which, if it applies to any work of art, applies to all works of art and to nothing else --- a common denominator, so to say, which constitutes the definition of art, and serves to separate, though not to isolate, the field of art from other fields of human culture."²

Indeed, Parker goes on to say that only when this alleged definition of art is admitted as a possible object of search can there even be a philosophy of art. (This is related to the idea that philosophy wants all-or-nothing answers, absoluteness.) In any case, this statement suggests the most immediate sense in which aesthetics searches for the defining characteristic(s) of art. Cohen

our language has many terms whose various use does not mark out a class of objects with some common property. The class of works of art, if it is not misleading to use class terms here, forms a family in Wittgenstein's sense.* Few would deny this is so, though different theorists would probably describe internal kinship patterns differently. The quest for a defining property for art is clearly doomed, if instances of art bear a family relationship to one another.

Further questions of new-fashioned aesthetics may also be seen as definitional. Marshall Cohen criticizes theories which look for "aesthetic essence" by advancing features of our experience, or singling out certain attitudes as giving the preconditions of any experience with art.³ We may easily see how a notion like 'aesthetic attitude' can amount to a sneaky, back-door definition of art. Consider Stolnitz's idea that the notion of aesthetic attitude revises and becomes central to aesthetic theory.⁴ Gripped by such a notion, aestheticians try to isolate the components of aesthetic attitude, aiming at some state of mind or mode of perception which is characteristic of our experience with art. Art is then defined as everything which admits the probing of aesthetic attitude. Everything the attitude catches is counted aesthetically relevant. Once an aesthetic attitude is conceded to exist, and once aesthetics is gripped and remodeled by the notion, aesthetic dictionaries fill

* This is a battered notion. The members of the class display "a complicated network of similarities, overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail." See §§65 ff., of: the Investigations.

up with descriptions. Where philosophers are too squeamish to offer full definitions, they begin by proposing certain 'merely necessary' conditions on such an attitude. In a similar way, any search for "aesthetic essence" will try to cover dissimilarities within art by some underlying property.

The notion that definition in any simple sense is possible with respect to "aesthetic essence" will be called into question; in fact, there are peculiarities about even requesting definitions here. Demanding a definition or hoping for one on the grounds that we certainly seem to know how to use the word 'art' in a wide variety of contexts seems alternately reasonable, misguided, insensitive, and foolish. There is no mystery about using English words in many different contexts, referring to many different things. Often we know perfectly well what a word means but would never attempt to reduce its meaning, or restrict its application according to the presence of some single essential property. Our language (or our world) is not quite so logically accommodating. The importance of the notion of 'family resemblance' is not that it relieves us of responsibility for our words. On the contrary, one reason that definitions of words like 'art' fail is that we do know, already, by virtue of being language speakers, how to use the words. Definitions in a normal unelaborate sense do not allow us even that knowledge; we can sense their inadequacy. Nor can the notion of 'family resemblance' relieve us of what Kermick calls a certain 'open texture' of the words. Sometimes we are baffled, sometimes just nervous about calling a particular object by some name. Saying that works of art are tied by a family resemblance does not eliminate rhetorical questions like "If x isn't art, what is?" or "Who,

in his right mind, would call that art?" Nor does it logically eliminate situations like these: if someone claims that x is art, and if we are unsure, he will have to do a certain kind of arguing or explaining --- if, that is, he wants our agreement. Not any argument will do.

In a certain sense, then, it is mystifying that aesthetic theories be searches for definition. It does not normally occur to us to ask "What is science?" or "What is scientific experience?" or in Wittgenstein's example "What is a game?" or "What is language?" Or if these questions do occur, (as they do, presumably, to philosophers) we do not search for that essential property which allows the use of the word. As we have said, if we want to find out, Wittgenstein's suggestion holds: "look and see whether there is anything common to all."⁶ We do not see anything common to all works of art or to the experiences surrounding art. Are we then to suppose that only bona fide aestheticians can see it? Hopefully not, or the words 'art' and 'artistic' must stick in our throats (more often than they do). Philosophical results are nothing so scientific as to have resulted from such inspection of works of art. (This is perhaps related to Kennick's note that the best way to do aesthetics is with few or no examples.⁷)

Kennick says "the suspicion that aesthetics is not nonsense is often justified."⁸ Clearly, he is being over-optimistic. Still, we can look at aestheticians' definitions as suggestions, or signposts for ways of looking at art; as formulations of particular criteria in art, or proposals for certain conventions in talking about art. Tolstoy might thus be seen as mapping out a certain role for art consistent with his own moral aims of producing brotherhood

among men. It is further significant that philosophical theories have a way of mirroring the critical standards of the day and turning up some new ones.⁹ As Wittgenstein notes, in defining some words, one can draw a line, where none already exists, though such a line is not necessary to using the word. (Philosophical Investigations, §68.) A philosophical theory may represent a linguistic decision which will restrict the word 'art' to a certain use, for certain reasons; such definitions may represent moral values, critical values, or artistic ones. They will make us selective in our usage. One reason that such normative suggestions in aesthetics are clothed in definitional garb, where no one supposes that one ought to do the same for games or languages, is that more turns on x's being 'art' than on y's being a 'game'. That is, to call x 'art' is a certain sort of praise; it indicates that x is to be treated in certain ways, is to be valued and prized. The hope of definitional theories is to give separable criteria for such praise. If x is art, then tests have been applied, and a number of conclusions may be drawn. In this way, there isn't much significance to y's being a game; we just play it.

We have seen that aesthetics generally hopes to define art or to define its surrounding notions. The aim may be either definition in a strict sense, or in a normative one. In either case, we can quarrel with the hope (though to quarrel with a linguistic suggestion is as much a critical task as a philosophical one). We have indicated how strict definition is generally impossible. Below, we will examine some ways definition has been attempted, and some ways the attempt has run afoul, if not amuck.

§ 2. Positive versus negative characterizations

There are at least two ways of 'getting at' art. They result from different motivations. We will call them roughly the critical way and the philosophical way, the former characterizing art positively, the latter negatively. The method of the positive approach is to 'pitch in' at art, to talk about it in whatever ways are suggested by a particular work. The goal is to find out about art by seeing what art is, and in particular, what this work is; this is the critic's method. The philosophical view, on the other hand, typically has other interests to protect. Thus, it discusses art by discarding from the aesthetic realm whatever it thinks should belong elsewhere. Art becomes what is left behind after all exclusions are made. Each approach bears some further scrutiny.

We do not propose to consider all the aspects of criticism which might bear on this topic. The examples we give are clearly chosen to further our overall goal; specifically, to discredit a definitional approach to art. Of course, some words strike us as recurrent in criticism, and there are, we suppose, recurrent critical aims. Happily, though, critics themselves often lend support to the thesis of this paper. Critics claim that there are not a priori rules for the requirements they may place on a work, nor are there such rules to tell them what to look for in, say, a novel. This does not mean that the critic can have no rules to guide him; nor does it exclude the possibility of his saying that a given work conforms or fails to conform with standards. Critics are apt to work within a general framework of freedom for the artist. This is freedom of source, of form, and of end, to use Schorer, Miles, & McKenzie's handy division.¹⁰ Thus, Henry James writes that, for example, if a novel is to be "a personal, a direct impression of

life" then there must be "freedom to feel and say".¹¹ Similarly, A.C. Bradley, enlarging on Hegel's theory of tragedy, notes that art often moves outside the confines of outmoded theory, at least in this area: "it is just one greatness of modern art that it has shown the tragic fact in situations of so many and such diverse kinds."¹² That is, the tragedian need not limit his subject according to theory. The critic is often the one to recognize developments in art which fall outside of established or theoretical patterns. T.S. Eliot praised as new and important Joyce's use of myth "in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity" in Ulysses.¹³ And Lionel Trilling, appraising the importance of Freudian analysis in art and criticism, comments that "the elements of art are not limited by art."¹⁴ He means that often many investigations outside of art may be appropriate to the experience of art. Finally, with regard to the 'end' of art, (or perhaps the 'source'), Robert Penn Warren, in criticising theories of 'pure poetry' declares that "nothing that is available in human experience is to be legislated out of poetry."¹⁵ Or, we might add, out of art.

But why press this line of argument? We have no need for the extreme view that critics never exclude unimportant features of art. We meant to hold up the model of the critic, confronting a work and asking not "Is this Art?" but "What is this, and what can we say about it?" Critics clearly do ask whether a given work is art. But they notice all kinds of features in art, which may be mentioned in criticism. If we take the critic's task as, in part, trying to get the ordinary man to 'see it there, too,' --- that is, to have his own experience of art --- then whatever the critic points out to achieve aesthetic experience in the other has, a fortiori,

some relevance. Critics, as we all know, talk about form, line, illumination, organization in painting; theme and development in music; rhythm, metre and symbol in poetry. It is instructive to see what else pops up in the literature of criticism. James sets only one condition on the composition of a novel: sincerity.¹⁶

He further uses the phrase "air of reality" to describe a novel. Virginia Woolf, with respect to the portrayal of character, describes certain novels as leaving the reader with "so strange a feeling of incompleteness and dissatisfaction" which can be relieved only outside of the novel.¹⁷ This is considered an artistic defect.

Auden describes the poems of Yeats: "From first to last /the poems/ express a sustained protest against the social atomization caused by industrialism, and both in their ideals and their language a constant struggle to overcome it."¹⁸ Trilling notes that Freudian

methods can analyze the 'meaning' of literature; the analyses are sometimes "beautiful and suggestive" if incomplete. But he continues, "the meaning of a work cannot lie in the author's intention alone. It must also lie in its effect."¹⁹ And intentions vary,

as do effects, according to historical and sociological forces (among others). E.M.Forster, disagreeing with Gide over a question of form and plot, uses terms like "logical," "prearranged." The validity of applying such terms to plot in an aesthetic context is assumed.²⁰ And Harry Levin makes a convincing plea that criticism which considers the complex relationships between art and both

environmental and sociological factors has significance and validity.²¹

We think, finally, of Eriksonian analysis, which relies on art to represent, in a most sensitive way, the growth of personality; artistic standards might be based on the subtlety and sensitivity

of a work's portrayal of certain psychoanalytically important developmental crises. All of the examples but the last are taken from a single volume of criticism. They are offered to illustrate the willingness of critics, engaged in their profession, to study works of art --- in these cases, literature --- and to defeat them with widely different procedures. Criteria are moral, psychological, sociological, formal, and sometimes almost scientific. This is, again, what we have called a positive approach: an unflinching attempt to understand art and to help others understand it in whatever form it appears.

The philosophical approach to art generally proceeds negatively. This is not an absolute characterization, for philosophy is flexible. Still, getting at a philosophical conception of art involves accepting parts of the life of art so long as they do not fall within some other part of philosophical theory. The development may proceed in two ways. First, the philosopher may ignore art altogether and talk about all the things he knows art is not. We find this approach in J.O.Urmson's article "What Makes a Situation Aesthetic?"²²

"In a suitable context the adjective 'aesthetic' and the adverb 'aesthetically' may well be superfluous, but it is sometimes necessary to introduce one of these words in order to make it clear that when we refer, say, to a person's satisfaction we are not thinking of moral satisfaction, economic satisfaction, personal satisfaction, intellectual satisfaction, or any satisfaction other than aesthetic satisfaction."

One gets the feeling that Urmson counted up all the satisfactions he could think of. He goes on to say that while the various sorts of non-aesthetic satisfaction may not be generically separable from aesthetics sorts, we do have criteria for distinguishing one from another. Urmson begins from outside art and gradually works toward it by exclusion. It is worth noting that, to a certain degree,

Urmson rejects the critical approach to art we mentioned above: he denies that the critic can allow aesthetic satisfaction to depend in any way on a work's moral position. This is a predictable state of affairs.

The second way a negative approach to art may proceed begins with aesthetic judgements as raw data, and dissects them until it has removed all the unwanted elements whose explanations lie in other areas of philosophy. Whatever features cannot be thus removed are left as 'characteristic' of aesthetic judgements. The suspicion seems to be: we don't really know art, even if we think, on the face of it, that we do. Most definitional theories are of this type; they try to isolate (or, as it were, quarantine) aesthetic judgements, from judgements which are about art, but only impurely aesthetic. (The problem here stated with respect to aesthetic judgement could be otherwise formulated about other aesthetic creatures: attitude, activity, appreciation, etc.) One result of such a theory of exclusion and, as it were, rarification, is that 'the aesthetic' is successively defined as a feature of works of art, then as a set of criteria for judging things, then as an attitude in which to view things, and then finally as a mode of perception itself. The important point is that philosophy wants to discover what art is, working from a firm conviction about what it is not. This impulse, too, may be definitional. For definitions, we think, have an ideal form; the differentia of art tell us, at least, what it isn't.

The negative approach may arise from two series of gripes, one from aestheticians and one from non-aestheticians. The aesthetician gripes about those maverick elements which can intrude upon art in what seem irrelevant ways. Thus, the aesthetician may want

to prevent the moral public from condemning a work like Ulysses on what he considers to be the wrong (and, in fact, inadmissible) grounds: namely, grounds which ignore the aesthetic merits of the work. He may want to demand that we eliminate extraneous elements from our attention to works, e.g., plays or poems. Something of a poem is spoiled for us if we are absorbed in irrelevancies. The normal sort of example shows a jealous husband at a performance of Othello, or a psychoanalyst working on a poet's psyche through the poems. The philosopher's position is clear, but ultimately it begs the question. As we shall see, any exclusive approach to art must leave us dissatisfied. The non-aesthetician's gripe is largely epistemological. Art, insofar as it is considered to convey a kind of knowledge, has been taken to give knowledge of a different, and usually lower, grade from that provided by such other human endeavors as mathematics and science. This has led some philosophers to exclude art as morally treacherous in a perfect state. It has led others to develop elaborate theories which give the mechanisms of perception their own sort of knowledge. And more importantly it has led philosophers like Hume and Kant to try to fit art neatly into the rest of their epistemological schemes. Thus Kant sets out to discuss aesthetical judgement as the most problematical case of judgement; that sort of judgement with respect to which it is both crucial and difficult to determine whether the governing principles are subjective or objective. Judgements of taste are immediately set apart from the rest of his critical system; they are aesthetical, not strictly dealing with cognition. By 'aesthetical' we "understand that whose determining ground can be no other than subjective."²³ The motive is to render aesthetical judgements comprehensible by

seeing where they fit into the overall system; of course, there is more to this theory, as we shall see.

We have dwelt upon the definitional quest and the difference, as we have characterized it, between critical and philosophical approaches in aesthetics to set the stage for the kind of philosophical 'answer' we may expect to the 'problem of aesthetics.' The critic is often content to work for some sort of sharing of experiences. The philosopher wants something harder, more graspable. And this is where the problems of Chapter I begin to arise. The philosopher may throw out moral attitudes from art; he may deny practical or economic interests. If so, something must be left in art; (lots of people worry about it, after all.) The temptation is to hold up what is left, saying "Here it is. This is art." In the next chapter we will look at three things that have been held up: appearances, attitudes, and aspects.

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Chapter III

Three Theories

§ 3. Appearances

One thing we do with paintings, to make a wild understatement, is look at them. Similarly, we listen to music. Can we then say that what we are doing is attending to looks in one case, to sounds in the other, (and why not 'listens'?) Certainly, the step from 'looking' to 'looks' is no simple one. Nor is the following step: not only do we attend to looks or appearances; the important thing in aesthetics is attending to looks or appearances. There are, all the same, a number of theories which move from exclusion as described in Chapter II to a position which elevates 'looks' or 'appearances' to a place of supreme importance in painting, and analogously in the other arts. Mrs. Langer seems to support an extreme version of the theory. Works of art are themselves considered to be appearances; she talks of 'projections,' 'images,' 'abstractions,' and 'illusions.'¹ Vincent Tomas, in his widely discussed treatment of 'Aesthetic Vision,'² holds a view, on the face of it less extreme, which depends on 'attending to appearances' as the model for aesthetic vision. And J.O.Urmson holds the tip-toe version of the theory with his dictum that "in very simple cases of aesthetic evaluation ... the grounds given are frequently the way the object looks (shape and color), the way it sounds, smells, tastes or feels."³ These three theories are, at least, explicitly stated. However, there are many other aestheticians whose views are based indirectly on the same sort of idea. Thus Pepper seems, in even his most recent

writing to think of the true object of aesthetic appreciation (the work itself?) not as the 'stimulus object,' but as " a gathering together of many successive perceptual events."⁴ It is not uncommon to find current philosophy blandly holding up appearances as something important to bother with, despite many convincing (and published) arguments against this notion.⁵ It seems worthwhile, therefore, to set out the theory in its most persuasive form; we may then run through a class of problems which immediately arise.

The obvious question we might put to the assertion that in art we attend to appearances is: what is this attention supposed to exclude, if anything? How are we to characterize the appearance of a work of art? Tomas and Urmson give examples to explain their ideas. Take, for instance, the case of the penny. Sometimes (normally) when we look at a penny, the story goes, we pay no attention to its appearance except insofar as this is necessary to 'read the label', i.e., to tell that it is a penny. Aesthetic vision, on the other hand, is directed only towards appearances. "We do not care what, if anything, it is that appears."⁶ Thus, the aesthetic observer will presumably notice how the thing looks. He will say such things as "It looks elliptical." Urmson tries this example. "I may value a rose bush because it is hardy, prolific, disease-resistant and the like, but if I value the rose aesthetically the most obvious relevant grounds will be the way it looks, both in color and in shape, and the way it smells."⁷ From such examples about objects not normally considered to be 'art objects', we must move to the much more difficult cases of the arts themselves. The treatment is completely analagous, although Urmson admits that his suggestions may be limited in scope, and Tomas tries to restrict his

analysis to the visual arts. That is, ordinary attention to art objects (that is, presumably, ordinary vision trained on works of art, whatever that may be) has only superficial interest in appearances. But aesthetic appreciation and aesthetic vision concentrate on or derive from appearances, without regard for what appears; evidently, the appearance includes things like shape and color. The notion of appearance in art is clearly connected with perception, though the exact sense is not obvious. We will refer to any theory which considers that aesthetic experience is primarily a matter of attention to appearances, in some sense, as an 'appearance theory.'

Even so briefly stated, the theory has epistemological problems. Though what Tomas or Umson says does not match Ryle's "man in the tent" model of perception, we are brought dangerously close to a theory that does. Some of Tomas's remarks on the subject are not absolutely clear, but it seems that when he talks of the appearance of a man and the appearance of his portrait being 'in principle' identical, and in other places where "aesthetically seeing" means something like 'seeing visual sense perceptions' in some traditional way, Tomas is firmly entrenched in what Ryle calls the Sense-Datum theory. Ryle, for one, is not willing to allow the move from the verbal form "the penny looks elliptical" to the rather odd substantive form "the penny has an elliptical look."⁹ Clearly, there is no suggestion in saying "the penny looks elliptical" that we should ever, in fact, take it to be elliptical; it is not as if there were something there (the look) which is elliptical, unattached to the penny itself. Austin points out the importance of getting clear about the use of the words when we say things like "the penny looks elliptical."¹⁰ One obvious question is: when should we ever say

such a thing (outside of philosophy)? If we did say it, we might expect an answer like: "Well, it certainly looks round to me," Or Cohen's answer: "How do you suppose it got that way?" There are, moreover, difficulties in saying blandly that the appearance of a man and of his portrait might be the same. We might say that a picture looks like a man; perhaps we would better use 'resembles' but not 'appears like.' But consider the substantive forms. We would be saying very special things in both of the following cases. (i) The pictured man has the same look as the real man. --- e.g., sheepish. (ii) The man's appearance is the same as the picture's. (Or, perhaps, they have appropriately similar appearances.) E.g., they both look shabby, and old, and, as it were, dusty....as if hung in an attic for years. In both these cases we have a relatively specific sense of 'look' or 'appearance' in mind. Try this: it is possible to imagine an elaborate system of mirrors and empty picture frames, and perhaps special eye-glasses, such that we might be fooled into confusing a man and his portrait. But even in this case we should not be tempted to say that the appearance of the man and of his portrait were identical. We were fooled. The sense of 'appearance' called for --- in which we could make this mistake --- is quite special: we might almost say 'trumped-up'. The theorist must convince us that this special sense bears on art. The relevance of these incomplete remarks is that if the appearance theory is to triumph in simple examples, its terms must be justified. Austin and Ryle, among others, have raised significant doubts about the epistemological contrast between appearance and real object; the aesthetician whose theory turns on this distinction must repair it a bit.

We might investigate one further point about the epistemology

of 'appearance.' One theory is that all we ever see (or perceive) are sense data, perceptions. For Tomas seeing aesthetically is moreover to be contrasted with that sort of ordinary perception wherein we merely 'read the label' off an object. Thus, even within the 'sense perception' theory, Tomas considers that aesthetic vision dwells on appearances in a way that ordinary vision does not. Stolnitz points out that, even when we are surveying the change in our hand to pick out a penny, the 'appearance of the penny' does not, as Tomas would have it, go unobserved; rather, the man is said to 'single out' just those perceptions necessary to label the thing right.¹¹ Thus, he notices that it is copper colored, not silver; that its edge is smooth, not notched. That is, appearances, in this sense, are quite a part of 'ordinary vision.' But there is a danger in using this notion of appearance, for we are liable to lose works of art altogether; if the work becomes the appearance, then it tends to float away. Whether or not anything turns on the examples here, we are left with two problems: (i) how are we to make the notions relevant for art; and (ii) how much of our theory can rest on such shaky epistemological grounds.

Unfortunately, our objections to appearances are more than epistemological. The notion seems on the one hand unclear and on the other wrong, or over-ambitious, for art. That is, first, the theory does not distinguish the relevant sorts of appearances for art. Second, of the various candidates advanced as relevant appearances, none turns out to be adequate when urged as the sole or principal concern of aesthetics. Thus, for example, the sense --- whatever it may be --- in which a penny has an elliptical appearance could not be the sense for which it is right to say that we attend to a painting's

appearance or those of other works of art. First, our business with respect, say, to a piece of sculpture, involves describing the work, not merely its appearance, from a variety of positions --- including those positions from which the work might in one way or another appear to be distorted. Moreover, it is misleading to suppose that aesthetically relevant appearances are what Sibley and Tomas call "mere appearances", i.e., those which are at issue in phrases like 'appears from here' or '...to me' or '...in this light.' Cohen points out that one important feature of works of art is that they are public.¹² When we make aesthetic judgements, we are talking (often) about how the work looks, not merely how it looks to us. It is a mistake to suppose that we are really talking about something that only we ourselves can see. Furthermore, the appearance theory cannot simply mean that attending to appearances is only necessary to our experience of art. The claim, to be interesting, must say something about the sufficiency of such activity. Paul Ziff writes that answering the interests of art is always a matter of "performing certain actions: looking, listening, reading, etc."¹³ If the appearance theory asserts no more than this, then it is not only trivial but, in Cohen's words, trifling. One has at least to look to see a painting. We want to add that looking may not be enough.

We might consider Austin's useful survey of some proper uses of the verbal forms 'looks' and 'appears.'

1. (a) It looks blue (round, angular, &c.)
(b) He looks a gentleman (a tramp, a sport, a typical Englishman).
She looks chic (a fright, a regular frump).
2. (a) It /a colour/ looks like blue /the colour/.
(b) He looks like a gentleman (a sailor, a horse).
3. (a) It looks as if it is raining (empty, hollow).
(b) He looks as if he is 60 (going to faint).
4. (a) It looks as though we shan't be able to get in.
(b) He looks as though he's worried about something.

1. (a) It appears blue (upside down, elongated, &c.).
(b) He appears a gentleman.
3. (and 4) (a) It appears as if (as though)....
(b) He appears as if (as though)....
5. (a) It appears to expand.
It appears a forgery.
(b) He appears to like her (to have recovered his temper).
He appears to be an Egyptian.
6. (a) It appears as a dark speck on the horizon.
(b) He appears as a man of good character (sc. from this narrative. We can also say of an actor that he 'appeared as Napoleon'.)
7. It appears that they've all been eaten.¹⁴

We note that all of these uses do not, clearly, have an associated substantive form. We can speak of a worried look or, perhaps, a hollow look; but not, surely, a raining look. And what about a forged appearance, or an Egyptian one; or an 'all-eaten-appearance'?* This study brings out the question whether, say, paintings have looks or appearances at all. A fresh painting, with the canvas still wet, might well have a new look (as well as a fresh smell). Cohen speaks of faded looks, and we can easily imagine expensive and finished looks. But it would not be urged that such looks are the proper subject for aesthetic attention --- perhaps they are with a penny, but not with a painting. We have, often, to ignore just these looks to get at the work of art. Similarly, it is by no means easy to imagine a use of 'appearance' from one of our examples with 'appears'. We may say that a painting first appeared in 1950; hence, its first appearance was in 1950. But this appearance is of aesthetic interest mostly as history, as a bit of information on an exhibition program. Perhaps we could say that a piece of sculpture appeared somewhat

*Furthermore, Austin points to a possible distinction between looks and appearances. In an instructive footnote¹⁴ he distinguishes, for example, 'not liking his looks' from 'not liking his appearance.' And sometimes, looks may be part of appearances. Looks seem more tied to the visual than do appearances, though we might not be willing to press the point.

diminished in stature when placed in the large room, much as we might say that a piece of music was laughable when played so seriously, or so badly; will we speak of appearances here? It is no help to bypass the question of whether works of art have appearances by pointing to a special act of 'attending to the appearance of ...' We would deny that 'attending to the appearance' marks out a special sort of perceptual act at all. In the penny example, attending to the appearance is perhaps nothing more than scrutinizing the coin a bit more carefully than usual, e.g., checking its genuineness by examining the lustre of the metal, or Lincoln's expression. Does it look all right? If a philosopher points to a painting, on the other hand, saying, "Attend to its appearance", we are a bit baffled. If we do anything in response, we likely enough go on looking at the painting as before. If it were harmless, the appearance theory would be merely unenlightening.*

The last two classes of problems about this theory involve ways in which the notion of appearances is, unfortunately, harmful for aesthetics. First, the notion and its epistemological trappings misleadingly draw our attention to a distinction between illusion (appearance) and reality. Merely stating that aesthetics is concerned

*Sibley¹⁵ makes some interesting remarks about 'appearances' in an intuitive sense, or 'looks' ---- especially in paintings or parts of paintings. He finds some looks to be characteristically aesthetic, e.g., smooth looks, glossy looks, pure or vivid looks; these looks have some sort of aesthetic connotation whenever they occur. Some looks, on the other hand, need explanation if they are mentioned in aesthetic conversations, e.g., angular looks. And some seem to have no place in such contexts, e.g., equilateral looks. Whether this classification, construed as an effort to salvage some looks for aesthetic purposes, can succeed is a question whose answer will not diminish the evident plausibility of the distinctions.

with appearances may not imply such a distinction, but judging from the popularity of the 'illusion' theory the idea is a natural development. Clearly, when a philosopher insists that the proper subject of aesthetic experience is only (and exactly) the appearance of the work, then we naturally ask what is being excluded. The evident answer from the epistemologist would be: we pay no attention to the way things really are, only to how they appear. There are a variety of ways we might make sense out of this requirement, though none need be significant for art.

It may be useful at first to note that in many cases where we use 'looks' and 'appears' in simple senses, there is no suggestion that there is a difference between the 'look' and the way the thing really is. Thus, to take an example from Austin, we may say "it looks angular" and mean, absolutely, that it really is angular. As Cohen points out: "Some looks are aspects of reality. A man with a mean look has it even if he is a saint."¹⁶

The most obvious way we might 'distinguish appearance from reality' is reflected in the way we say that 'appearances are deceiving' or that he is 'just keeping up appearances.' And here we are suggesting some kind of doubt; e.g., "His gentlemanly appearance is deceiving" suggests that he really is not so much of a gentleman. But merely "His appearance is deceiving" when there is nothing special about his appearance, leaves us wondering what is deceiving about him, and about his appearance. We might say "The photograph appears retouched, but it's not." When would we say that we are interested in appearance and not reality, in such examples? An easy case: a photographer wants a fashionable looking man for advertising copy, and he doesn't care who the man is, so long as his appearance is

that, if this is something more than an experiment in perception, we are interested only in the way it appears; that we do not care what it is really like, in some sense? We may distinguish two cases to illuminate the relationship between 'appearance' and 'reality' here.

(i) Sometimes we have ways to determine (and reasons to want to determine) the way a work of art is, no matter how it appears. A good case is an optical illusion, which an artist (in painting or in film) might employ. Consider:

This set of lines looks much taller than that.

Well, it isn't, you know.

OR The colors seem to clash and fight and jump where they meet. Of course, they don't really move at all.

Here, the facts can be determined (e.g., with some measuring instrument or by squinting). Suppose a dispute were to arise about such cases. (This is difficult to imagine in art.) We can at least say this: if such illusions existed in a given painting we would be interested both in the way the painting looks (when you let your eyes go funny) and in the way it really is, determined by some means. Unless we can describe and settle both the appearance and the reality, then the essential surprise when we discover the illusion will be lost. (The artist might have intended this surprise.)

(ii) In more interesting cases we do care what the work is really like, but we do not know how to discredit a conflicting appearance that presents itself to someone else. Imagine:

(a) It appears (looks) greenish-blue (e.g., the color of a sky).

How can you say that? It's more blueish-green.

(b) The figure appears (looks) upside-down.

No, no, it's clearly right-side-up.

Here the people are talking as if the question could be settled. But, in (a) we will not be convinced by an instrument which determines the exact color by counting angstrom units. Each man can stick to his position, saying that no matter what the evidence, it still looks more greenish (or blueish). In (b) there is no instrument which could settle the question. One could stop a passer-by and secure his opinion, but this would not make a satisfying solution. The example is designed to show something of what is at stake in an appearance theory. We do not maintain that appearances are unimportant to art. (Although a sense of 'appearance' derived from the philosophically loaded notion of 'private sensation' is positively harmful to aesthetics.) Neither, though, is reality unimportant, when contrasted with appearances. When we cannot decide how a work really is, and when we have conflicting opinions about how it looks, we want to decide the question; we get a helpless feeling in conversations about art: as if to say "But, but, don't you see?"

Tomas claims that "the distinction of importance to epistemologists between 'appearing x' and 'being x' is of no importance to the aesthetic observer."¹⁷ This dictum is as ambiguous as its mate: "the question of reality does not arise." For Tomas's answer to the question of reality is that the question is indifferent or unimportant. Thus, if somehow the Pope and his picture present the same appearance, then "the question that it is two different stimulus objects that appear in the same way is irrelevant."¹⁸ The many problems with this account have been treated definitively elsewhere. We may summarize as follows. First, the question of reality truly does not arise in such examples. It is precisely the aesthetic observer, the one with keen sensibility, who knows not to bow before

a painting of the Pope; it is, after all, only a painting. There is no question at all of its being real.¹⁹ So the question is not one of indifference, nor is it one of uncertainty, except perhaps in dreams. Second, when we talk about art, we say certain things which it would be impossible to say about real people or other 'real things'. Thus, to bend a Wittgensteinian example, we do not say of a real fork "My, that is so like a fork." Similarly, we do not, under normal circumstances, stand before the Pope and say: "So lifelike; it almost breathes!" Saying many of the things we do about art --- about realism, as well as about style and composition --- would be, as Cohen says, absurd and immoral if the reality of works of art were not perfectly clear, if tragedies were real and portraits lived.²⁰ Finally, it happens that some* artists keep constantly before our minds the tension between the real and the apparent, the played and the imagined, the actual and the illusory. (This fact is connected with the rejection of notions like psychical distance which we will discuss in the next section.) Thus, Goddard holds his camera on a scene while his actors turn most ridiculously to address the theatre audience --- a clear case of the wickedest sin for most high-school actors. Stoinitz uses the very obvious 'played' or 'produced' aspect of Brecht as a further example.²¹ The methods for exploiting the relationship between artist, art, and observer are subtle and diverge widely. These considerations have been

*Professor Cavell, in a conversation, has pointed out that, in particular, it is modern artists who keep the tension between real and apparent before our minds. It is characteristic of modern art (e.g., modern painting) that the traditional temptation to say that art is appearance (or illusion) drops out. On the other hand, there is something incomplete about saying that a non-representational painting is only a thing of its own sort, i.e., a collection of color blobs and paint. Are we stuck with works of art as very special things?

directed against the simple model that art is appearance or illusion (merely, or exactly) and that reality doesn't count. A profitable investigation for philosophy could grow out of these thoughts.

Clearly, there is tension between illusion and reality in art, even if the simple model is wrong. We might investigate how it is, for example, that artists are in a position to bounce us around between illusion and real life. One result is difference between things as they are and things as they appear in art. (Art's reality vs. reality itself?) These thoughts are interesting only if art is more than appearance.

Lastly, the appearance theory has prima facie applicability only to the visual arts. Tomas recognizes this limitation, but other philosophers have been tempted to suppose that the theory can be extended by analogy to other arts. Hopefully we have made the impulse to extend the theory somewhat less attractive. Even if the notion of 'appearance' were useful, there would be difficult problems. Are we prepared to speak of music as having 'sounds' in any relevant sense? (Presumably, 'off-key' or 'faraway' sounds are not relevant.²²) With respect to a poem, one version of an aesthetic vision theory might hold that the appearance of a poem involves the shapes of its letters (or with some poets, the arrangement of the words on the page). Surely, such an interpretation is uncharitable both to poetry and to philosophy; what would do better? Finally, we must face all of literature, and mystifying arts like drama, dance, and cinema. Can we even find appearances here?

Where the appearance theory seems right, it seems accordingly trivial. We do look at paintings, and pieces of sculpture; we do listen to symphonies and read poems. Merely to say this, however,

omits a good deal that is aesthetically relevant. What is unobjectionable in the penny story, which began this section, is that it is possible (though not necessarily aesthetically interesting) to look more closely than we normally do at a penny. Surely, many museum-goers could manage a better average per painting per trip. These thoughts, however, by no means mark out the differentia of aesthetic experience.

§ 4. Attitude & Knowledge

A different path in the search for the aesthetic is uncovered by the following sort of argument. It may be that there is no element in each work of art whose presence makes that work art. And it may be impossible to guarantee an aesthetic response to art simply by attending to appearances. We notice ordinary features of works of art; what makes this experience aesthetic is not what we notice, but how we notice. We look in a certain way; we adopt a certain attitude. Different descriptions of this attitude have enjoyed various popularity. Sibley writes that we can "notice no 'typically aesthetic' features /of art/, but ordinary features in a certain way, with admiration, delight or distaste."²³ More ambitious is Bullough's famous idea of 'psychical distance' --- a factor which operates, at the lowest possible level, to keep us 'out of gear', in aesthetic experience, with 'practical needs and ends.' It is lack of distance which makes the yokel jump onto the stage to rescue the heroine; which counts out the jealous husband at Othello who can't watch the play without thinking of his own wife; and which denies critics qua critics any aesthetic experience.²⁴ Bullough's interesting notion has been given at least three interpretations, based

mostly on different examples. First, Bullough's example that critics make a bad audience because of their 'practical activities' which are 'constantly endangering their Distance' is used by attitude theories which exclude from the aesthetic attitude any 'ulterior interest or purpose.' Second, Bullough claims that Distance changes "our relation to characters /in drama/, renders them seemingly fictitious, not that the fictitiousness of the characters alters our feelings towards them." If we can make any sense out of this, it again raises the question, differently motivated in the last section, of how our beliefs are managed in art, of the contrast between appearance and reality. The variant of the attitude theory seems to have a clear path: to exclude reality in some way, namely, by a psychological attitude. Third, attitude theories can be created out of appearance theories by shifting the emphasis from 'appearances' to 'attending to appearances', in which case the aesthetic attitude involves close attention to the 'individual physiognomy' of the object.²⁵

We will discuss only the attitude theory which denies any ulterior interest to the aesthetic attitude. The other variants are closely related to the appearance theories mentioned above. A profitable line for discrediting the attitude theory is to point out that "whenever some actual limit /to attitudes, feelings, etc., compatible with aesthetic experience/ has been proposed, in theory or in practice, it has been characteristic of modern artists to attempt to demonstrate its arbitrariness."²⁶ Artists are, like Professor Aiken, 'constitutionally suspicious' of theories which put this or that material, this or that feeling, this or that attitude, this or that experience outside the bounds of art. "Art' is an

open textured word.

It will, however, be worthwhile to discover what motivates the attitude theories. Granted that such theories cannot isolate a unique solution to the 'problem' of aesthetics, there does seem to be something here which some critics have tried wrongly to cover. The idea that aesthetic judgements are made in a disinterested or impartial way began, at least, with Kant.

"We wish only to know if this mere representation of the object is accompanied in me with satisfaction, however indifferent I may be as regards the existence of the object of this representation. We easily see that in saying it is beautiful and in showing that I have taste, I am concerned, not with that in which I depend on the existence of the object, but with that which I make out of this representation in myself. Every one must admit that a judgement about beauty, in which the least interest mingles, is very partial and is not a pure judgement of taste."

Kant includes a criterion of impartiality; the criterion is not met, for example, by a critic who evaluates his son's painting or an author who reviews his own book. And there does seem to be a way to keep oneself impartial when appraising debates, history or art. If, however, impartiality excludes sympathy, compassion, gaiety, understanding, dreaming and wishing then art does not demand impartiality. We take sides in some novels; we have our fantasy heroes; we wish for sweet poetic love, and we understand poetic justice. In painting, too, it is not clear what interests impartiality can exclude if we are to look into a Rembrandt face with understanding. What sense of 'impartiality' is to be applied to art? Taste seems to imply partiality. We may indeed have reservations about a mother's appraisal of her son's performance in a play. But it is worth noting that if the mother is some authority on acting --- an actress herself, a teacher --- her appraisal may be an excellent indication