Is Psychology Relevant to Aesthetics?

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IS PSYCHOLOGY RELEVANT TO ÆSTHETICS?

THE major purpose of this paper is not to raise questions of aesthetics but to raise some questions about aesthetics; namely, the logic of the question "Is psychological information (or scientific information in general) relevant to solving the problems of aesthetics?" The attention of this paper will be focused on the relation of psychological information to the philosophical problems of aesthetics. In particular, I shall discuss (1) experiments which are designed to discover if certain kinds of works of art have meaning, (2) experiments which are designed to establish preference orders among items of aesthetic interest, and (3) the question of whether the description of aesthetic experience is a psychological question. My thesis is that psychology is not relevant to aesthetics.

Since the time of Fechner's *Vorschule der Aesthetik*, a considerable body of empirical data has been collected under the titles "psychology of art" and "psychological aesthetics." However, there has been little or no examination of the relation of such information to the solution of aesthetic problems. There has been, nevertheless, no lack of writers who have assumed, believed, or asserted that psychological information is useful. Edward Bullough, an early advocate and practitioner of experimental or psychological aesthetics, wrote a short article, "The Relation of Aesthetics to Psychology."[1] The title of Bullough's discussion leads one to think that he might treat the problem of this paper; all that he does, however, is assert without analyzing the problem that it is a task of psychology to analyze "aesthetic consciousness."

It is assumed by some experimentalists that the positive relation of psychology to aesthetics is so obvious that anyone who is skeptical is either antiscientific or hopelessly woolly-minded. For example, L. L. Thurstone writes of his participation in a seminar devoted to aesthetic theory:

[1] *British Journal of Psychology*, X (1919), 43-50.

In some of those discussions it occurred to me that the question at issue could be treated as a question of experimental fact, and I ventured to suggest how the psychophysical methods could be adapted to obtain an empirical answer. . . . It was an illuminating experience to discover that some of my friends in the humanities were hostile to the very idea of subjecting questions of aesthetic theory to empirical inquiry. On one of those occasions a friend showed me a quotation from Aristotle that settled the matter for him. It was heresy when I suggested that we knew more about this problem than Aristotle.[2]

These remarks recall the philosophy professor who refused to look through Galileo's telescope. Contemporary philosophers such as Eliseo Vivas and Murray Krieger agree in some measure with Thurstone. They assert in the introduction to their book of readings in aesthetics that while aesthetic problems can be defined analytically they cannot be solved in an a priori way. "Aesthetics is an empirical discipline. . . . If we are to make any headway in aesthetics we have to refer to the facts, and these, we know, are not yet fully explored."[3] Several pages later Vivas and Krieger write, "The serious and intense labor which psychologists have spent on aesthetics in the last seventy-five years cannot be ignored, even if, unfortunately, all this labor has panned out very little of genuine value to the aesthetician."[4] The paucity of results suggests that either we must work, wait, and hope on the psychological aesthetics front or that the assumption that psychological information is relevant to questions of aesthetics is confused.

Thomas Munro has devoted very considerable space to the discussion of science and aesthetics. The view that Munro sets forth is wider than the question under discussion here, since he maintains that aesthetics is or can become a science. If his view is correct, however, psychological information is certainly relevant to the problems of aesthetics. Munro attributes several kinds of motives to opponents of his view: (1) the contention that artistic

[2] Quoted in C. C. Pratt, "Aesthetics," in *Annual Review of Psychology*, XII (1961), 73.

[3] Eliseo Vivas and Murray Krieger, eds., *The Problems of Aesthetics* (New York and Toronto, 1953), p. 10.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

value is subjective and aesthetic feelings too subtle for scientific treatment; (2) the fear that "science must mechanize and deaden what it penetrates";[5] or (3) the "attempt to revive the old absolutistic belief in fixed principles of good art independent of human nature."[6] None of these is involved in the arguments I shall present nor are the arguments motivated by any of them. What does Munro mean when he says that aesthetics is a science?

> An experimental attitude in aesthetics would imply making use of all possible clues to the nature of aesthetic experience, from a variety of sources and modes of investigation. It would imply putting all these clues together, and on that basis working toward tentative generalizations through induction and the testing of hypotheses.[7]

The object, then, of the science of aesthetics is a special kind of experience, the aesthetic experience. Part II of this paper is devoted to a discussion of what it means to take "aesthetic experience" as an object of empirical inquiry. Munro's conception of aesthetics omits the problem of the analysis of the concepts of critical descriptions and evaluation. In any event, although Munro repeatedly makes statements of the kind above, which very generally characterize aesthetics as a science, summarizes the methods and results of experimental aesthetics, and exhorts us to intensify research efforts, he never penetrates to the problem I am trying to deal with—to show the relation or lack of relation of scientific information to aesthetics. In addition, the way in which he conceives of the nature of science (as implied by some of his assertions) vitiates much of what he has to say. Consider his use of "scientific" in the following sentence: "The more scientific view is that there is no one right definition for a word; each word is a symbol to which various meanings are attached by common usage."[8] The problem of the analysis of the nature of definition is not a scientific task at all; it is purely a philosophical one. Munro is using "scientific" to mean "intelligent" or perhaps "adequate." Of course, we all want to do aesthetics intelligently.

[5] Thomas Munro, *Toward Science in Aesthetics* (New York, 1956), p. 4.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 13.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

It is usual for philosophers to discuss or at least mention two distinct kinds of questions when they write about aesthetics, especially when they write introductory texts. One group of questions centers around what may be called logical considerations: the meaning of critical concepts and the truth of critical statements, both descriptive and evaluative. Typical problems of this first type are "Can music have meaning?" "Can paintings make statements?" "Is it proper to make use of the intention of the artist in criticism?" The other group of questions centers around what is thought of as clearly a psychological consideration, the nature of aesthetic experience. Monroe C. Beardsley, for example, makes this distinction in the introduction to his important book, calling the former "philosophical aesthetics" and the latter "psychological aesthetics," and asserts that his book is a book in "philosophical aesthetics."[9] But he adds:

> Nevertheless, we shall see that we cannot ignore psychology; its data and conclusions will bear upon ours at many points. For example, when we consider the logic of evaluation, we are led to ask about the nature of aesthetic experience, and this is a psychological question. Where the psychological data are as yet too sparse to answer the question decisively, we can at least analyze the question, and formulate it as clearly as possible, so that we can see what sort of psychological data would be required in order to answer it.[10]

Beardsley, however, devotes only four pages near the end of his book to a description of aesthetic experience.

Beardsley asserts that the nature of aesthetic experience is related to critical evaluation, and I think this contention is correct. But he also says that there is a problem of the nature of aesthetic experience, which is a psychological question, and that all the data are not yet in. It would seem then that art criticism is being hampered by the lack of psychological information.

To speak simply of the relation of psychological information to aesthetics obscures a distinction which must be made. There are at least two different ways in which the question of relevance of psychological information to aesthetics can be raised: (1) "Is

[9] *Aesthetics* (New York, 1958), p. 7.
[10] *Ibid.*

psychological information relevant to the solution of what I have called logical problems (can music have meaning? and so on)?" and (2) "Is psychological information relevant to the description of aesthetic experience?" The former question generally is concerned with the results of the psychological laboratory —the recording of data on the responses of subjects who listen to music and the like. The relation of the latter question to the psychological laboratory is not clear.

The main discussion of this article will revolve around these two questions. However, I wish to discuss two points in order to dismiss them. First, psychological information which relates to the problem of why men create works of art is ruled out as irrelevant because aesthetics (at least philosophical aesthetics) is concerned only with the language and concepts which are used to describe and evaluate works of art. Aesthetics is not concerned with how works of art have come to be but only with the finished consumer product. Second, psychological information may be helpful to the critic whose job it is to describe and evaluate works of art: for example, a drama critic may fruitfully draw upon psychological information in analyzing the plot of a play, the relationship between the characters in a play, and so on. In this latter example the psychological information has no special relevance to art as art: there is no difference important to the problem under discussion between describing the neurotic behavior of a character in a play and a real person. Consequently, these two uses of psychological information are not included in this discussion.

I

Now I shall turn to the first question, which is central to this paper, "Is psychological information relevant to the solution of logical problems of aesthetics?" I have selected for discussion examples of experiments in the psychology of art which I hope are representative of the various types of work done in that field. The two main classes of experimental inquiry are experiments designed to discover if particular works of art have meaning (of various sorts), and experiments designed to discover preference orders.

I shall begin by examining "meaning" experiments, and the first example concerns the question "Can music have meaning?" (I am not going to try to answer the question, but only examine the logic of the question.) Vernon Lee tries to apply the questionnaire method to this problem by asking a group of subjects the question "Does music seem to you to have a message, a meaning beyond itself?"[11] Half the subjects answered in the affirmative, saying that if music did not have a message "it would constitute only sensual enjoyment, and be unworthy of their consideration."[12] The other subjects answered in the negative. The tie aspect of the results seems to prevent us from drawing any conclusions about the question asked. But is the "vote" of the subjects relevant at all? Suppose there had been 100 per cent agreement among the subjects, would the situation be improved? No, because the "query a subject" approach misconceives the nature of the problem. What is the proper way of deciding whether a set of marks or sounds carries a message? Suppose you found a piece of paper on which there were marks and wondered if it were a message. What would you do? First, you might work with the marks to see if they were a coded English message, that is, a message originally written in English and then put into a code. If this method failed, one might ask foreigners if these marks were a message in their language. Foreigner A says "No." Foreigner B truthfully says, "Yes," and correctly reads you the message. Note that the situation is quite different from the situation of subjects in a psychological experiment. Foreigner A's negative answer is not a datum from which one draws a scientific conclusion about the marks. Foreigner B's behavior is not a scientific datum either, although it solves the problem. What B's behavior proves is that the marks have certain characteristics which enable them to convey a message; B could teach us to use his language and then we could read the message ourselves. The essential point to be distinguished here is the logical difference between understanding a language and drawing scientific conclusions from data.

[11] Vernon Lee, "Varieties of Musical Experience," in *Problems of Aesthetics*, pp. 298-299.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 299.

The situation with the set of musical sounds is not completely parallel—there is no point in looking for musical "foreigners"—but the circumstances are similar enough to indicate what the proper procedure is for settling the music-message question. One should examine the sounds (as they interact with listeners) to see if they have the characteristics which enable a set of marks or sounds to bear meanings. This sort of inquiry is not a scientific one to which the collection of data is relevant; it is a logical inquiry about language. (Are the sounds part of language or not?) Beardsley uses what I would call "the logical inquiry" approach very acutely in discussing the music-meaning question. In discussing the parallel question "Do paintings make statements?" Beardsley even formulates the minimum features that a set of marks (or whatever) must have in order to be symbols in a language.[13] If the point of my discussion is correct, then one kind of inquiry in psychological aesthetics is pointless, since it misconceives the nature of the problem to which it is addressing itself: it has mistaken a logical problem for a scientific one.

A second kind of "meaning" experiment tests whether subjects can match works of nonverbal art with descriptive adjectives. Pratt characterizes such inquiries as attempts to see if a subject can identify "tertiary qualities" in works of art.[14] Pratt reports the following experiment done with descriptive adjectives and abstract paintings. (I suspect he means nonobjective paintings). Expert judges selected several paintings and agreed that certain adjectives "fittingly described the respective moods of the designs."[15] The subject's "matchings were far above chance, ranging from 66 per cent to one design correctly matched by every subject."[16] Pratt reports another experiment which made use of musical passages rather than paintings. In this experiment "227 subjects listened to passages from Brahms (stately), Mendelssohn (sprightly), Mozart (wistful), and Tchaikowski (vigorous) and made correct matchings well over 90 per cent in every case."[17]

[13] *Op. cit.*, pp. 372-373.
[14] *Op. cit.*, pp. 78-79.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 79.
[16] *Loc. cit.*
[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

What do these kinds of experiments aim to show? Presumably, that the nonexpert subjects agree with the experts; but where does this leave us? Suppose the nonexperts had not agreed with the experts, would we be willing to say that such works of art do not have "tertiary qualities," that we ought not to speak of Mendelssohn being sprightly? What would count as evidence for the assertion, "This Mendelssohn passage is 'sprightly' "? We all know what "sprightly" means, that is, know the various kinds of situations to which it is appropriate to apply "sprightly"; so there is no problem there. The only problem is whether the Mendelssohn passage has characteristics which can properly be said to be sprightly, but this is not a problem about which it is necessary or even proper to poll subjects. The problem is to be solved by an analysis of the Mendelssohn passage to see if it has the "right" kind of characteristics, possibly, for example, to see if the sound rhythm has a structure similar to the pattern of a lively, skipping movement of some animal. To decide whether the Mendelssohn passage has the "right" kind of characteristics is a matter of understanding or apprehending the structure of a set of elements. If a critic is competent (has knowledge and understanding of the kinds of works of art he is talking about), it simply is unnecessary to seek information from others (especially nonexperts; e.g., college sophomores) to ascertain if a certain set of elements in a work of art has a particular form.

The actual problem which the experiment purports to be solving has actually been solved (if it ever can be) in the designing of the experiment, since the experts have already selected the correct adjectives at the beginning. And, incidentally, the basis of the selection of the correct adjectives by the experts would have to be the kind of analysis of the works of art just described. Furthermore, reflect on what would happen if the experts disagreed about the appropriateness of a particular adjective to a particular work of art. Would they settle the issue by waiting to see what the nonexperts said? I think not. They would dispute among themselves about the characteristics of the work of art, and such a dispute can only be decided by "pointing" to the various features of a work of art. No appeal to numbers is relevant to the question.

The second main type of psychology-of-art experiment is the

preference test. Various elements (shapes, colors, sounds, etc.) are paired (generally) and a subject is asked which of the elements is preferred. Preference orders are established, although it is possible that a subject prefers *a* to *b* and *b* to *c* but prefers *c* to *a*. Even if this kind of "odd" case occurs, a preference order can be established; it just will not be a simple transitive one. Some aestheticians take a rather despairing, albeit still hopeful, attitude toward the psychology of art (preference experiments, etc.). Douglas N. Morgan outlines the work in the psychology of art in an article.[18] He concludes his article by saying that he does not think that we have learned very much from experiments in the psychology of art. He writes, "If pressed, I will admit that I do not expect—unless we alter our approach somewhat—that we will learn a great deal more in this direction, at least within the next three thousand years."[19] Morgan gives three reasons for the lack of progress. The first is "the empirical fact that our experiences of works of art in appreciation, and artists' experience in creation, are admitted by all hands to be highly complex."[20] To this fact by way of contrast Morgan writes:

> It is not at all evident, or perhaps it is even unlikely, that discrete observations gleaned in the sterile atmosphere of the usual psychological laboratory are now legitimate warrant for *any* very interesting or useful generalizations about the aesthetic experience. Responding to an El Greco on a museum wall simply isn't much like comparing cardboard rectangles in a classroom."[21]

Morgan does not give up on psychological aesthetics, however, and as a second reason for a lack of progress suggests that the psychology of art "is still in a stone age" of scientific development.[22] The third reason Morgan suggests is that we have failed to ask the right questions before setting up our experiments. This difficulty can be corrected, he feels:

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[18] "Psychology and Art Today: A Summary and Critique," in *Problems of Aesthetics*, pp. 30-47.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

[21] *Loc. cit.*

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 47.

In the psychology of art we must imaginatively select in advance of experiment *which* factors, when correlated, will give us interesting and important results. This requires some hard thinking, some imagination, some kind of *theory*, however tentative, some "exploratory hypothesis" guessed at from earlier work, or from common sense observation, or wherever.[23]

This last quotation has an air of quiet desperation about it. Morgan is convinced that there is some scientific problem to be solved but thinks that neither he nor anyone else has yet been able to see the problem in a way that it can be fruitfully approached. Morgan is right—looking at an El Greco and preferring it to some other painting is more complicated than comparing cardboard triangles. If there is a scientific problem to be solved in this context, however, it would seem that there should be some relevance of the simple preference choice to the complex preference choice. It is a strange argument to reject x as evidence which throws light on y because x is very simple and y is very complex, when x and y are of the same logical type. One of the reasons (among many others) that psychologists experiment with rats, monkeys, and the like is that they are simpler organisms than human beings. There is something odd about Morgan's argument. In any event, it is not necessary that preference experiments pair very simple elements. In fact, I know of one study in progress which pairs a series of nonobjective paintings in an attempt to arrive at a preference ordering of the paintings. Once a preference order is established, however, it is not clear how the ordering will be relevant to aesthetics.

At this point it is appropriate to raise the question "For what aesthetic purpose is it supposed that preference orders are established?" Certainly for more than to show that such orders can be established. That preference in art is as orderly as preference in other human activities scarcely needs establishing, although it is perhaps comforting to know this as a well-established fact. I suspect that the main purpose which is envisaged is that the information about preference will serve as a basis for normative principles which can be used in art criticism. But how can such

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

information form a basis for normative principles? In his book, *The Philosophy of Art*, C. J. Ducasse summarily rejects the aesthetic importance of the fact of preference orders: "What can be done with that hard-won fact? Virtually nothing."[24] The irrelevance of preference orders can be shown most clearly by reflecting upon the question: Would the result of any preference test change the mind of any critic or aesthetician about what is important in art? I think the answer is clearly "No." The logic of the matter is somewhat similar (although of course not completely parallel) to the logic of the question: Would you change your mind about arithmetic if you discovered that a pint of liquid *A* added to a pint of liquid *B* did not give you two pints of liquid? Both arithmetic and the preferable in art are impervious to experimentation. For example, how is a critic, in evaluating a work of art, to take into account the fact that certain shapes, meters, and so on are preferred by one class of people, or for that matter, by all people? Aestheticians and critics know what they need to know about preference, if, in fact, they need to know anything about preference. The situation in aesthetics and criticism is not comparable to a frequent situation in engineering when a project is held up because of the lack of scientific information which is not yet available. Another point, or perhaps it is the same point put differently, involves the old problem of how can *ought* be derived from *is*. No matter how many data are collected, they still remain descriptions (the *is*) and no normative principles (the *ought*) can be derived from the descriptions alone. I am not, of course, suggesting that critical reasons cannot be given in support of evaluative judgments. I would deny, however, that statements about the preferences of some person, group of persons, or all persons can be used as supporting reasons. The only proper kind of supporting statement or reason is one that points out some characteristic of an art object. I shall return to the discussion of preference tests at the conclusion of the paper, giving additional arguments to show their pointlessness for aesthetic theory.

[24] New York, 1929, p. 13.

II

I now wish to turn to the second and last question with which I shall deal, namely, "Is psychological information relevant to the description of aesthetic experience?" I am led to ask this question by such assertions as Beardsley's in the already quoted passage that the question of the nature of aesthetic experience is a psychological question. Consider what Beardsley says near the end of his book when he comes to a discussion of the nature of aesthetic experience and particularly the question of what, if anything, is common to all aesthetic experiences. He writes:

> This is at least an empirical question, open to inquiry. And some inquiry has been made, though many *mysteries* remain. However, we can be reasonably confident of certain generalizations, which some writers have obtained by acute introspection, and which each of us can test in his own experience.[25]

Beardsley then proceeds to point out—as all books on aesthetics do—that aesthetic experience is characterized by (1) rather firmly fixed attention, (2) some degree of intensity, and (3) a considerable degree of unity, that is, is coherent and complete within itself. That aesthetic experience has these characterics is, I suppose, beyond doubt. But what more is there to be said about aesthetic experience? What are the mysteries which Beardsley says remain? What sort of scientific experiments could be set up to plumb these mysteries? We already know from Aristotle and before that unity is a characteristic of works of art and "of the experience of them." We know what kind of devices make for unity—picture frames, rhyme, plot, geometric shape, and so on. From time to time artists invent new means to achieve unity in their works of art. We know what unity is; what more is there to be discovered by scientific means? In the same way, we know what coherence and completeness are and what the devices are for achieving them. We know what it means for a work of art to be more or less intense and what it means to have one's attention firmly fixed. Works of art which hold our attention are generally intense, coherent, and complete, and therefore are

[25] *Op. cit.*, p. 527; italics mine.

enjoyed, and we recommend them. But there are no mysteries concerning these characteristics of works of art which aestheticians and critics must wait for psychologists to clear up before they can do their jobs better. The work that remains to be done in aesthetics and criticism requires clear thinking and hard analysis but it does not wait upon scientific discovery.

Some philosophers, however, have talked about aesthetic experience as if it were some unique sort of entity which can become the object of experimental inquiry. (Beardsley is not one of these theorists.) There is something odd about any attempt to make experience an object of inquiry, as if experience were of the same type as a piece of copper, a frog, or even an example of behavior. It has been noted by a number of philosophers that *experience* is an odd notion, as is the related notion of *sense-data*.[26] Earlier philosophers such as Bullough talked about the *aesthetic consciousness* rather than aesthetic experience and conceived of the task of aesthetics as an introspective and experimental examination of this consciousness. Later philosophers abandoned the word "consciousness" and talked instead about aesthetic experience; I suspect, however, that the idea of a special sort of mental thing (consciousness) still haunts the notion of aesthetic experience and is responsible for the assumption that there is some object to be scientifically dissected. Max Schoen, for example, writes in "Aesthetic Experience in the Light of Current Psychology" in such a way as to suggest experience is a kind of thing and that aesthetic experience is a special species of it: "Aesthetic experience can arise only from ordinary experience by doing something to it."[27] "The aesthetic experience therefore must arise by an act of imagination in which experience is rid of that which is imposed upon it by biological necessity."[28]

The hardiest holdover from the conception of aesthetic consciousness is Bullough's notion of psychical distance, which is accepted in one way or another by almost all contemporary

[26] See G. A. Paul, "Is There a Problem about Sense-Data?" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Suppl. Vol. XV (1936), 61-77; reprinted in *Logic and Language*, First Series (A. G. N. Flew, ed., Oxford, 1951), pp. 101-116.

[27] *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, I (1941), 25.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

aestheticians who talk about the aesthetic experience or attitude. Psychical distance as conceived by Bullough is a particular kind of psychological event which must occur as a precondition to having an aesthetic experience of some object. According to Bullough, psychical distance is the phenomena of putting some object "out of gear" with practical interests of the self. It is conceived of as a psychological process which must be sustained in order for aesthetic appreciation to occur and be sustained. Presumably psychical distance is conceived of as similar to such genuine psychological phenomena as hypnosis, in which attention is transfixed, or shock, in which one becomes oblivious to one's environment. In fact, one of Bullough's contemporaries, Ethel D. Puffer, whose theory of detachment is very similar to the notion of psychical distance, seems to think of aesthetic detachment as a kind of hypnosis: "It is not necessary at this place to emphasize the fact that our theory, if accepted, would constitute a theory and a definition also of hypnotism."[29]

I think that Bullough and Puffer are dealing with something which is important for aesthetic theory but that the psychologistic way they talk about it is very misleading. Most aesthetic *experiences* are rather casual in nature, but even when one is intensely interested in, say, a drama these cases are not at all like being hypnotized. It is not that one undergoes some special sort of psychological occurrence which someone (or yourself) could observe as when one is hypnotized or in shock. The thing being described by Bullough, Puffer, and all theorists who follow them in speaking about aesthetic distance or detachment is not a psychological occurrence at all in the sense that something is undergone or felt. The spectator who "distances an object" is merely following a rule of the art game; namely, "Watch, listen, and so on, but do not try to participate in the work of art." This tacit rule is connected with the demand that a work of art be complete. If the work of art is complete, then it is pointless or worse for a spectator to try to add to the work by joining the dance or play, or by painting in an area on the painting on the museum wall, or the like. The words "distanced" and "detached," in addition

[29] *The Psychology of Beauty* (Boston, 1905), p. 84.

to the difficulties which they raise as to how we can be both intensely interested in a work of art and detached (disinterested) from it at the same time, are very misleading. It is not that we are detached or distanced from a work of art, we are barred from the work of art by the rules of the art game. It is not that picture frames, raised stages, and the like are devices which help cause a peculiar kind of psychological phenomenon, as Bullough thought. These devices serve (along with other purposes) merely as a signal (if any is needed) that certain rules are to be obeyed. It would be better to speak of the aesthetic barrier than of psychical distance.

Aestheticians have spoken of spectators "losing distance," for example, running up on the stage and attacking the villain. (Bullough would call this a case of underdistancing.) An adult who "lost distance" and seriously tried to participate in a drama would not merely be someone who in the heat of emotion has mistaken stage play for reality. Such a person would be mentally deranged —at least temporarily—that is, would have lost the ability to follow a rule of sane behavior. To attack a political speaker physically for what he says might or might not be an insane act, but to attack an actor in a play for what he says as a character certainly would be insane. If a person were to "lose distance" (in the way described above), it would not be that a particular kind of psychological process had ceased and the person had begun to act in a usual practical way. Rather, if a person were to "lose distance" in this way, he would have ceased to act in a perfectly usual way (watching a play) and have begun to act very oddly. In the other cases of "losing distance," as when one forgets the play and thinks of something else (Bullough calls this process a case of overdistancing), it is merely that one is no longer attending to the play, not that some special kind of psychological process has ceased to exist. In these latter kinds of cases, the rule of which I spoke earlier is not being disobeyed; it is not relevant to such cases. It might be said, however, that a maxim is being ignored, the maxim, namely, "Attend to the work of art, you are missing something" (your money's worth, perhaps).

Earlier I spoke of a rule of *the* art game. However, there is a plurality of art games, and the rule of the aesthetic barrier applies

more strictly in some than in others. On one end of the range there are dance situations in which the line between spectator and dancer is blurred to the extent that spectator may become dancer and dancer become spectator. On the other end of the range are theater situations in which the barrier rule is rigidly adhered to. Without trying to arrange them in any order, there are intermediate cases: hissing the villain and cheering the hero in the old-fashioned melodrama situation, applauding during an act because of an especially well-performed piece of acting, and so on.

In short, I suggest it is better to speak of the aesthetic barrier rule of art games and of attending or not attending to works of art than it is to talk of psychical distance or detachment. It is better because we are not then led to think that there are some mysterious psychological processes which must be investigated. We are not misled to mistake the observance of rules, conventions, and maxims for peculiar psychological processes.

III

I am not denyng that there is a sense in which it is correct to say that there is an empirical aspect to aesthetics and criticism: certainly one *looks* at paintings, *listens* to music, and so forth. But it does not follow from this obvious fact that scientific (empirical) studies are going to throw light on the problems of aesthetics and criticism. There is much confusion in the talk about works of art and in talk about talk about works of art, but it is confusion, not lack of information. Appreciating works of art is an ancient and encrusted activity of men: it is, to borrow Wittgenstein's metaphor,[30] part of the old city in which the streets are narrow and crooked but nevertheless we know them well, although we often get confused if asked to describe them for someone or to draw a map. The mechanisms involved in the appreciation of art are similar to such concepts as knowing, believing, oughtness, —concepts which all mature users of the language know how to use. The same sort of difficulty is involved in saying that scientific information is relevant to problems of aesthetics and criticism as

[30] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (New York, 1953), p. 8e.

in thinking that we can discover what it means to know or believe something by instituting a scientific inquiry.

In the case of preference or of the nature of aesthetic experience we already know what we need to know. The case of aesthetic experience is similar to the nature of scientific experience (i.e., the application of scientific method): we already know the general nature of scientific method, although many of the techniques of scientific procedure obviously have not yet been created. Of course, in the case of scientific method we have to teach each new generation the procedure. Similarly, in the case of the appreciation of art we have to teach each new generation the nature of aesthetic experience (i.e., teach them to attend to the music, and so forth, to recognize the intensity, to look for coherence and completeness). We also teach how to analyze works of art, to show what characteristics produce coherence, and the like. In the case of preference, at a given time among a given group certain kinds of works of art or certain art techniques are preferred. These preference patterns will be taught to the next generation, who may accept them but as often as not reject them and develop their own patterns. Preference patterns quite obviously can be studied; anthropologists and psychologists do it constantly. But such studies cannot be turned back on themselves somehow to correct preference patterns. How could it be done?

Earlier I said preference is impervious to the results of preference discoveries. At least part of what accounts for this imperviousness is the fact that preference is taught or built into people similar to the way in which language is taught to them. People are taught to have aesthetic experience, that is, taught to look at paintings in a certain way and to listen to music in a similar way.

None of the foregoing argument should be taken as an attack on psychology or science: any such attack would be silly. What I have been trying to do is to draw lines and distinguish various sorts of activities. Aesthetics, like ethics, philosophy of science, and so on, is a philosophical activity and not to be confused with science. All philosophical activities depend on nonphilosophical activities: for example, ethics depends on the use of moral language, and philosophy of science on the employment of scientific concepts. But the problems of ethics are not solved by a

scientific study nor are the problems of the philosophy of science.

I do not wish to appear dogmatic about the relation of scientific information to aesthetics. I am aware that I have discussed only a few of the psychological experiments which have been carried out in the psychology of art. I have tried, however, to select examples for analysis which seem to me to be typical of the various kinds of psychology-of-art experiments. It, of course, remains an open question as to whether some scientific information has been discovered or will be discovered to be relevant to aesthetics. Consequently, I cannot say with complete assurance that the conclusions of Part I of this paper (psychological information and the logical problems of aesthetics) is final. However, it does not seem to me at the moment that anyone has made clear how any specific psychological information is relevant to these problems. Not only has this matter not been made clear in any specific instance, but no one appears to have any idea what sort of procedure should be followed to establish the relevance relation under discussion. Despite my theoretical tentativeness concerning Part I, I am convinced that the problem of the description of the nature of aesthetic experience is not a task to which the techniques of empirical science are relevant. In any event, if my arguments are not conclusive and completely convincing (philosophers' arguments rarely are), I hope they at least suggest a possible explanation for the feelings of futility which envelop psychological aesthetics. At the very least, I hope to evoke consideration and possibly controversy about questions to which little or no attention has been given.

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