We have all had the experience of viewing a painting unprepared and, over time, especially with explication, gradually coming to see the work in a wholly different light. We speak of a growing familiarity with the work, or an expanding store of knowledge in relation to which the work can be evaluated, but what does this signify for the original content? Is knowledge available to a bare object as an external resource — the library metaphor of common sense — or, however counter-intuitive, is it more deeply invested in the act of perceiving? Is aesthetic experience a special case of ordinary perception or a different mode of cognition? Familiarity and knowledge increase enjoyment of aesthetic objects, if not ordinary ones, but they do not provide an explanation for the process(es) they refer to; they do not help us decide whether the concepts that are emphatic in aesthetic perception emerge in the process of perceiving, or are juxtaposed to perceptions as extrinsic repositories, inculcated, stored in the mind and looked up when needed.

The problem has been forcefully put by Danto. He argues that content alone cannot distinguish an artifact from a work of art, for the latter is ‘like an externalization of the artist’s consciousness, as if we could see his way of seeing and not merely what he saw.’ In this way, a work of art is said to differ from a ‘mere representation’, for it expresses something beyond the content of what is represented (Danto, 1981, p. 148). This something includes the feelings, the intentions and the conceptual sources of the work which are, in some sense, if not in the immediate content of the perception, in the wider perceptual experience, though in exactly what sense is not clear.

Art is distinguished from ordinary perception by its intensity of conceptual feeling.\(^1\) The passage from, say, an ordinary chair to one that evokes memories, associations and ideas, to a chair as an artistic or architectural topic, where habit gives way to novelty, or the innovative in thought replaces the replicative in memory, owes to the variation in conceptual feeling out of which these objects develop. But to write, as Danto does, of a mere representation, or merely what the artist sees, is to relegate perception to input, i.e. sensation, to which ‘conceptualizations that are only incidentally related’ are applied (Williams, 1998). Such a distinction could only be valid if the concepts to which concepts are presumed to be attached are no more than registrations without conceptual weight, or if the conceptual structure of consciousness is a faculty

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\(^1\) Conceptual feeling refers to the unity of the conceptual with its affective tonality.
distinct from its objects. The distinction of consciousness and objects makes an extrinsic entity of an ingredient, divides the object from its conceptual base and then, through interaction, attempts to reunite them by external contacts. This approach distances aesthetics from the psychology of everyday perception, and offers no bridge from aesthetic entities to magical, psychotic or devotional objects, not to mention the beauty of sunsets, chess moves and the sight of one’s lover.

The subjectivity in a work of art was discussed by Plotinus who asked, if ‘the potentiality is the substratum while the thing in actualisation — the statue for example — is a combination, how are we to describe the form that has entered the bronze?’ (Plotinus, 1921 edn.). He went on the say that if the relation of the potential to the actual is that of two different substrates, then ‘the potential does not really become the actual: all that happens is that an actual entity takes the place of a potential.’ He hinted how this might occur: ‘anything that has a potentiality is actually something else, and this potentiality of the future mode of being is an existing mode.’ In other words, the concept of potential is a relation to what is actual in the future of the potential, but potential can also be described as what is actual in the present. Potential unspecified is subjectively actual, another mode of existence prior to that of the final or material object.

Actualities are not connected in causal chains but emerge from potential as replacements. Otherwise, an antecedent cause that was a prior actuality would be disenfranchised from the perceptual content. In process theory,2 potential specifies a concept that further specifies an object. The concept is the immediate past of an object, an object is the future toward which the concept is heading. The object perishes for a new concept, the concept perishes as it objectifies. The momentary past of the object, its immediate present, and the aim to actualization, are all part of the same object. Actuality is a limit, potential a direction. The inclusion of subjective phases in the objective content implies that an artwork does not consist of two portions, a conceptual part for the creative process, and an objective part that is its physical realization. The work of art is fully physical or fully mental — assuming a physicalist account of meaning and/or a mentalist account of brain process — but not half one, half the other; it is one and/or the other all the way through. The artistic object is that portion of the subjective that exists in the world; an actuality of creative toil that includes its creative segment which is then reincarnated in the mind of the observer. Art energizes the psychic undersurface of the objectively real in the artist, and in the aesthete.

Process and Pathology

It is natural to think that objects are offered up to consciousness with the self the spectator of a passing show, while in truth, consciousness and the self are deposited in the course of the perception. The self is a residue of constructs within a perception left behind as the object moves outward (Brown, 1999b). The self is laid down by phases in the object that were bypassed in the surge to objectivity, phases that are uncovered in states of reverie, meditation and, more reliably, in cases of brain pathology. These phases, usually traversed automatically, are recaptured in the letting-go of deep meditation, and the coming-to-the-fore of the symptoms of brain damage.

Clinical study shows that perceptual objects have a ‘structure’ the greater part of which is private, concealed and differentially vulnerable to pathology. The symptom exposes a phase in the specification of microstructure teased apart by the injury. The process mediated by the damaged segment ‘discharges’ in a symptom, which is a sign of that phase in the specification process. Within the conceptual phase of the object formation, the analysis of perceptual deficits demonstrates a continuum from abstract category to concrete entity to final object that unfolds over an evolutionary hierarchy of neural systems. Symptoms arising at successive points in this hierarchy, as inferred from pathology, reflect moments in the genesis of a perception. In a word, brain injury displays early process by disrupting it.

In perceptual disorders, a derailment of object meaning spares object form, and the reverse. An individual may perceive an object but fail to recognize it, sort objects in categories without being able to identify them, or misperceive visual objects but recognize them by touch or audition. The finding that meanings can be disrupted yet remain submerged in object representations gives credence to the notion that conceptual feeling is an antecedent phase (Brown, 1988; 1999a). The conceptual phases leave their traces in an anomalous content that is still part of the perception even if the final objectivity is all that is perceived. Specifically, form perception may be intact with a derailment of object meaning, while meaning may be preserved with a disruption of form.

In the brain-damaged, there is usually a preference for symmetry and simplicity of design. Severe aphasics cannot be questioned as to their aesthetic responses, but they seem to retain an enjoyment of fine art and music. The aesthetic response, or its manifestations in habit and taste, survive a loss of language. In artists, there can be preservation of drawing, often with an alteration of conceptual content. The Bulgarian artist, Zlatio Boiyadiev, suffered a severe stroke with total aphasia, and a shift from an accomplished social realism to a style that was more impressionistic, with bold colours, inverted perspectives and heavy brush strokes. It is my observation that a disruption of phonology tends to give alterations in perspective though drawing is otherwise preserved, while in lexical-semantic disorders there is increased fantasy, often of a dream-like nature.

One does not need pathology to demonstrate the influence on object perception of a nonconscious conceptuality. Every object is shaped by experience. Indeed, every past experience in life is implicit in the occurrent state. The more recent events are configured by the more ancient ones, with the present state most exactly configured by the one immediately prior to it. We see the effects of past experience in the familiarity of an experience repeated over time, for example, even to the unsophisticated listener, a piece of music becomes more familiar, i.e. is perceived in greater detail, with repeated listenings. This effect is unconscious. In experiments, faces that are shown repeatedly to subjects are judged as more attractive even though the subjects do not recall seeing them before. Here, judgments of beauty are linked to unconscious familiarity. Indeed, familiarity is a learning-by-acquaintance of some complexity involving a nonconscious process that can alter perception even in the absence of a

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[3] See Zaimov et al. (1969); Leischner (1979). These cases and others are described in Brown (1977). The topic has recently been discussed from the standpoint of hemispheric interaction by Nikolaenko (1998).

[4] The possibility of a ‘picture-strip’ memory was discussed by McCulloch (1965).
recognition that the object has been previously encountered. Once recognition sets in, familiarity follows as a matter of course, though this does not exhaust its explanation.

Temporal Objects

The clinical material is important because a specific conceptual preprocess cannot be inferred from an outcome. McGinn wrote, one cannot ‘recover from a functional ascription to an organism the specific means of discharging that function in the organism in question. . . the function of an evolved characteristic does not determine the specific intrinsic nature of the characteristic’ (McGinn, 1982). I interpret this to mean, trivially, that ‘output’ does not predict interior process. This might imply that there are many roads to Rome or that, from the destination, the one and only road is indetectible, or that the way to the output is part of the output, not a causal antecedent, and undiscoverable from the output alone. One can agree, at least, that the surface expression or content of a mental state reveals neither the processes supporting the expression nor those antecedent to it.

We take mental entities at ‘face value’, decide on their relevance, utility, standing, even though we know little or nothing of the mental processes through which they develop. In the conventional approach to aesthetic and ordinary perception, the distinction that is made between content and becoming splits off the conceptual from the objective and, in so doing, eliminates mind from the object. Certainly, mental contents, no less than made objects, can have the status of scientific entities, the truth of which can be ascertained independent of their source. In everyday life, we do not need a recipe to enjoy a meal, and we can usually distinguish rational thoughts from fantasies without submitting the content to depth analysis. But, we cannot derive the laws of cooking from what we have eaten, nor of mentation from its products, nor even from a list of ingredients or components. This would be like explaining how a television works by looking at the wires and transistors or the picture on the screen. The laws of thought cannot be extracted from the contents of thought for the laws describe how the contents come into existence.

Such processes are elusive. Psychologists assume they refer to an aggregation or recombination of elemental part-functions, which are obtained by ‘deconstructing’ the object into its presumed constituents. These physiological operations, and the little agencies through which they act, such as feature or motion detectors, colour-coded cells, etc., are conceived as neural devices that subserve a variety of ‘dumb’ routines, all of which, through a process of assemblage, go into the construction of an object, though it is unclear in what sense they may be said to eventuate in an object or be ingredient in it. The part-functions are assumed to have a causal role in the production of a perception, but we are unaware of the assemblage, how it is accomplished, how memory and thought enter the perception, how the process ‘jumps’ from neural routine to mental state and whether the effect of each element is concluded when the perception is achieved or is instantaneous, i.e. whether perceptions are outcomes or sums, and so on.

It must be emphasized that in cases of brain damage, it is unusual to encounter a defective part-function of this type. A loss of line or angle detection, a motionless
object, the absence of a single colour, do not appear to occur with focal lesions, other
than as artifacts of the expectations of the investigator. What we do see, for example,
are a variety of qualitative alterations that fluctuate in perception. These fluctuations
are often linked to aspects of the personality. The condition is classified according to
the major impact of pathology, not the loss of specific components. When a focal
defect does appear, it affects the perception momentarily, uniformly, not in the patch-
work and sustained manner anticipated by a dissection of particulate elements.

Studies of recovery help to clarify this problem. In cortical blindness, the return of
vision is systematic and predictable. First, a diffuse brightness sensation returns, then
gradients of brightness, then a vague sense of motion, or apparent motion, followed
by size, shape and depth. The first chromatic colour to return is a diffuse, filmy,
unsaturated redness. Colour tends to precede form in an orderly sequence. The pat-
ttern of recovery is regular from one phase to another, within and across cases. This
argues against the damage of specific components. In the resolution of aphasia,
recovery is also holistic, involving levels of linguistic realization, not a return of
piecemeal functions, as would be expected if damage produced a random destruction
of a mosaic of elements.

The clinical evidence that phases in object realization are revealed in the form of
symptoms reinforces the conclusion that objects are not stationary entities or slices in
the stream of time but have temporal extension. Put differently, phases in the actuali-
zation, from initial to final, are not preparatory to the object but are the object. It is
even unclear whether a perceptible entity is realizable in the fraction of a second that
is a single act of perception. An object requires both the phase-sequence within a
mental state, and a duration over mental states, to be perceived as self-identical. Else-
where, I have referred to the within-state transition as implicit or authentic change,
and the state-to-state transition as explicit or apparent change. The first, the unfolding
of a single mental state, creates an epochal object, the other, the ‘glue of passage’,
sums the object across its several replacements (Brown, 1998).

Once an object is understood as the ‘sum’ of a temporal series, within and across
cognitions, the problem arises as to how the sequence is to be demarcated. The extrin-
sic sequence is ostensibly non-problematic. The brain, so the argument goes, simply
fuses successive objects like a picture strip. There are difficulties with this interpreta-
tion but for the purpose of this discussion they can be ignored. The intrinsic series,
however, presents a greater problem. The phases constituting an object can, in princi-
ple, be stretched to include the inception (arising) of an object in the mind of the
observer and its termination (perishing) in external space, when it is replaced by
another perception. If the inception includes conceptual phases, where is a boundary
to be drawn between an object and a concept?

The only response to this question is that the temporal extension of an object must
incorporate all of the (neural, psychic) phases in its satisfaction. The physical refer-
ents of the object are the physical worlds implicit in its actualization. These worlds
constrain the object as it becomes real. At every phase, the world, in the form of brain
process, combines external and internal constraints to guide the object along. An
external constraint, e.g. sensation, is no more or less defining of the resultant config-
uration than the internal process, e.g. habit, on which it acts. An object is the set of
contrasts that survives this process. The configuration as a whole — the contrast with
its adjacent surround — and the parts that individuate, are apprehended jointly.
Whitehead wrote, ‘esthetic experience is feeling arising out of the realization of contrast under identity’ (Whitehead, 1929, p. 427). A contrast isolates a particular in a greater inclusiveness. A constraint is a type of contrast that frames a possibility. This boundary is a compromise of potential with its limits, of what is possible with what is permissible, of what can be thought of with what is real.

Music
Our theory of the world is conditioned on the perception of visual space. Indeed, it is difficult to even conceive of a thing that cannot be visualized. Visual phenomena are fundamentally temporal, grounded in becoming, but experienced in a spatial mode. The spatial mode is the mode of existence attributed to a non-cognitive entity and then transferred to the entity when it is being observed. A painting is a cognition that leaves the mind of the artist and enters the mind of the observer. When it is not present in a perception, it is a pattern of energy, like quartz or water. Its temporality enlarges in an occasion of its enjoyment. That is, subjectivity expands the temporal relations concealed in the physical object or artwork. What, then, of artforms that come into existence only when in performance, where a translation from a spatial to a temporal mode is the dominant condition of experience, such as music?

To the casual observer, objects and tones, written notes and heard music, could not be more different, as different as space and time, as the strings of a violin from the sounds they convey. We are constantly reminded of the contrast between the evanescence of sound and the persistence and slow decay of objects. An object is perceived as an entity continuous across occasions. Changes of the object — growth, decay, interaction — are perceived not in terms of a changed object but as changes the object undergoes. The object, it seems, would remain unchanged if change were to cease, as if change were an event in the career of the object. Time is an agent of destruction that erodes the substance of what would otherwise be a continuous existence. An object will be dust in a million years. The attrition seems to be the effect of time. Were it not for this effect, we think, the object might last forever.

In contrast, change as a transition across tones is the essence of music. Tonal identity is sacrificed for the sake of melodic continuity. In visual perception, change is filtered out for the sake of object stability, whereas in music, the melodic phrase or the structure of the work as a whole spreads out serially in the surface tones and is recovered by the listener according to his musical experience. There is no stable object, the tone, the music, that undergoes change. Music seems to run in time, the notes seize time and exploit it, while objects are at the mercy of time, time seizing them and wearing them down. Music, Kant said, is the ‘art of time’, in which temporal order is employed as a formal property (Alperson, 1980). What is temporal order other than an articulation by events of some duration? The order does not create the duration, rather, the process generating the events creates the order, which then objectifies in time-awareness. Each percept increments an individual consciousness.

When we listen to music we do not hear a sequence of acoustic waves — the sound impulses that strike the ear — but a phenomenal entity, an auditory image, that devel-

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[7] The perception of a melody with the eyes closed, and the progressive elimination of secondary qualities, was used as an illustration by Bergson of pure duration. For example Bergson (1923).
ops in the mental state. Tones are more like images than perceptions. One could say, we hear the music in our souls before we hear it in the world. The perceived tones arise out of the images of prior tones, sound pictures that ‘take time’ to develop. For music, an echo of the tone-image must recur after its cessation. The tone-image retains its serial position in relation to occurrent tones, inheriting and replacing the preceding image, and stacked in the mind like tea gardens. The succession of phases separates the tones to prevent a muddle of images. The difference between successive tones is cancelled in their replacement and retained as an apprehension of sequence in a musical phrase. The difference that is cancelled is the prior change erased in the becoming of the present. The difference that is retained is the comparison of a prior image with a present actuality as a limit to which antecedent states are revived or decay.

In process theory, an object is not a linear solid with change at its forward edge but the relic of change left behind in its cyclical recurrence. It reappears each moment in more or less the same form. We are convinced by the similarity of perceptual frames that the continuity of the object is independent of the observer when, in fact, its replication in the mind is the basis for its stability. An object is changing like music, but our awareness of the change is obscured by the similarity of replicates. For example, the radio on the table appears as a solid object that persists through time, quite different from the music that emanates from it, which is a dynamic pattern of fluctuant sound. This difference reflects the recurrence of similar images that fuse to form an object with a continuous existence, in contrast to music, which is the recurrence of disparate images over a finite set of iterations. The critical difference between vision and audition has to do with the discrepancy of objects in adjacent moments of perception. The replicates of objects are similar, those of music variable. Music that does not vary, or is densely repetitive, a sequence of self-similar replicates, is like a continuous object.

The commonality of objects and sounds is seen in the resemblance of music to a visual hallucination or dream in fluid transformation. If an object were to undergo a rapid change, say a cup that contracts, flattens or expands to become a glass, a saucer or a bowl, the change from one shape to another would be so unexpected we would not be able to say what object it is we are looking at, or even if what we are looking at is an object, since objects do not behave in this way. The definition of an object would begin to loosen. If an observer was accustomed to seeing objects in continuous transformation, the perception of such objects might be construed as a form of music. An object is like a series of tones over time, an accumulation that can be viewed as a type of spatial music, a melody in which the tones are more or less identical. Goethe may have had something like this in mind when he described a complex object — architecture — as frozen music.

Conversely, music is a liquid object, the disparity between replicates giving the perception of a sequence in continuous change. Still, structure is perceived at the level of the phrase, the movement or the work as a whole. For a musical phrase to be enjoyed, the sequence must be heard within a whole unit or duration of time. The tone sequence is carved out of the present, allowing the tones to be heard both in sequence and all at once, what amounts to the incrementation of a virtual simultaneity, or a derivation of tonal parts out of melodic wholes. The specious present encloses a succession of tones derived from antecedent wholes, much as a visual image is derived from a succession of perspectives. Tones are objects in auditory space isolated by figural contrast. The context around the tone — ‘horizontal’ in melodic relations, ‘vertical’
in harmony — depends on intervals in the mind’s auditory space. The melodic structure thickens with the frequency of harmonic shifts as the compounding of polyphonic planes lays down strands in the melody.

In music, the structure of the work is primary, the impression of motion an illusion. There is no movement, no change in position. The pitch of a tone is a point in auditory space (Albersheim, 1964). An interval between points is an illusory ‘distance’ since a point in the immediate past exists in memory when the ensuing tone is heard. The transition from one point to another in subjective time is the melodic movement. The feeling of motion is created by tones going nowhere. The tone replaces itself.

The order in which the notes of a score are played is a logical progression. The notes are simultaneous in the score, yet played and heard sequentially. In the translation from the score to the mind of the listener, they traverse intermediate holistic phases. The duration of the present can be viewed as a gestalt-like whole that encloses the tones in succession. In fact, the seriality articulates each momentary present as it is renewed in overlapping waves. The serialization of the tones in duration retains a spatial character as a projected two-dimensional line. The notion of a musical line, or the movement of the piece from beginning to end along a line in time, Bergson argued, is a spatial image of a purely temporal process. I would say the segmentation of duration into succession creates time awareness. When we give ourselves up to the music, the succession becomes a subjective time of music. Hegel wrote of the imposition of musical time on the time of subjectivity.8

Commonality of Sound and Object

Music is perceived ‘in the head’, objects are in the world. At a concert, when I close my eyes the sound is referred to the proscenium, but gradually it moves to a locus in intrapersonal space. The sound is now in my head. Through an effort of the (visual) imagination, it can again be projected outward. The mind extends a visual space beyond the body to provide an extrapersonal environment in which the tones can be located. The localization of sounds is parasitic on visual space. Sound has no space of its own. Disorders of visual space with intact auditory brain regions have a disruption of sound localization. There is no external space for the sounds to localize in. The space of the congenitally blind is a kinaesthetic field that extends to the perimeter of limb action. We see the dependence of audition on vision in the mapping of speech to oral movements, or the synchronization of musical sound with instruments. The concordance of objects and sounds requires not only an object for the sound to exteriorize onto, but a common organization and timing of the modalities for the synchrony within a perceptual moment.

The fundamental unity of the modalities is illustrated by the ability of gifted musicians to hear a score on reading it, or to write the music down after hearing a single performance. For Brahms, an armchair and a score at home were preferable to a seat at the opera. I have been told of linguists so proficient with sound spectrograms they could hear speech on reading the wave patterns. In the phenomenon of écho de la lecture,9 psychotics hear words they are reading as an echo a moment after the word

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8 On the contrast of clock or external time with music as virtual time, see Langer (1953), de Selincourt (1958).
9 Morel, F. (1936); see also Brown (1988).
has been read. Inner speech is excited to a kind of involuntary imagery. Verbal perception is activated by reading words. Is this comparable to musical perception being activated by reading notes when a gifted musician hears a score in his head?

Cases of synaesthesia for music and colours — a colour specific to a key or an instrument, for example seeing the colour blue on hearing a violin, or a specificity of colours to speech sounds, for example seeing the colour yellow on hearing the sound ba\textsuperscript{10} — also signify a close bond between the auditory and the visual modes. These effects are most prominent for purely visual features (letters, musical notation, visual wave forms, colours) that, unlike ordinary objects, are specific to the visual modality and are not reinforced by somesthetic experience. Synaesthesia is usually interpreted in terms of an association or transfer from one modality to another. I think that the specificity of colours to sounds derives from their common origin in a unitary matrix that forecasts the individual modalities. Synaesthesia is a reminder of the unimodal foundations of the varieties of perceptual experience.\textsuperscript{11}

Visual signing in the deaf is mediated by auditory (language) cortex. With congenital damage to auditory or visual cortex, functional preservation of hearing and sight may occur through other cortical zones. The bond between vision and audition is confirmed by the difficulty that occurs in lip-reading with damage to auditory cortex, or the confusion that results when speech and oral movements are thrown into dys-synchrony by delayed auditory feedback. It is, after all, the same world out there for the ears and the eyes. Music is part of the cognized world. Music is clearly in the world like any other object, especially when I am not really listening. When I attend to objects, I do not hear the music. When I really listen to the music, the world disappears. But the world is ultimately one. The distinctions of sight and sound, of what is written and what is heard, of act and percept, are the surface tokens — what survives in consciousness — of conceptual feeling distributing into a given cognitive domain, into auditory perception for music, into the visual or tactile (plastic) arts for painting and sculpture, into action for dance, language for conversation and literature, and so on.

On this view, a poem, a painting and a sonata realize a common deep form.\textsuperscript{12} The conceptual is most prominent in the poem, feeling in the sonata. Linguistic categories are learned, object categories are naturally acquired, musical concepts develop as a reward for careful study. The emotive in music dominates the conceptual; with words and objects it is the reverse. The ineffability of music, the ‘thoughts too deep for tears’, and the non-intentional moods it evokes, trace to the affective background of pre-lexical concepts. While there is some uniformity of emotional response to a work across occasions and listeners, the music, the emotion, the listener, are never exactly the same. The mind is differently prepared. Keats was partly right. The sweetness of melodies heard is enhanced by concepts unheard to make the music sweeter.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{10}See the account by Nabokov in his autobiography, \textit{Speak Memory}.
\textsuperscript{11}A conclusion shared by Cytowic (1989).
\textsuperscript{12}Consistent with this view, Turner writes, ‘periodicity, interval, motion, and closure belong to the whole of experience and are represented by music, painting, sculpture, poetry, theater, and dance equally.’ Acknowledging the many differences between them, he goes on to say that parallels can be reduced ‘to a common denominator, the universe of human feeling’ (Turner (1998)).
\textsuperscript{13}From the \textit{Ode on a Grecian Urn}: ‘Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard / Are sweeter’.
Content and Meaning

Without subjectivity, a poem is a scrawl of marks, a painting, a blotch of colour. The *Eroica* played on the moon is noise. These become artworks again when they pass through a cognition attuned to their significance. The difference is the presence of meaning. A work of art may seem to have a meaning for the subject to decipher or it may suggest a meaning for the subject to provide. Meaning is knowledge in the service of value without which a perception is a neutral datum. The valuation in meaning is the subjective in knowledge. It transforms concepts to personal beliefs, to the point where the subjectivity of knowing, the *belongingness* of what is known, has a greater immediacy for the subject than the content the meaning is about. Like knowledge, meaning can be implicit or conscious, it can be assigned to the subject, as a content in the mind, or located in the object, as a content in the world, that is, to an interpretation applied by the subject or an external commodity gathered up by the subject and put to work. An object dissociated from its meaning is displaced to the external world, or a locus intermediate between reality on the outer side and mentality on the inner side as a screen between conceptual feeling and the noumenal universe.

When we are young, we seek meaning in the world, where knowledge seems to be located. As we mature, and our ‘stock of knowledge’ expands, i.e. as mind is enriched by experience, we come to realize that meanings after all are creations of the subject, to be generated and sought after in his own nature. Later, we may realize that we only discover the meanings that nature provides. That is, meaning does not move inward from the world to the mind, nor outward as a mental factor attached to objects that otherwise would be meaningless, rather it is ingredient in the conceptual relations that specify objects and the mental representations through which they are enjoyed. Meanings inhere in the configural properties of cognitions and deposit as the subjectivity of the onlooker prior to the realization of objective or linguistic form.

Accordingly, an object that seems meaningless, such as a foreign language or a nonsense shape, still traverses a phase of meaning-relations, if only by the recognition of a lack of meaning, i.e. the meaning of a meaningless object is impoverished, not lacking, the configural biases guiding the process leaving no more than a rudimentary knowledge base, either because the object is strange, or of insufficient interest to evoke a meaning in the observer, or because the conceptual system of the observer is insufficiently developed to respond to an otherwise meaningful object. In becoming actual, every object travels the same path. There is a spectrum from contents that seem meaningless, because of inadequate knowledge, to contents in which meanings are felt to be interpretations, to contents that seem to provide (constrain) the meanings which the subject attaches to them. In all of these instances, however, we are dealing with gradations in conceptual feeling evoked as an object materializes under the constraints of form. The conceptual base of the object, i.e. whatever the subject brings to the perception, leaves its traces, subtly, in the tacit recognition, identification, classification or value that guide the object to its destination and partition it from the rest of nature. Conversely, the elicitation of knowledge or reminiscence by an object, or a shift of attention from the object to its contextual background, signals a retreat to the abstract categories that were sacrificed when a concrete object was their goal.
Art and Nature

The view that meaning inheres in the configural properties of developing objects entails that even without a subject an object is not meaningless. An object hewn from a subject is still the objectified portion of its own subjective phase. In all this, we are speaking of external objects such as trees and chairs that are assumed to exist independent of our percepts. Such entities, in themselves non-cognitive, could be described as meaningless only if, like the objects of scientific thought, they are conceived as physical entities supplemented by mind-dependent properties. If meaning is generated by the intrinsic spatio-temporal relatedness of non-cognitive entities, such as the relation of spatial wholes to parts, or durations to temporal increments, and if a linguistic operation is not obligatory to meaning and, finally, if the intentional relation to otherness is equally an aim toward self or object-realization, i.e. if the intentional is a relation within the object, interpreted as a single completed state or entity rather than a vector from mind to external objects, the seeds of meaning and intentionality in non-cognitive entities would qualify them as primitive conceptual systems (Brown, 1999a).

If so, meaning, or conceptual feeling, would arise, primitively, in non-cognitive entities as the subjective phase of objects undergoing temporal completion, or in human cognition, in the withdrawal from the world of actuality to its derivational phases. One can ask, poetically, with Menander, whether nature or art is the plagiarist, but ordinarily we are able to distinguish natural objects from artworks. The central features of artistic creation — purpose, freedom, subjectivity, aboutness — are not found in nature, or so it is argued. Nature is functional, its design, unlike art, is adapted to survival. Subtract the constraints of evolution and nature is chaos. Subtract the intentional and an artwork is a random assortment. Nature is what it is, mechanically, causally, inevitably, it does not mean or point to something. For most of us, the works of nature are not comparable to works of art, unless God is an artist and a tree is conceived as an intentional product of God’s own agency. Yet the true artist, in his art, summons up the power and generativity of nature; he reaches into his own nature, to the patterns of mental process that are continuous with those of nature, and transforms it into art.

We see this transition in the magical objects of the primitive, which for some are not even artworks, for they violate many of the canons of aesthetic perception. It is ironic, therefore, that they can be appreciated, aesthetically, only by those with a theory of art outside the culture that produced them. For the primitives, however, their artworks, i.e. artifacts, do not so much express intentions as assign intentional properties to nature through a ‘projection’ of the agency of the artisan into the realized object (Brown, 1999b). Primitive concepts leave the mind of the artist and take up residence in the artwork. The anonymity and sacramental quality of primitive art derive from this projection. The artist is less an individual creator than the voice of the clan or community, the work, less a signature of the artist than a zone of mentality within subjective nature. From the primitive, we learn that artworks fall somewhere


[15] On an initial stage in thought of diffuse subjectivity continuous from inner to outer, see Durkheim & Mauss (1903); on the ‘primitive’ sense of a community as a whole entity rather than a collection of parts, see Lévy-Bruhl (1975).
in a process of becoming independent of a definition of what an artwork is supposed to be, and that the continuum from nature to art, like that from ordinary objects to aesthetic perception, is a deep fact about nature and the human mind.

In fact, the flow in art from mind to nature, and back again in the process of creation and enjoyment, is observed over the historical period in the progression from its origins as an image of nature, in primitive art, where agency and feeling are centred in the artwork, to imitation, where the artwork, though divested of agency and feeling, is still close to the external in its effort to represent an image of the real, to the exploration of the mind of the artist as a container of its own objects. An object that fully actualizes the conceptual content behind it is a psychic entity, less an artwork than a talisman. The autonomy of an ordinary object is achieved by usurping or transforming the ancestral concepts out of which it took shape. An artwork is an object that leaves the conceptual behind as a wake of feeling activated in its transit to the world. This shift in subjectivity from a fixation in nature, to a subjectivity that is a spectator of concrete entities in the world, to a subjectivity that is absorbed in the creative process behind the artwork is, really, a relative accentuation of one or another phase in a continuous ‘sheet of mentation’.

The Objectification of Concepts

Objects are implicit Rorschachs. The lure to meaning so characteristic of human cognition announces the conceptual feeling that is driving what, on first approximation, seem to be naive perceptions. Such objects are perceived as barren of intrinsic meaning because they remain more or less constant in form while their conceptual foundations undergo an expansion brought on by repeated contacts. Similarly, an artwork does not appear to undergo a transformation even with an increase in knowledge of the work, though to be sure, we may see more in the object with each new exposure. When the artwork does not provide clues to interpretation, some history and explanation are needed to elicit the context from which the ‘naive’ representations emerged.

The knowledge that goes into an aesthetic experience may be felt as secondary for the same reason as in ordinary perception, that abstract concepts seem to develop out of empirical ones. The interpretation of the concrete or empirical as prior — thus, inferior — to the abstract is responsible for the historical error that abstract concepts are constructions of thought or pure conceptions that are brought to bear on low-level object perceptions. This leads to the contrast between basic and aesthetic objects, or between the latter and intellectual objects, or the opposition of concepts and objects, or reason and logic with unmediated intuitions. The history of aesthetics is replete with descriptions of cognitive abilities that are scaled from the ethereal to the bestial, in which the act of creation is conceived as an enterprise somewhere between mysticism or spirituality at one extreme, and childish play at the other, the mind assumed to be a kind of edifice with lower and higher floors in which, depending on the writer, art inhabits either the cellar or the penthouse.16

This is not the conclusion of clinical studies, which find abstract and concrete concepts to be the expressions of categories of graded, qualitative uniqueness that lead from those of the widest scope, and indefiniteness, to those of the narrowest applica-

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16 The Aristotelian definition of art as a skill in making (poesis) rather than an action flowing from character (praxis) objectifies art by fixing its aim in an object (Shusterman, 1995).
tion. This is also true for feelings, which resolve from the pressures of the basic drives to the desires and the partial affects or affect-ideas. Preference is the child of desire, desire mitigates drive and ‘intentionalizes’ in a particular object.17 An aesthetic object is an image en route from an abstract concept to a concrete perception, accompanied by desires or feeling-tones that are also intermediate between the drives and exteriorized affect, i.e. the feeling of reality and value in the object. In both evolution and mental process, the individuation of the particular from the general, the concrete from the abstract — objects from concepts, aesthetic concepts (images, symbols) from abstract ones — is a partition of constructs of greater inclusiveness and potentiality to those successively more delimited, final and committed.

Thus, growth in knowledge can be viewed, not as a graft of reason onto the repertoire of perception but as a propagation, appropriation or cognitive ‘spandrel’ of the conceptual underpinnings of ordinary objects, where it was incipient, unnoticed and more or less automatic in the initial encounter. The attributes of form, proportion, timing, rhythm, etc., and the categories of object relations and personal memory that come into play in the perception of common objects, undergo an elaboration from within to categories that ground the evaluation of aesthetic objects and their psychological interpretations. These aesthetic valuations, including affective tonality and the relatedness or groundedness to objects, derive from, or can be further distilled to, philosophical concepts which are at a still greater remove from concrete reality. The aesthetic image is midway between the detachment of reflection and the immediacy of perception. For this reason, it vivifies the concealed undersurface of objects while still remaining bound to an object experience. Conceptual feeling is less apparent in ordinary objects than in artworks, yet it is no less decisive in shaping our sense of what an object is, whether a thumbtack or a Picasso, whether the sounds of traffic or the Eroica.

In the relation of artist to artwork, or that of abstract concepts to empirical objects, aesthetic objects more than everyday artifacts show a heightened sense of interiority or subjective individuality.18 The penetration of objects by a felt conceptuality, the sense that there is more to the artwork than its overt material, and the harmony and coherence in (the perception of) the work — a sign that aesthetic entities are adapted to the domain of concepts, not objects — point to possibilities undeclared in the final content. This is Kant’s ‘aesthetic universality’ of art, in contrast to the ‘objective reality’ of logic and science. For Cassirer, the potentiality of aesthetic experience was ‘pregnant with infinite possibilities which remain unrealized in ordinary sense experience’ (Cassirer, 1944). This manifold of potential has not, as in ordinary perception, been given up in the realization of a concrete form but persists, immediate in the object, unexhausted in the detail of the representation, as a layer of thought behind the surface appearance.

The unity of conceptual feeling in a work of art is a sign of its depth. In minds of extraordinary richness, concepts arise, anterior to specification, prior to consciousness, at a presuppositional core, fundamental to personality, that provide an organic unity to the content that individuates in the artwork. In lesser artists, the conceptual

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origin does not penetrate to this depth. The art is not authentic, and the separate part-concepts serve as a makeshift source of a work that seems fragmentary, the elements lacking the unity that would have been provided by access to more generic constructs.

**Objectivity and Function**

A painting can always be given a function, a lively pattern on a wall, a tranquillizer for people who are disturbed, a tray, a dart board, moral teaching, ‘food for the soul’, but the function is inessential to its aesthetic. A functional entity, such as the gleaming chrome engine of a luxury car is, one might say, a ‘work of art’, but its function gets in the way of its aesthetic power. Unlike the objects of nature, an artifact exhibits all the attributes of human agency but its function situates it in the world of objects rather than artworks. As Collingwood wrote, it becomes an object for consumption, not contemplation (Collingwood, 1938). In aesthetic objects, the use or purpose is suspended for the sake of the conceptual role. The mentality in the object is retained by an incomplete objectification. The inutility is the lack of adaptation to the world of function. This lack of adaptation or functional specificity is experienced as an indefiniteness. Since the function or meaning of the object is incompletely specified, it retains the potential and ambiguity of early cognition. The perception, in completing its development, has the capacity to arouse the not-yet-committed of the interior space of privacy, anticipation, choice, possibility, that precede the irrevocability of the actual.

A suspension of functional role unaccompanied by an alteration of intentionality — the for-itself of art, the detachment or inutility, nonfunctionality and aesthetic indifference of Kant — are accomplished by transforming a functional to a conceptual intent, i.e. by shifting intention to an intrapsychic aim at the expense of external targets. A porcelain vase is an artwork that has a function, but the function is secondary. The conceptual intent is primary. The fact that the object retains a function is less important than that the function is no longer the goal of the intentionality behind it. In the decorative arts, a reminder of function can accompany a response to the beauty of the object, but at the cost of some aesthetic power. The object is beautiful, but do we respond to it as to a work of art? One may enjoy or wish to possess a beautiful object, but the joy or wish does not seem to be part of an aesthetic feeling. Beauty entices, beckons, seduces — the prophet of truth, von Hartmann wrote — but in aesthetics, as in life, it arouses the very desires it is unable to satisfy.

The judgment of beauty is a response to the coherence of outer form, aesthetic judgment is based on a coherence of conceptual feeling. The former is entrenched in the objective, it is felt by all and does not obligate interpretation, the latter is interpretative and develops with experience and learning. The beauty of a sunset is not enhanced by a grounding in the study of optics. A growing intimacy with one who is loved does not, necessarily, augment the beauty of the beloved in the eyes of her lover nor intensify the passion of a first kiss. The continuity of the conceptual and the objective explains the association of aesthetics with beauty by the inseparability of the inner and outer aspects of perception. The fit of concepts or their features and the derivation of featural content out of conceptual feeling accounts for the interweaving of aesthetic valuations and judgments of beauty.

[19] On the role of ambiguity in art, see Kris (1952); Gombrich (1960).
So it is that a work of art seeks objectivity but ought not expect to achieve it. The fully objective is toxic to the creative. A concept discharges its potential, then perishes once objectivity is achieved. Art awakens and revives those formative concepts still undepleted by what was given to actuality. Consider a painting so realistic that one expects, with the artist, that a bee will alight on a flower. Or, a piece of music that attempts to duplicate the sound of a train, or the song of a bird. In such works, the artist avoids the accusation of mere imitation, or a fatuous mastery of technique, by the use of illusion to illustrate the real. Realist art is more than photographic and this difference is the basis of its aesthetic interest. Similarly, poetry may violate grammatical rules or semantic conventions to elicit meanings in novel arrangements. Meaning veers to anomaly, stretching the semantic fields of words, or creating new ones. Metaphor is not logical. A true fact is a boring poem. The real conceals the poetic, which is the possibility of something unexpected. Coleridge wrote of the ‘suspension of disbelief’ that makes art possible. The suspension is the prominence of the prelogical. Art submits to logic at the cost of novelty and surprise. Art, it has been said, is the relation of appearance to reality. An appearance is unreal only in comparison to a greater — more concrete or objective — realness. Perhaps one could say there is more of appearance in art, and more of reality in perception, but it is only a matter of emphasis.

The uniqueness or rarity of the object is important, though trivially, in heightening aesthetic interest and reducing the impact of function. Nature replicates in eternal cycles, art originates in fleeting moments. A function implies a pre-existing plan, art suggests the freely creative. We may overlook utility if an object is sufficiently rare. If all but one chair in the world disappeared, that one would be a treasured artwork. The relative strength of pragmatic to conceptual intentions, and the felt reciprocality of the creative and the useful, are more decisive when there are many instances of the same object. For better or worse, these effects can be exploited in different art forms. In dance, in rock, in middle eastern, Indian and some modern music, e.g. the works of Phillip Glass, repetition can induce states of restlessness, elation, transport and dreamy intoxication. In the visual arts, an excess of exemplars in a single format, say, the calculated iterations of Andy Warhol or the deeper, limpid rectangles of Mark Rothko, tend to saturate the viewer with a sense of automation, ease and externality that can either subdue or heighten an interior response. Auditory and visual perception may have different effects. Vision cannot go on without incessant change, auditory demands stability. There is nothing so tiresome as to watch the whirling dervishes, yet no music is more conducive to trance.

[20] Gombrich: ‘the old insight that it’s naïve to demand that a painting should look real is gradually giving way to the conviction that it is naïve to believe any painting can ever look real’ (Gombrich, 1960). On the distinction of the pictorial and representational in music, see Kivy (1984).
[21] This, of course, is an old observation. Croce writes, ‘if photography have anything in it of artistic, it will be to the extent that it transmits the intuition of the photographer’ (Croce, 1909, p. 28).
[22] Goethe titled his autobiography, Poetry and Truth, to indicate that some truths can only be conveyed poetically. Novalis said, ‘the more poetic, the more true.’ The difference is that of logic and authenticity, of a scientific truth and the truth of a genuinely real expression.
Artist and Observer

Perception is an active process with an object as the outcome. To say the observer must recreate the artwork is to agree that the mind is not a passive receptacle but that objects are actively generated. Dewey wrote, ‘to perceive, a beholder must create his own experience. And his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent. . . . Without an act of recreation the object is not perceived as a work of art’ (Dewey, 1935). This is unobjectionable as far as it goes, but it does not go very far. What exactly is in the mind of the artist when the work is produced? Bosanquet wrote, ‘if we could get at the explicit being of a creative or accumulative mind at any limited moment, we might find little or nothing there’, likening it to a pencil point that leaves behind ‘a splendid and intricate pattern, but has never had in it at any instant any appreciable portion of the design’ (Bosanquet, 1923).

The requirement that an aesthetic perception correspond with the state of the artist’s mind before being vetted as genuine demands, for example, a mental state comparable to that of Beethoven to appreciate his music. This excludes all humanity from such an experience and assumes that, even were one to generate such a state, the only thing preventing composition in the manner of Beethoven is lack of compositional skill, as if conceptual feeling were independent of its expression in an act or object. Conceptual feeling is accentuated in the attempt to appropriate the creative energies of the artist in an act of imaginative fusion. The artwork does not reproduce in others the artist’s state of mind but arouses concepts and feelings of some generality that touch on a common humanity.

The Sublime

Ordinary objects limit aesthetic perception at one extreme, the experience of the sublime at the other. The feeling of sublimity may owe to a simultaneous apprehension of these limits, the immediacy of an overwhelming object at the outer rim of perception, the expansiveness of potential at its base. The sensibilities that converge in this experience include the relations in space and time, an identification of becoming in mind with that in nature, individuality in duration, and a oneness with the natural order in all its terror and tranquility.

A vastness impenetrable to reason yet comprehensible in the imagination has, since Kant, been claimed to be essential to the feeling of the sublime (Kant, 1960/1764). The artist also captures the interior motion of momentary consciousness in relation to the power of creative advance. The immensity of nature in relation to the insignificance of the individual is the spatial analogue of the temporal embedding of the evanescent in the eternal, the view from Olympus with the fragile human perspective. Aesthetic experience is a capsule of the sublime, where the artwork is perceived as a fragment of an imaginative whole, potential with its realized elements, tones in phrases, temporal parts in durations. The part/whole relation in time and space, central to aesthetic feeling, expands outward to embrace the limits of time and nature, and inward to the local and the fleeting. The permutations of entities developing in the mind, changeless in

[23] Vygotsky wrote that the source of artistic pleasure is ‘the parasitic enjoyment of exploiting somebody else’s labor free of charge’ (Vygotsky, 1971, p. 32). I would substitute symbiotic for parasitic. The fusion is more a becoming-one with the art than with the artist.

perception and perish ing once perceived, tinges the experience with a melancholy awareness of the finality of passage and the fading of brief existents.

The sublime, then, is an experience of part and whole in time and in space. In its temporal manifestation, it is the compresence of the personal now with an eternal present, or the vulnerability of linear time embedded in the deep cyclicity of change. In its spatial manifestation, it is the immersion of the individual self in the immensity of nature or an individual one ness in an impersonal many. That is, it is the contemplation of an individual time and place in the spatiotemporal whole that surrounds it, from which it arises, to which it returns. We die as leaves on the tree of matter. All creatures, inanimate and living, a bird, a bower, a ripple in the stream, the clouds above, the ragged cliffs, inhabit the same world. Wordsworth wrote, ‘every flower enjoys the air it breathes’. Creation is thematic, in the very nature coursing through our veins, the flowers and the hills, the torrents and the winds. In contemplation, all distinctions melt away. The enormity, the manifold, the diversity, are then felt to issue from a single incomprehensible root sensed in an act of beholding.

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