Dufrenne, Kant, and the Aesthetic Attitude

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Abstract:
This paper reconstructs Dufrenne's phenomenological interpretation of the aesthetic attitude. I argue that Dufrenne develops a fecund alternative to competing formulations, advances an innovative proposal for how artworks are perceived on their own terms, and undercuts the claim that a reliance on the subject-object framework in aesthetics entails a commitment to subjectivism. On Dufrenne's view, the aesthetic attitude is an intentional stance towards a special category of perceived object, which is defined by a 'purposive' mode of appearance. Whereas aesthetic attitude theorists argue that a subjective ability to attend disinterestedly to objects is a sufficient condition for aesthetic experience, Dufrenne locates decisive conditions for aesthetic experience in the object-term. This innovative approach develops a novel take on the aesthetic attitude, blunts the edge of aesthetic anti-subjectivist arguments, advances an original interpretation of Kant's relevance for phenomenological aesthetics, and offers a plausible philosophical account of art's objectivity and world-disclosive power.

Keywords:
Aesthetics; Aesthetic Attitude; Intentionality; Perception; Phenomenology; Dufrenne; Kant

1. Introduction

Since Shaftesbury and Kant, aesthetic attitude theorists have argued that a psychological ability to attend in a disinterested or reflective manner to an artwork's properties is a sufficient condition for the possibility of aesthetic experience.[1] This capacity, they maintain, explains its comparative intensity, richness, and qualitative distinctness from other object-directed stances.

In the post-Kantian tradition, this line of argument encounters a recurring criticism. Thinkers like Hegel, Nietzsche, Gadamer, and Adorno charge Kant with offering too subjectivist an account of art.[2] The view that judgments of taste require a disinterested or

[1] Gary Kemp, "The Aesthetic Attitude," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 39.4 (1999), 392–399.
[2] For more on the reception of Kant's "subjectivization of aesthetic experience" see Kai Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 41.

reflective attitude, they contend, restricts the scope of art to its significance for consciousness, and ignores its metaphysical, social, or historical import.[3] Adorno's view that "[t]he relation of subjectivity to art is not, as Kant has it, that of a form of reaction to artworks…[but] the element of art's own objectivity" captures a basic motivation behind these criticisms: the aesthetic attitude fails to do justice to art's objectivity, or, to art on its own terms.[4] Many influential post-Kantian theories of art, including those developed by the thinkers identified above, subscribe to some version of aesthetic anti-subjectivism: the view that art's significance lies chiefly in its ability to disclose truth, rather than its ability to elicit intense or rare subjective experiences. These arguments even find support among thinkers associated with the phenomenological tradition. Most notably, Heidegger contends that Kant's reliance on the subject-object framework, and his appeal to feeling, reduces the meaning of art to its significance for our "lived experience."[5]

Amid this reception-history, Dufrenne's interpretation of the aesthetic attitude stands apart. Following Kant and later aesthetic attitude theorists, Dufrenne maintains that aesthetic experience presupposes special cognitive and perceptual commitments. However, unlike standard approaches, he locates decisive conditions for the constitution of aesthetic experience in artworks. His revisionary approach underscores a key feature of Husserl's phenomenological theory of intentionality: the view that intentional acts are governed by

[3] See indicatively Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1960); English translation: *Truth and Method*, 2nd Edition, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 2006), 84, and Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970); English translation: *Aesthetic Theory*, eds. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 2002), 365–7.

[4] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory,* 355.

[5] Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche,* Erster Band (Pfullingen: Verlag Gunther Neske, 1961); English translation: *Nietzsche Volume 1: The Will to Power as Art*, trans. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1975), 78. Henceforth cited as *N1* followed by page numbers from the English translation.

intuitive evidence.[6] On a phenomenological view, our capacity to modify objects' appearance is not unconditional: it answers to the kind of object we intend. For Dufrenne, this condition also constrains aesthetic intentional modalities: qua perceived objects, artworks evidence a distinctive *aesthetic* mode of appearance. Through an unorthodox realistic interpretation of Kant's conception of internal purposiveness, Dufrenne argues that aesthetic (or 'sensible') objects appear as internally meaningful, purposive wholes. The perceptual structure characteristic of a special region of reality—art—justifies the adoption of a distinctive intentional attitude. The autonomy, normativity, and objectivity of art obtains for an intentional attitude sufficiently receptive to the structure of aesthetic appearance.

I first outline the basic contours of the aesthetic attitude, with special attention to a recent phenomenological interpretation (§2). While canonical definitions show that the aesthetic attitude is a basic condition of aesthetic experience, they remain vulnerable to anti-subjectivist arguments. By reinterpreting the relations of priority between subject and object in aesthetic experience, Dufrenne blocks the anti-subjectivist critique (§3). Through innovative phenomenological readings of Kant's accounts of reflection (§4.1) and purposiveness (§4.2), Dufrenne forges an interpretation of the aesthetic attitude that reserves a role for subjective intentional activity without compromising art's objectivity. Among other features, his account is distinguished by the view that the aesthetic attitude discloses an atmosphere or world internal to an artwork. While this position has been read as an extension

[6] See Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie.Erstes Buch*. Husserliana, Band III (den Haag: Nijhoff, 1976), 44–45; English translation: *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book*, trans. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2014). Henceforth abbreviated as Hua III followed by German pagination. See also Hua III, 288–89, and Edmund Husserl, *Formale und Transzendentale Logik*, ed. Petra Janssen (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 143–44; English translation: *Formal and Transcendental Logic,* trans. Dorion Cairns. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969). Henceforth abbreviated as Hua XVII followed by German pagination.

of a Heideggerian thesis, I argue that it advances a rather different conception of the art-world relation, which emphasizes the importance of the first-personal standpoint (§5).

In sum, Dufrenne's early engagement with Kant leads him to formulate a more holistic account of the aesthetic attitude, which preserves art's objectivity and world-disclosive import, and reveals the limits of the anti-subjectivist critique. This offers a strategy for appropriating Kant's relevance for phenomenological aesthetics that challenges Heidegger's and rehabilitates the prospects of a broadly humanistic phenomenology of art that takes aesthetic experience as a guiding theme (§6). These outcomes do not justify the relatively meagre scholarly attention that this revisionary interpretation of aesthetic intentionality has received.[7]

2. Phenomenology and the Aesthetic Attitude

Kant's view that aesthetic experience presupposes a disinterested stance is a common reference point in discussions of the aesthetic attitude.[8] For Kant, judgments of taste make normative claims about an object's beauty that any other well-placed perceiver could in

[7] Although Dufrenne composed the most expansive phenomenological treatise on art to date, scholarly interest in his aesthetics pales in comparison to work on figures like Heidegger, Sartre, Ingarden, Merleau-Ponty, and even Husserl. Some recent studies suggest a reversal of this tendency: see indicatively Maryvonne Saison, *La nature artiste*. *Mikel Dufrenne de l'esthétique au politique* (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2018); Jean-Baptiste Dussert and Adnen Jdey, eds., *Mikel Dufrenne et l'esthétique. Entre phénoménologie et philosophie de la nature* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2016); Claude Thérien, "«L'idée d'un a priori affectif» et la perception esthétique chez Mikel Dufrenne," *Nouvelle revue d'esthétique* 17.1 (2016): 61–75; Frédéric Jacquet, *Naître au monde: Essai sur la philosophie de Mikel Dufrenne* (Milan: Mimésis, 2014); and Paul Crowther, "Dimensions in Time: Dufrenne's Phenomenology of Pictorial Art," in *Phenomenologies of Art and Vision: A Post-Analytic Turn* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 137–160.

[8] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, Volume 5 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1905); English translation: *Critique of the Power of Judgment,* trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 5:204–10. Henceforth abbreviate and cited in-text as 5/20 with page references to the Akademie edition.

principle agree with. Aesthetic evaluation is grounded on a subjectively universal, or "reflective" form of judgment, which excludes narrowly subjective (or 'interested') grounds like desire, approval, preference, or satisfaction (20:220). The enjoyment experienced when taking in the beautiful is not mere satisfaction or approval ('I like x'), but a refined delight that others could also feel. The conditions enabling these judgments depend on a disinterested stance that we adopt.

In analytic aesthetics, Kant's account of disinterested judgment is typically understood as a form of disinterested attention.[9] Like Kant, aesthetic attitude theorists hold that "when we are aesthetically engaged with a work of art…this fact is not to be explained in terms of the special nature of the qualities perceived, but in terms of a special attitude which we take up, the aesthetic attitude."[10] I might play what I think is a moving piece of music, but unless you adopt the right kind of stance, the piece will not do much for you. Sound itself does not trigger aesthetic experience. Object-level facts are incidental to explanations of the expressive or aesthetic character of perceptual properties. Their special phenomenal character derives from an attitude we adopt towards them: "properly aesthetic description should be explained in terms of the mental propensities awakened by disinterested attention, not in terms of features literally possessed by the objects."[11]

Recent accounts of the aesthetic attitude revive and reinterpret Kant's conception of disinterestedness.[12] Challenging Dickie's influential argument that attention cannot be disinterested, Nanay defends the view that there are different ways to attend to objects.[13] His

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[9] Jerome Stolnitz, *Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art Criticism* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1960).
[10] Kemp, "The Aesthetic Attitude," 392.
[11] Kemp, "The Aesthetic Attitude," 396.
[12] See Bence Nanay, *Aesthetics as Philosophy of Perception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) and Richard Westerman, "Intentionality and the Aesthetic Attitude." *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 58.3 (2018): 287–302.
[13] Nanay, *Aesthetics*, 20. For Dickies's view see George Dickie, "The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 1.1 (1964): 56–65.

account of "distributed attention," he argues, shows that aesthetic experience features a distinctive attentional pattern, on which "attention is distributed with regards to properties but focused with regards to objects."[14] This form of perceptual activity features distributed interest, whereby subjects attend to the multiplicity and variety of an object's properties. Unlike standard attentional practices, which typically focus on a single property, aesthetic attention takes in a wide range of object-level properties, attempting to fit them together.

As Westerman observes, while Nanay's proposal helpfully develops Kant's original insight that aesthetic experience requires a special mental stance, it is arguably not fine-grained enough.[15] A perceiver could plausibly attend to an object in the way Nanay describes without having an aesthetic experience. To use Westerman's example, we might attend in an object-focused and property-distributed way to a charming old map. Someone who views the map as a use-object might do the same, for example, when using it for navigational purposes. While the first experience is aesthetic, the second is not. Since Nanay's account does not itself explain the qualitative differences between aesthetic and non-aesthetic distributed attention, a principled explanation must be located elsewhere.

To find it, Westerman turns to the phenomenological theory of intentionality. Intentionality is a subjective capacity to direct oneself to objects of thought, perception, belief or imagination. Following Brentano, Husserl argues that intentional objects appear variously to the mind and enjoy different modes of givenness or appearance. For example, we can

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Dickie's challenge is motivated by the view that attention to perceptual properties is uniform. While there may be different reasons that lead us to listen to a piece of music, when we listen to it, we do so in the same way, for there is only one way to listen. So-called disinterested attention, Dickie argues, is really distraction or inattention (Dickie, "The Myth," 60). For another reply to Dickie see Paul Crowther, *Art and Embodiment: From Aesthetics to Self-Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), here 28–30.

[14] Nanay, *Aesthetics*, 24.

[15] Westerman, "Intentionality and the Aesthetic," 291.

assert but also doubt that 'there are intelligent beings on Mars.'[16] The same intentional content (or 'matter') is presented differently in each case: the first attitude casts its content as factual while the second shrouds it in uncertainty. The same object can appear under different intentional guises. Varieties in intentional presentation are partly parasitic on differences in how content is intended by consciousness, or, in Husserlian terms, on differences in 'act-quality.'[17]

In this vein, Westerman suggests that a disinterested or aesthetic attitude is an ability to intend objects as internally meaningful wholes. Aesthetic wholeness depends on how an object's properties are grasped. Adopting the aesthetic attitude "entails intending objects as…*internally* coherent."[18] To engage an object's aesthetically relevant properties, we must first grasp it as an aesthetically relevant object, or "as a self-enclosed whole, its meaning determined within itself."[19] A map appears under an aesthetic guise, for example, when its lines or colours are intended as significant in themselves, and not with a view to their geographical reference or practical applications. This attitude supports an aesthetic mode of presentation on which the map appears as internally unified, and also features distributed interest. Qualitative differences between aesthetic and non-aesthetic attention, then, must be located in a more fundamental intentional act. The "aesthetic attitude is disinterested because it treats objects as formally unified wholes in which the significance of any property is determined in relation to its other properties."[20]

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[16] Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen: Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis*. II/1 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1980); English translation: *Logical Investigations*, *Volume II,* ed. Dermot Moran, trans. J.N. Findlay (New York: Routledge, 2001), Investigation V §10, 96.
[17] Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, *Volume II,* Investigation V, §20.
[18] Westerman, "Intentionality and the Aesthetic," 297.
[19] Westerman, "Intentionality and the Aesthetic," 297.
[20] Westerman, "Intentionality and the Aesthetic," 294.

This timely argument makes a persuasive case for the fundamentally intentional character of the aesthetic attitude. Its interpretation of disinterestedness is especially compelling: it suggests that aesthetic intentionality discloses a special kind of perceived unity characteristic of artworks. But this phenomenological reconstruction of aesthetic intentionality emphasizes only one of its relata. For Westerman, if "our attitude to [aesthetic] experiences…constitutes them as particular kinds of thing, it is in principle possible that any set of sensations (or *hyle*) could provide the stuff out of which intentionality constructs aesthetic objects."[21] This is partly right: a potentially unlimited range of objects could be appreciated aesthetically. However, in the map case, as in most other cases of aesthetic experience, we assume that a given object either is or could count as art. We intend the maps (which are curated in an artbook) under this guise, and in the context of practices, institutions, and traditions that individuate artworks. While we are open to seeing the map aesthetically, or with a view to its historical or practical dimensions, in either case we shift our intentional attitudes in response to some facts about the object and its broader context of significance.

Phenomenologists accept that there are different ways of intending an object. But they also argue that there are different ways of *being* an object. In addition to a theory of acts, Husserl complements his theory of intentionality with a theory of evidence, on which acts respond to an object's possible mode of appearance.[22] Objects' intended (or 'noematic') structure is not analyzable solely by appeal to variations in subjective acts (or 'noeses'). For acts are constrained by the region or category an object belongs to.[23] An extended three-dimensional object's mode of appearance is unlike that of an imagined mythical creature or a counterfactual state of affairs. A perceived object, for example, orients intentional acts

[21] Westerman, "Intentionality and the Aesthetic," 294.
[22] See Hua III, 283; Hua III, 300–1.
[23] Hua XVII, 144/161.

around what is presently given. An imagined object, however, gives intentional acts free reign, allowing us to significantly expand the possible scope of intuition. These differences determine how each object is intended. While we must invoke a subject's capacity to vary the intentional appearance of an object to explain the possibility of seeing it as x or y (or non-aesthetically), to explain the type and degree of attention we pay to it, we must also appeal to object-level facts that motivate variations in intentional acts.

These qualifications extend to aesthetic intentionality. We relish or recoil from a novel, film, or painting in response to these objects' respective properties. While we inevitably appeal to qualitative or internal states to explain our responses, these are necessarily correlated with the concrete object-level structures we encounter: subjective reports follow object-level facts.

When formulating his version of the claim that the aesthetic attitude intends "a set of properties *as if* they form a whole," Westerman follows earlier aesthetic attitude theorists in holding that our perception of completeness derives "from the way the object is intended; it is not a property of the object that we perceive directly."[24] But this is only one half of the intentional story. Emphasizing it to the detriment of the other half accords too great an explanatory priority to consciousness. This leaves a phenomenological approach vulnerable to the anti-subjectivist critique: by identifying the subject's capacity to vary appearances as the sufficient condition for aesthetic experience, Westerman undercuts the promising holism about aesthetic objects that his account also brings to the fore. While we might shift between perceiving the maps aesthetically and non-aesthetically, in each case, our perceptual stance responds to the object's real structure: that the maps are organized thus-and-so makes some

[24] Westerman, "Intentionality and the Aesthetic," 297, 295. See also Kemp, "The Aesthetic Attitude."

intentional stances possible while excluding others.[25] Without a sufficiently robust account of artwork-level unity, an act-focused or internalist account of the aesthetic attitude remains vulnerable to the charge that it reduces the meaning of art to subjects' intentional attitudes.

In the most ambitious formulation of a systematic phenomenological aesthetics to date, Dufrenne develops an interpretation of the aesthetic attitude that weakens the internalism characteristic of most treatments of the aesthetic attitude. He concedes that a subject's capacity to shift intentional stance is a precondition for aesthetic experience. But he argues on phenomenological grounds that the sense of aesthetic objects is irreducible to the attitude that intends them: evidence from aesthetic perception compels us to revise the classical phenomenological theory of intentionality and to accord greater autonomy to the aesthetic object. Despite extending lines of argument from his phenomenological predecessors, Dufrenne supplements Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's accounts with revisionary readings of Kant's concepts of reflection and purposiveness. This affords him the resources to secure the objectivity and autonomy of art without overlooking the role of aesthetic consciousness.

3. The Sensible Core of Aesthetic Perception

Dufrenne's *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* aims to explain how art—in his terms: the sensible [*le sensible*]—is perceived for its own sake. The sui generis structure of aesthetic experience sharpens the explanatory challenge. The sensible becomes perceptually accessible following the adoption of the aesthetic attitude. But its meaning and mode of appearance is irreducible to the attitude that intends it; the sensible even exercises a "dominion [*d'empire*]

[25] On the importance of object-level conditions for subjective evaluations see John McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 145.

over perception."[26] In this section, I unpack Dufrenne's motivations for thinking that the classical phenomenological approach to intentionality must be modified to countenance the basic data of aesthetic experience.

To begin, we must first consider Dufrenne's distinction between the 'aesthetic object' and the 'work of art.' This distinction separates non-aesthetic from aesthetic intentional attitudes and individuates their respective objects. A work of art is physically indistinguishable from an aesthetic object: the "object qua aesthetically perceived is no different from the thing objectively known or created that solicits this perception" (*P* 6/xlix). A work of art, in Dufrenne's terms, typically refers to some material object and its properties. While we can certainly make sense of an object in terms of its material properties (or, for example, with reference to its monetary value), this mode of analysis does not take our first-personal experience of the object into account. From a phenomenological perspective, however, experience is the primary and fundamental ground of our encounter with art.

For Dufrenne, aesthetic experience is a species of perception.[27] Aesthetic perception intends the "sensible" or "[t]he aesthetic object", which "is essentially perceived" (*P* 286/223).[28] Dufrenne's account of the sensible partly follows Merleau-Ponty.[29] Merleau-

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[26] Mikel Dufrenne, *Phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992), 289; English translation: *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience,* trans. Edward S. Casey, Albert A. Anderson, Willis Domingo, and Leon Jacobson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 225. Henceforth abbreviated and cited in-text as *P*, followed by French and English pagination. All translations of this text are my own.
[27] Mikel Dufrene, "Intentionnalité et Esthétique," *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* 144 (1954): 75–84, here 75–8.
[28] While Dufrenne does not always observe the distinction (see e.g. *P* 195/145, 487–8/393), in more perspicuous moments, he maintains that an aesthetic object appears under a special intentional guise. Beardsley, who reserves high praise for Dufrenne's *Phenomenology*, adopts a similar distinction in his *Aesthetics*, and also emphasizes the primacy of artworks' perceived structure (Monroe Beardsley, *Aesthetics*: *Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Harcourt and Brace & World, 1958), 45 and 59.
[29] For an account of Dufrenne's relation to Merleau-Ponty see Annabelle Dufourcq, "Dufrenne et Merleau-Ponty. L'ontologie diplopique de l'art," in *Mikel Dufrenne et l'esthétique*, eds. Jean-Baptiste Dussert and Adnen Jdey (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2016), 161–180.

Ponty argues that perceptual objects are meaningful wholes, whose parts and relations are not organized by the intellect but grasped through an embodied mode of pre-conceptual understanding: "to perceive in the full sense of the word…is not to judge, but rather to grasp, prior to all judgment, a sense immanent in the sensible."[30] While Dufrenne accepts that perceived form is inherently meaningful, he reserves the term '*sensible*' for aesthetic objects, that is, artworks as they appear under a distinctively aesthetic mode of perception. While all sensible objects are perceptual, not all perceptual objects are sensible. A sensible object is distinguished by the structure of its appearance and by the kinds of experiences it can support. The sensible has an autonomous and self-organizing intentional structure, which comes to our notice when we intend an aesthetic object on its own terms. Unlike standard perceptual objects (and works of art in the sense referred to above), the sensible reveals an object's 'expressive' character, and opens up the possibility of relating to an object (and ultimately to the world) through what Dufrenne calls 'feeling.' The latter is a distinctive possibility of aesthetic experience.

The distinction between aesthetic object and work of art is clearer in practical contexts. Imagine that, late for a meeting, you run to catch the bus, looking for its characteristic green hue. Driven by practical concerns, you do not care much for what might be a beautiful or ugly shade of green. Colour is a mere sign indicating the quickest means of making your meeting on time. Your perceptual attitude is non-aesthetic: it is "interested" in features extrinsic to an object's or property's mode of appearance (*P* 127/86). In everyday perception, properties like colour do not become "autonomous" objects. Colour is not typically perceived "for itself" (*P* 359/286). We pass over appearances and go straight to the things, places, or persons they refer to.

[30] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 60. See also *P* 41/11.

Aesthetic perception, on the other hand, intends appearances as such. It attends to a property's or object's mode of presentation, suspending all interest in conditions external to its perceived structure.[31] Aesthetic perception explores an object's perceptual "form" or "style", for example, the distinctive hue of this particular shade of green, on its own terms (*P* 147/97). The sensible is the "irreplaceable" intentional object of aesthetic perception; its appearance supervenes on lower-level physical properties, or on "the very matter [*matière*] of the work" (*P* 69/11).

To grasp Dufrenne's point, consider his description of watching a ballet. In the theatre, you focus on the dancers, studying their movements, while also hearing the music in the background. The sorrowful music lends the dancers' movements a melancholic quality. You experience this by attending to how bodily gesture matches music, and by situating the present scene in light of the ballet's plot. To grasp an expressive property like melancholy, you need a view of how a part of the performance, like a dancer's gestures and movements, fits within the whole. By isolating relevant appearances, and attending to their connections with other parts of the work, perceivers intend the ballet's sensible dimension, or "a certain atmosphere in which subject, music, and choreography cooperate, and which forms the soul of the ballet; the dancers aim [*visent*] for this, and this is the aesthetic object itself that they realize" (*P* 116/76). On this description, the sensible is a meaningful, higher-order mode of intentional "unity", or "a new aspect [*visage*]" of an object, which supervenes on the elements that individuate an artwork (in the theatre: on dancers' positions, bodily movement and gesture, musical notes, lighting, and so on) (*P* 193/143).

To perceive an object's sensible dimension, then, we must adopt an aesthetic attitude, which intends properties like colour, sound, or shape as meaningful in themselves: "the

[31] For relevant discussion of similar themes see Westerman, "Intentionality and the Aesthetic," 298.

aesthetic object distinguishes itself from the ordinary object that has colours, but is not colour, and which makes noise, but is not sound" (*P* 127–8/86). The shift from non-aesthetic to aesthetic intentionality requires that we attend to an object's intentional form, to how form emerges from lower-level properties, and to the distinctive meanings it expresses. To grasp an aesthetic object "for its own sake" is to intend its sensible character (*P* 47/16).[32]

Like other descriptions in the *Phenomenology*, the ballet case shows that sensible properties become intentionally salient following an attitudinal shift. Sensible properties, then, are relational or response-dependent. Their "instantiation in an object…consists in the object having a ready disposition to bring about a certain reaction in human beings."[33] The ballet becomes melancholic by expressing values, meanings, or properties that induce a feeling of melancholy in spectators. But Dufrenne's account is not distinguished by its appeal to relational properties as such, but by its view of what conditions must be satisfied for them to become effective. While we must attend to the ballet's perceived form (whole, parts, and relations) to experience its sensible character, within the aesthetic attitude, sensible properties are *real* and *immanent* features of the object. They are not projected by us (*P* 555/451). The sensible is a perceptual modality of an object that could also appear under a non-aesthetic guise; in aesthetic intentionality, however, sensible properties enjoy an "autonomy" and "sovereignty" over consciousness (*P* 258/199). The aesthetic object "overflows" [*déborde*] the gaze that provisionally "assigns the limits of its influence" (*P* 206/154).[34] To perceive

[32] Levinson offers a similar formulation: "To appreciate something aesthetically is to attend to its forms, qualities, and meanings for their own sakes, and to their interrelations, but also to attend to the way all such things emerge from…low level perceptual features" (Jerrold Levinson, *The Pleasures of Aesthetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 6. Dufrenne's account of sensible properties is also consistent with Levinson's view that aesthetic properties are "anchored" in the "specific structure that constitutes [an artwork] on a primary perceptual (or cognitive) level."

[33] Robert Stecker, *Intersections of Value: Art, Nature, and the Everyday* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 37.

[34] A sensible property "ends at the point where the look ends, because the aesthetic object, with its dependencies, is one with the look [*est solidaire du regard*]" (*P* 206/154).

artworks aesthetically, we must first carefully attend to them. In doing so, we soon discover that their perceived form (re-)calibrates and orients subjective acts according to a logic internal to the object. Aesthetic objects make normative claims on perceivers: "we do not decide on the beautiful; the object itself decides and does so by manifesting itself [*décide de lui-même en se manifestant*]" (*P* 22/lxii).

The challenge for phenomenology is to account for two special features of aesthetic perception. First, while perceptual intentionality is standardly analyzed into independent relata (consciousness or object), its aesthetic version features an internal relation of "reciprocal possession" between perceiver and perceived (*P* 92/56). Second, aesthetic intentionality upsets the traditional relations of priority between subject- and object-terms: sensible appearances presuppose but are irreducible to the perceiver who grasps them. In aesthetic experience, "intentionality is no longer intention toward [*visée de*], but participation with [*participation à*]" (*P* 503/406).

Dufrenne's attempt to meet this challenge is indebted to Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. In his eyes, however, both fail to appreciate the degree to which aesthetic perception depends on conditions "common to perceiver [*sentant*] and perceived [*senti*]", and the extent to which perceivers are normatively motivated by aesthetic objects.[35] To account for the co-dependent status of its basic poles, a less imperialistic view of consciousness than that developed in classical phenomenology is needed.

Nevertheless, the aesthetic attitude never "exhaust[s]" an object's sensible dimension (*P* 285/222), which is "spontaneously and directly signifying" (*P* 488/393).

[35] Dufrenne, "Intentionnalité et Esthétique," 78; see also *P* 5/xlviii, 286/223–4. For Dufrenne's critique of constitution in Husserl see *P* 281–2/219. Despite its comparative advantages, Merleau-Ponty's theory of embodied constitution fails to escape an "idealism" on which "the transcendental, instead of being a constitutive consciousness, would be the lived body" (*P* 283/220).

Defenders of Husserl or Merleau-Ponty, of course, might find these conclusions tenuous.[36] I want to leave issues of interpretive fidelity aside and focus on what they reveal about his wider motivations. His own proposal, he contends, "corrects [*corrige*] the usual view of intentionality" by formulating a view that secures both the autonomy of the aesthetic object and the ineliminable contributions of the aesthetic attitude (*P* 296/232). In §4, I show how a revisionary reading of Kant exercises a decisive influence on this project.

4. Kant's Relevance for a Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience

To meet the challenge above and overcome the anti-subjectivist critique, Dufrenne must show that the aesthetic attitude lays the groundwork for perceiving the sensible on its own terms without sacrificing the autonomy and normativity of the aesthetic object. To do so, he repurposes a set of conceptual resources at the intersection of Kant's accounts of reflective judgment, purposiveness, and art (20:234; *P* 563–4/457–8).[37] Reflective judgment anticipates the open-ended attitude needed to intend the sensible (§4.1). The self-organizing structure of internal purposiveness, in turn, offers a model for the autonomy of sensible form (§4.2). Crucially, Kant's view that purposiveness is the principle of reflective judgment helps Dufrenne model the internal or bi-directional relation between aesthetic attitude and object.

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[36] See Lories's argument that on a Husserlian view of aesthetic experience, we intend "the object only *'for the sake of the appearance*'" (Danielle Lories, "Remarks on Aesthetic Intentionality: Husserl or Kant," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 14.1 (2016): 31–49, here 41. Lories argues that Husserl extends Kant on this point: "Disinterestedness is not to be confused with lack of interest; on the contrary, it takes into consideration what the usual interests normally overlook: the way the thing appears, its own way of giving itself. The Husserlian way of saying this is an invitation to interpret in this sense the Kantian thesis that binds the beautiful with the form, to the exclusion of matter." As I argue below, Dufrenne offers a similar reading. This suggests that a more charitable interpretation would have led Dufrenne to see more continuities between his own approach and Husserl's.

[37] For discussion of Dufrenne's relation to Kant see Thérien, "L'idée d'un a priori affectif," 64–7.

His realistic interpretation of aesthetic purposiveness marks a clear divergence from the letter of Kant's account. But he argues that it is justified by our experience of aesthetic objects, which appear as self-organizing, autonomously meaningful wholes. A realistic interpretation of aesthetic purposiveness, he contends, offers a bulwark against aesthetic subjectivism. As I will show in §5, it also lays the foundation for the claim that the aesthetic attitude discloses a world internal to an artwork.

a. Reflective Judgment and the Aesthetic Attitude

Recall that on Kant's view, judgments of taste unfold in the nexus of sensibility, imagination, and understanding (5:217). We encounter artworks through representations given to the senses. The imagination orders empirical representations and suggests ways that they might be further unified and conceptually translated by the understanding. However, the understanding fails to find a concept under which it can group the products of the imagination's unificatory activity. No concept adequately subsumes the content of aesthetic experience.

The non-conceptual character of aesthetic experience entails that, unlike standard cognitive or perceptual judgments, judgments of taste are (largely) unconstrained by the understanding's rules. Since no objective concept of the beautiful subsumes its appearance, the imagination's search for unity produces a form of perceptual intelligibility that falls short of conceptual unity. When "no determinate concept restricts them to a particular rule of cognition", the search for a principle of unity in artworks leads the faculties into a harmony and "free play" that produces a 'reflective' kind of pleasure (5:217–18). The to-and-fro between imagination and understanding, Kant claims, is inherently pleasurable; the beautiful "pleases universally without a concept" (5:219). The experience of the beautiful is sensible, rather than conceptual, since "beauty is not a concept of the object" (5:290; 5:212).

To ascribe purpose, meaning, or intention to an object, we must first adopt a mental attitude that Kant calls 'reflective judgment': "we perceive purposiveness insofar as [judgment] merely reflects upon a given object…" (20:220). Unlike determining judgments, which apply unity-giving moulds (concepts) to empirical particulars (intuitions), reflective judgment showcases a non-conceptual mode of objects' unity. While determining judgment groups particulars under general concepts, reflective judgment works bottom-up: it generates order from particulars and forges a unity not already given in intuition. This extra-conceptual form of unity figures prominent in aesthetic experience and produces a mode of intelligibility unlike that of the categories.

As Fiona Hughes argues, "reflective judgement is 'intentional' in the phenomenological sense" because "it is directed toward something other than itself."[38] As she observes, despite its subjective origins, reflective judgment "arises in response to a given phenomenon" and is "oriented towards something beyond the subject."[39] In the *Phenomenology*, Dufrenne arrives at a similar conclusion, but stresses the idiosyncrasy of the reflective stance. Reflective judgment is an object-directed form of attention. But unlike other modes of intentional activity (e.g. perception, imagination), which give meaning to their objects, reflective judgment actively maintains an open-ended attitude that aims to allow an object to fully manifest itself. The activity of reflective judgment is best understood as a mode of receptivity. This makes reflective judgment a promising model for a non-subjectivist formulation of the aesthetic attitude.

In a discussion of reflective judgment, Dufrenne likens Kant's talk of free play to the attitudinal shift inaugurated by the phenomenological reduction:

[38] Fiona Hughes, "On Aesthetic Judgement and our Relation to Nature: Kant's Concept of Purposiveness," *Inquiry* 49.6 (2006): 547–572, here 556.
[39] Hughes, "On Aesthetic Judgment," 556–7

> The reduction creates nothing; it suspends the thesis of the natural attitude. It does not constitute a new object, or subtract something from the real object [*l'objet réel*]. 'Bracketing' is not subtraction. All the reduction demands of us is to not 'operate the thesis' (of reality or unreality), that is, not to participate [in it] and to give ourselves free play [*nous laisser prendre au jeu*]. (*P* 270/209)[40]

The reduction motivates study of experience in a non theory-laden manner. By suspending or bracketing assumptions about mind, nature, or reality, we gain the possibility of generating accounts of consciousness, world, and meaning grounded on intuitive data immediately revealed to phenomenological reflection. While the importance of the reduction for Dufrenne's philosophy of art has been noted, it has yet to be appreciated that in his eyes, a perceptual version of reflective judgment performs a similar function in aesthetic experience.[41] Saison rightly observes that Dufrenne borrows core insights from Kant's associated account of disinterestedness, but does not explore the details of his appropriation of Kant's account of reflective judgment.[42]

As the allusion to free play suggests, Dufrenne sees Kant's account of reflection as a precursor to the open-ended attitude that intends the sensible. In the aesthetic attitude, "everything that does not participate in [*n'est pas complice de*] the aesthetic object, [and is] not in service of the experience it offers me, is bracketed [*est mise entre parenthèses*]" (*P* 206/154). Like the reduction, a reflective, open-ended, and receptive mode of perceptual intentionality allows perceivers to grasp the sensible: it "exiles and uproots us from those

[40] See also Dufrenne, "Intentionnalité et Esthétique," 77.
[41] Bernhard Waldenfels, *Phänomenologie in Frankreich* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1987), 357.
[42] Saison, *La nature artiste,* 71–73. For a helpful account of Dufrenne's reading of Kant between *La notion de l'apriori* and *L'inventaire des apriori* see Saison, *La nature artiste*, 147–67.

habits that embody the superficial self" and "bring[s] us before a new world that needs a new outlook" (*P* 506/408).

A central virtue of reflective judgment is its ability to inaugurate an intentional stance that does not get ahead of the phenomena or restrict objects' modes of appearance:

> in reflective judgment, I maintain a more intimate relation to the object than in determining judgment: I am not content to order appearances or record meanings proposed to me by the imagination; [here] I observe the "adaptation of nature to our faculty of judgment" that Kant describes with the principle of purposiveness [*finalité*]. (*P* 468/375)

Concept-application constrains the possible range of an object's meaning. But aesthetic perception requires that we cultivate a disposition towards encountering objects in ways that could outstrip our assumptions or conceptual schemes.[43] Due to its non-conceptual character, reflective judgment motivates just such an open-ended attitude. By refraining from ordering appearances from the inside, and by attempting to generate order from within intuition, reflective judgement illustrates how perceivers can prime themselves to intend art on its own terms. They must surrender their claim to adequately grasp objects' sense using internal resources alone, and must instead take direction from the object. As the passage above hints, the purposiveness of the aesthetic object is a key precondition for this; I return to this below.

As this brief review suggests, Dufrenne's reading of Kant's account of reflective judgment is complex, and his use of Kantian resources eclectic. He is drawn to Kant's account of reflection in part because he aims to infuse his own account of aesthetic perception with similar kinds of proto-cognitive attitudes. The concept of reflection also helps Dufrenne further refine the differences between aesthetic and non-aesthetic perception.

[43] Developing a line of argument from Kant, the "new attitude toward the object" inaugurated by the aesthetic stance is defined chiefly by feeling rather than cognition (*P* 487/392).

In everyday perception, reflection typically establishes distance from an object, because it inaugurates a detached and analytical attitude. In the aesthetic sphere, however, reflection brings subjects into closer proximity with an object (*P* 515/416). Unlike in non-aesthetic contexts, our experience of art establishes a "dialectical" relation between feeling, reflection, and perception (*P* 524/423). This offers Dufrenne the resources to explain why aesthetic objects manifest qualities like depth, expression, and feeling, and why objects perceived in non-aesthetic contexts exercise comparatively less power over perceivers. And as this suggests, Dufrenne's Kantian-inspired account of reflection makes a claim about reality that goes beyond what we find in Kant. For Kant, reflective judgment begins from particulars and attempts to find a rule for a given empirical case. While this implies that a relationship to objects already obtains, Dufrenne goes further, and claims that aesthetic reflection takes us beyond merely formal conditions for the possibility of subject-object relations, or for the correspondence between empirical laws of nature and transcendental laws of mind. Reflection reveals unseen dimensions of reality, and this suggests that art has a distinctive metaphysical significance (*P* 655/537).

The attitude described above is evident in the ballet case. Before the performance begins, "perception must institute [*instituer*] a background [*fond*] appropriate to it, a zone of space or time, of emptiness or silence, which attention circumscribes like a nimbus. This silence precedes an audition, and it is also how we prepare ourselves to read, sheltered from every distraction" (*P* 203/151). By adopting a receptive openness to encountering objects without prejudice, perceivers satisfy a basic precondition needed to subsequently attend to dancers' movements, music, or choreography in the ways that these features issue from the performance. In this attitude, "I submit myself to the work instead of submitting it to my jurisdiction, and I allow the work to deposit its meaning within me" (*P* 487–8/393).

Dufrenne identifies two stages to reflection in Kant. The first is "*committed*" by its objects, or oriented chiefly by intuitive evidence. The second focuses "on ourselves", or on internal dispositions. As the description above suggests, neither is sufficient on its own. To intend the sensible, subjective projections onto the structure of appearances must be curtailed: "If reflection…implies self-consciousness, this is because I put myself into question" (*P* 467/374). The internally focused stage of reflection, which functionally resembles the phenomenological reduction, is complemented by an open-ended object-directed attitude, in which we "involve ourselves more deeply [with art] than when determining judgment is in effect" (*P* 467/374). So understood, the aesthetic attitude is a mode of intentionality that steers clear of a view of constitution qua meaning-construction. Aesthetic perception realizes a "communion" with the object "more profound than that of the activity of constitution" (*P* 467/374).

b. Internal Purposiveness and Aesthetic Form

We just saw that Kant's account of reflective judgment exercises an important influence on Dufrenne's description of the aesthetic attitude. Recall, however, that a receptive and open-ended perceptual stance is justified by the kind of object encountered in aesthetic perception. For Dufrenne, sensible objects' normativity or purposiveness for consciousness distinguishes them from other kinds of perceptual objects. The region of sensible reality is defined by a mode of intentional presentation structurally akin to what Kant calls internal purposiveness. Unlike Kant, Dufrenne argues that purposiveness is a real feature of aesthetic objects.

For Kant, an "**end**" or purpose is "the concept of an object insofar as it at the same time contains the ground of the reality of this object" (5:180). Kant's likening of concept to purpose suggests that purposive objects appear to be designed according to plan, or for some reason. Purposiveness can thereby be understood as an explanation of an object's

organization or structure. An object counts as purposive when its parts appear systematically designed with a view to some end (5:220).[44]

Kant distinguishes between external and internal purposiveness. Both fall under what he calls objective material purposiveness, which pertains to organisms; subjective purposiveness, by contrast, is merely formal and pertains to aesthetic objects. External purposiveness corresponds to the kind of utility afforded by a bridge, for example, which serves extrinsic ends. "[I]nternal" purposiveness originates within a living being (5:367). Internally purposive entities are self-determining and serve their own goals.

Nature offers many examples of internal purposiveness. An "**organized** and **self-organizing** being" like an animal, plant, or tree appears to be structured by relations of reciprocal causation between parts and whole, which serve its own ends (5:374). In organisms, "each part is conceived as if it exists only **through** all the others, thus as if existing **for the sake of the others** and **on account of** the whole." Organic life appears to be structured by a "self-propagating" or self-regulating principle inexplicable in terms of mechanistic or efficient-causal models.

For Kant, attributions of natural purposiveness are regulative. Purposiveness is a transcendental principle that aids the study of nature. We do not intuit purposiveness: "insofar as it is represented in perception, [purposiveness] is…not a property of the object itself" (5:189). In scientific enquiry, purposiveness encourages us to investigate nature as if it were a "supersensible" systematically ordered whole, which motivates more complete accounts of the physical world (5:175). (Similarly, while the objective meaning or concept of an artwork is indemonstrable, we still seek order in its contingent elements, and grasp it as purposive to attain a more thorough view of the object.) Despite recognizing the benefits of

[44] See Cassirer, *Kant's Life and Thought*, trans. James Haden (New Haven: Yale niversity Press, 1981), 294, 312 for more on this point.

ascribing meaning or systematicity to nature (or art), Kant defends the "**idealism** of…purposiveness": purposiveness grounds reflective judgment without being a demonstrable property of objects (5:351; 20:213–14, 20:218).

The degree to which the cross-cutting distinctions in Kant's account of purposiveness are unified is contested and cannot be addressed here. The key point for our purposes is that Dufrenne blurs Kant's distinction between subjective (formal-aesthetic) and objective (natural) purposiveness, and models his account of aesthetic form around internal natural purposiveness. Unlike Kant, he argues that aesthetic perception offers good grounds to affirm the objective import of purposiveness in art.[45] This revisionary claim exploits a connection Kant draws (but does not develop) between purposiveness and the form [*Gestalt*] of objects' appearance (5:181; 5:192–4, 5:279). While representations of purposiveness are ideal products of reflective judgment, Kant concedes that "we can at least observe a purposiveness concerning form…and notice it in objects" (5:220). This hints at the possibility that objects' structure motivates subjective ascriptions of purposiveness. It also suggests that a special attitude is needed to grasp purposive forms.[46]

Aesthetic objects, Dufrenne maintains, are perceptually grasped as internally purposive meaningful wholes, in which parts and whole cohere. Consider again the ballet case. In the theatre, we encounter a meaningful unity of music and movement unfolding on stage. The meanings expressed in the ballet emerge as we attend to its parts and trace their connections. Aesthetic appreciation inclines toward an awareness of the suite of perceived

[45] Kant stops short of drawing this conclusion, but Hughes argues that he offers indirect support for it, insofar as purposiveness is a possible candidate explanation for the fit between reflective judgment and nature: "aesthetic judgements may be seen as providing *indirect* encouragement for our expectation of empirical systematicity. This is because aesthetic judgements entail a reflection on the principle on which empirical systematicity is based" (Hughes, "On Aesthetic Judgment," 566).

[46] Kant allows that "the representation through which an object is **given** to us" contains "the mere form of purposiveness" but does not go as far as to locate purposiveness in intuition (5:221).

qualities that constitute the ballet's form, which Dufrenne describes as "movement." Aesthetic form is not an "external principle of unity," a mere "contour" or "outline," but an "internal" principle that reveals a coherence between an object's parts (*P* 294/229). The sense of the performance takes shapes before us as we grasp an "action in the ballet that expresses the way its movements are organized [*s'articulent*]." This mode of perceptual organization, one encountered within the aesthetic attitude, "is nothing other than the way the sensible announces and opens itself [*se livre*] to perception." The meaning immanent in the ballet, or "the interiority or intentionality of the work", derives from relations of "coherence, totality, limitation, [and] autonomous formality" that organically emerge from part-whole relations (*P* 195/145).

The claim that sensible form expresses "a principle immanent and developing in [the object]" makes a descriptive claim about aesthetic experience (*P* 555/451). An aesthetic object "represents something" when a set of properties "constitutes itself as an object" and conveys a sense (*P* 294/229).[47] While a "self-expressive" object's properties are relational and dispositional, Dufrenne's realistic reading of aesthetic purposiveness aims to secure the sensible's subject-referentiality without reducing its meaning to that of a *mere* intentional object, significant only for consciousness. The aesthetic attitude helps us grasp the aesthetic object's "principle of purposiveness", or the internally meaningful structure of an "empirical object that lends itself to [*se prête à*] unification" (*P* 564/458). This latter feature marks a fundamental difference between aesthetic and non-aesthetic objects. While our skill at perceiving pens, trains, computers, or motorways typically allows us to fix their meaning, aesthetic objects' sense often confronts us in ways that elude transparent apprehension. Sensible objects exhibit their own internal logic and are organized on their terms, not ours.

[47] While I cannot explore this here, Dufrenne's account of intentional self-constitution and part-whole relations is also influenced by Gestalt-psychological research. For Gestaltists, form is an organically emergent relation governing an object's properties or parts.

While this feature is often most pronounced in our initial encounters with a work, and might progressively weaken, it resurfaces when we realize that a familiar work supports an alternative interpretation.

As evidence above shows, Dufrenne describes this feature of aesthetic perception by appropriating and transforming Kantian resources. Sensible form reflects a logic of autonomous self-organization, akin "to that illustrated by the internal purposiveness [*finalité interne*] of a living being, in which the harmony of parts to whole constitutes a totality" (*P* 513/414). Like organisms, aesthetic objects appear as internally organized and bear their sense within themselves. The immanent unity organizing an aesthetic object's elements secures its meaningfulness: "it is through the very unity of [its] form that the aesthetic object is…nature" (*P* 195/145). While organisms are nature and artworks artefact, their respective modes of intentional presentation converge on a basic point: like self-directed or teleologically-organized beings, aesthetic objects' parts are governed by intelligible relations that constitute them as meaningful wholes. Dufrenne's descriptions of the sensible converge on the idea that sensible appearance "is the principle of its own becoming [*devenir*], whereby the movement animating it is a self-movement [*auto-mouvement*]" (*P* 333/256).[48] In aesthetic perception, the "forms which take shape in the object and which together compose [its] form are…the organs of an organism and are recognized as such by our intelligence" (*P* 520/420).[49]

Kant's importance for Dufrenne's attempt to formulate an account of aesthetic intentionality that preserves art's intentional autonomy should now be clear. Realistically

[48] Dufrenne denies that the aesthetic object is a living being [*un vivant*] but maintains that it expresses life, a concept defined (following Kant) in terms of self-organization.
[49] Nothing *requires* that we perceive artworks as internally purposive. Of course, we need not perceive objects aesthetically at all. For Dufrenne, however, properly aesthetic perception intends objects under the guise of an aesthetic mode of "internal purposiveness" (*finalité interne*) (*P* 307/243; 513/413–14).

interpreted, purposiveness brings art's objective or subject-independent meaning to the fore. Transformed into a thesis about objects' constitutive logic, it helps Dufrenne explain how art becomes normative for aesthetically inclined perceivers. Crucially, this approach highlights the ineliminable role of the aesthetic attitude: without adopting an open-ended and receptive mode of perceptual intentionality, the preconditions for appreciating art's autonomy and normativity fail to obtain. As the ballet case (among others) suggests, attention to our lived encounter with art shows that "the aesthetic object…has the initiative" (*P* 296/231). This corrects the mistaken (for Dufrenne) assumption that subjective attitudes alone are sufficient "for the sensible to realize itself and find its meaning." Aesthetic intentionality demonstrates that "I am the mere instrument of this realization" and that "it is the object that commands." On this interpretation, the aesthetic attitude is a response to a region of reality essentially defined by an expressive, self-structuring, and internally meaningful mode of appearance. To perceive art for its own sake, the aesthetic attitude "must be reoriented in order to regain the object—[which] must be accorded anew the essential privilege of sufficing by itself and of bearing its meaning within itself" (*P* 487/392).

5. Aesthetic Attitude and World

Recall that anti-subjectivists reject the aesthetic attitude because they maintain that a core function of art is to reveal facts about truth, reality, or world. This function, they argue, is suppressed in Kant-inspired aesthetic theory. In this section, I show that Dufrenne's view of the aesthetic attitude weakens the plausibility of this inference. His conception of the aesthetic attitude is distinguished by the claim that aesthetic intentionality discloses a world internal to an artwork. An aesthetic object's purposiveness and normativity stems in large part from its ability to reveal a world, which Dufrenne defines as an internally ordered affective atmosphere.

While a comprehensive overview is not possible here, I will sketch the basic contours of Dufrenne's conception of aesthetic worlds by contrasting it with Heidegger's. Three basic reasons inform this decision. First, since both accounts of the art-world relation are informed by readings of Kant, the contrast sheds greater light on the originality of Dufrenne's Kant-interpretation, while also demonstrating its importance for his formulation of the relation between aesthetic attitude and world. Second, it serves to correct the misconception that Dufrenne's account of aesthetic worlds is, in effect, an extension of Heidegger's. Third, it helps to show that Dufrenne's account of the relation between aesthetic attitude and world supports an original and attractive phenomenological conception of art's objectivity.

Recall that for Kant, the beautiful "pleases universally without a concept" (5:219). The affective character of aesthetic experience motivates Kant to circumscribe the scope of claims about the beautiful to the subjective sphere:

> In order to decide whether or not something is beautiful, we do not relate the representation by means of understanding to the object for cognition, but rather relate it by means of the imagination (perhaps combined with the understanding) to the subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure. (5:203–4)

Judgments of the form 'x is beautiful' inform us about the subject evaluating x, not about the object of her appraisal. Criteria for judgments of taste are subjectively grounded: "beauty is nothing by itself, without relation to the feeling of the subject" (5:217). Judgments of taste exhibit "merely a relation of the representation of the object to the subject" (5:211). They enjoy a "**subjectively universal validity**" that falls below the degree of truth or objectivity characteristic of cognitive or perceptual judgments (5:215). The "universal voice" we seek when judging the beautiful is "only an idea" (5:216).

Heidegger concedes that Nietzsche's and Schopenhauer's readings of Kant are partly responsible for his reception as an aesthetic subjectivist (*NI* 107–14). Still, he identifies two features internal to Kant's account of the beautiful that have subjectivist implications:

> Now, since in the aesthetic consideration of art the artwork is defined as the beautiful which has been brought forth in art, the work is represented as the bearer and provoker of the beautiful with relation to our state of feeling. The artwork is posited as the "object" for a "subject"; definitive for aesthetic consideration is the subject-object relation, indeed as a relation of feeling. The work becomes an object in terms of that surface which is accessible to 'lived experience.' (*NI* 78)

Kant's commitment to the subject-object framework, coupled with his stress on feeling, pleasure, and other consciousness-centric categories, circumscribes the scope of our experience of art and its meaning. By stressing its affective dimensions, Kant's account of beauty forecloses on the possibility that the beautiful might contain truth-apt content, or, at the very least, that its content might not be exhausted by internal states. Correlatively, Kant's focus on taste restricts the scope of art to its significance for us. His encouragement to "seek the standard for [beauty] in ourselves *a priori*" circumscribes art's reach to its affective imprint on consciousness (5:350).[50]

These claims lead Heidegger to conclude that beauty for Kant is indexed to how a subject "finds and feels things" (*NI* 83).[51] In a charge repeated by Adorno, he claims that "taste" in Kant becomes "the court of judicature of all beings." The "aesthetic" approach is

[50] According to Cassirer, the "new cosmos" revealed by the beautiful "is not the system of objectivity but the whole of subjectivity" (Cassirer, *Kant's Life*, 319).
[51] On Heidegger's anti-subjectivism see Ingvild Torsen, "Disinterest and Truth. On Heidegger's Interpretation of Kant's Aesthetics," *The British Journal of Aesthetics*. 56.1 (2016): 15–32 2016; Alberto Siani, "Antisubjectivism and the End of Art: Heidegger on Hegel," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 60.3 (2020): 335–349; and Iain D. Thomson, *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

subjectivist because it cashes out art's significance in terms of first-personal, affective, or perceptual categories.[52] If the meaning of art becomes the purview of subjectivity, it loses its world-disclosive power. Nothing can be said about it on its own terms.

As Torsen has demonstrated, despite his criticisms, Heidegger maintains that Kantian disinterestedness anticipates the attitude of "letting be" that Heidegger thinks we should adopt towards artworks and reality as such.[53] She argues that "the interplay between purposiveness and disinterest in the reflective judgement is highly suggestive of Heidegger's own way of thinking about the relationship between Dasein and truth."[54] For Heidegger, "both work and audience are necessary components of art as a happening of truth."[55]

Insofar as Dufrenne's Kant-interpretation also emphasizes receptivity or openness, it might seem like little more than a perceptual translation of the attitude of *Seinlassen*. Appreciating a relevant point of interpretive disagreement about which faculty in Kant takes precedence will highlight subtle but significant differences between the two accounts. These reveal diverging estimations of the extent of Kant's 'subjectivism' and contrasting approaches to the art-world relation.

Famously, Heidegger identifies the productive imagination in Kant as the unacknowledged "root" of the harmony of the faculties.[56] Dufrenne concedes that Heidegger

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[52] For Thomson, "Heidegger's fundamental objection to the aesthetic approach to art…is that this approach follows from and feeds back into *subjectivism*, contemporary humanity's ongoing effort to establish 'our unlimited power for calculating, planning, and moulding…all things'" (Thomson, *Heidegger, Art*, *and Postmodernity*, 52–3). By tying art to subjectivity, Heidegger contends, the aesthetic approach succumbs to and prolongs Modern humanistic prejudices.

[53] Torsen, "Disinterest and Truth," 24–5.

[54] Torsen, "Disinterest and Truth," 26.

[55] Torsen, "Disinterest and Truth," 25–6.

[56] Martin Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, Fünfte, vermehrte Auflage (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1973); English translation: *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics,* 5th Edition, trans. Richard Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 112. See Daniel Dahlstrom, "Heidegger's Kantian Turn: Notes to his Commentary on the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*," *The Review of Metaphysics* 45.2 (1991), 329–361, for discussion of Heidegger's reading of Kant.

"justifiably" emphasizes the imagination's significance but concludes that he ultimately overestimates its broader role (*P* 563/457).[57] The imagination "stabilizes" [*donner consistence*] representations, but its work "remains discreet" (*P* 450/360). For "the transcendental faculty of imagination, which operates on the basis of a sensible and nonintellectual intuition and to which the object is given", must first "find a link with the given of intuition [*le donné de l'intuition*]" (*P* 563/457–8). To unify its objects, the imagination depends on robust identity conditions first given in intuition.[58] As Kant's example of cinnabar shows, the imagination's unificatory work is constrained by intuition and "presupposes that…appearances themselves are subject to such a rule." The view that perception serves a foundational, knowledge-grounding role leads Dufrenne to conclude that "the progress of perception…proceeds through disciplining the imagination" (*P* 464/372).[59]

Even if Heidegger does not explicitly situate his later reflections on art in the transcendental terms of *Being and Time*, as Torsen shows, earlier arguments continue to influence his view that "the proper encounter with a work of art occasions a new relationship to the world as deeply meaningful and grounded, although this is based on what we could call a subjective projection."[60] Heidegger's interpretation of Dasein's being-in-the-world or pre-theoretical structures of pragmatic understanding breaks from Kant's conceptualism but retains his transcendental orientation. Interpretations of this account's relation to post-*Being*

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[57] For Kant's account of the imagination's role in aesthetic experience see 5:190.
[58] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, in *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. IV (1781 edition) and III (1787 edition), ed. Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1911); English translation: *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). Henceforth cited as A/B followed by corresponding page numbers. Here, A 100–1.
[59] Dufrenne's privileging of intuition over imagination follows Merleau-Ponty, and especially his conception of the 'real' (cf. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception,* 380 with *P* 446/357). It is also consistent with the critique levelled against Sartre's account of image-consciousness, which denies that a new, irreal object is the term of aesthetic engagement (*P* 263/203).
[60] Torsen, "Disinterest and Truth," 24.

and Time writings inevitably prove contentious. However, as far as Heidegger's take on the third *Critique* is concerned, remnants of the earlier approach remain. Against Nietzsche, he claims to have identified an overlooked (positive) sense of the beautiful in Kant, tied to "what we take ourselves to be" and dependent on the "transcendental procedure" of reflective judgment (*NI* 112). This more sympathetic take links the positive import of disinterested pleasure to Dasein's "anticipatory" projective activity.[61] While Heidegger's later reflections on art begin from different points of departure, his estimation of the positive import of Kant's aesthetics is consistent with a transcendental interpretation of Dasein's *existentialia* and supporting accounts of temporality and imagination.

In a reading no less speculative than what we find in Heidegger, Dufrenne avers that "Kant is anxious to avoid subjectivism" (*P* 463 note 3/458 note 28). Consistent with his privileging of perception over imagination, Dufrenne even contends that Kant "locates the necessity of the a priori in the object." This captures a core claim behind Dufrenne's account of the affective a priori.[62] While its interpretive fidelity to Kant is debatable, for our purposes it shows that despite his emphasis on intentionality, consciousness, or perception, Dufrenne's appropriation of Kant departs from Heidegger's transcendentalizing strategy: "We need not follow the path reflection takes in Kant, when it takes the transcendental turn" (*P* 466/374). As descriptions of the sensible show (§3), aesthetic intentionality is a bi-directional relation whose decisive constitutive conditions lie outside consciousness (creator or audience). They are located in a higher-order unity constituted in the exchange between subject and object. Dufrenne's account of aesthetic worlds develops this line of thought.

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[61] See Rachel Zuckert, "Projection and Purposiveness: Heidegger's Kant and the Temporalization of Judgment," in *Transcendental Heidegger,* eds. Steven Crowell and Jeff Malpas, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 215–235, here 228.
[62] For discussion of this concept see Thérien, "L'idée d'un a priori affectif," and Saison, *La nature artiste*.

In an important exposition of the purposiveness of sensible form (§4.2), Dufrenne observes that aesthetic perception discloses "a world…internal to the object" (*P* 513/414). Johnson contends that with the "notion of 'world,' Dufrenne extends the Heideggerian understanding of the essence of the artwork."[63] While he does not offer a defence of this interpretation, Dufrenne's suggestion that Heidegger's claim that the world 'worlds' is also "true of the world of the aesthetic object" offers ostensible support (*P* 221/166; 253–4/194–5). The comparison holds on a basic point: like Heidegger, Dufrenne accepts that a world is no object like any other. But the comparison is otherwise deceptive: in its details, Dufrenne view of world is unlike that developed in Heidegger's "Origin" essay, even if it borrows some claims from *Being and Time*'s account of 'worldhood' [*Weltlichkeit*].

For Dufrenne, "every relation to an object is only ever a relation to an object in a world" (*P* 660/541). This holds a fortiori for aesthetic perception: "the aesthetic object…is a relation to a world. […] its appearance is the appearance of a world" (*P* 512/413). These claims are consistent with *Being and Time*'s claim that a world necessarily mediates subject-object relations.[64] But two important tenets of Dufrennian aesthetic worlds suggest significant distance from Heidegger's later account of the art-world relation.

(1) As the ballet description hints, Dufrenne defines an aesthetic world as an affective atmosphere.[65] An atmosphere is "a certain quality that speech cannot translate, but which communicates itself in arousing [*éveillant*] a feeling. This quality proper to the work, or to

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[63] Galen Johnson, "Continental Aesthetics: Phenomenology and Antiphenomenology," in *The History of Continental Philosophy Volume 4,* ed. Leonard Lawlor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 87–110, here 98. But cf. Saison, *La nature artise*, 71–2 and Thérien, "L'idée d'un a priori affectif."

[64] Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 8th ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1957), §§14–16, §§30–31; English translation: *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962).

[65] See Thomas Fuchs, "The Phenomenology of Affectivity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Psychiatry,* eds. KWM Fulford, Martin Davies, et al.. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 612–629, here 616–20, for a recent account of the relation between affectivity and atmosphere.

works of a single creator, or a single style, is a world atmosphere [*une atmosphère de monde*]" (*P* 235/178). We encounter an atmosphere when visiting a city for the first time. While walking its streets or spending time in it, we grasp something of its pace and rhythm, getting a glimpse of what it might be like to live there. A city's atmosphere is a distinctive qualitative feeling that frames our experience of place, time, and space.

An affective atmosphere is central to aesthetic objects' expressive character. For example, when

> attending a Molière play, we are caught up in a certain atmosphere that orients our understanding [*compréhension*], [and] orders [*qui commande*] the sense [*sens*] of all we will see or hear… To speak of the comic in Molière is thus to specify a singular world, by giving it a name and contrasting it with other worlds that do not arise from a perfectly similar atmosphere. (*P* 554–5/450)

Molière's comic style engenders distinctive feelings in an audience that take hold when reading or viewing his plays. The meanings expressed by his affective schemata individuate a world, or a certain style of representing things, persons, and events, which calibrates our moods, perceptual habits, and cognitive attitudes. A creator's or object's ability to build a unique qualitative atmosphere is the central perceptual avenue through which art's autonomy, purposiveness, and normativity for consciousness is experienced: like a city, an aesthetic world is organized according to its own logic, which orients us towards specific meanings.

While diverse sources influence Dufrenne's theory of aesthetic worlds, a reading of Kant helps him describe how aesthetic worlds regulate subjects' intentional acts.[66] The organizing principle of a complex whole like a world or an aesthetic object, which Dufrenne

[66] Two additional noteworthy influences on this account include Ingarden's account of aesthetic worlds' representative power and Jaspers's discussion of *Weltanschauungen* (*P* 266–273/206–12; 597–98/487–88).

likens to the unconditioned in Kant, is difficult to access through thought alone. However, it is perceptually accessible through feeling [*le sentiment*]. For Dufrenne, feeling is a pre-theoretical, proto-cognitive, and affective embodied process, which takes hold following the shift detailed in §4.2. In the aesthetic context, feeling is a subjective response to the meanings expressed by an aesthetic object, and ultimately, by the world it constitutes:

> In aesthetic experience, the unconditioned is the atmosphere of a world revealed by the expression through which the transcendence of a subject shows itself. (*P* 256/196)

> the unconditioned [in the world of the aesthetic object] is not the inaccessible totality of the series of conditions; it is that perhaps indefinable but [altogether] sensible unity of a singular feeling. (*P* 646/529)

Following Kant's suggestion that feeling secures an extra-conceptual relation to art, Dufrenne contends that the governing conditions of aesthetic worlds are accessed through affective intentional stances. The immediacy and affective character of feeling establish a direct link with an aesthetic object and lay the groundwork for the sensible to appear. While meaningful in itself, feeling also informs higher-order sense-making activities like representation, which bring the object's world into view (*P* 640–41/524–5).

Filmic experience offers a tangible example of aesthetic worlds' affective presence and their regulative and transformative import.[67] A film makes attitudinal demands on viewers consistent with its director's style, cuts, pace, plot, or actors' presence. Compare the persisting deferred climax in Kiarostami's *The Wind Will Carry Us* with the non-linear progression of Resnais's *Last Year at Marienbad*. *Last Year at Marienbad* trains viewers to

[67] For an account of cinematic worlds inspired by Dufrenne see Daniel Yacavone, *Film Worlds: A Philosophical Aesthetics of Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

grasp events on screen as potentially bearing multiple time signatures. Its reorganizing of temporal relations of succession transforms viewers' perceptual attitudes: we gradually learn to check and compare each new scene against preceding ones. The repetitive, documentary style of *The Wind Will Carry Us* instead stretches and dilates our experience of time. Its capacity to draw out the lived present cultivates an anticipation for something still outstanding, motivating us to see events on screen as perpetually on the way to a possible resolution or twist. Here time is experienced as indefinitely suspended or as 'in between.' Both films teach us something about the experience of time, but do so differently, by cultivating different perceptual habits. These basic perceptual attitudes, in turn, support higher-order representations. A film's global affective framework, or its world, teaches us to see otherwise by first getting us to feel things anew.

Dufrenne's emphasis on the affective character of aesthetic worlds marks a clear break from Heidegger's approach to the art-world relation. By developing an argument for the transformative and disclosive power of feeling in aesthetic experience, Dufrenne undercuts the force of Heidegger's argument that affective categories cement the tendency to confine artworks' significance to the boundaries of finite consciousness, or, to the "state and condition of man" (*NI* 83). And by showing that the aesthetic attitude concomitantly discloses a world, he makes a persuasive case that the adoption of a reflective and receptive *aesthetic* intentional stance is a condition for the manifestation of art's objectivity and normativity.

(2) As the cases above suggest, for Dufrenne, the transformative power of aesthetic worlds is tied to their (inter-)subjective character. This marks a second and related difference from Heidegger. Art's expressiveness resembles that of a "quasi-subject [*un quasi-sujet*]" or "a spontaneously and directly signifying thing, even if [one] cannot figure out [*cerner*] its meaning" (*P* 488/393). Art is inanimate, but qua perceived object, it addresses us as if it were

a self-directed organism, or a purposive whole. Its subject-like character stems from an ability to articulate something of the lived experience of beings like us: "the world of the work expresses the absolute position of a creative subjectivity" (*P* 607/496). In its self-organizing intentional structure, "I recognize in the object an interiority and an affinity with me" (*P* 296/231).

The intentional style, or way of seeing, revealed by an aesthetic world originates in its creator's lived experience. In the aesthetic domain, "the notion of the world…has its root in the singular disclosure effected by subjectivity" (*P* 256/197). Following Jaspers, Dufrenne maintains that all subjects are situated within some worldview (or *Weltanschauung*), which is reflected in their style and personality. Artists are historical beings, bounded by traditions, technical developments, and social conditions. The affective states and ways of seeing that aesthetic objects support originate in wider networks of significance and practices of meaning-making operative in historical time. To grasp a Gothic or Baroque style, for example, is to understand "a consciousness inhabiting and giving life to [*animant*] a Gothic or Baroque world that we are invited to enter" (*P* 156/109–10). By concretizing an intentional style and its associated interpretation of ideas and things, the aesthetic object offers a (partial) window into different ways of inhabiting a world: "an affective quality can be pregnant with a world, because a world…is precisely a response to a certain attitude, the correlate of the subjectivity that manifests itself in an affective quality" (*P* 557/452).

Crucially, while intentional styles and their affective atmospheres are human inventions, their scope is not confined to or conditioned by the intentional horizons of their creators. Artists lay the groundwork for certain kinds of experiences, but in Dufrenne's eyes, great art establishes intentional schemata that reorient audiences' attitudes in open-ended and unpredictable ways. His earlier appeal to Kant's conception of the unconditioned should be

read together with descriptions of the sensible (and the affective a priori) that emphasize the organic or auto-constitutive character of aesthetic experience.

By contrast, world in Heidegger's writings on art does not refer to a "specific world and a specific earth", that is, to work, genre, or artist-relative conditions.[68] Insofar as a "'world' is the background, and usually unnoticed understanding which determines for the members of an historical culture what, for them, fundamentally, there *is*", it counts as extra-subjective and belongs to no-one in particular.[69] Heidegger's view of artistic invention entails that art and its worlds are ways that being articulates itself.[70] Consistent with polemics against feeling and first-personal categories, he denies that art articulates lived experience. As Siani observes, for Heidegger, art "is not a product of the artist's individual creativity, but the place of truth's unconcealment."[71]

Heidegger's interpretation of Van Gogh's *A Pair of Shoes* (1885) reflects this approach. For Heidegger, Van Gogh's depiction of peasant shoes is no mere representation of an ordinary use-object. By presenting a pair of shoes against an indeterminate context, Van Gogh invites us to re-evaluate the assumptions underlying our everyday interpretive security and to reflect on what it is to be an object at all. A truth-disclosive work like *A Pair of Shoes* ultimately makes an ontological point about the recalcitrant character of things and their inability to be fully exhausted by our conceptual schemes. This insight is experienced as an event that reorients sense-making practices. Art discloses truth by unmasking governing

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[68] R. Raj Singh, "Heidegger and the World in an Artwork," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 48.3 (1990): 215–222, here 216.
[69] Julian Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 23.
[70] See the observation that "Modern subjectivism…misinterprets creation, taking it as the self-sovereign subject's performance of genius" (Martin Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1950); English translation: "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language, and Thought*, trans. Alfred Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 2001), 73. Henceforth abbreviated *UK* followed by English pagination.
[71] Siani, "Antisubjectivism," 4.

assumptions about the metaphysics of objects, nature, mind, technology, etc., operative in a particular historical period (*UK* 33–35). Great art transcends subjectivity at the termini of creation and appreciation and discloses extra-subjective world-forming or intelligibility-making conditions. Accordingly, aesthetic categories like the beautiful must be purged of their subject-relative content: "*Beauty is one way in which truth occurs as unconcealedness*" (*UK* 54).

Dufrenne agrees with Heidegger that aesthetic worlds are not subjective in the narrow sense: they do not transmit private data, like their creator's psychological states (*P* 255/195). However, he maintains that they are inextricably linked to the intentional lives of others: an "artist does not need to renounce his singularity, because it is through this singularity that a world is expressed…" (*P* 675/554). As the ballet or film cases show, subjective experience is not incidental to art's world-disclosive power; it is a precondition for it. Whereas Heidegger defines art's historicity with reference to the epochs of being, Dufrenne links it to human experience: an aesthetic world "is always a human world" (*P* 156/110). The normativity immanent to the aesthetic object originates in a concrete mode of intentional life and becomes effective in conscious experience. While Heidegger offers a somewhat more abstract description of how art acquires truth-disclosive power, Dufrenne argues that this takes hold concretely through perceptual and affective experience, whereby subjects are addressed by an intention-structuring object.

As this suggests, Dufrenne's account of the transformative power of aesthetic worlds is modelled around intersubjective meaning-constitution, especially as it unfolds in activities like dialogue or communication. Successful linguistic communication requires that we see things from another perspective. To do so, we must seriously entertain the possibility that our own outlook could be inadequate. Similarly, profound aesthetic experiences reveal the limits of our intentional horizons, and teach us something new about sense-making, by acquainting

us with intentional styles that we can make our own. Art acquaints us with the "existential attitude on the basis of which [an artist's] world can appear" (*P* 555/451). "Art," Dufrenne concludes, "presupposes and realizes intersubjectivity: it invites the other to be himself" (*P* 675/554). Great art reveals hitherto occluded views of the real, and "constitutes" us anew "as a subject" capable of organizing our attitudes around novel intentional schemata (*P* 555/451).

The suggestion that the aesthetic object and its world disclose an artist's subjectivity might seem to conflict with Dufrenne's arguments for the priority of aesthetic objectivity. Moreover, the features above could also be read as covert attempts to smuggle subjectivist tendencies back into the account. Much like more traditional subjectivist aesthetic theories, Dufrenne apparently situates the objectivity of art within the boundaries of subjective experience.

Dufrenne's reply to these worries should already be clear. As a phenomenologist, he maintains that any plausible account of objectivity and reality will necessarily make reference to human consciousness: any world is a world for some subject. This fact does not, however, imply a deleterious form of subjectivism. As the structure of aesthetic experience demonstrates, the meaning of an aesthetic object is always negotiated by multiple perspectives. An aesthetic object is born from within a world of (subjective) experience and articulates some of its characteristics. It gives voice to some region of reality, as it is lived by a subject (*P* 603–4/493). One can only grasp its sense if one enters into dialogue with and approximates the distinctive ways of encountering the world that are immanent to the aesthetic object. Aesthetic objectivity, then, necessarily implicates a form of subjectivity that remains open to interrogation and modification. Accordingly,

> The aesthetic object is a point of departure not so much for objective knowledge but for a reading of the expression of the real, and this is why the artist's subjectivity is eminently required. The world of this object is that of an affective category, and only

> through this category [is it also] a world of real objects: the work leads us to the real, but does so through the affective… (*P* 631/516)

Contact with another's subjective experience is a precondition for grasping the real anew. If the only relevant sense of reality includes subjects, and if aesthetic worlds offer plural modes of representing reality, then the real "needs…subjective worlds to appear…" (*P* 655/537). The world of the aesthetic object finds a correlate in its audience's experience, which it promises to enrich and enlarge.

While this interpretation of the art-world relation is not Kantian in the strict sense, it develops Kant's claim that a world is an ordered, appearance-structuring "whole", or a "sum total of all appearances", which conditions experience in ways that outstrip the boundaries of finite subjectivity (B 446–7). If Dufrenne's estimation of the transformative import of perceptual and affective experience is on the right track, then it offers an alternative conception of art's objectivity and its ability to reveal the partiality and incompleteness of the first-personal stance. Aesthetic experience orients us beyond ourselves by acquainting us with novel ways of encountering the real that transcend our existing intentional attitudes.

6. Conclusion

I have argued that Dufrenne's attempt to formulate a novel phenomenological conception of the aesthetic attitude relies on a revisionary interpretation of Kant's accounts of reflection and purposiveness. This innovative take on aesthetic intentionality is systematically and historically significant.

First, while Dufrenne's debts to Kant are frequently invoked, the account above offers the first (to my knowledge) detailed treatment of his appropriation of the concepts of reflection and purposiveness. While Kant's influence on Dufrenne's later account of the

material a priori is widely recognized, the evidence above shows that this influence is already central to arguments in the *Phenomenology*, many of which inform later positions. Despite some inevitable points of contact, the scope and substance of Dufrenne's Kant-interpretation should be seen as a competitor to Heidegger's. Unlike in Heidegger's treatment, Dufrenne's reading motivates a strategy for appropriating Kant's relevance for phenomenological aesthetics that deliberately extends arguments, methods, and assumptions internal to the phenomenological tradition.

Second, Dufrenne develops a fertile framework for reconceiving the aesthetic attitude along phenomenological lines. While phenomenologically-inspired readings of the aesthetic attitude typically stress the subject's role in securing basic conditions for aesthetic perception, Dufrenne enriches existing accounts by highlighting the degree to which intentional attitudes are guided by the sui generis self-constituting structure of the aesthetic object. The claim that aesthetic appearances acquaint perceivers with the constitutive logic of a world balances out the overwhelming focus on subjective acts that often defines accounts of the aesthetic attitude. This opens up new interpretive space within which to pursue links between aesthetic consciousness, aesthetic objectivity, and the lifeworld.

Third, Dufrenne's interpretation offers good reasons to resist anti-subjectivist arguments that an aesthetic approach to art—one centred on intentionality and experience—is necessarily subjectivist. His strategy for substantiating the priority of the object is undoubtedly unlike what we find in Hegel, Schelling, Heidegger, or Adorno. The *Phenomenology*'s account of art's normativity prioritizes perceptual experience and presupposes a broadly humanistic metaphysics, which Dufrenne would later defend (against the grain of 1960s French anti-humanism) in *Pour l'homme*. Nevertheless, by making a case for the autonomous, expressive, purposive, and self-constituting structure of sensible appearances, Dufrenne's account of aesthetic consciousness accords constitutive priority to

art's objectivity. While he grounds it in a broader account of intersubjective constitution, his version of aesthetic humanism overcomes the limitations of aesthetic subjectivism as typically articulated by post-Kantian thinkers.[72] By showcasing the centrality of the aesthetic attitude, Dufrenne demonstrates that strong anti-humanist premises (like those defended by the later Heidegger) fail to address a core feature of our lived encounter with art. He shows that any attempt to do full justice to art is only possible via an account of aesthetic experience: art's objectivity is really a sui generis form of the appearance of subjectivity, and its world-disclosive modalities only appear under a special intentional guise.

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[72] *Le Poétique* develops the *Phenomenology*'s suggestion that sensible form originates in a more fundamental natural ground (a claim formulated, in Kantian terms, as an "affinity" between nature and subjectivity: *P* 468/375). Dufrenne's later philosophy of nature aims to show how the creation and appreciation of art derives from a more fundamental (non-human) form of natural creativity, which is expressed in human artefacts.

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