



is confused, muddy, and perhaps untenable: it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to speak of aesthetic experience as a unique type of experience, as an experience distinguishable from moral, religious, intellectual, or sexual experience.

I would readily admit that the concept of aesthetic experience is vague, misused, and in some cases abused, and that it is, consequently, in need of clarification, perhaps overhaul; but I cannot readily admit that we cannot speak, at least in principle, intelligibly of aesthetic experience or that we cannot identify this experience as a *type* of experience. Although Hospers raises a number of important and difficult questions regarding the existence and identity of aesthetic experience, and although he advances strong arguments to validate his claim, he does not, I think, succeed in showing that *aesthetic experience* is a useless or senseless concept. In this paper I intend to analyze and evaluate the main argument which Hospers offers in support of his view. The propositions which I plan to defend are: (1) the principle of artistic distinction is possession of aesthetic qualities; that is an artefact is a work of art in so far as it possesses, or embodies, aesthetic qualities; (2) an experience of an art work is, or becomes, aesthetic when it is an actualization, or as Ingarden would say concretization, of the basic qualities, or values, usually designated as aesthetic qualities, or values.

## I

Let us begin our discussion of Hospers' view by asking: what kind of experiences are aesthetic experiences? The emphasis in this question is on the *identity* of the aesthetic experience, viz., what aspect, or character, distinguishes the aesthetic experience from other types of experience? Hospers quotes, though briefly, Stolnitz's answer to the question: "the aesthetic experience is the experience one has when the aesthetic attitude is sustained."<sup>4</sup> But this answer is unsatisfactory mainly because it "makes the experience depend on first having the attitude; and it has the unfortunate consequence that, if it turns out that there isn't after all an aesthetic attitude, then there can be no aesthetic experience either, since the experience is defined in terms of the attitude."<sup>5</sup> This argument rests on the assumption that having an aesthetic attitude in an event of aesthetic perception is what *makes* the experience in that event aesthetic; therefore, if the attitude is a phantom, i.e., does not exist, the alleged aesthetic experience would not, *eo ipso*, exist. And even if it exists, is it not possible for one to assume such an attitude towards an art work but not have an aesthetic experience simply because the work is bad or aesthetically trivial? And is it not possible for one to have an aesthetic experience suddenly, or spontaneously, without having the chance to gear himself into an aesthetic attitude? Hospers has a lengthy chapter in *Understanding the Arts* in which he did his best to show that the aesthetic attitude as a principle of aesthetic distinction does not exist. He acknowledges, however, that his negative findings on the aesthetic attitude do not rule out the possibility, or even plausibility, of speaking intelligibly of aesthetic experience. We can, that is, still speak of *aesthetic experience* even though we may hold

<sup>4</sup> *Understanding the Arts*, p. 353.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

that aesthetic attitude as a necessary, or sufficient, condition for the being of an aesthetic experience does not exist. We should, accordingly, ask once more: what makes an experience aesthetic? An adequate answer to this question is not, for Hospers, possible — why?

We may, to begin with, advance *pleasure* as a criterion, that is, as a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for an experience to be an aesthetic experience; thus we say: an experience is aesthetic inasmuch as it is pleasurable, enjoyable. But this criterion is one-sided, not only because *pleasure* as a concept is vague but especially because not all experiences of art works are in fact *pleasant*; it is true that some art works please us, but many others do not. "Works of art", Hospers writes, "can do more than please you; they can move you, shock you, startle you into a new awareness, channel your mind into new modes of perceiving, the experience of which (especially at the outset) you would hardly describe as pleasant".<sup>6</sup> It would not help to say that no experience is aesthetic unless it is pleasant, or that all aesthetic experiences are pleasant in addition to being (though not necessarily) shocking, insightful, inspiring, soothing, etc., because such a statement is arbitrary and contrary to our experience of art works in general. A great work, e.g., *Guernica*, is not pleasant, yet it is an artistic masterpiece. Moreover, even if all aesthetic experiences are pleasant this criterion fails to account for how, or what it means for, an experience to be aesthetic, for pleasantness accompanies a wide range of other types of experience:

[...] sexual experiences are pleasant; are they aesthetic experiences? The experiences of breaking a roomful of crockery is pleasant to those who want to work off some tension; that of beating up old ladies is pleasant to hoodlums. These can hardly be called aesthetic. The experience of playing games is or can be pleasant; is it therefore aesthetic? To call all pleasant experience aesthetic will be to cast our net much too wide.<sup>7</sup>

Thus in order for pleasure to be a necessary condition for the being of aesthetic experience, in order for it to make the experience aesthetic, it must be more than *mere* pleasure, but a special kind of pleasure — aesthetic pleasure? Are we, then, to say, with Ducasse, that "what makes a pleasure aesthetic is not some peculiarity intrinsic to it, but only the fact that the pleasure is one being obtained through *the mere contemplation* of the object that is the source of it"?<sup>8</sup> This qualification would not help because pleasant contemplative activity extends beyond the domain of art; one may contemplate a problem, a street, a factory, God, etc., and his experience in each case may be pleasant, but does this fact make the experience necessarily aesthetic? No. Again, what sort of contemplative activity makes an experience aesthetic — practical, or when it is performed for its own sake, i.e., intrinsically? But is it not possible to contemplate a trivial object intrinsically?

This only shows that the mere contemplation of an object, or an art work, is not enough to make an experience of the object aesthetic. At this point of his discussion, Hospers introduces H. Mead's view of what makes an experience aesthetic: "the aesthetic experience is a pleasurable absorption in the *perceptual aspects* of phenomena."<sup>9</sup> What

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 354.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 355.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

we should spotlight in this definition is the emphasis on the sensuous, perceptual, character of the aesthetic experience: an experience is aesthetic in so far as it is a pleasurable absorption (or contemplation?) of the perceptual aspects. Accordingly, are we to claim that what makes an experience aesthetic is the fact that it is a pleasant, sensuous, experience obtained while contemplating the perceptual relationships of the art work? It would seem that this is a necessary inference from Mead's definition. But this view, Hospers immediately points out is one-sided, for it eliminates from the realm of art not only intellectual experiences, as in logic and mathematics, but also the whole art of literature.<sup>10</sup>

We are in need, then, of a criterion, or set of criteria, which can define the peculiar aspect of aesthetic experience in *all* the arts. This need seems at first look to be met by Monroe Beardsley's definition of the aesthetic experience:

[...] a person is having an aesthetic experience during a particular stretch of time if and only if the greater part of his mental activity during that time is united and made pleasurable by being tied to the form and qualities of a sensuously presented or imaginatively intended object on which his primary attention is concentrated.<sup>11</sup>

Two essential features of aesthetic experience are contained in this definition: (1) in perceiving a work of art, whether sensuous or imaginative, the relevant sense, or imagination, should be fixed, absorbed, by the form and given properties of the art work; the experience should be actuated by the structure of the work. (2) The experience should be pleasant, at least to some degree; there should, in other words, be an emotional response of some intensity to the formal and qualitative aspects of the work. Hospers adds two more features from Beardsley's *Aesthetics*: (3) the aesthetic experience should be coherent; it should hang together; (4) the experience should be complete in itself; the pleasure or emotional intensity it occasions depends exclusively on the internal structure and elements of the given art work.

Although systematic and seems to provide an adequate account of what makes an experience aesthetic, this view fails for the following reasons. First, "it is more descriptive of some of the experiences one has in enjoying the arts than the others. The third condition, for example, applies in an obvious way to temporal arts such as literature and music, but not as clearly to spatial arts such as painting and sculpture."<sup>12</sup> Second, the four features which Beardsley advances do not characterize, or distinguish, aesthetic experience as a special type of experience. Third, it is difficult to determine, or ascertain, whether we can distinguish or classify a species of experience called *aesthetic experience*, primarily because we cannot discover one feature, or property, common to all the experiences we usually call *aesthetic experience*. What is common, for example, between

<sup>10</sup> I am aware that some philosophers have argued that the literary work of art is a perceived, i.e., sensuous, object, or that it is somehow grounded in, at least to some extent, sense-perception. Though radical, this view is hardly recognized by the majority of aestheticians. For a discussion of this question see my study, *Ontological states of the literary work of art*, [in] "Journal of Aesthetic Education", Winter 1983.

<sup>11</sup> M. C. Beardsley: *Aesthetic experience regained*, "Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism", vol. 28, 1969, p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 359.

our enjoyment of a comedy and a tragedy? Again, "the felt qualities of the experiences of various persons, even those thoroughly steeped in the arts, are extremely various. This is all the more so when we consider not only the variety of persons doing the experiencing, their diverse backgrounds and temperaments, but also the great differences in the artistic media, and the various genres of art within each medium, not to mention the even greater differences between our responses to art and our responses to nature. If we take all these experiences together considering both the variations in the kinds of object which caused them, it may well be that the variety of experience is too great to be included under any category label, such as *aesthetic experience*".<sup>13</sup>

## II

A thoughtful, critical, look at the train of reasoning adopted in the preceding discussion clearly shows that the source of Hospers's main discontent with the concept of aesthetic experience is this: *aesthetic* in *aesthetic experience* does not denote a quality, or a complex of qualities, which is common to the sort of experience which we usually have when we approach and perceive art works for the sake of enjoyment or criticism. The four features, or criteria, which Beardsley has proposed (and which systematize those offered by Ducasse, Mead, and others) are not sufficient enough to explain or account for the unique identity of the aesthetic experience, not only because such features seem to attend other types of experience, for example, sexual experience, but also because empirical observation does not show or confirm the existence of such experience: art works, as well as the people who perceive them, are diverse; they are, strictly speaking, generically different from each other. As I have just indicated on behalf of Hospers, in what sense is one's experience of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*, e.g., similar to his experience of Picasso's *Guernica*? If the structure and content of the experience is in general determined by its objects, and if the objects of these two experiences are generically different, should we not conclude that these two experiences are generically different? And if they are generically different, is it at all sensible to look for an essential property common to them? This line of reasoning is inadequate — why?

First of all, because it rests on a questionable, indeed debatable, assumption: viz., a class of 'art works' does not *qua type* exist; accordingly 'art' as a concept cannot be defined. Art works, Hospers tells us, are diverse; they do not share a common aspect, or nature, on the basis of which they can be defined and classified. Thus the experience of objects we ordinarily call *art works* would be *diverse* and would, consequently, resist a general definition or classification. It would then seem that the denial of the possibility of aesthetic experience as a distinguishable class of human events is a logical corollary to the denial of 'art' as a type or class of experience objects. If, on the other hand, we grant that art works constitute a class, if, in other words, we grant that they somehow possess an art-making aspect, it would follow that the experiences which these works occasion would constitute a class, and this in virtue of the ingression of this aspect in the experiences.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 360.

But is it the case that *art* cannot be defined, or that the large number of symphonies, paintings, statues, buildings, poems, novels, etc., which we usually call art works do not share a common feature or aspect on the basis of which they can be grouped as a class and to which we can meaningfully apply the term *art*? Aestheticians have been debating this question with a high degree of vigor during the past two decades; many theories and arguments and ways of analyzing the problem have been advanced to solve, and perhaps dissolve, the problem. I am not quite certain that all the philosophers who have participated in this debate are reconciled or agreed on a general happy solution to the problem. Of one thing, though, I am certain, viz., it is extremely difficult, almost impossible, to define, or attempt to define *art* on the basis of observable or exhibited property or set of properties. And the aestheticians who constructed theories of art like Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Croce, Collingwood, Santayana, Dewey, Fry, to mention just a few names, did not, I am certain, distinguish art works as a class on the basis of empirically observable properties, but on the basis of unexhibited properties, properties that come to life, fruition, or actualization in the aesthetic experience. Art is, and should be, defined not on the basis of how an art work *ordinarily*, merely, or naively appears to the senses but on the basis of what it does to the imagination. This is based on the fundamental assumption that the *artistic* about art, or what makes an object art, is not a finished product or aspect but a spiritual content which acquires its structure and meaning in the process of aesthetic perception. If the artistic about art is to be reduced to a complex of sensible qualities directly perceivable by the senses and perceived the way we perceive ordinary objects then art loses its unique character in our life and the history of culture. The so-called art works would then be reduced to ordinary artefacts like the rest of man made objects which come and pass out of existence without leaving a significant impression upon the course of human civilization.

The point which I am trying to stress, and which Hospers is reluctant to grant, is that *art* can be defined: there is a basic element, or aspect, which is common to all the things commonly called art works. This element, or aspect, is usually called *beauty*, or *aesthetic quality*. The first term is both vague and narrow in its application; this is why it is abandoned by many aestheticians and artists. The latter term is, I think, expressive and useful. An artefact is a work of art inasmuch as it possesses aesthetic qualities and is therefore the ground of an aesthetic experience. I do not here need to sketch a theory of art, or art work; but I need to emphasize that it is quite meaningful to hold that an art work is an artefact made by man thoughtfully, consciously, and purposefully; as such it is a construct, a form, which embodies aesthetic qualities. These qualities *exist* in the work as a complex potentialities awaiting realization *qua meaning* in aesthetic perception. It might help if I quote a distinguished authority on this subject. Harold Osborne, writes:

A work of art, is a construct which is constituted fine by the possession of aesthetic qualities, aesthetic qualities being a necessary though not perhaps a sufficient condition for any artefact to be classified as a work of art. Aesthetic qualities, it is generally agreed, belong to the wider class of '*emergent*' properties, which means that aesthetic qualities cannot be derived or deduced from non-aesthetic qualities and their interrelations by the application of a system of rules although any change in the relevant non-aesthetic qualities of a construct will effect a change, perhaps disproportionately, in its aesthetic qualities. Most works of art are complex constructs with aesthetic qualities existing at various levels of containment constituting a kind of hierarchy. The work of art perceived as a whole — a Gestalt — has over-all aesthetic qualities and the contained parts have also their aesthetic qualities. The aesthetic characteristics at each higher level of containment are '*emergent*' not only from the

non-aesthetic properties of the construct but 'emergent' also from aesthetic qualities of the contained parts.<sup>14</sup>

This view which is succinctly articulated by Osborne is shared, so far as I know, by a large number of aestheticians on both sides of the Atlantic. It calls for two remarks: (1) the defining character of an art work, or what makes the work art, is possession of aesthetic qualities; (2) these qualities are not given as ready made or finally formed realities, but as possibilities for realization inherent in the work as a *meaningful*, significant form. They emerge as *gestalten* in the activity of aesthetic perception.

I may be asked: what is aesthetic quality? Is aesthetic quality similar, or identical, in all art works? We raise this question simply to see whether we can establish a basis for defining *art works* and consequently *aesthetic experiences*; for if the so-called aesthetic quality which belongs to all art works is *diverse* in character Hospers's main objection would remain both alive and forceful. Hence, we should ask: what is the essential character of aesthetic quality? Does this sort of quality have a general essence and existence in all art works? An adequate answer to this question requires not merely a long article but a book.<sup>15</sup> I raise it only because it is our duty as philosophers not to shy away from any question regardless of whether it is difficult or impossible. But on the basis of my experience and the testimony of art critics and philosophers I can, however, say that though rich in its scope, appeal, and depth the aesthetic quality appears to have a general identity in all the arts, and art works: regardless of its habitat – a poem, a novel, a statue, a dance, a building, a symphony, or a film – aesthetic quality belongs to the art work as a potentiality, i.e., as a human aspect that can be actualized as meaning in the aesthetic experience. Its dual character, (1) potentiality (inasmuch as it belongs to the art work) and (2) meaning (inasmuch as it belongs to the aesthetic experience), is what delimits and determines the sort of identity aesthetic quality enjoys. We approach, prize, and experience art works primarily because they promise a special kind of experience and satisfaction, an experience and a satisfaction which are uniquely different from the ones which are usually labelled moral, religious, rational, or practical. This promise is grounded, made possible, by the fact that art works are the sort of objects which possess special qualities, i.e., aesthetic qualities.

Now, if possession of aesthetic quality is the basis upon which art works are grouped as a class of objects, and if it is the principle of artistic distinction, if it is, in other words, the *differentiae* of an artefact *qua* art, then it should follow that the experiences which this class of objects occasion must have a common element between them. This element is a necessary ingredient of the experience mainly because one cannot be said to experience such an object as art unless one experiences it aesthetically.

### III

But Hospers would object: if aesthetic qualities are essentially unexhibited, or, as you say, exist as a complex of potentialities in the art work, if they come to life and acquire

<sup>14</sup> H. O s b o r n e : *Inspiration*, "The British Journal of Aesthetics", vol. 17, 1977.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. S. P e p p e r : *Aesthetic Quality* Greenwood Press, Westport 1970; M. D u f r e n n e : *Phenomenology of the Aesthetic Experience*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 1973.

existence and identity in an aesthetic experience, then we have no way to know either what makes art works *art* or aesthetic experiences *aesthetic*, for the aesthetic experiences of the people who perceive and appreciate art works are, as we saw, *diverse*; it is in principle extremely difficult for two or more individual percipients to have the same experience of one, or more, objects. Can we formulate rationally objective criteria according to which we can establish the aesthetic identity of these experiences? Again, do we not beg the question if we say that an aesthetic experience, or having one, is the criterion by which we distinguish, or identify, an object as a work of art? For, how can I have an aesthetic experience of an object to begin with if I do not know ahead of time that the object I am approaching is a work of art? And if I know ahead of time that it is art, how did I happen to possess this knowledge? Accidentally, or by design?

Let me state at the outset that we do not beg the question if we hold that the criterion by which we *know* an object to be a work of *art* is experiencing the object aesthetically, or the capacity of the object to occasion an aesthetic experience; for we do not, cannot, know the essence — indeed any aspect — of an object unless we first *perceive it*: perception is a necessary condition for the being and knowledge of any concrete object whatsoever. Thus if an object possesses certain qualities I should first perceive it, I should, that is, recreate the unity of these qualities in my perception, or experience, in order for me to know what it is or to relate it to other objects if I need to do so. We usually bump into all sorts of objects in our daily lives — building, roads, trees, flowers, animals, people, etc. — and we can, upon request, *identify* any of these perceptual objects by a quick glance most of the time, and we tend to think that in this activity that we *perceive* the object; but this is a gross mistake, for we do not frequently sense, i.e., see, smell, hear, or taste such objects; at best, we name, or classify them, we subsume them under the general concept by which we discourse or communicate about the world around us. Real perception takes place when we focus our *sensuous attention* on an object completely, when the sense, or senses, involved and the mental powers of the mind are given totally to the object as a complex presentation of colors, lines, sound, or movements, along with other types of qualities. During this activity I do not merely think the object; I sense, perceive, it; I form a *percept* of it. And the percept I form is a specific, concrete, individual; for it is *of* the specific, concrete, individual object I have perceived. Only when this perceptual activity takes place can I say that I perceive and become in a position to know the object. Accordingly in order for me to know the identity of any object I must perceive it, viz., experience it: only in this sort of experience can I grasp the peculiar qualities which constitute this identity. Thus the sort of experience I have of the object is the ultimate ground, basis, of any claim or aspect I attribute to it; put differently, I have no right to attribute anything to the object unless what I attribute is perceived by me in the experience of the object. Though brief, this account of perception essentially applies to the perception of the art work, but with a difference. Let me now elucidate this difference and draw some conclusions from it.

Like the ordinary physical object, the art work is fundamentally a sensuous object. But the qualities — aesthetic qualities, I mean — which *make* it art are not given as ready made to ordinary perception the way whiteness is given to the paper on which I am now writing. From the standpoint of ordinary perception, the art work is as natural, and given, as any other object which attracts our sensuous attention in the course of daily activity.

This feature calls for our earlier question: how do we recognize, or identify, such an object as art? This question becomes doubly important especially when we are told that works like paintings, symphonies, statues, poems, etc., which appear to ordinary sense-perception as generically different from each other, are *art* works and that they are art because they share an aspect — art-making aspect — among themselves.

We approach, and identify, an object as an art work, not because of certain observable lines, colors, or representation, and not because it is an ordinary object or an artefact formed to serve a practical purpose, but because it is a *purposive*, i.e. significant form, a form capable of realizing a meaningful experience in which we are delighted, enlightened, inspired, and in which the very heart of our imagination is *enlivened*. That is, I am able to distinguish a fine work of art from an ordinary object, or artefact, by the fact that the former invites me or presents itself to my sensibility as a purposive form. And I am able to make this distinction, and respond to the object as art, mainly because I know what it means for something to be a fine work of art. This knowledge, or better cognitive skill, is usually acquired when one becomes a member of the artworld, when one is exposed to the art works which inhabit our cities, museum, auditoriums, opera houses, literary books, and learns to appreciate and discourse about the nature and peculiar aspects of these and similar works. In every artistic domain there are broadly articulated conventions, rules, or procedures which guide us in our approach to, and perception of, the art works of that domain. We should readily admit, with Hospers, that a sunset, or a human face, can be as beautiful as an art work produced by an artist. The two types of object are strictly speaking formed, ordered, and possess aesthetic qualities which are the ground of the beauty which appears in and through their form. We should also admit that the beauty of a natural object may exceed the beauty of many an art work. But what distinguishes a fine work of art from any natural scene, for example, is that the fundamental character of the fine work of art is *human purposiveness*.

When I perceive a beautiful sunset, e.g., the content of my perception is primarily sensuous: the *feelings* I have attend to the inter-relatedness of the colors, lines, and spatial configuration, including the gentle breeze which flirts with my body, are a direct, yet creative, response to the qualities which I *immediately* perceive; my response begins and ends with the sunset scene. But when I perceive a fine work of art, say Renoir's *Gabrielle*, I do not only respond actively and creatively to the complex order of aesthetic qualities which please my vision but also to the human element, to the human qualities which are pregnant, i.e., potential, in the portrait as a representation and which transcend what is immediately given. In perceiving this work, I recreate, as Dewey and Croce would say, the object in my perception and partly participate in the world which Renoir lived when he was creating this piece. My experience in this case ceases to be merely sensuous; it becomes human, and as such it exists not simply to my sensibility but also to my imagination — cognitive imagination, I should say — which savors, *enjoys*, the aesthetic qualities which the artist has succeeded in creating during the production of the painting. Thus what is peculiar to our experience of fine works of art, and what makes this experience aesthetic, is not merely sensuous pleasure but the capacity of the work to move, enlighten, delight or perhaps enhance our sense of value and provide an occasion for a joyful, meaningful experience. Creation and attainment of human meaning is the *raison d'être* of artistic creation and perception. This is, I think, what Osborne had in

mind when he argued in his insightful article, *Aesthetic Perception*, that the aesthetic experience is a *peak* experience: "it is the apprehension of richly and tensely organized perceptual material without practical implications that extends the perceptual faculties and brings about the expansion of awareness which . . . is the hallmark of aesthetic activity."<sup>16</sup> In this sort of activity the sensuous element of the art work is not neglected or discarded but, as Hegel and Alexander have argued, spiritualized;<sup>17</sup> it is a human character. And it acquires this character mainly because the artist has mixed "himself with his materials";<sup>18</sup> because he created a form, a configuration of sensuous elements that is capable of actualizing an imaginative, meaningful experience, It is this aspect of the art work which led philosophers like Cassirer and Langer to define the essential nature of art in general as symbol and philosophers like Dufrenne, Pepper, and Ingarden to define the art work as an aesthetic object, i.e., as an object destined for the human imagination. They were led to these views because they clearly saw that art works are cultural phenomena; as such they embody some of the highest values, i.e., meanings, which adorn the spiritual fabric of society. Thus if we grant that what makes an artefact a work of art is possession of aesthetic qualities *qua* purposive form, if this form exists as a potentiality awaiting realization in aesthetic perception, i.e., as a function of the art work as a sensuous form, if we also grant that the actualization and enjoyment of the form is what makes an experience aesthetic, and that we acquire a skill in identifying and perceiving works of fine art as we acquire membership in the artworld of the society to which we happen to belong, it should follow that we do not beg the question when we hold that we determine whether an object is a work of art by experiencing that object aesthetically.

Let us grant for the sake of argument, Hospers would argue, that one can have an aesthetic experience, an experience which can be aesthetic by perceiving the aesthetic qualities of an art *qua* purposive form, how can we establish that the diverse experiences which people have of the diversity of art works actually possess, at least in principle, some aesthetic character? I have already argued that the principle of artistic distinction in general is possession of purposive form. This means that regardless of the sort of sensuous medium in which it appears — words, sounds, lines, colors, marble, movements, etc. — a form is purposive inasmuch as it is capable of realizing a meaningful, life-enhancing experience. The texture of this experience is not *merely* concept, sensation, emotion, or a mental representation of some kind, but an *image*, an imaginative reality in which sensation, emotion and concept fuse into a special kind of apprehension — *noetic* apprehension. When we deny, with Hospers, the possibility of aesthetic experience on the grounds that the qualities of the experiences people have of art works are diverse, not to

<sup>16</sup> H. Osborne: *Aesthetic perception*, "The British Journal of Aesthetic", vol. 18, 1978; See also his recent article, *Expressiveness in the arts*, "The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism", XLI. 1982; *What is a work of art?*, "The British Journal of Aesthetics", vol. 21, 1981.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. S. Alexander: *Beauty and Other Forms of Value*, T. Y. Crowley, New York 1968, p. 53 ff.; G. W. F. Hegel: *The Philosophy of Fine Art*, tr. T. M. Knox Oxford University Press, 1980, Introduction; Cf. also M. Mitias: *Hegel on the Art Object*, "The Personalist", Vol. 56, 1975.

<sup>18</sup> Alexander: *Beauty and Other Forms of Value*, p. 18–19.

speak of the generic diversity of the art works themselves, we have to be clear about what it is that we are denying. If the principle of artistic, and consequently aesthetic, distinction is purposive form, if the essence of this form is a *gestalt*, a dynamic quality, created and enjoyed in and by the imagination in aesthetic perception, i.e., if it is unexhibited aesthetic quality, and if this quality is intended for the human imagination as a universal faculty, I do not think it is logically offensive to hold that (1) diverse types of art works may possess this form, and (2) people with diverse individual characters can basically have similar experiences of such works. For if the purposive form I have been speaking of is grounded in the sensuous form which constitutes the physical being of the art work, if this form is an objectively given structure, and if, furthermore, the structure of the experience is *determined and guided* by the sensuous form, it should follow that the qualitative aspects of the experience would necessarily be a realized content of the art work as a complex of sensuous qualities.

The attempt to stress diversity in art works, as well as in the experiences which the works occasion, strikes me as unnecessary, on the one hand, and as sophistic, on the other, not only because artistic masterpieces have always existed in our midst, and people continued to enjoy them since the Golden Age of Greece, but especially because the structure of human sensibility, the general values we live by, the general socio-cultural conditions under which we recognize, appreciate, and evaluate art works more confirm, rather than deny, that the experiences we usually enjoy when we seek and perceive art works are uniquely different from those which we enjoy when we help others, pray to God, watch a football game, or have a sexual experience. My task in the preceding discussion has not been to elucidate the nature of aesthetic value, or the extent to which aesthetic experiences do in fact vary, but only to show that it is possible to articulate one (or more) criterion as a principle both of artistic and aesthetic distinction.

## STRESZCZENIE

Dyskusja w niniejszym esejie koncentruje się wokół jednego zasadniczego pytania: czy można w sposób wiarygodny mówić o przeżyciu estetycznym jako o specjalnym czy też unikalnym typie przeżycia, dającym się odróżnić od takich przeżyć, jak moralne, religijne, seksualne lub inne. W swej najnowszej książce *Understanding the Arts* (Rozumienie sztuki) John Hospers utrzymuje, że trudno jest, jeśli w ogóle możliwe, mówić o przeżyciu estetycznym jako o typie przeżycia, przede wszystkim dlatego, że nie można wykryć jednej cechy (lub więcej) wspólnej tym przeżyciom, które zazwyczaj charakteryzujemy jako „estetyczne”. A wręcz przeciwnie, obserwacje empiryczne pokazują, że dzieła sztuki są odmienne jak rozmaici są ludzie, którzy te dzieła przeżywają. Ta różnorodność nie pozwala na wykrycie jednej lub więcej cech, na podstawie których można zidentyfikować a następnie sklasyfikować przeżycia estetyczne jako klasę czy typ wydarzeń w życiu człowieka. Autor artykułu twierdzi jednak, że można zdefiniować sztukę w ogóle, a dzieła sztuki w szczególności. Sztukę definiuje się i powinno się definiować nie jak dzieło sztuki – po prostu czy w sposób naiwny jawiące się zmysłom, ale na podstawie tego jak dzieła na wyobraźnię. Sztukę należy definiować w oparciu o nie przejawione własności, które ożywają, urzeczywistniają się czy też aktualizują w przeżyciu estetycznym. Owe własności są tym, co estetycy nazywają zazwyczaj jakościami czy wartościami estetycznymi. Jakości te istnieją w dziele sztuki jako zespół możliwości oczekujących na realizację, jako **z n a c z e n i e** w percepcji estetycznej.

Stąd odróżnianie tego, co artystyczne, wynika z posiadania jakości estetycznych: dany artefakt jest dziełem sztuki, o ile posiada czy ucieleśnia jakości estetyczne. Jeżeli weźmie się tę przesłankę poważnie, to wynika z niej, że przeżycie jakiegoś dzieła sztuki jest lub staje się estetyczne, gdy jest ono aktualizacją podstawowych jakości czy wartości, zazwyczaj określanych jako jakości czy wartości estetyczne.

## РЕЗЮМЕ

Дискуссия в данной работе сосредоточена вокруг одного основного вопроса — можно ли в достоверный способ говорить о эстетическом переживании как о специальном или чрезвычайном типе переживаний, которые отличаются от таких переживаний, как: моральное, религиозное, сексуальное итд.? В своей новой книге „Understanding the Arts” (Понимание искусства) Джон Госперс утверждает, что невозможно говорить о эстетическом переживании как о типе переживания только потому, что не возможно в нем выкрыть одной (или больше) черты общей этим переживаниям, которые характеризуем как „эстетические” переживания. Итак, эмперические наблюдения показывают, что произведения искусства являются разные, так как разные бывают люди и их переживания. Эта разновидность не способствует выкрытию одной или больше черт, на основании которых можно идентифицировать, а потом классифицировать эстетические переживания как класс или тип происшествий в жизни человека. Автор данной работы утверждает однако, что можно определить искусство вообще, а произведение искусства в частности.

Искусство определяется и должно определяться опираясь не на то как произведение искусства „вообще” наивно показывается чувством, а на основании того как оно действует на воображение. Искусство нужно определять опираясь на непроявленные особенности, которые оживляются, осуществляются в эстетическом переживании. Эти особенности являются тем, что эстетики называют качествами или эстетическими достоинствами. Качество это существует в произведении искусства как группа возможностей ожидающих на реализацию, как значение в эстетическом восприятии. Поэтому представление того, что артистичное, вытекает из содержания эстетического качества: данный артефакт является тогда произведением искусства, поскольку обладает или воплощает эстетические качества.

Если учтем эту предпосылку, то из нее вытекает то, что переживание какого-то произведения искусства есть или становится эстетическим тогда, когда оно является актуализацией основных качеств или достоинств, преимущественно определяемых как качества или достоинства эстетического характера.