

WITTGENSTEIN AND AESTHETICS:
SPECULATIONS, RUMINATIONS
AND EXPLORATIONS

By

ELLEN E. ROSS

Bachelor of Arts

Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, Oklahoma

1986

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
May, 1994

WITTGENSTEIN AND AESTHETICS:
SPECULATIONS, RUMINATIONS
AND EXPLORATIONS

Thesis Approved:

Edward L. Lawry

Thesis Advisor

Robert J. Radford

Walter G. Scott

Thomas C. Collins

Dean of the Graduate College

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the members of the Department of Philosophy who encouraged and supported me in my studies. Their interest and concern were sincere and greatly appreciated. In particular, I would like to thank the members of my committee. Dr. Robert Radford, for introducing me to Wittgenstein and for allowing me to pursue my own areas of interest beyond the original scope of the course. Dr. Walter Scott, for his patience and advice, as well as his painstaking attention to detail. And lastly, to Dr. Edward Lawry, who got me into this mess in the first place, and what a glorious mess it is. Thank you much more than I can say for your patience, aid, understanding and encouragement.

My friends and family were equally supportive. Cindy, thank you for being there, listening, and helping me to stay on track and relatively sane. Michael, thanks for everything. Clyde, Tai, Beau and Clemmie, in your own feline ways, you made it all easier. And Mom, we both know that I couldn't be here without you, and I mean that both literally and figuratively. You have always been my first, best friend and support, and I dedicate this to you and Pop. You were always there for me, and I know that you both still are.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN AESTHETIC VOCABULARY	6
From Pictures to Games	6
The Aesthetic Language Game	9
The Idea of a Language Game	9
Building an Aesthetic Vocabulary	10
Primitive Language Games	10
The Context of the Language Game	13
The Nature of Aesthetic Discussion	15
III. AESTHETIC PUZZLES	19
The Science of Aesthetics	19
Aesthetic Understanding	24
Aesthetic Discontent	24
Aesthetic Explanation	28
Comparison and Translation	32
IV. AESTHETIC EVALUATION	37
Aesthetic Rules	37
Rules: Their Nature and Purpose	37
The Source of Rules	44
Aesthetic Judgment	46
The Development of Mastery	46
The Transmissibility of Mastery	51
The Aesthetic Context	53
Taste and Genius	59
V. ART AND MEANING	67
The Spirit of Art	67
Art for Art's Sake	67
Spirit and the Will	69
The Unsayable in Art	71
The Boundaries of the Sayable	71
The Importance of the Unsayable	75
Art and the World	78

VI.	CONCLUSION	83
	Art, Life and Happiness	83
VII.	BIBLIOGRAPHY	91

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The construction of something cogent and coherent enough to be called Wittgenstein's theory of aesthetics is a difficult task, one made more difficult by Wittgenstein's own reluctance to assist. Although he had very decided opinions about art and aesthetics, he never organized his informal remarks and lectures into formal theory.

When he gave the lectures that were published as *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, Wittgenstein asked that his words not be recorded because:

If you write these spontaneous remarks down, some day someone may publish them as my considered opinions. I don't want that done. For I am talking now freely as my ideas come, but all this will need a lot more thought and better expression (Monk, 403).

His reluctance stemmed from the concern that these were not his "considered opinions", but extemporaneous remarks that would need revision before they were suitable for publication. Regardless, many of these unconsidered remarks have been published and serve as the major source of his aesthetic ideas.

Unfortunately, as is often the case with personal notes, they are not always clear to an outside reader. There are multiple versions of the same notes, including earlier

versions of notes later included in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Lecture notes preserved by his students can be misleading because of the spontaneity of his lecture style. There is no guarantee that what was written down in class actually corresponds to conclusions later reached. Such ideas were not intended to represent the fullness of thought and reflection of which he was capable. As Norman Malcolm describes it in his memoir, Wittgenstein ad libbed his lectures, preferring not to use notes that he felt made his ideas seem stale and dry. Instead of listening to the presentation of previously worked out ideas, his classes watched as Wittgenstein thrashed things out in front of them. (Malcolm, 24).

The publication of his ideas in such scattered and unfinished form as they have appeared would probably have greatly disturbed Wittgenstein. He had what amounted to almost a horror of being misrepresented, and "he was of the opinion...that his ideas were usually misunderstood and distorted even by those who professed to be his disciples" (Malcolm, 11).

This opinion was probably justified. While Wittgenstein has been very influential in recent philosophy, the influence has been selective. The majority of texts that comment on or interpret his philosophy do not deal with his ideas about ethics or aesthetics except in passing. This may be because his ideas do not fit well within the scope of

analytic philosophy. Until recently, the greater part of the articles that did mention Wittgenstein's aesthetic ideas did so only from the analytic perspective. This caused the authors virtually to ignore the more interesting and original aspects of his ideas, which will be explored in this thesis.

The primary idea these authors did adopt was Wittgenstein's pictorial theory of language, which he himself later rejected. This theory of language was presented in his earliest work, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, and it was very influential in the early positivist and linguistic schools of thought. His ideas of language were seen as being in line with those of G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell, and his works were influential in analytic aesthetics, although again, the influence was selective (Tilghman, 10).

Wittgenstein's early ideas made him very attractive to the positivists. His pictorial theory of language ascribed a one-to-one correspondence between language and the objects of language. This seemingly placed theories of ethics and aesthetics right where the positivists wanted them: in the realm of senselessness. The terms used by these theories had no objects to correspond with in the concrete world, and so language was powerless to discuss them in any logical or meaningful way.

Some of Wittgenstein's comments did seem to support

this view. When he said in the *Tractatus* that "it is clear that ethics cannot be put into words" and that "ethics and aesthetics are one and the same" (Wittgenstein 1961, 147), it did seem as if he were saying that there was nothing which could be said about these areas. If nothing can be put into words, then it must be because there is nothing that can be said. The positivists understood this to mean that nothing could be said because such areas are nonsense, having no logical sense. If there were any sense, then logically, it could be formed into language.

It would be very curious if this were Wittgenstein's intent, for he himself saw his work as being entirely ethical in origin, and saw questions of ethics and aesthetics as being far from senseless. While he was working to get the text of the *Tractatus* published, he wrote to Ludwig von Ficker, a German publisher with whom he had had earlier dealings, and said (concerning the text):

....it will probably be helpful for you if I write a few words about my book: For you won't--I really believe--get too much out of reading it. Because you won't understand it; the content will seem quite strange to you. In reality, it isn't strange to you, for the point of the book is ethical (Luckhardt, 94).

Obviously, if Wittgenstein felt that the whole point of the book was ethical, he could not have felt that the whole idea of ethics was senseless. The difficulty lies in discerning exactly what he meant by "ethical", and hence by "aesthetics". The *Tractatus* is not an ethical text in the usually accepted sense. It is instead a text that attempts to set

the limits of what can be logically and rationally talked about in order to highlight and outline the areas that are beyond rational, logical discussion. Wittgenstein does not have anything further to say about ethics (aesthetics) because what can be said cannot show what is important.

What is important is a matter for some sort of perception beyond the logical and rational, something that comes closer to intuition than rational thought. The purpose of this paper is to explore and define Wittgenstein's aesthetic ideas with an eye towards demonstrating the importance of this intuitive perception and the role it plays, along with aesthetics, in our lives. The aesthetic ideas that we will explore include: the development of the aesthetic vocabulary and demonstrations of how it is used; a discussion of the impossibility of developing a "science of aesthetics"; the development of and the role played by aesthetic rules; the necessity of aesthetic context to the development of those rules; and the mastery of such a context and the rules that make aesthetic judgment possible. In conclusion, I hope to demonstrate the importance of art in its relation to ethics and to life itself, at least as Wittgenstein saw it.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN AESTHETIC VOCABULARY

From Pictures to Games

Considering the enthusiastic reception of the *Tractatus*, it seems somewhat curious that Wittgenstein could so completely reject the pictorial theory of language. As described in the introduction to this thesis, this theory proposed a one to one correspondence between language and the world. A linguistic description "paints a picture" of objects in the world, with the elements of language corresponding to objects in the world. Any logical proposition is thus a linguistic picture of that which it describes. In his memoir of Wittgenstein, Norman Malcolm recounts the incident that led to the development of the pictorial theory of language:

Wittgenstein related to me two anecdotes pertaining to the *Tractatus*...One has to do with the origination of the central idea of the *Tractatus*--that a proposition is a *picture*. This idea came to Wittgenstein when he was serving in the Austrian army in the First War. He saw a newspaper that described the occurrence and location of an automobile accident by means of a diagram or map. It occurred to Wittgenstein that this map was a proposition and that therein was revealed the essential nature of propositions--namely, to picture reality (Malcolm, 69).

From this incident, a detailed and precise account of language and its relation to the world developed. Indeed,

Wittgenstein himself felt that with the completion of the *Tractatus* he had said all that could logically be said concerning philosophy and the nature of the world. "He had, he thought, completed a book that provided a definitive and unassailably true solution to the problems of philosophy" (Monk, 173). This "definitive" solution dismissed the problems of ethics, aesthetics and religion by relegating them to the realm of things of which we cannot speak. Cannot, because there are no objects corresponding to such areas, and language is a description of objects. These issues exist outside the purview of logical thought, outside "reality", and cannot be discussed in logical terms. From this viewpoint, language is simply not capable of producing meaningful answers to ethical and religious questions. Indeed, we cannot even frame meaningful questions, if by meaningful we mean logical. As mentioned above on page 4, the ramifications of this theory as construed by most analytical philosophy delighted the positivists, and Wittgenstein's ideas were ultimately widely received and acclaimed.

What then, led Wittgenstein himself to reject this theory? The second anecdote mentioned by Norman Malcolm (p.6) gives the story behind its ultimate rejection.

The other incident has to do with something that precipitated the destruction of this conception. Wittgenstein and P. Sraffa, a lecturer in economics at

Cambridge, argued together a great deal over the ideas of the *Tractatus*. One day...when Wittgenstein was insisting that a proposition and that which it describes must have the same 'logical form', the same 'logical multiplicity', Sraffa made a gesture, familiar to Neapolitans as meaning something like disgust or contempt, of brushing the underneath of his chin with an outward sweep of the finger-tips of one hand. And he asked: 'What is the logical form of *that*?' Sraffa's example produced in Wittgenstein the feeling that there was an absurdity in the insistence that a proposition and what it describes must have the same 'form'. This broke the hold on him of the conception that a proposition must literally be a 'picture' of the reality it describes (Malcolm, 69).

This gesture, and the fact that it was "simply" a gesture, (gestures were to become a very important part of his ideas concerning aesthetics) made Wittgenstein aware of flaws in his conception that he had not previously seen. Ray Monk, in his biography of Wittgenstein, says that the very nature of Sraffa's criticism was so sweeping that it could force a whole new perspective on Wittgenstein, in a way that a more detailed and mathematically or philosophically oriented argument could not (Monk, 260).

According to Monk, Wittgenstein felt that Sraffa's influence brought him to the point of looking at philosophical problems from an 'anthropological' viewpoint. He ceased to view language as existing separate and apart from its environment, and instead focused on the idea that language gets its meaning from the context in which it is used. This led to the development of the language-game, the predominant linguistic image of the *Philosophical Investigations*. As Monk says, "a 'language-game' cannot be described without

mentioning the activities and the way of life of the 'tribe' that plays it" (Monk, 261).

This change of perspective meshed well with Wittgenstein's view of aesthetics. Whereas you could not say anything substantive about the nature of art and aesthetics from the logical, rational perspective of the pictorial theory, the idea of language games was more flexible.

The Aesthetic Language Game

The Idea of a Language Game

The idea of language games in general can be illustrated using the aesthetic language game. In language games, like other sorts of games, you are constrained by the context and rules. Each game has its own guidelines and conditions which make it recognizable as the game it is. If I saw someone using certain recognizable objects in familiar circumstances, using them according to a particular scheme of usage, I could identify the game they were playing with a certain degree of accuracy, given that this was a game with which I was familiar. For example, if I saw a board covered with squares of two alternating colors, arranged so that no two squares of the same color shared a side, and two sets of playing pieces, each set of a different color, and each including a certain variety of pieces, I might assume that it was a chess board, if I was familiar with that game. If I

continued to watch, and the moves that were made seemed to correspond with the game I call chess, I could then say with relative certainty that they were playing chess.

Being able to identify this game as chess assumes that I, as observer, have somehow learned the names of the objects and the rules of movement associated with the game called chess. Similarly, in order to identify and participate in the particular language game associated with aesthetics, I must be able to identify the terms and guidelines that go to make up the aesthetic language game.

Building an Aesthetic Vocabulary

Primitive Language Games. Just as my ability to identify a game as chess presumes that I have at some point learned the terms and rules associated with chess, so an ability to participate in the aesthetic language game assumes that I have learned the terms and rules associated with art and aesthetics, and that I have become familiar with the vocabulary necessary to an aesthetic discussion. To account for this familiarization requires some idea of how we originally learned the vocabulary.

One thing we always do when discussing a word is to ask how we were taught it. Doing this on one hand destroys a variety of misconceptions, on the other hand gives you a primitive language in which the word is used. Although this language is not what you talk when you are twenty, you get a rough approximation to what kind of language game is going to be played (Wittgenstein 1972, 1).

This "primitive language" refers in part to the context

in which we first learned the meaning of a word as children. This context is directly related to the usage that this term has in the aesthetic language game; the difference between the role the word plays in the primitive language game and the role that it plays in the more sophisticated aesthetic language game is simply a matter of degree.

For example, how I use terms like 'beautiful' or 'good' is directly related to the way in which the term was used when I learned how to use it. As Wittgenstein explains, adjectival terms of this sort are first learned as interjections, and usually in reference to food.

(Wittgenstein 1972, 2). Perhaps he is thinking of the situation in which a parent, having fed a child a spoonful of food, will make various noises, (mmmmm!) smile widely and say "isn't that good!". The child learns to associate the term 'good' with certain expressions and a positive reaction to food. Later, she applies the term in different but related situations that evoke a similar positive reaction, adjusting the meaning of the term in the process.

Wittgenstein stressed the role played by the noises, gestures and facial expressions accompanying the word being "taught" in this primitive language game.

One thing that is immensely important in teaching is exaggerated gestures and facial expressions. The word is taught as a substitute for a facial expression or a gesture. The gestures, tones of voice, etc., in this case are expressions of approval. What *makes* the word an interjection of approval? It is the game it appears in... (Wittgenstein 1972, 2).

The faces and gestures that people make, accompanied by appropriate noises and words, teach us the primitive language that evolves into the language games we are familiar with as adults. I learn and expand the meaning of a word such as "good" by associating different experiences from different contexts that evoke reactions and gestures similar to those in the primitive language game that went with my tasting "good" food. If the actions of my parents were smiles and laughter, words they used have positive, pleasant (or stronger than pleasant) associations for me. Similarly, if I behaved "badly", their strong negative reactions, perhaps with raised voices and expressive gestures, taught me the meaning of "bad" and gave it strong negative associations. As I developed language skill, positive and negative reinforcement encouraged the proper use of these aesthetic terms, where proper means the usage that is common in my environment. "Beauty" and "ugliness" were learned in a similar way. "Oh, isn't that beautiful!" was accompanied by smiles, gasps, expansive gestures, clapping. Therefore, when I find a performance particularly moving and beautiful, I stand up and clap my heart out. To express my displeasure I frown, wrinkle my nose or purse my lips.

Thus, the meaning of words is developed and learned from the contexts in which they are used and the manner in which they are applied. As our context shifts, so does the manner in which our vocabulary is applied. The word 'good'

applied to food has a different but related meaning to the same word when applied to art. What has changed is the context.

I see roughly this--there is a realm of utterance of delight, when you taste pleasant food or smell a pleasant smell, etc., then there is the realm of Art which is quite different, though often you may make the same face when you hear a piece of music as when you taste good food (Wittgenstein 1972, 11).

It is this similarity of gestures, of expression, that leads us to a similarity of vocal expression as well. This is what Wittgenstein termed a "family of meanings" (Wittgenstein 1958, 36e). We use similar terms in aesthetics and ethics: good, bad, correct, wrong, etc.; each of these words has a family of meanings that relates how the word is used in our primitive language games to how we use it in ethical and aesthetic language games. This concept is particularly clear in the following passage.

Supposing you meet someone in the street and he tells you he has lost his greatest friend, in a voice extremely expressive of his emotion. You might say: "It was extraordinarily beautiful, the way he expressed himself." Supposing you then asked: "What similarity has my admiring this person with my eating vanilla ice and liking it?" To compare them seems almost disgusting (but you can connect them by intermediate cases.) Suppose someone said: "But this is a quite different kind of delight." But did you learn two meanings of 'delight'? You use the same word on both occasions. There is some connection between these delights. (Wittgenstein 1972, 12).

The Context of the Language Game. This context of understanding extends further than the individual. In the aesthetic language game, we assume that other people who use

terms with which we are familiar are using them in the same way that we are using them. We assume that they learned their vocabulary under similar conditions, and that therefore we are safe in trusting our understanding of their use of familiar terms. If I were to come across someone who used the term 'beauty' in an entirely unfamiliar way, I should either have to determine the relation between her use of the term and mine, or decide that we are in fact playing different language games.

This becomes most striking when examined in terms of an unfamiliar culture. If we did not use the same language, how could we determine what they valued, or what was important to them? According to Wittgenstein, we would revert to our primitive language context.

If you came to a foreign tribe, whose language you didn't know at all and you wished to know what words corresponded to 'good', 'fine', etc., what would you look for? You would look for smiles, gestures, foods, toys...If you went to Mars and men were spheres with sticks coming out, you wouldn't know what to look for. Or if you went to a tribe where noises made with the mouth were just breathing or making music, and language was made with the ears.... You compare the branches with arms. Certainly we must interpret the gestures of the tribe on the analogy of ours.... We don't start from certain words, but from certain occasions or activities (Wittgenstein 1972, 2-3).

What is most important is the context and the way in which we use words, not the words themselves. We demonstrate our facility and the sophistication of our ability to play in the aesthetic language game by the way we use and surpass our primitive vocabulary. For Wittgenstein, true masters of

the game seldom use this vocabulary, because of its limitations.

The Nature of Aesthetic Discussion. When faced with great beauty or great horror, we often find ourselves "at a loss for words." We make sounds of delight or pain, using gestures and exaggerated facial expressions to indicate our emotions, because saying that it is beautiful or horrible is inadequate. For Wittgenstein, these gestures remain the most basic expressions of understanding, serving to express comprehension as well as or perhaps better than the words with which we learn to replace them. Our gestures can convey a wealth of meaning and an associated cultural context much more effectively than language can, as evidenced by Sraffa's gesture. Words fail us because they seem inadequate.

As long as our language game is restricted to such primitive gestures and expressions, problematic questions about the nature of beauty and the constitution of a work of art are not an issue. It is when we try to move beyond these gestures that such questions arise. The problem is that our simple aesthetic vocabulary is not up to the task because its expressiveness is limited. It can express the character of a work, but say little more about the work itself and the role it plays in human life.

Once we start trying to tackle such questions directly and articulate them logically and rationally, we find ourselves at a loss for words, trying to satisfy ourselves

with expressions that do not tell us why something is beautiful, but simply that it is. If you are not satisfied with stopping there, you find yourself searching for other means of expression. We say that an artwork is good, and when we try to explain why, we leave behind the words like 'fine' and 'good', and turn to discussions of technique and style, using words with more normative meanings. The question of why we think it is beautiful goes beyond the simple stating of it. By describing the color, the shape, the texture and other objective features, we try to convey the response that the artwork evokes. By comparison with other artworks, we attempt to pin down why it is that this artwork evokes this response, while another does not.

Note that in an aesthetic controversy the word 'beautiful' is scarcely ever used. A different sort of word crops up: 'correct', 'incorrect', 'right', 'wrong'. We never say "This is beautiful enough." We only use it to say, "Look, how beautiful," that is, to call attention to something (Wittgenstein 1979, 36-7).

Aesthetic adjectives are used to draw attention, to indicate a quality, but if we want to discuss an artwork a normative vocabulary is more useful. 'Beauty' is too tenuous, too variable, perhaps. It admits of degrees, but to define these degrees and distinguish between them requires a different sort of language. And even then, my definition may exist outside of language itself.

If I say A has beautiful eyes someone may ask me: what do you find beautiful about his eyes, and perhaps I shall reply: the almond shape, long eye-lashes, delicate lids. What do these eyes have in common with a Gothic church that I find beautiful too? Should I say

they make a similar impression on me? What if I were to say that in both cases my hand feels tempted to draw them? That at any rate would be a *narrow definition* of the beautiful (Wittgenstein 1980, 24e). Here the boundaries of language are reached. He can articulate what he finds beautiful, but when asked about beauty itself, his response is a gesture. Beauty is defined as my response to it. What is beauty? It is that which brings forth laughter, brings forth tears, that which evokes the response that I have learned accompanies beauty. After all our work developing a more sophisticated language game, I am left with a primitive response.

Understanding and explaining a musical phrase. Sometimes the simplest explanation is a gesture; on another occasion it might be a dance step, or words describing a dance. - But isn't understanding the phrase experiencing something whilst we hear it? In that case what part does the explanation play? Are we supposed to think of it as we hear the music? Are we supposed to imagine the dance, or whatever it may be, while we listen? And suppose we do do this - why should that be called listening to the music with understanding? If seeing the dance is what is important, it would be better to perform that rather than the music. But that is all *misunderstanding*....

If I now ask "so what do I actually experience when I hear this theme and understand what I hear?" - nothing occurs to me by way of reply except trivialities. Images, sensations of movement, recollections and such like.

Perhaps I say, "I respond to it" - but what does that mean? It might mean something like: I gesture in time with the music. And if we point out that for the most part this only happens to a very rudimentary extent, we shall probably get the reply that such rudimentary movements are filled out by images. But suppose we assume all the same that someone accompanies the music with movements in full measure, - to what extent does *that* amount to understanding it? Do I want to say that the movements he makes constitute his understanding...? What is true is that in some circumstances I will take the movements he makes as a sign that he understands (Wittgenstein 1980, 69e-70e).

The gesture *is* the understanding, and the response evoked is as far as we can go in expressing this understanding. To try to go further in this manner is to attempt to breach the barrier established by logic and reason. It is an attempt to play the aesthetic language game by rules that belong to some other game. It is a *misunderstanding* of the game itself.

CHAPTER 3
AESTHETIC PUZZLES

The Science of Aesthetics

It disturbed Wittgenstein when he saw the kinds of language games that people tried to play with art. It was as if they were trying to develop a "science" of aesthetics, with hypotheses, experiments, and provable results. "You might think Aesthetics is a science telling us what's beautiful - almost too ridiculous for words. I suppose it ought to include also what sort of coffee tastes well" (Wittgenstein 1972, 11). Since the words used in aesthetic response and discussion have a family of meanings, trying to define these terms to the extent called for in a scientific undertaking is a hopeless task. "Good" does not have one single meaning, indicating the same degree of pleasure or satisfaction each time I use it; its meaning is culturally and contextually dependent.

The desire to make aesthetics into a science is particularly ludicrous from Wittgenstein's point of view, considering his comments concerning the impossibility of discussing art and aesthetic understanding. If we cannot say anything rational about it, we certainly cannot make a science out of it. But as Wittgenstein saw it, there was a strong desire for predictability and solvability.

What would the advantages of such a science be? If we could just get all the right terms and the aesthetic responses pinned down in a logical, rational fashion, then all the aesthetic questions could be resolved, all those questions that do not seem clearly answerable if Wittgenstein is right. If we have a definition of beauty, or a definition of art, then we can clearly delineate what is art and what is not. This would please people who want to be able to quantify the value in an artwork, making it easily analyzable and explainable. There is desire for consistency, a desire for an explanation of why an artwork affects us in the way it does, an explanation that Wittgenstein does not see as valuable, even if it were possible.

I give someone an explanation and tell him "It's as though..."; then he says "Yes, now I understand it" or "Yes, now I see how it's to be played." It's most important that he didn't have to accept the explanation; it's not as though I had, as it were, given him conclusive reasons for thinking that this passage should be compared with that and the other one. I don't e.g., explain to him that according to things the composer has said this passage is supposed to represent such and such (Wittgenstein 1972, 69e).

It is the search for such "conclusive reasons" that drives those who desire a Science of Aesthetics.

For Wittgenstein, an explanation is either sufficient, or it is not. There is no proving, no "conclusive reason" that I should accept what is presented to me. As will be seen below, the explanation either "clicks" or it fails, but I cannot be made to understand by being presented with conclusive proof. The types of explanations of which

aesthetics is capable are of a different sort, not susceptible of proof.

People often say that aesthetics is a branch of psychology. The idea is that once we are more advanced, everything - all the mysteries of Art - will be understood by psychological experiment. Exceedingly stupid as this idea is, this is roughly it.

Aesthetic questions have nothing to do with psychological experiments but are answered in an entirely different way (Wittgenstein 1972, 17).

The idea is that if we can just get the right experiment, perhaps expose X number of people to Y number of art works and measure their response, we will be able to predict the type of works to which people will respond favorably. No need to wonder if an artist will be successful, we have a test for that! However, tests of this sort are irrelevant as far as aesthetics is concerned. The explanation sought by science is more likely to destroy aesthetic perception than to solve aesthetic puzzles.

The mathematician too can wonder at the miracles...of nature of course; but can he do so once a problem has arisen about what it actually is he is contemplating? Is it really possible as long as the object that he finds astonishing and gazes at with awe is *shrouded* in a philosophical fog?

I could imagine somebody might admire not only real trees, but also the shadows or reflections that they cast, taking them too for trees. But once he has told himself that these are not really trees after all and has come to be puzzled at what they are, or at how they are related to trees, his admiration will have suffered a rupture that will need healing (Wittgenstein 1980, 57e).

This "rupture" is the break between seeing something with an aesthetic eye and seeing it with the scientific eye. The former appreciates and seeks meaning, while the latter

analyzes, breaks down, and seeks information. For Wittgenstein this is the wrong way of looking. "Do not forget that a poem, even though it is composed in the language of information, is not used in the language game of information" (Wittgenstein 1980, 28e). If you are constantly asking "why?" and "how?" questions, you are missing the whole point aesthetically. For Wittgenstein, looking for the hows and whys prevented us from seeing.

People who are constantly asking 'why' are like tourists who stand in front of a building reading Baedeker and are so busy reading the history of its construction, etc., that they are prevented from *seeing* the building (1980, 40e).

The problem seems to be that "an aesthetic explanation is not a causal explanation" (Wittgenstein 1972, 18). In seeking a causal explanation, you are playing the wrong language game, for causal explanations do not play a valuable role in the aesthetic language game. Some predictability may be possible, but its usefulness is severely limited.

Aesthetic puzzles--puzzles about the effects the arts have on us.

Paradigm of the sciences is mechanics. If people imagine a psychology, their ideal is a mechanics of the soul...[but] to talk about a mechanics of the soul is slightly funny.

But we can dream of predicting the reactions of human beings, say to works of art. If we imagine the dream realized, we'd not thereby have solved what we feel to be aesthetic puzzlements, although we may be able to predict that a certain line of poetry will, on a certain person, act in such and such a way (Wittgenstein 1972, 28e).

Even if we could develop full, complete causal explanations

for aesthetic response, we would not be satisfied, because this is not the type of explanation sought by those trying to solve aesthetic puzzles.

Supposing it was found that all our judgements proceeded from our brain. We discovered particular kinds of mechanisms in the brain, formulated general laws, etc....Suppose this were done, it might enable us to predict what a particular person would like and dislike. We could calculate these things. The question is whether this is the sort of explanation we should like to have when we are puzzled about aesthetic impressions...Obviously it isn't this, i.e. a calculation, an account of reactions, etc., we want (Wittgenstein 1972, 20).

Part of the problem with explanations of the psychological, causal sort is that they are likely to be impersonal, an examination of the average response of the total number of responses that you have studied rather than an examination of my response. From the average we could perhaps predict the responses of a single person, possibly a type of person, or we could predict how most of the people reacted most of the time, but this information is not very valuable unless you are trying to buy a present for the type of person whose probable response can be judged.

The sort of explanation one is looking for when one is puzzled by an aesthetic impression is not a causal explanation, not one corroborated by experience or by statistics as to how people react. One of the curious...things about psychological experiments is that they have to be made on a number of subjects. It is the agreement of Smith, Jones and Robinson which allows you to give an explanation, e.g. you can try out a piece of music in a psychological laboratory and get the result that the music acts in such and such a way under such and such a drug. This is not what one means or what one is driving at by an investigation into aesthetics (Wittgenstein 1972, 21) .

So, if we are not looking for reasons why, for predictability or the average response, what is the point of aesthetic explanation? In the aesthetic language game, this question is invalid, coming as it does from the outside, from a game that requires a point, a goal, a reason why. In some sense, just as in a language game that uses causal explanations, the goal of explanation is understanding, but aesthetic understanding is just as different from scientific understanding as aesthetic explanations are different from causal explanations.

Aesthetic Understanding

Aesthetic Discontent

How do we know whether a work of art "works" or not? What is it that allows us to distinguish between the merely proficient artist, the talented artist, and the master? If aesthetics were science, there would be concrete criteria by which to judge. Anyone with sufficient training would be able to recognize and evaluate the level of greatness of a given work, and their explanations of why the work was great would be thorough and convincing (ideally). In this case, all that would be required for someone to understand art and to be able accurately to determine the quality of a piece would be the relevant training. But aesthetics is not a science, and not everyone is equally talented in the recognition and evaluation of artistic quality.

Instead, what Wittgenstein thought happened is that in evaluating an artwork, a person who is capable of aesthetic understanding can have a sense that something is not quite right, a feeling that something in the painting or sculpture does not quite work. This feeling is what Wittgenstein calls aesthetic discomfort. The further ability that allows someone to determine and express what it is that is not working is aesthetic discontent.

Perhaps the most important thing in connection with aesthetics may be called aesthetic reactions, e.g. discontent, disgust, discomfort. The expression of discontent is not the same as the expression of discomfort. The expression of discontent says: "Make it higher...too low!...do something to this."

Is what I call an expression of discontent something like an expression of discomfort *plus* knowing the cause of the discomfort and asking for it to be removed? (Wittgenstein 1972, 13).

An analogous, practical example of this would be the nagging feeling you get when you know you have forgotten to do something. When you leave on vacation and forget to unplug the coffeepot, you may have an annoying feeling that something is wrong, even if you are not sure about what it is. This is analogous to aesthetic discomfort. The equivalent of aesthetic discontent would be the realization of what it is that was forgotten, and the desire to rectify it.

The primary difference between this more practical form of discontent and the aesthetic version is that Wittgenstein is uncomfortable with the attempt to break down aesthetic discontent into a sensation of discomfort plus a causal

explanation of why the discomfort exists. To "know the cause" of an aesthetic discomfort does not mean the same thing for Wittgenstein as it would if it were a scientific discussion.

Saying 'I know the cause' brings in mind the case of statistics or tracing a mechanism. If I say: "I know the cause", it looks as if I had analyzed the feelings...which of course, I haven't done...

There is a 'Why?' to aesthetic discomfort not a 'cause' to it. The expression of discomfort takes the form of a criticism and not 'My mind is not at rest' or something. It might take the form of looking at a picture and saying: "What's wrong with it?" (Wittgenstein 1972, 14-15).

When an artistically knowledgeable person looks at an artwork, aesthetic discomfort tells them that something is wrong, something that prevents them from achieving an understanding of the work. There is a failure in communication. To analyze this lack of understanding and figure out what causes it would not be an aesthetic goal. What is desired is the understanding and ability to see the artwork in the right way. The failure to do so may be the result of either a qualitative lack in the piece, or a failure in the viewer's perspective. Confronted with this problem, I ask what is wrong that I cannot see correctly. Am I looking at it wrong, or is the piece itself the problem?

If we speak of a 'cause', it is too easy to be misled by the family of meanings that the word has. We may start looking for explanations, caught up in the 'hows' and the 'whys', and end up losing sight of the picture itself. When we try to alleviate our discontent, we are not pursuing a

means to an end. The understanding that is achieved with the alleviation of the discontent is what we seek. We want to get it 'right', to understand simply for the sake of understanding, not in order to "feel" better. "Getting it right...[is] not a means to some further result such as producing a certain psychological state in the observer, but rather... 'an end in itself'" (Tilghman, 56). When my discomfort is alleviated and my discontent is resolved, I know that I understand and that I have finally "gotten it right".

This is a very difficult idea to comprehend. When I seek to resolve the feelings of aesthetic discomfort and discontent, I do not do this because I want to "feel content." I am not trying to effect a change in myself as such; rather, in "getting it right," in achieving understanding, my feelings of discomfort and discontent are alleviated. This is not the goal; nor do I seek understanding in order to provide an explanation of what I understand. Understanding is of value for itself alone. It gains no added value if I try to explain why or how it is valuable. "A poem makes an impression on us as we read it...*this* takes hold of me, and the other not.... 'I experience something different'--And what kind of thing?--I can give no satisfactory answer. For the answer I give is not what is most important" (Wittgenstein 1970, 30e).

Aesthetic Explanation

Although the explanation of what it is that I experience when I achieve aesthetic understanding is not what is most important, it is still necessary for us to be able to communicate some sense of our experience to others. We still have the problem of the *Tractatus*, and our language is still inadequate to the task of relating our experience in such a way that words alone will allow someone else to understand our experience. What we have to do is to enable others to have the same experience and to achieve the same understanding.

The problem is that aesthetic understanding is not a step-by-step procedure. Aesthetic understanding does not require that all the pieces of the puzzle be laid out before us, to be put together a piece at a time. It is not as if I look at a picture, realize that I am experiencing aesthetic discomfort, and analyze the painting and my feeling in order to rid myself of this unpleasant sensation. It is much more intuitive than that. In trying to explain these things, we describe them at length as if they occurred over a period of time, and as if each occurred separately and distinctly from the others. First, looking; then sensation; then decision; then resolution. But instead, there is just one 'event'. The whole non-process is aesthetic understanding, which is beyond the realm of logic. There is no halfway point between understanding and its lack.

...if I hear a tune with understanding, doesn't something special go on in me--which does not go on if I hear it without understanding? And *what*--No answer comes; or anything that occurs to me is insipid. I may indeed say: "Now I've understood it," and perhaps talk about it, play, compare it with others, etc. *Signs* of understanding may accompany hearing.

It is wrong to call understanding a process that accompanies hearing (Wittgenstein 1967, 29e).

Here Wittgenstein specifically denies that aesthetic understanding is a process; it is not something that happens inside you as you listen nor a sensation that you feel apart from the music you hear. It is not an experience that is separate from the experience of listening to a piece of music or seeing a painting. "If a theme, a phrase, suddenly means something to you, you don't have to be able to explain it. Just *this* gesture has been made accessible to you" (Wittgenstein 1970, 28e). Here again we have the influence of the primitive language. Not only do we demonstrate our understanding through gestures and expressions, art itself *is* gestures and expression. Great art is complete expression; it communicates directly to us and *we understand*. We don't have to think about it, analyze it, try and figure out *why* or *how* we understand it, we simply know that we do.

Wittgenstein described his own experience with this sudden comprehension and its effect on him while reading the work of the poet Klopstock:

I had read this kind of stuff and been moderately bored, but when I read it in this particular way, intensely, I smiled, said: "This is *grand*," etc. But I might not have said anything. *The important fact was that I read it again and again.* When I read these poems I made gestures and facial expressions which were what

would be called gestures of approval. But the important thing was that I read the poems entirely differently, more intensely and said to others: "Look! This is how they should be read." Aesthetic adjectives played no role (Wittgenstein 1972, 4-5).

Once he "gets it", there is nothing further he can say to explain or convince others. He must show them, and then must wait and see whether they "get it."

But how can we know that we have gotten it? If it is not something that goes on inside us, nothing we can point to in order to say, this is how I know, then what do we do? According to Wittgenstein, it will 'click'.

One asks such a question as "What does this remind me of?" or one says of piece of music: "This is like some sentence, but what sentence is it like." Various things are suggested; one thing...clicks. What does it mean, it 'clicks?' Does it do anything you can compare to the noise of a click? Is there the ringing of a bell, or something comparable?

It is as though you needed some criterion, namely the clicking, to know the right thing has happened (Wittgenstein 1972, 19).

So I have criterion for my own understanding, but how can I tell if someone else has gotten it or not? After all, their response may be quite different from my own. I may express my understanding by movement, but for others their facial expressions may suffice, or they may draw a response. Can I determine whether or not things click for them?

I write a sentence. One word isn't the one I need. I find the right word. "What is it I want to say? Oh yes, that is what I wanted." The answer in these cases is the one that satisfied you, e.g. someone says...: "I will tell you what is at the back of your mind:..."

"Oh yes, quite so."

The criterion for it being the one that was in your mind is that when I tell you, you agree. (Wittgenstein 1972, 18)

This type of confirmation seems spurious to our scientific mindset, which requires objective, outside confirmation. It sounds ludicrous to say that if I show someone how something should be read or convey how he should listen, my only confirmation that it has worked will be his agreement with me that yes, this is how it should be done. But for Wittgenstein, this is sufficient. My pupil could of course lie, and say he understood when in fact he did not, but this would be evident when he tried to demonstrate his understanding. You cannot claim complete understanding unless you can also demonstrate that understanding in such a way that I could agree that you understand. This type of special understanding and communication is possible between those who have achieved aesthetic understanding.

What does it consist in to get hold of a tune or a piece of poetry. You may read a stanza. I let you all read it. Everyone reads it slightly differently. I get the definite impression that "None of them has got hold of it." Suppose then I read it out to you and say: "Look, this is how it ought to be." Then four of you read this stanza, no one exactly like the other, but in such a way that I say: "Each one is exactly certain of himself." This is a phenomenon, being certain of yourself, reading it in *one way only*. He is absolutely exact as to what pause to make. I would have conveyed something to you. I would perfectly correctly say, that I have exactly conveyed to you the exact experience I had...This (convention/communication/description) is not based on copying me exactly (Wittgenstein 1972, 40).

"This is how it should be read!" If you then understand, you will be able to read *with understanding*. Merely imitating me is insufficient. You could exactly duplicate my intonation, my pauses and gestures, but this would be mimicry, not

understanding. Your understanding will be expressed in your own way. It is not sufficient to study previous versions of Hamlet, to see how other actors moved. It is necessary to become Hamlet, to incorporate the role into yourself, to "make your mark." "If I make a gesture, and you are good imitators, these gestures will have to be similar, but different....The criterion for its being this gesture will be the clicking of it in you" (Wittgenstein 1972, 39). Here is how the puzzle pieces fall into place. That "click" is the sound of everything fitting together at once, and the result is understanding. "Aha!" says our primitive language. "I think she's got it!"

Comparison and Translation

So how is it that we go about resolving aesthetic discomfort and achieving understanding? "What we really want, to solve aesthetic puzzlements, is certain comparisons, grouping together of certain cases" (Wittgenstein 1972, 28-29). This comparison is similar to what we did as we developed our aesthetic vocabulary. To develop the language game of aesthetics, we compared similar cases from different language games to our new activities. I see a painting, and the feeling I get is similar, if distantly removed, from the feeling that a really good cup of coffee gives me. Both cause the same gesture, the same expression on my face. "Good" begins to have a new and extended family

of meanings for me. If I am at a loss for words, I will try to think of comparative examples that hopefully will be understood.

One of the most interesting points which the question of not being able to describe is connected with, the impression which a certain verse or bar in music gives you is indescribable...I think you would say it gives you experiences which can't be described...it is true that again and again we do feel inclined to say: "I can't describe my experience"... "I can make a gesture but that's all"... But that doesn't mean that you may not one day say that something is a *description*. You may one day find the word or you find a verse that fits it... And now perhaps you say "And now I understand it." (Wittgenstein 1972, 39)

Aesthetic understanding can be achieved by comparison. This is simply an extension of the idea that different things (like the ice cream and the friend's voice, p.13) may make me feel a similar way. So, a picture can serve to illustrate a movement of a symphony, or a poem to describe a painting in a way that lets you to see it in a way that was not possible before.

These comparisons aid your understanding because something within the one resembles something within the other such that each can serve to illustrate the other and make it more clear. "Aesthetics is descriptive. What it does is to *draw one's attention* to certain features, to place things side by side so as to exhibit these features." (Wittgenstein 1979, 38) An example that Wittgenstein uses is the comparison of music to language. "One says 'Don't you see, this is as if a conclusion were being drawn' or 'This is as it were a parenthesis', etc." (Wittgenstein 1958, 143)

The rhythms of music are compared to the rhythms of language in the hope that greater understanding will result. Although we cannot say what music means, we can make it more understandable. "In music there is both meaning and logical sequence, but in a musical sense; it is a language we speak and understand, but which we are unable to translate"

[Eduard Hanslick in *The Beautiful in Music*] (Tilghman, 69-70). This is a statement that I think Wittgenstein could agree with, at least insofar as he would agree that we cannot translate the language of art into rational verbal discourse. However, perhaps we can "translate" from one medium to another, from a picture of words to a picture of music, and so on. It would not be an exact translation, but translations very seldom are. They are always also interpretations.

We speak of understanding a sentence in the sense in which it can be replaced by another which says the same; but also in the sense in which it cannot be replaced by any other. (Any more than one musical theme can be replaced by another.)

In the one case the thought in the sentence is something common to different sentences; in the other, something that is expressed only by these words in these positions (Wittgenstein 1958, 143).

Sometimes when I say things "in other words", I still manage to get the same sense across. Perhaps in these cases there is no meaning exclusive to the particular words I use, embedded in them such that it would be lost in the "other words". On the other hand, if it is a case of "something that is expressed only by these words in these positions",

understanding to someone else, I can go no further than laying my "evidence", my comparisons, before them. I cannot prove that I am right. Either understanding is achieved, or it is not. Hopefully, things "click."

CHAPTER 4

AESTHETIC EVALUATION

Aesthetic Rules

Rules: Their Nature and Purpose

Comparison alone is insufficient to convey understanding. Another useful tool is critical evaluation. Despite Wittgenstein's rejection of anything resembling a Science of Aesthetics, he still acknowledges that there are certain criteria that are useful in evaluating art. These rules do not define what is important and meaningful about art, but they do help in gaining *understanding* of what is important and meaningful. Ian MacKenzie describes the role of rules as follows:

...The understanding and interpretation of a work of art requires more than the finding of counterparts.... The analysis of an individual work of art is usually a formal one. Understanding words, sounds, or images requires the perception of formal patterns. Criticism - getting someone "to see what you see" - begins with the description of formal elements. The choice of what to describe is at the same time an act of interpretation and evaluation (MacKenzie, 97).

These formal criteria are not intended to make it possible to talk about the "content" of aesthetic understanding. However, the description and criticism that is possible plays a specific and necessary role. It also is a form of comparison from which we can learn. Instead of comparing two

different mediums, as described in chapter three (p. 32-36), aesthetic criticism compares an artistic work to an ideal or established standard. This standard serves as a measuring device, a basis from which to judge the excellence or lack thereof of the artwork under consideration.

What makes something an ideal? Many of the criteria come from context and history.

Why do we say certain changes bring a thing nearer to an ideal, e.g., making a door lower, or the bass in music quieter. It is not that we want in different cases to produce the same effect, namely, an agreeable feeling. What made the ideal Greek profile into an ideal, what quality? Actually what made us say it is the ideal is a certain very complicated role it played in the life of people. For example, the greatest sculptors used this form, people were taught it, Aristotle wrote on it...The various arts have some analogy to each other, and it might be said that the element common to them is *the ideal*. But this is not the meaning of "the ideal". The ideal is got from a specific game, and can only be explained in some specific connection, e.g., Greek sculpture. There is no way of saying what all have in common...in the statement that their beauty is what approaches the ideal, the word "ideal" is not used as is the word "water", which stands for something that can be pointed to. And no aesthetic investigation will supply you with a meaning of the word "ideal" which you did not have before.

When one describes changes made in a musical arrangement as being directed to bringing the arrangement of parts nearer to an ideal, the ideal is not before us like a straight line which is set before us when we try to draw it...It *may* happen that you have a picture in mind...but this is rare (Wittgenstein 1979, 36-37).

The ideal is not concrete, not something held up before us to which we literally compare our object in order to determine what is lacking. In a way, the ideal is a type of consensus, not so much a conscious image of a people and

time, but a standard which has developed through time and become accepted as the standard. This is not absolute conformity to a common measure. Instead, the ideal points us in the right direction without telling us how far to go. We go along in that direction, and we know that we have arrived when we are in the right place. It clicks. What we have to guard against is the too zealous enforcement of the ideal, so that the standard becomes a tyrant rather than a tour guide.

The only way for us to guard our assertions against distortion - or avoid vacuity in our assertions, is to have a clear view in our reflections of what the ideal *is*, namely an object of comparison - a yardstick, as it were - instead of making a prejudice of it to which everything *has* to conform (Wittgenstein 1980, 26e)

Here, Wittgenstein is speaking more specifically of the distortion that afflicts philosophy when it becomes dogmatic in defense of its chosen paradigms, but the concept works equally well in aesthetics. If we enthrone a paradigm, making it the ideal to which all else must conform or be lacking, we stifle imagination and creativity, both of which are essential to art. Instead, the paradigm should be a marker, a measuring stick with which to compare the object of study. Again, the ideal is not an image held before us, but something more pervasive in the whole language game of aesthetics.

"The repeat is necessary." In what respect is it necessary? Well, sing it, and you will see that only the repeat gives it its tremendous power. - Don't we have an impression that a model for this theme already

exists in reality and the theme only approaches it, corresponds to it, if this section is repeated?...Yet there *is* no paradigm apart from the theme itself. And yet again there *is* a paradigm apart from the theme: namely, the rhythm of our language, of our thinking and feeling. And the theme, moreover, is a *new* part of our language; it becomes incorporated into it; we learn a *new gesture* (Wittgenstein 1980, 52e).

In one sense, the theme is nothing but itself. It is not the imitation of the ideal. We do not experiment on our music and paintings to make them all conform to the same set of standards. However, there is a sense in which the very rhythms of our language, feelings, thought, and so of our very lives are ideals or paradigms for artistic creation.

What is necessary is an understanding of the models and the rules that are used to apply such paradigms.

Suppose that a Russian who doesn't know English is overwhelmed by a sonnet admitted to be good. We would say that he does not know what is in it at all. Similarly, of a person who doesn't know metres but who is overwhelmed, we would say that he doesn't know what's in it. In music this is more pronounced. Suppose there is a person who admires and enjoys what is admitted to be good but can't remember the simplest tunes, doesn't know when the bass comes in. We say he hasn't seen what's in it. We use the phrase 'A man is musical' not so as to call a man musical if he says "Ah!" when a piece of music is played, any more than we call a dog musical if it wags its tail when music is played (Wittgenstein 1972, 6).

The individuals in this case have no training, no critical faculty to enable them to make an aesthetic judgment. They are the people who say, "I don't know art, but I know what I like!" They are simply overwhelmed, caught perhaps by that boundary between what can be spoken and what can only be shown. Restricted to the primitive language game of emotive

gestures and exaggerated facial expressions, they are unable to find adequate words to go beyond their simple yet sincere admiration. They are not capable of aesthetic appreciation in any complex sense.

What does appreciation consist in? If a man goes through an endless number of patterns in a tailors', says: "No, this is slightly too dark. This is slightly too loud", etc., he is what we call an appreciator of material. That he is an appreciator is not shown by the interjections he uses, but by the way he chooses, selects, etc. Similarly in music: "Does this harmonize? No. The bass is not quite loud enough. I just want something different... (Wittgenstein 1972, 7).

The appreciator has a standard for comparison, an idea of what is correct, of what will work. We recognize her by her manner and sophistication (in aesthetic terms), by the way in which she proceeds. She has experience, she knows her way around and has learned something of her field.

Jay Shir objects to the way in which Wittgenstein advocates this type of criticism in aesthetics, feeling that this is a misunderstanding on Wittgenstein's part:

To express aesthetic discomfort by saying, for example, that a contorted pose is 'wrong' in a Quattrocentro picture shows only that the speaker has learnt something about the conventions of Quattrocentro painting...It does not necessarily show that the speaker has learnt anything about what art is or how to evaluate fully (Shir, 10).

Shir is absolutely correct. Mere facility with the forms of a particular genre does not prove that the critic "has learnt anything about what art is". However, he is attacking Wittgenstein unfairly. Wittgenstein is not concerned with "what art is", because that is a question

more appropriate to a different language game. It is true that just the one example given would be insufficient to prove that the individual in question was capable of complete aesthetic evaluation and interpretation. You would have to observe how she proceeded over a period of time to see if her judgments were correct and if she were capable of conveying understanding and critical appreciation to her audience. Nowhere does Wittgenstein claim that mere apprehension of the technical aspects of different genres is sufficient to lay a claim to aesthetic judgment. As will be shown, this claim must be backed by experience, training and perhaps something more.

As mentioned in chapter two, the nature of the aesthetic vocabulary is more normative than descriptive. When using comparisons in the demonstration of critical judgment, terms of critical comparison are heard more often, and are more effective than uncritical terms of admiration.

It is remarkable that in real life, when aesthetic judgements are made, aesthetic adjectives such as 'beautiful', 'fine', etc., play hardly any role at all. Are aesthetic adjectives used in music criticism? You say "Look at this transition," or..."The passage here is incoherent." Or you say, in a poetical criticism, "His use of images is precise." The words you use are more akin to 'right' and 'correct' (as these words are used in ordinary speech) than to 'beautiful' and 'lovely' (Wittgenstein 1972, 3).

The appeals here are to standards of coherency, precision, etc., that are being used well/misused. Clearly, this type of criticism is more conducive to making a judgment than simply saying "The passage here is lovely, or

"His images are disgusting." Correctness in aesthetic judgment is an appeal to standards, the standards we invoke when we say things like, "That doesn't sound right".

[Rhees: What rule are we using or referring to when we say: "This is the correct way"? If a music teacher says a piece *should* be played this way and plays it, what is he appealing to?]

Take the question: "How should poetry be read? What is the correct way of reading it?" If you are talking about blank verse the right way of reading it might be stressing it correctly--you discuss how far you should stress the rhythm and how far you should hide it. A man says it ought to be read *this* way and reads it out to you. You say: "Oh yes. Now it makes sense." (Wittgenstein 1972, 4).

Here, an element that seems almost intuitive is present. Obviously, there are certain accepted rules or guidelines concerning poetry: technicalities of meter and rhyme scheme with traditional verse, rhythms of language and effect with other forms. But beyond those is the "clicking," the understanding as it encompasses us.

This is not to say that the rules are unnecessary. It is our rules and conventions that allow us to be understood by others. Wittgenstein denied the possibility of a private language, in part because it would violate the boundaries of the language game itself. In the same way, there are no private meanings or private rules. Rules are rules by virtue of their being accepted as rules. You can have a personal code of behavior, or a private set of standards, but these cannot be used as standards in a public discussion without acceptance by all concerned, or there will be no common basis or possibility of comparison. Aesthetics assumes such

a common basis. It assumes a common language game that provides a common or at least comparable set of criteria and meanings, with a possibility of understanding arising from a common context. This common context is the source of aesthetic rules.

The Source of Rules

In order to develop aesthetic judgment, you must first learn the rules that guide that judgment. Although these rules may vary depending on the artistic form, style or period, and they may be more or less explicit, they develop and are learned in a similar manner.

In the case of the word 'correct' you have a variety of related cases. There is first the case in which you learn the rules. The cutter learns how long a coat is to be, how wide the sleeve must be, etc. He learns rules - he is drilled - as in music you are drilled in harmony and counterpoint (Wittgenstein 1972, 5)

A preliminary step in acquiring discerning aesthetic judgment is to learn the rules. This may be accomplished by either a formal course of study, or by personal experimentation. For example, to learn to play music correctly, you may study harmony, counterpoint and other musical elements. Similarly, as you learn to paint you study the effects of light and color, perspective, and so on. Often, you study the history of music and art to gain in experience and knowledge. In any case, the rules must be learned, and we learn them from our society and culture.

You could regard the rules laid down for the measurement of a coat as an expression of what certain people want... (These may be extremely explicit and taught, or not formulated at all - footnote)... People separated on the point of what a coat should measure: there were some who didn't care if it was broad or narrow, etc.; there were others who cared an enormous lot. The rules of harmony, you can say, expressed the way people wanted chords to follow--their wishes crystallized in these rules.... All the greatest composers wrote in accordance with them. You can say that every composer changed the rules, but the variation was very slight; not all the rules were changed. The music was still good by a great many of the old rules (Wittgenstein 1972, 5-6).

Rules developed as a matter of custom. As people made their wishes known in the choices they made, these became the conventions that were used to measure the correctness of adherence to the rules.

As styles change, so do the rules. Someone innovates or proposes a twist on current accepted practice. If it is successful, perhaps it becomes the new standard. If it is not successful, it dies a quiet, unlamented death (Black velvet "paintings", for instance). These standards permeate the culture, affecting all of the artistic disciplines. "To describe a set of aesthetic rules fully means really to describe the culture of a period" (Wittgenstein 1972, 8). If you look back through history, the way in which we designate time periods often has a great deal to do with their aesthetic standards. The Classical period; the Renaissance period; the Romantic; the Modern; the Post-Modern. Each of these brings to mind characteristic styles of music, painting, and culture in general. These styles vary by time

period and country, as the cultural context shifts. Yet we come to expect a certain amount of artistic continuity throughout music, literature, the graphic, plastic and performing arts. All of them are guided to one degree or another by the standards that have developed in the culture around them.

Aesthetic Judgment

The Development of Mastery

As Shir pointed out, it is not sufficient to merely attain technical proficiency in applying the cultural standards that you are working with. It is possible to have a person who knows all of the rules, and yet who has poor aesthetic judgment. Perhaps they cannot apply the rules consistently; or maybe they can, but it is still apparent that they have no aesthetic understanding because they cannot bring anyone else to understanding. They are not able to make us "see it like this." To do all of this: learn the rules, apply them correctly and with understanding, and convey this understanding; this requires the development of aesthetic judgment.

In what we call the Arts a person who has judgement develops. When we make an aesthetic judgement about a thing, we do not just gape at it and say: "Oh! How marvellous!" We distinguish between a person who knows what he is talking about and a person who doesn't (Wittgenstein 1972, 6).

The person "who knows what he is talking about" has experi-

ence. He knows a great deal and can apply it consistently over time, not just once or twice. This person has had his judgment refined over time. "...If I hadn't learned the rules, I wouldn't be able to make the aesthetic judgement. In learning the rules you get a more and more refined judgement. Learning the rules actually changes your judgement" (Wittgenstein 1972, 5). As you learn more, you gain a better perception, a surer eye for aesthetic value, and your judgment becomes measurably better and more trustworthy.

This mastery distinguishes you from others who lack it. It demonstrates not only that you have a greater ability to make valuable aesthetic judgments, but to express them. You are not confined to the primitive language game like those who "just gape...and say: 'Oh! How marvellous!.'" This is why the word 'lovely' is seldom used in the aesthetic language game. "A lot of people, of course, who can't express themselves properly use the word very frequently. As they use it, it is used as an interjection" (Wittgenstein 1972, 3). These are people without training, without the ability to make perceptive aesthetic judgments. They are restricted to exclamations and interjections.

The master, on the other hand, develops an intuition in the application of the rules. She dictates the rules, rather than the rules dictating to her.

Suppose I went in for tailoring and I first learnt all the rules, I might have, on the whole, two sorts of attitudes. (1) Lewy says: "This is too short." I say "No. It is right. It is according to the rules." (2) I

develop a feeling for the rules. I interpret the rules. I might say "No. It isn't right. It isn't according to the rules." Here I would be making an aesthetic judgment about the thing which is according to the rules in sense (1) (Wittgenstein 1972, 5).

In the first case, the impression is of someone who holds the rules up as the absolute measure. In the second, the judge has learned the rules so well that they have become guidelines rather than rules written in stone. He has a facility with them that the first person is lacking. They direct his behavior and his judgments, but they do not dictate them. This is the type of judge capable of making us see things differently. He can provide the comparisons that will widen our perception. He can show us that if we can just "see it like this", we too shall understand.

Sometimes we do not understand simply because we are not seeing things in the right way. Our perspective is wrong or inadequate.

Here it occurs to me that in conversation on aesthetic matters we use the words: "You have to see it like *this*, this is how it is meant"; "When you see it like *this*, you see where it goes wrong"; "You have to hear this bar as an intro"; "You must hear it in this key"; "You must phrase it like *this*"; (which can refer to hearing as well as to playing) (Wittgenstein 1958, 202e).

In order for me to see things differently, I have to gain a different perspective and be taken out of my normal way of seeing things. Perhaps I am unfamiliar with the standards that are applied, or the context against which the piece is performed. "'Now he's seeing it like *this*,' 'now like *that*' would only be said of someone capable of making certain

applications of the figure quite freely. The substratum of this experience is the mastery of a technique" (Wittgenstein 1958, 208e).

Benjamin Tilghman stresses this idea strongly:

What underlies the very possibility of being able to see things in the right way and even the possibility of making such comparisons is what Wittgenstein calls the mastery of a technique. The technique required to see the ambiguous figure as a duck is familiarity with that kind of creature and the prior ability to identify and describe ducks. Likewise the technique required to get the point of what Fry is showing us about Cezanne [in an artistic comparison] is some measure of familiarity with painting and its history and traditions. If the relevant background is absent, there can be no experience of seeing things and responding to them in the right way. The ability to see things in appropriate ways depends upon the mastery of techniques that derive from the proper background. In the case of understanding and appreciating art this background has to be the greater part of our entire cultural background (Tilghman, 136).

Here you have a concise summary of the case. Rules, context, judgment, response, all must be present in the right way for a mastery of aesthetic judgment to develop. Our language is a development of who we are and how we live. "To understand a sentence means to understand a language. To understand a language means to be *master of a technique*" (Wittgenstein 1958, 81e).

If I understand the aesthetic language game, then I have achieved mastery in this area. But this mastery is not just a technique, not just a matter of study, of memorizing rules, familiarizing yourself with proportions, harmonies, perspectives, rhyme schemes, etc., but also a matter of innate talent, a use of intuition for discernment.

When one shows someone the king in chess and says: "This is the king," this does not tell him the use of this piece--unless he already knows the rules of the game...You could imagine having learnt the rules of the game without ever having been shown an actual piece...

One can also imagine someone's having learnt the game without ever learning or formulating rules...He too might be given the explanation...This explanation again only tells him the use of the piece because...the place for it was already prepared...And in this case it is so, not because the person to whom we give the explanation already knows rules, but because in another sense he is already master of a game (Wittgenstein 1958, 15e).

The first individual has studied and learned the rules, even though he has not yet been exposed to the objects of the game. When presented with the pieces, he understands their roles. It all fits. The second individual has learned the game as well, but more intuitively. She knows how the pieces move and how the objects fit without analysis. She "knows" the rules, even if they have not been spelled out. She has seen how the pieces are moved and has developed a "feel" for them. She has been immersed in the game, developed a skill that extends beyond the technical knowledge and proficiency of the first player.

Even without working "by the book", this mastery can be tested and checked up on by others. And what are the criteria that prove mastery? One, of course, is the ability to make right judgments consistently. Another is a manner of behavior.

There is a certain expression proper to the appreciation of music, in listening, playing, and at other times. too. Sometimes gestures form part of this expression, but sometimes it will just be a matter of how a man plays, or hums, the piece, now and again of the

comparisons he draws and the images with which he as it were illustrates the music. Someone who understands music will listen differently, from someone who does not. But he will show that he understands a particular theme not just in manifestations that accompany his hearing or playing that theme but in his understanding for music in general (Wittgenstein 1980, 70e).

This understanding arises from a person's familiarity with the history and culture that is required for mastery. Such things can be taught. We have spoken of being "drilled" in the rules and the study of history and culture. But if there is something more intuitive to the nature of mastery, is this something that can also be taught?

The Transmissibility of Mastery

If aesthetic judgment is transmittable, this must mean more than just educating a person in art history and the artistic context, and familiarizing them with the various conventions surrounding the different artistic mediums. Mere technical proficiency is insufficient to demonstrate aesthetic mastery. The accurate transmission of mastery would have to include the ability to bring others to aesthetic understanding and to inculcate in them the ability to achieve this understanding themselves. Wittgenstein implies that this type of understanding can be taught:

So how do we explain to someone what "understanding music" means? By specifying the images, kinaesthetic sensation, etc., experienced by someone who understands? *More likely*, by drawing attention to his expressive movements.--And we really ought to ask...what it means to speak of: understanding what it means to understand music. For some would say: to understand that means: to understand music itself. And in that

case we should have to ask "Well, can someone be taught to understand music?", for that is the only sort of teaching that could be called explaining music. (Wittgenstein 1980, 70e).

If one can teach someone to understand music or some other art form, then this, along with the knowledge of context and culture, would count as the transmissibility of mastery.

As indicated, there are varying degrees of mastery, depending on technical proficiency, knowledge, experience and ability to apply all of this successfully and consistently. Some of these things can be taught, some require the passage of time and diligence of application. In the following passage, Wittgenstein speaks specifically of the ability to determine genuineness of expressions of feeling, but the concepts should apply equally well to mastery of aesthetic judgments.

Is there such a thing as 'expert judgement'...? Even here, there are those whose judgement is 'better' and those whose judgement is 'worse.'

Correcter prognoses will generally issue from the judgements of those with better knowledge of mankind.

Can one learn this knowledge? Yes: some can. Not, however, by taking a course in it, but through 'experience'.--Can someone else be a man's teacher in this? Certainly. From time to time he gives him the right tip. This is what 'learning' and 'teaching' are like here.--What one acquires here is not a technique; one learns correct judgements. There are also rules, but they do not form a system, and only experienced people can apply them right (Wittgenstein 1958, 227e).

This is more like apprenticeship than the forms of education to which we are accustomed, and not everyone can learn the making of correct judgments. It is exposure to the medium,

to the contexts in which the rules are applied and the judgments made that brings you the knowledge and experience necessary to becoming a master yourself. 'Teaching' is an interactive experience, not the passive acquiring of information. Correct aesthetic judgments require understanding, and this understanding is not gained simply from information. It also requires a certain intuition or 'inspiration' which is much more difficult to transmit. If I can communicate the way I listen for inspiration, I can communicate mastery as well.

Let us imagine a rule intimating to me which way I am to obey it; that is, as my eye travels along the line, a voice within me says: "*This way!*"--What is the difference between this process of obeying a kind of inspiration and that of obeying a rule?...In the case of inspiration I await direction. I shall not be able to teach anyone else my 'technique' of following the line. Unless, indeed, I teach him some way of hearkening, some kind of receptivity... (Wittgenstein 1958, 87e).

To "teach" such receptivity consists in providing experiences, in giving "tips" as to how the pupil might proceed. It is like any mystical experience. I can tell you what I did, how I felt and how I opened myself to it, but the same path may not work for you.

The Aesthetic Context

To a certain extent, an artwork is defined by its context, but this is not always only the context in which it was created. Some artworks continue to maintain their value as art well past their time of origin. Other objects become

dated when they outlive the customs and conventions of their period of origin, while still others develop greater impact as time passes (only in retrospect can something be designated as "ahead of its time"). Those works that are valued as art works beyond their time of conception seem to transcend their local origins. This might indicate that some of the rules and conventions surrounding art are not temporally conditioned. Styles may change, but some works remain artistically valuable and meaningful even after the conventions and ideas that provoked them have passed, and some even gain in value. Shakespeare's works are arguably more valued as art today than they were when written, when they served as entertainment for the masses.

Even so, it is often necessary to examine an artwork's context of origin in order to achieve full aesthetic understanding. Only from that perspective does it have its full impact. It may seem out of place and peculiar until we are familiar with its origins. "It is not only difficult to describe what appreciation consists in, but impossible. To describe what it consists in we would have to describe the whole environment" (Wittgenstein 1972, 7). An art object is exhibited and appreciated best against the background of its environment. Every art object and every person is already in an aesthetic context--whether they are aware of it or not.

This is demonstrated in a somewhat simplistic way if we just look at how musical tastes change. This happens rather

rapidly. My mother listens to classical and big band music, my brother listens to early rock and roll, and my nephew listens to heavy metal. Their aesthetic contexts are different, and their tastes have been developed and cultivated by different standards. These tastes can overlap, as when you are exposed to a variety of contexts, spanning from classical to new age, blues, and so on. You may not appreciate them all equally, and it takes a certain familiarity to appreciate them at all. "There are, for example, styles of painting which do not convey anything to me in this immediate way, but do to other people. I think custom and upbringing have a hand in this" (Wittgenstein 1958, 201e).

This difference of contexts can be physical, mental or temporal.

You talk in entirely different terms of the Coronation robe of Edward II and of a dress suit. What did they do and say about Coronation robes?...Questions like 'What standards were there?', etc. are all relevant to the question 'Could you criticize the robe as they criticized it?' You appreciate it in an entirely different way; your attitude to it is entirely different to that of a person living at the time it was designed. On the other hand, 'This is a fine Coronation robe!' might have been said by a man at the time in exactly the same way as a man says it now (Wittgenstein 1972, 9).

The Coronation robe will not have the same meaning now as it did at the time it was made. On the other hand, the exclamations that it inspires in the untrained may be exactly the same. i.e., "Isn't that marvelous!".

The aesthetic appreciation and understanding of an

object is dependent not only on the context of the viewer, but on the context of the work. We look at a contemporary work differently than an historical work, perhaps depending on whether it is in use or not. The Coronation robe was created as a useful object as well as an artistic one. Now its context is primarily if not entirely that of an art object or a museum piece. This will change its context. This is also exemplified in the "world" of antiques. Something that was originally created for purely utilitarian purposes will over time become something purely decorative, valuable for its age, its authenticity, its "quaintness", rather than its usefulness. In this sense we *cannot* appreciate the art of a different time or culture exactly as someone from that context would. We are always already in our own context.

One reason why authors become dated, even though they once *amounted* to something, is that their writings, when reinforced by their contemporary setting, speak strongly to men, whereas without this reinforcement their works die, as if bereft of the illumination that gave them their colour (Wittgenstein 1980, 79e).

Deprived of context, some works suffer. They no longer carry the weight and influence that they had. This may be because of their topicality, which does not extend meaningfully beyond the time of the event.

On the other hand, it is also sometimes possible for old styles to be renewed. It will not be exactly the same, but something in the old style that spoke will speak again.

An old style can be translated, as it were, into a newer language; it can, one might say, be performed afresh at a tempo appropriate to our own times. To do

this is really only to reproduce...

But what I mean is not giving an old style a fresh trim. You don't take the old forms and fix them up to suit the latest taste. No, you are really speaking the old language, perhaps without realizing it, but you are speaking it in a way that is appropriate to the modern world, without on that account necessarily being in accordance with its taste (Wittgenstein 1980, 60e).

This is not merely taking an old style and dressing it up with a few modern twists. This is taking something that is true, and saying the same thing, but in a way that it can be heard again as if it were new. Sometimes we just see things as hopelessly old and outdated, when they still have something to tell us. Sometimes this is recognized, and a "new translation" is developed.

In saying "When I heard this word, it meant...to me" one refers to a *point of time* and to a *way of using the word*. (Of course, it is this combination that we fail to grasp)...

I speak of the essential *references* of the utterance in order to distinguish them from other peculiarities of the expression we use. The references that are essential to an utterance are the ones which would make us translate some otherwise alien form of expression into this, our customary form (Wittgenstein 1958, 175e).

These "essential references" speak to us in such a way that we enter into the aesthetic language game, "translating" by comparison and evaluation. If we listen to a song, and it reminds us of a picture we have seen, these essential references are what the two pieces have in common. One is in notes, one in colors, so that the accidents are different, but the essence is shared. This is what lets us recognize the value of the object under consideration. Not every piece of writing gets translated into our own tongue,

because some of it is not worth the time and effort. Something must be used to judge when it is worth it, both for words and other artistic mediums.

Further evidence of the intrinsically joined nature of aesthetics and its context is shown in the following passage. Just as the learning of rules refines aesthetic perception and judgment, so the rules refine and define the culture that develops them, and these rules are not always transmissible.

The words we call expressions of aesthetic judgment play a very complicated role...in what we call a culture of a period. To describe their use or to describe what you mean by a cultured taste, you have to describe a culture. What we now call a cultured taste perhaps didn't exist in the Middle Ages. An entirely different game is played in different ages (Wittgenstein 1972, 8).

As rules change, as the context changes, the game changes as well. The Coronation robe participates in a different game now than before. What is most important to see here is that the context is inextricably important for aesthetic understanding:

For how can it be explained what 'expressive playing' is? Certainly not by anything that accompanies the playing.--What is needed for the explanation? One might say: a culture.--If someone is brought up in a particular culture, and then reacts to music in such-and-such a way, you can teach him the use of the phrase "expressive playing" (Wittgenstein 1967, 29e).

Coming from a particular culture gives you an insight into that culture. Certain faculties can be developed in the context of rules and conventions of that culture that affect your aesthetic perceptions. One of these faculties is 'taste.'

Taste and Genius

It is unclear what role taste plays in aesthetic mastery, or whether or not taste refers to aesthetic mastery. Both come from knowledge of the context. In his article "Geniuses and Metaphors," Yuval Lurie draws a connection between the two in that, like aesthetic mastery, aesthetic judgment is one of the faculties that leads to taste.

Taste, according to Wittgenstein, is a culturally acquired faculty; one which comes about through the acquisition of refined skills and through the cultivation of aesthetic sensibilities, judgements and attitudes. It is a faculty which *supports tradition* and which, in turn, is manifested in the *social circumstances* in which tradition is expressed (Lurie, 226).

Taste is acquired from the aesthetic context, and serves in turn to support and preserve the aesthetic conditions. There is no distinction made here between good taste and poor taste. Presumably, if one has taste, it is good taste; what might be called poor taste is in fact no taste at all. However there are different levels of aesthetic taste corresponding to different levels of aesthetic appreciation.

There are lots of people, well-offish, who have been to good schools, who can afford to travel about and see the Louvre, etc., and who know a lot about and can talk fluently about dozens of painters. There is another person who has seen very few paintings, but who looks intensely at one or two paintings which make a profound impression on him. Another person who is broad, neither deep nor wide. Another person who is narrow, concentrated and circumscribed. Are these all different kinds of appreciation? They may all be called 'appreciation' (Wittgenstein 1972, 9).

These are persons of taste, some with a better developed sense of taste and hence of appreciation. It is

unclear in this passage which have the better taste, and not at all clear that any of these express aesthetic mastery. They have different levels of experience and exposure to the aesthetic culture, but none of them have what Wittgenstein called 'cultured taste' (cf. above, p. 58).

There is a connection between aesthetic judgment and cultured taste. Tastes may vary, as does the quality of aesthetic judgments, and a 'cultured' taste is equal to aesthetic mastery. Such a faculty would seem most useful in an evaluative situation, such as that of an art critic. In the actual creation of art, it could serve to refine a piece, but there aesthetic mastery or cultured taste by itself is limited in its creative usefulness. Taste is not capable of moving forward and breaking new ground. It can guide aesthetic judgments and help us to remove aesthetic discomfort and achieve understanding, but it does not create anything new.

The faculty of 'taste' cannot create a new structure, it can only make adjustments to one that already exists. Taste loosens and tightens screws, it does not build a new piece of machinery.

Taste makes adjustments. Giving birth is not its affair.

Taste makes things ACCEPTABLE.

(For this reason I believe that a great creator has no need of taste; his child is born into the world fully formed)

Sometimes polishing is a function of taste, but sometimes not. *I* have taste.

Even the *most refined* taste has *nothing* to do with creative power.

Taste is refinement of sensitivity; but sensitivity does not *do* anything, it is purely receptive...

Taste can be charming, but not gripping (Wittgenstein 1980, 59e-60e).

Taste does not create; it supports the artistic conventions and practices already in existence, but leaves imagination and creativity alone. It is the artists who create. You can say that "every composer changed the rules, but the variation was very slight; not all the rules were changed. The music was still good by a great many of the old rules" (Wittgenstein 1972, 5-6). They followed the rules, *but they also changed them to suit themselves*. Even if some rules stay the same, the artists are not completely bound by the rules.

This is how rules and context evolve. Artists, by their very nature, create. This is more than a function of taste and judgment. It must be more than clever tricks or personal peculiarities, because these are insufficient to change old traditions or generate new ones. As innovative artists create, they affect those around them, including those who have achieved aesthetic mastery. Cultured taste and aesthetic mastery support tradition, but artistic genius creates tradition. It is genius that is "gripping", and that can lead to cultural progression. This is part of its necessary role, for without newness, a culture stagnates.

"Taste...can only go so far in a culture. Taste contributes only to the *observances* of a spiritual tradition in a culture, not to its spiritual *pro-gression*. It is geared only for participating in established practices, not for their creation. It only brings about rearrangements of already created cultural elements (Lurie, 226).

Taste can only go so far and no further. A culture driven only by tastes is a decaying culture. If tradition dominates and remains unchanging, taste deteriorates. Even truth occasionally needs to be retold in a newer, more relevant way. If not, people may fail to listen.

You can get a picture of what you may call a very high culture...and what happens when this deteriorates. A picture of what happens in Architecture when you get imitations-or when thousands of people are interested in the minutest details...

Explain what happens when a craft deteriorates. A period in which everything is fixed and extraordinary care is lavished on certain details; and a period in which everything is copied and nothing is thought about (Wittgenstein 1972, 7).

Without new ideas and new forms of expression, art may completely degenerate into "arts and crafts," into imitation without creation, where there is minute attention to details but a lack of craftsmanship.

What art requires is the presence of the *tremendous*. Benjamin Tilghman uses this term to draw a distinction between aesthetics and art itself.

It is possible to characterize Wittgenstein's distinction between *appreciation* on the one hand and the *tremendous* on the other as a distinction between aesthetics and art...In the visual arts, aesthetics...is a matter of such things as lines, shapes, colours and the designs and arrangements that can be created out of them. For poetry it is a matter of rhyme, meter, alliteration and such things; the aesthetic materials of music are tonal relations, harmonies and the rest. To appreciate a thing and find it correct...is pretty clearly to restrict one's attention to these aesthetic properties of things. By art I want to understand something that can be of great importance, that can have significance and meaning, and that can have depth (Tilghman, 87).

This distinction is at least partially valid. If all you do

is appreciate an artwork and look at its aesthetic qualities, then you are limiting your view. But if you are limited in this way, then you have not achieved aesthetic mastery. While such mastery, or taste, may be limited in its ability to create original art, it is not limited in its ability to perceive meaning and depth. Simple taste and aesthetic appreciation may be so limited, but aesthetic mastery and cultured taste include aesthetic understanding, which is what is required for recognition of the *tremendous*, or of genius. It goes beyond the rules. "Soulful expression in music--this cannot be recognized by rules" (Wittgenstein 1967, 28e). This recognition is guided by the intuition that is present in aesthetic mastery. It is capable of recognition beyond that of mere correctness.

We talked of correctness. A good cutter won't use any words except words like 'Too long,' 'All right!.' When we talk of a symphony of Beethoven we don't talk of correctness. Entirely different things enter. One wouldn't talk of appreciating the *tremendous* things in Art. In certain styles in Architecture a door is correct, and the thing is you appreciate it. But in the case of a Gothic Cathedral what we do is not at all to find it correct--it plays an entirely different role with us. The entire *game* is different. It is as different as to judge a human being and on the one hand to say 'He behaves well' and on the other hand 'He made a great impression on me' (Wittgenstein 1972, 7-8).

Wittgenstein speaks of an entirely different game that is played by those things which are beyond correctness. The old game is a game of appreciation and taste; the new game is a game of genius and the *tremendous*. While the first game maintains the rules, the second creates them.

This distinction between the tremendous and the correct is of the greatest importance...The great Gothic churches are anything but correct....In the first place the idea of correctness enters only when the conventions of a style have been established and an artist is aware that he can opt to do another one of those with an eye on all the rules. The notion can hardly apply to the people whose works create the style and who certainly do not consciously think of themselves as working within a style.

In the second place it is possible to be overwhelmed, awe struck by such a construction. It can indeed be *tremendous* (Tilghman, 86-7).

Those who create the rules cannot be bound by rules that have not been established yet. Their innovations set new standards; this is the role of genius. Genius goes beyond skill and talent; it is *tremendous*.

Genius is what makes us forget the master's talent.
 Genius is what makes us forget skill.
 Where genius wears thin, skill may show through.
 Genius is what prevents us from seeing the master's talent.
 Only where genius wears thin can you see the talent
 (Wittgenstein 1980, 43e).

This passage brings to mind the so-called "primitive" painters who lack formal artistic training and experience and yet have an overpowering ability to create and inspire. Their gift goes beyond talent and skill. Skill is acquired, while talent is the ability to apply that skill. But genius is inborn, not learned. It is inspired, not taught. It is in the end a kind of being. Genius is a matter of character.

The measure of genius is character, even though character on its own does not amount to genius. Genius is not 'talent *plus* character,' but character manifesting itself in the form of a special talent. Just as one man will show courage by jumping into the water after someone, so another will show courage by writing a symphony.

There is no more light in a genius than in any

other honest man - but he has a particular kind of lens to concentrate this light into a burning point...

One might say: Genius is *talent exercised with courage* (Wittgenstein 1980, 35e,38e).

Bach said that all his achievements were simply the fruit of industry. But industry like that requires humility and an enormous capacity for suffering, hence strength. And someone who...can also express himself perfectly, simply speaks to us in the language of a great man (Wittgenstein 1980, 71e).

Genius is a matter of strength, greatness and humility. Beyond this is Wittgenstein's claim that Bach (and presumably, all great artists) *expressed himself perfectly*. Such clear expression is capable of conveying equally clear understanding in an attentive and perceptive audience. The greatness of the man and the music can perhaps inspire equal greatness in the understanding listener, by making her a little more aware of what is meaningful.

Thus genius can provide for the *spiritual progress* that taste cannot. Genius takes its inspiration from life, from our feelings and drives and translates it for us into a form that is easier for us to hear and understand.

Within all great art there is a WILD animal; *tamed*...All great art has man's primitive drives as its groundbass. They are not the *melody*...but they are what gives the melody its *depth* and power.

...The house I built for Gretl is the product of a decidedly sensitive ear and good manners, an expression of great *understanding* (of a culture, etc.) But *primordial* life, wild life striving to erupt into the open--that is lacking (Wittgenstein 1980, 37e).

Genius transforms wildness into art; it captures primordial rhythms and meanings and expresses them perfectly for those of us who fail to perceive them on our own. This ability is

what allows great works to transcend their culture and context. "The works of great masters are suns which rise and set around us. The time will come for every great work that is now in the descendent to rise again" (Wittgenstein 1980, 15e). What inspires these works, their 'spirit', is not limited by time or culture.

CHAPTER 5

ART AND MEANING

The Spirit of Art

Art for Art's Sake

An important concept in Wittgenstein's theories of art and aesthetics is that of the intrinsic value of art, a value independent of any of the values with which we invest it. Art dealers and investors are concerned primarily with the monetary value of art, which may or may not correspond to the aesthetic value of art. Here, aesthetic understanding would be a tool to use in the hopes of discerning which art works are worth the investment. An art critic would also use aesthetic understanding as a means to increase his evaluative ability. For the seeker of understanding, there is no further goal beyond aesthetic understanding. Such a person pursues artistic training and experience in order to more fully experience, enjoy and understand art. Art has a great deal to communicate, and what it has to communicate is itself, which is not necessarily the same as what the artist felt in creating.

There is a lot to be learned from Tolstoy's bad theorizing about how a work of art conveys 'a feeling'. You really could call it, not exactly the expression of a feeling, but at least an expression of feeling, or a felt expression. And you could say too that in so far

as people understand it, they 'resonate' in harmony with it, respond to it. You might say: the work of art does not aim to convey *something else*, just itself....

And it does start to get quite absurd if you say that an artist wants the feelings he had when writing to be experienced by someone else who reads his work. Presumably I can think I understand a poem (e.g.), understand it as its author would wish me to--but what he may have felt in writing it doesn't concern me at all (Wittgenstein 1980, 58e).

An artwork may embody certain ideas and concepts that the author had in mind, but its purpose is not to make me feel like the author did. The artwork conveys understanding to me according to my own capabilities. It simply is, and I bring to it my perceptions as created by my culture and background in order to achieve an understanding of it. I do not regard it in order to achieve a particular 'feeling'. I read a poem for the sake of the poetry, because it is worth reading.

There is a tendency to talk about the 'effect of a work of art'--feelings, images, etc. Then it is natural to ask: "Why do you hear this minuet?", and there is a tendency to answer: "To get this and that effect." And doesn't the minuet itself matter? Hearing *this*: would another have done so well?

You could play a minuet once and get a lot out of it, and play the same minuet another time and get nothing out of it. But it doesn't follow that what you get out of it is then independent of the minuet....(Wittgenstein 1972, 29).

This 'effect' is not independent of the art work, though it may change over time. It is the viewer and his ability to perceive and understand that changes, not the piece itself. In this way an art work may be more 'meaning full' at one time than at another. It may have greater spirit.

Spirit and the Will

What separates art from technical proficiency is its spirit. Art is 'inspired', while works that have technical proficiency may be pretty or fetching, but not *tremendous* or gripping. Spirit is what makes this difference, and it distinguishes the improvement of an artistic style from technical improvement.

A modern film is to an old one as a present-day motor car is to one built 25 years ago. The impression it makes is just as ridiculous and clumsy and the way film-making has improved is comparable to the sort of technical improvement we see in cars. It is not to be compared with the improvement-if it's right to call it that-of an artistic style. It must be much the same with modern dance music too. A jazz dance, like a film, must be something that can be improved. What distinguishes all these developments from the formation of a *style* is the spirit plays no part in them (Wittgenstein 1980, 3e).

This is not to say that artistic style has no role to play in film-making or jazz dance. But the development of style is distinct from the technical improvement of something. In competition level figure skating, two scores are given per performance: one for technical merit and one for artistic impression. A skater can receive fairly low technical marks while still scoring highly in artistic impression. Her artistry may be greater than her technical skill, and they may develop separately. Style is concerned with spirit, and technical proficiency and technical improvement are possible without spirit.

To improve an artistic style requires a strong spirit,

but not a spirit or character that is independent of the work of art. Rather, it is a spirit that is infused into the art work both by the will of the artist and by the nature of the art work itself. When we view or listen to the piece, this spirit of the art work acts on our own spirit to create the resonance that brings us in harmony with the work of art. "For it is only from yourself that you are acquainted with any spirit at all." (Wittgenstein)

Being acquainted with your own spirit, your own life and meaning, you can recognize and resonate with the spirit found in a work of art. You can be "in tune" with the art work. The genius of the artist has translated the wildness, the 'snake' and the 'lion', and it brings forth understanding from the wildness in the observer. The artist's will and our will pierce the world and bring it meaning. The character of the will that so imposes itself will affect the character of the world. The world is what we make of it.

Wittgenstein presents the will as an attitude of the subject of the world (Notebooks, p.87)...we are told that the will, this attitude, penetrates the world, is good or evil, and is somehow connected with the meaning (*Sinn*) of the world. It also has to be the case, I believe, that the will is the source of the expression and the character that can be found in the world. (Tilghman, 52)

This explains how genius and the tremendous can add to and direct the spiritual progression of the world. The character and will of genius permeates the world, and as we respond to that, our own will and character are strengthened and

improved. The willing subject is the subject that gives the world meaning.

This attitude of the willing subject to the world plays a very important role in the language game of art. It is the willing subject, unconfined by the logical boundaries that limit the thinking (logical, rational) subject, that enables us to achieve understanding at all.

The Unsayable in Art

The Boundaries of the Sayable

The distinction between the sayable and the unsayable has been important to Wittgenstein from the very beginning of his philosophic work. He felt that philosophy was on the wrong track, tackling the unsayable answers to literally unspeakable questions rather than providing descriptions and greater clarity for those issues about which something could be said. There is a great deal of mysticism in the *Tractatus* that many analytic philosophers seem simply to disregard as awkward or embarrassing. But for Wittgenstein, *everything of any importance at all lay in this area of mysticism.*

Tilghman agrees with this assessment.

The distinction between what can be pictured, that is said, and what can only be shown, the distinction between the sayable and the unsayable, becomes vitally important in the *Tractatus*. We can also add to the genus of the unsayable everything that is a matter of human value--ethics, aesthetics and those questions that are usually thought of as the stuff of religion.

All of this latter *Wittgenstein* comprehends under the heading of the mystical (Tilghman, 44).

These areas belong to the unsayable, but not the unreachable. What is important to understand is that we can only go so far with rationality and logic. The world itself is bounded by the mystical. We can speak about the world of logic and facts with the language of logic and facts. Beyond this world, another language game is necessary. Jay Shir articulates the difficulty.

...the world is logical. 'Logic pervades the world,' rendering the world's boundaries identical with logic's own (Trac. 5.61). The world and logic share a common form which, however, the propositions of logic cannot represent. They can only 'show' it or 'display it' (Trac. 4.121). If the common form could ever be represented, that would constitute the representation of the world's meaning. Yet the difficulty is this: In order to represent logical form, we should have to be able to station ourselves with propositions somewhere outside logic, that is to say, outside the world (Trac. 4.12). This is on the face of it impossible: since "Life is the world," to stand with propositions outside the world would be to stand outside life itself. The meaning of life, that 'problematic' thing, therefore becomes quite inaccessible when logic alone is used to approach it (Shir, 4).

This is why Wittgenstein maintained that you could not compose meaningful propositions in the areas of ethics, aesthetics, religion and even philosophy. They deal with subjects and meanings that cannot be reduced to propositional form. We cannot stand outside them and capture them in our scientific language game. We must *enter in* to them in order to understand or show them to anyone else in any meaningful way.

"Only the intended picture reaches up to reality

like a yardstick. Looked at from outside, there it is, lifeless and isolated"--It is as if at first we looked at a picture so as to enter into it and the objects in it surrounded us like real ones; and then we stepped back, and were now outside it; we saw the frame, and the picture was a painted surface. In this way, when we intend, we are surrounded by our intention's pictures, and we are inside them. But when we step outside intention, they are mere patches on canvas, without life and of no interest to us. When we intend we exist in the space of intention, among the pictures (shadows) of intention, as well as with real things. Let us imagine we are sitting in a darkened cinema and entering into the film. Now the lights are turned on, though the film continues on the screen. But suddenly we are outside it and see it as movements of light and dark patches on a screen (Wittgenstein 1967, 42e).

The 'outside' is the world of facts and reasons. When the lights are turned on, we try to see rationally and scientifically. When it is dark, the art work is our whole world. Our intention, or our will, permeates the world and makes it meaningful.

This space of intention is the world of the willing subject, who can go beyond the boundaries of the sayable and understand what can only be shown and not said. Standing outside puts us in the place of the man who mistakes the shadows of trees for the trees themselves and then tries to figure out what they really are (p. 21). In Wittgenstein's words, "his admiration will have suffered a rupture that will need healing" (Wittgenstein 1980, 57e). He has ceased to participate intentionally in the work and has re-entered the realm of reason and logic. He is thinking too much. He has ceased to be the willing subject in favor of the thinking subject, who is limited by the world's factual

boundaries. He has placed himself outside the realm of the unsayable by trying to say rather than show.

It is important to see the whole of the world of the art work, rather than to break it into pieces in order to make it more easily observable or analyzable. In trying to grasp it better through its parts, you shatter the world that it creates and in which it exists. Outside of this world and this perspective, its specialness is lost.

...when E. looks at what he has written and finds it marvellous (even though he would not care to publish any of the pieces individually), he's seeing his life as a work of art created by God and, as such, it is certainly worth contemplating, as is every life and everything whatever. But only an artist can so represent an individual thing as to make it appear to us like a work of art; it is *right* that those manuscripts should lose their value when regarded *disinterestedly*, i.e. by someone who doesn't feel enthusiastic about them in advance. A work of art forces us...to see it in the right perspective but, in the absence of art, the object is just a fragment of nature like any other(Wittgenstein 1980, 4e)

Taken as a whole, E.'s life is a work of art, even though separately the parts may not be meaningful. It is only as a whole that they have the capacity to be seen in this way. Life and everything else of meaning must be viewed with interest and enthusiasm, 'willfully' and intentionally. It is only then that things have value.

It is only the areas of the mystical that have these properties, because the areas of the sayable are not 'valuable,' at least not in the sense of giving meaning and moral value to life.

If good and evil willing affects the world it can

only affect the boundaries of the world, not the facts, *what cannot be portrayed by language but can only be shown in language* (Wittgenstein 1961, p. 73).

Poetic language can show what cannot be said, as can art in general. It can portray that which has value and meaning in such a way that it can be understood and valued by the receptive observer. Art puts the world and life in the right perspective.

The Importance of the Unsayable

Here it is difficult as it were to keep one's head up, to see that we must stick to the subjects of our every-day thinking, and not go astray and imagine that we have to describe extreme subtleties, which in turn we are after all quite unable to describe with the means at our disposal. We feel as if we had to repair a torn spider's web with our own fingers (Wittgenstein 1958, 46e).

The instruments (language, words, etc.) at our disposal are too blunt to use in saying the unsayable. They can be used to reveal what cannot be said only in the form of poetry and literature. Because of this, literature and the other arts are of the greatest importance. Our scientific rational forms of explanation and inquiry can guide us in the natural world and tell us about our everyday affairs, but only through the unsayable can we understand that which should be of most importance in our lives.

The world in the totality of facts is the world investigated by science and the correct description of those facts is the concern of science. By making the distinction he did between what can and cannot be said, Wittgenstein effectively separated all questions of human value and the importance of human life from scientific questions (Tilghman, 44).

Science can tell what is best for us to eat. It can tell us how to keep warm or how to get from one place to another in the shortest possible amount of time. It can design faster and more accurate computers to do a phenomenal number of calculations and run incredibly useful programs. All of science's achievements are pursued in order to achieve some further, practical results, but none of these add intrinsic value to our lives. "There is no value in the world since all facts and all propositions representing the facts are all on the same level. All value, the meaning of the world and of life, in some sense stands outside the world" (Tilghman, 43).

In standing outside the world, value and meaning are placed beyond the reach of science. Contrary to what the positivists assumed, this was not because these were either meaningless questions or questions of no value. In fact, these are the questions of highest value and most meaning. "His purpose in making these distinctions was to emphasise the importance of that area he called the mystical and to preserve it from the tyranny of the sciences, not to dismiss it" (Tilghman, 17). This is exactly what he does in the *Tractatus*, and later in the *Investigations*, both highly ethical in character.

For Wittgenstein, metaphysics, ethics, religion and art all belong to the realm of the transcendental which cannot be *said* but only *shown*. It would indeed be nonsense to contend as Stenius does, 'what is inexpressible is just nonsense and nothing else.' The inexpressible (or the mystical) is *everything* that is

important in life. The whole point of the *Tractatus* is precisely to show the inexpressible by exhibiting clearly the expressible (Fann, 27).

Wittgenstein himself expressed this important distinction in a letter to Ludwig von Ficker, with whom he was trying to arrange for publication of the *Tractatus*.

...I wanted to write that my work consists of two parts: of the one which is here, and of everything which I have not written. And precisely this second part is the important one. For the Ethical is delimited from within, as it were, by my book; and I'm convinced that, strictly speaking, it can ONLY be delimited in this way. In brief, I think: All of that which many are babbling today, I have defined in my book by remaining silent about it... (Luckhardt, 94-5).

The many were 'babbling' because that was all they could do with the way they were trying to 'mend spider's webs.' If you try to answer questions about the meaning of life in sensible, rational terms, all you get is meaninglessness. Such issues cannot be framed in rational language. It is very similar to saying that God can only be found by faith, not by reason. A rational man can have faith, but only through a 'leap of faith.'

Wittgenstein's leap was a leap across the boundary between the expressible and the inexpressible, and the only way he saw for the inexpressible to be shown was through ethics, religion and especially through art. "In art, in 'mysticism,' man searches for spiritual satisfaction that he seeks vainly through reason: once found, such satisfaction cannot be qualified or presented in any way on the rational plane" (Shir, 7). This is why artistic genius can stimulate

a spiritual progression that a culture will otherwise lack. The particular language game of art is capable of embodying greater truths than our scientific language.

Describe the aroma of coffee.--Why can't it be done? Do we lack the words? And for what are words lacking?--But how do we get the idea that such a description must after all be possible? Have you ever felt the lack of such a description? Have you tried to describe the aroma and not succeeded? (I should like to say: "These notes say something glorious, but I do not know what." These notes are a powerful gesture, but I cannot put anything side by side with it that will serve as an explanation. A grave nod. James: "Our vocabulary is inadequate." Then why don't we introduce a new one? What would have to be the case for us to be able to?) (Wittgenstein 1958, 159e).

In such a case we are reduced to metaphor, trying to describe figuratively something that we cannot approach logically with any coherence. To be able to do so would require a language and vocabulary unlike any one we have, one based on some other form than the propositional. As it is, we show what we know to be true in our art, seen against the background of the world.

Art and the World

The difficulty in finding some way to convey the inexpressible is finding a way to grasp it, to take it in in some meaningful way without belittling or diminishing it. Our scientifically based language is not capable of doing this. This is not due to a lack in the language as such, but rather to the nature of what such a language is "designed"

to grasp. Although the facts and ideas of science are not intrinsically valuable in the way that the truths of the inexpressible are, we endow them with meaning in terms of our lives and our search for greater meaning. "Perhaps what is inexpressible (what I find mysterious and am not able to express) is the background against which whatever I could express has its meaning" (Wittgenstein 1980, 16e). Art has its own meaning embodied in music, poetry, painting. The mystical serves as the background for these, a language context within which the meaning resides.

It is queer that Busch's drawings can often be called 'metaphysical.' Is there such a thing as a metaphysical style of drawing then? - "Seen against the background of the eternal" you might say. However, these strokes have such a meaning only within a whole language. And it is a language without grammar; you couldn't say what its rules are (Wittgenstein 1980, 75e).

The strokes by themselves are merely dabs of paint; without context to imbue them with meaning, they are parts of an unattainable whole. The art work must be seen with its background in order to achieve its purpose.

We may think of the work of art as a system and in the case, say, of a painting, the subject of the painting as an element within that system. To pursue the analogy between the work of art seen as a world and the world itself we must assume that in the *Tractatus* scheme of things the particular elements of a work of art, the notes and harmonies from which a piece of music is constructed, the figures and colours that make up a painting and so on, considered in themselves have no value, no significance. It is only when they are seen as a system, that is as a whole, as necessarily connected with one another, when seen under the aspect of eternity, do they have value and a sense. Part of that sense and value is surely the character and expression that the work presents to the one who contem-

plates it (Tilghman, 55-56).

Just as the individual parts of a man's life may seem valueless while the whole is meaningful, so it is with the work of art. Taken moment by moment, a life can be a disaster, a joke, or simply dry and colorless. Taken as a whole, with each moment and event affecting others both within the same life and in different lives, it can be a work of art. What is necessary is to see things in the right perspective. For art, this perspective must be intentional and "wholistic". When seen from this perspective the art object becomes the world for the observer, art seen *sub specie aeterni*. This is to see it as a whole, to see it "together with the whole logical space" (Wittgenstein 1961, 83). The value of art is its ability to allow us to see things *sub specie aeternitatis*, against the background of the eternal, and thus to see how they fit into the world and our lives. The artistic subject is displayed in relation to us and to the world, and is made completely valuable.

If I have been contemplating the stove, and then am told: but now all you know is the stove, my result does indeed seem trivial. For this represents the matter as if I had studied the stove as one among the many things in the world. But if I was contemplating the stove it was my world, and everything else colourless by contrast with it (Wittgenstein 1961, 83).

The power of art is its ability to take ordinary objects and bring them to life in new and valuable ways. Seen as art, things that we exist with and ignore every day are brought into view in new ways. Art forces a new

perspective on us, allowing us to enjoy all aspects of life.

Only an artist can so represent an individual thing as to make it appear to us like a work of art...A work of art forces us - as we might say - to see it in the right perspective, but in the absence of art, the object is just a fragment of nature like any other (Wittgenstein 1980, 4e).

This is the role of art and the artist: to put things in the *right* perspective, the right perspective for us as human beings. The work of art, as it becomes our world, serves to represent the whole, to bring the whole world and its meaning to us in a microcosm. Art allows us to see things from the realm of the inexpressible, from outside the logical, rational realm in which we reside. Thus the role of art is not only aesthetic, but ethical. Art brings meaning into our lives and allows us to see meaningfully. It brings us closer to "the good life."

The work of art is the object seen *sub specie aeternitatis*; and the good life is the world seen *sub specie aeternitatis*. This is the connexion between art and ethics.

The usual way of looking at things sees objects as it were from the midst of them, the view *sub specie aeternitatis* from outside.

In such a way that they have the whole world as background (Wittgenstein 1961, 83e)

By seeing art *sub specie aeternitatis*, we are enabled to see the world *sub specie aeternitatis*. Ethics and aesthetics are one. Tilghman expresses this concept well.

There are several parallels between the *Tractatus* conception of ethics and aesthetics and one important relation binding them. They are parallel in that both belong to the domain of the unsayable; just as there are no ethical propositions, so there are no propositions stating aesthetic judgments. Both values can only be shown. Both involve a way of looking at things that

is contemplative. Ethics is involved in a certain kind of view of the world as a whole and aesthetics entails a contemplative view of an object considered as a world unto itself. Neither serves any purpose. Aesthetic value is an end in itself and the ethical life is its own reward. The ethical view of the world imputes a certain spirit or character to the world, and the aesthetic view finds spirit and character in the work of art which is understood as an expression. In addition to these parallels and analogies, ethics and aesthetics are intimately related in that art is one of the most important ways in which ethical value can be shown and a solution to the problem of life made manifest (Tilghman, 64-65).

Ethical values are demonstrated through art, and in this way an ethical spirit or character is imparted to the world. Here again, in a more detailed fashion, is the role of art as a leader in the spiritual progression of humanity. Art, with its *human* message, feeds our hungry spirits with eternal truths. In Wittgenstein's view, art is certainly the best and maybe the only method in which these truths can be conveyed.

If at least part of what it means to say that ethics and aesthetics are one is that only through art can the sense and value of a life and of the world be shown, then the oft-quoted parenthetical comment that Frank Ramsey made, with one eye on the *Tractatus*, 'But what we can't say we can't say, and we can't whistle it either,' is surely off the mark as it applies to Wittgenstein's notion of the ethical....We have to conclude that what cannot be said about the ethical is just exactly what can be whistled, that is shown in a piece of music or other work of art. And here we must remember that among his artistic and musical accomplishments Wittgenstein was a great whistler (Tilghman, 64).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Art, Life and Happiness

Because the meaning that art has to convey is so difficult to articulate, the tendency is to dispute or diminish its value. Knowledge is important, but we normally measure knowledge by *how much* you know and how well you can express this knowledge. If you cannot express what you know in a clear, coherent manner, then how can you say that you know it? "I just know" is the last resort of the stubborn individual who refuses to give in to greater, i.e. rational, knowledge. Knowledge is information. I display my knowledge in *facts*.

The meaning displayed in art is not embodied in facts. *Art is not informational*. Art may detail historical images, but it is not always intended to be historically factual or educational, at least not in the same way as a history course. Paintings and literature may be informative in what they have to tell us about the time in which they were created, but it is the meaning that transcends these contexts that is of greatest value in Art. It is the human value that is important. Art has much to teach us, but it is of a different character than the instruction with which we

are familiar.

"People nowadays think that scientists exist to instruct them, poets, musicians, etc. to give them pleasure. The idea that these have something to teach them, - that does not occur to them" (Wittgenstein 1980, 36e). We do study Art, but the approach is not the type to which Wittgenstein was referring. I can learn much in terms of aesthetic rules and context from art and music appreciation courses, but they are not trying to teach me aesthetic understanding. I am not taught to perceive the deeper meaning that resides in the artistic medium. For Wittgenstein, this meaning is more important than any more purely scientific information, or any well described philosophical theory, for that matter. *Nothing* does as well as art in showing us what is most important in life.

Tilghman affirms this view of Wittgenstein in a passage he quotes from *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, by Stephen Toulmin and Allan Janik:

Their contention is that the *Tractatus* "assigns a central importance in human life to art, on the ground that art alone can express the meaning of life. Only art can express moral truth, and only the artist can teach the things that matter most in life" (Tilghman, 62-63).

This places the artist in a very privileged position, but it substantiates the claim that artists are capable of guiding the spiritual progression of others. They are endowed with a

gift that permits them both to perceive and to convey meaning on a profound and vitally important level. Art can go beyond words in its ability to express. "Art is a kind of expression. Good art is complete expression" (Wittgenstein 1961, 83e) Good art leaves nothing left to say.

As expression, art is not lacking in the way our propositional language game is. When complete understanding is achieved, its transmittal seems nothing short of instantaneous, and is truly mystical. Like mystical experiences of the more traditional variety, it cannot be accurately and consistently reproduced by others. I can tell you how I achieved my understanding, but not completely. I can tell you what I was reading, how I felt, how I moved and listened, and other technical and trivial details, but your copying me exactly will not guarantee that your response will be the same. It may be that you achieve understanding differently. This is the point of saying that art and aesthetics cannot be reduced to a science. I can give you tips that helped me, but I cannot give any certain assurances that your experience will be the same. This results in part from the differences between us and the ways in which we approach the world.

One advantage that art has is that it can bring different people to see things in the same way. Although the artist's intention and how he felt while creating may not ultimately be valuable, it still remains true that the best

artwork has captured the artist's vision, and the artist has superior vision. Our own individual perspectives differ radically and it is difficult to overcome these differences. Art, with its more direct, more concentrated view can force us to see deeper and more meaningfully, overcoming differences and enabling us to see things in the right way. It is not impossible for the world to do this also, but it is more difficult. Art is created to be observed, it is its very nature to be looked at, read, listened to, to be studied with concentration. It captures our attention in a way that our world, indeed our lives, do not. If the world does not force the right perspective on us, perhaps it is because we are not paying attention. However, remember that Wittgenstein considered that each life could be seen as a work of Art. If this is true, then life's meaning can be perceived through other mediums than human art, most notably through the world itself and our interactions with it.

"Aesthetically, the miracle is that the world exists. That what exists does exist." The artist accepts that miracle, shows it forth in his work and makes it the stuff of joy: "Is it the essence of the artist's way of looking at things, that it looks at the world with a happy eye?" (Shir, 6)

This 'happy eye,' not to be confused with a cheery attitude or positive outlook, allows the artist to portray what she sees, not just with her physical eyes, but with her inner 'happy' eye, her eye for happiness. This eye sees more deeply and more clearly. We all have been in awe of natural beauty, but it is the rare artist who can express this

aspect of the *tremendous* in their art.

The miracles of nature. One might say art *shows* us the miracles of nature. It is based on the concept of the miracles of nature. (The blossom, just opening out. What is *marvellous* about it?) We say: "Just look at it opening out!" (Wittgenstein 1980, 56e).

The artist shows us what we might miss in looking at the world ourselves, with our lack of awareness. They make us "see it this way," showing us things in the right perspective, taking us out of our own hurried, inadequate perspective. We are so busy living our lives that we seldom take time to see what life means. "Life is serious, art is gay" (Wittgenstein 1961, 83). Art pursues happiness in a way life should, but life, in its human embodiment, takes itself too seriously without pursuing what is truly important.

Art is not all happy in the sense of cheerful. It is striking, profound, often desperately powerful. But it is meaningful, as happiness is meaningful, and as life is meaningful when it is lived completely, in full awareness. Ethics and aesthetics are activities that can increase this awareness. As studying the rules can refine your aesthetic perception, so can pursuing ethical and aesthetic meaning refine your perception of meaning and life. "Both activities must be carried on beyond the bourn of analysis. Both have to do with the happy existence, which Wittgenstein singles out as the *summum bonum*" (Shir, 3).

The happy life is the proper end of man. This is not a feeling of perpetual contentment, all desires satisfied and

a smile on your face. The happy life *is* the life of meaning, the right way of living, simply because it is the right way to live. Art is the way to happy life, "for there is certainly something in the conception that the end of art is the beautiful...And the beautiful *is* what makes happy" (Wittgenstein 1961, 86e).

I keep on coming back to this! simply the happy life is good, the unhappy bad. And if I now ask myself: But why should I live *happily*, then this of itself seems to me to be a tautological question; the happy life seems to be justified, of itself, it seems that it *is* the only right life.

But this is really in some sense deeply mysterious! It is clear that ethics *cannot* be expressed!

But we could say The happy life seems to be in some sense more *harmonious* than the unhappy. But in what sense??

What is the objective mark of the happy, harmonious life? Here it is again clear that there cannot be any such mark, that can be *described*.

This mark cannot be a physical one but only a metaphysical one, a transcendental one (Wittgenstein 1961, 78e).

Happiness, like aesthetic understanding, cannot be measured in discrete amounts. It comes from a certain way of living and of exerting your will, but not in the sense of becoming happy "by force of will." You must bring your will into line with the world and be in agreement with the world to achieve a harmonious life. That is what "being happy" *means*.

In so far as literary work X increases my appreciation of the world's existing as it does, it similarly increases my acceptance of the world; in the same degree, therefore, it increases the sum of happiness in my life. To that extent I may call X beautiful, and value it accordingly; "for the beautiful is what makes happy" (Shir, 7).

By our perceptive consideration of art and the incorporation of its teachings into our lives, we make our lives happier, in that they are more meaningful and complete. We are more in tune with the world and with life, like a piece of music that is expressively played. And here Tilghman reflects Wittgenstein's view of life as a work of art.

When one finds a 'solution' to the problem of one's own life and the world waxes happy and looks back at you with a happy spirit, could we not say that one's life and the world has become like a work of art?
(Tilghman, 62)

"Smile and the world smiles with you..." Here is the artist's happy eye, one which each of us would do well to cultivate. The happy eye sees the meaning in the world, and the will forces the world to conform. "The world of the happy is a *happy world*" (Wittgenstein 1961, 78). It is the willing subject that introduces good and evil, and beauty and ugliness as well, into the world. The world is the realm of propositions and logic, of what can be clearly and definitively spoken. The world of the will, of the I, is that of art and aesthetics, where we make our own world.

If we assume that it is a person's actions and the way those actions are performed that create a life, then the ethical desert of those actions is simply that life itself, and since life and the world are said to be one, the ethical reward is nothing else but the face with which the world looks back at you. To complete the account let us remember that the face that looks back at you is your own; it is tempting to speculate that your ethical reward is no more or less than the discovery of your own character.

Let us note that this way of looking at the consequences of our actions provides the ethical analogue of

aesthetic rightness. Getting things right aesthetically, getting say, the proportions of the room correct or changing the bass until it moves just as it should serves no further purpose but is an end in itself. In like manner, living the good life is not a step toward some further goal, it is an end in itself, it is its own reward (Tilghman, 60-61).

Ultimately, art and aesthetic understanding are essential to the good life. It is possible that without them, a life may be pleasant, and the person who lives it will never know what they have missed. However, while knowledge isn't everything, the good life is. If you question Wittgenstein's basic assumptions about the role of the mystical and the aim of life, remember: "...one must either accept or reject these assumptions rather than expect to be convinced of their validity. They provide grounding not for dispassionate discussion but for a corpus of belief, a credo. They cannot be argued for or against" (Shir, 3).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Fann, K. T. Wittgenstein's Conception of Philosophy. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.
- Luckhardt, C. G. Wittgenstein: Sources and Perspectives. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979.
- Lurie, Yuval. "Geniuses and Metaphors." Journal of Aesthetics & Art Criticism 49:3 (Summer 1991): 225-233.
- MacKenzie, Ian. "Wittgenstein and Aesthetic Responses." Philosophy and Literature 11 (April 1987): 92-103.
- Malcolm, Norman. Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir. New York: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- Monk, Ray. Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius. New York: The Free Press, 1990.
- Shir, Jay. "Wittgenstein's Aesthetics and the Theory of Literature." British Journal of Aesthetics 18 (Winter 1978):3-11.
- Tilghman, B. R. Wittgenstein, Ethics and Aesthetics. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. Culture and Value. Edited by G. H. von Wright in collaboration with Heikki Nyman. Translated by Peter Winch. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980.
- _____. Lectures & Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief. Edited by Cyril Barrett. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.
- _____. Notebooks 1914-1916. Edited by G. H. von Wright and G. E. M. Anscombe. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961.
- _____. Philosophical Investigations. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1958.

_____. Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. Translation by D. F. Pears & B. F. McGuinness. Introduction by Bertrand Russell. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969.

_____. Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge, 1932-1935. Edited by Alice Ambrose. Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1979.

_____. Zettel. Edited by G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright. Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970.

VITA 2

Ellen E. Ross

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: WITTGENSTEIN AND AESTHETICS: SPECULATIONS,
RUMINATIONS AND EXPLORATIONS

Major Field: Philosophy

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Stillwater, Oklahoma, July 24,
1963, the daughter of Alex R. and Margaret J.
Ross.

Education: Graduated from C.E. Donart High School,
Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 1981. Received
Bachelor of Arts in Humanities and Bachelor of
Arts in French, Oklahoma State University,
Stillwater, Oklahoma, May, 1986. Completed
requirements for Master of Arts degree in
Philosophy, Oklahoma State University, May, 1994.

Professional Experience: Graduate Teaching Assistant,
Department of Philosophy, Oklahoma State
University, August, 1988 to May, 1991.