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Ronald Hepburn
University of Edinburgh

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An Exchange on Disinterestedness

Arnold Berleant and
Ronald Hepburn

Abstract

The idea of aesthetic disinterestedness has been a central concept in aesthetics since the late eighteenth century. This exchange offers a contemporary reconsideration of disinterestedness from different sides of the question.

Key Words

Disinterestedness, sublime, emotion, distance

Editor's note: Readers are invited to contribute to this discussion. Please send comments by following the regular submission procedures for *Contemporary Aesthetics*.

Arnold Berleant

Wherefore Disinterestedness?

The concept of aesthetic disinterestedness is surely one of the axioms of modern Western aesthetics, if not its central principle. Developed mainly in the eighteenth century in the writings of Alison, Shaftesbury, Addison, Hutcheson and others of the British school, the notion of disinterestedness denoted the perception of an object "for its own sake." This central idea became the mark of a new and distinctive mode of experience called the aesthetic, a kind of experience that was distinguished from more common modes, such as practical, cognitive, moral, and religious experience. During the same century many of these writers grouped what we now call the fine arts into a generally accepted set in which they were all organized by the same principles and could be compared with one another.^[1] Finally, in the latter part of the century and especially in Germany, the general theory of the fine arts achieved the status of a separate discipline and, in the work of Kant, came to occupy a distinct and integral place in a philosophical system. Kant's formulation of disinterestedness is generally regarded as definitive:

"...[T]aste in the beautiful is alone a disinterested and free satisfaction; for no interest, either of sense or of reason, here forces our assent...Taste is the faculty of judging of an object or a method of representing it by an entirely disinterested satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The object of such satisfaction is called beautiful."^[2]

Even though axioms claim eternal verity, we now understand them as human constructions. As such, they have historical origins and relevance. I believe that aesthetics today labors under the burden of a conceptual apparatus that has lost its relevance and impedes our ability to understand and appreciate the arts, especially their recent developments. It also obstructs our appreciative experience of other human creations, such as built environments, agricultural landscapes, industrial sites, and the like. It is important to add that appreciation need not always be positive. Indeed, aesthetics can provide the basis for a powerful critique of human actions and their products that demean human values and devastate large parts of the human habitat.

What might we say is the historical significance of aesthetic disinterestedness?

Disinterestedness served to identify intrinsic normative experience. As first developed it was used in a moral context to help the recognition of things and actions that were good in themselves, apart from their usefulness. Thus Shaftesbury, who, along with Hutcheson and Alison, was one of the principal contributors to this view, contrasted "the disinterested love of God," a love pursued for its own sake, with the more common motive of serving God "for interest merely." The disinterested love of God has, then, value that is entirely intrinsic.^[3] When applied to the experience of beauty, it denoted the same recognition of intrinsic value. There is a valid insight here, for we often find ourselves valuing a work of art for its own sake. Somehow the value of good art seems to be self-contained. The work commands respect and admiration in itself, apart from practical considerations such as monetary value, the conferring of social status, or its association with the hand of genius.

Coming from a time when art served the purposes of church, state, and aristocracy, this

doctrine was liberating. It offered an opportunity to throw off, however briefly, the cares of commerce and politics during a period of great industrial and social change. Disinterestedness, moreover, was combined with other, related ideas into a new aesthetic, especially the contemplative ideal of appreciation and the isolation of its object from practical uses. These ideas lent themselves later to new movements and intellectual fashions, such as art pour l'art and formalist criticism of art.

This is not the place to expatiate on the long, complex, and fascinating history of the idea of disinterestedness.^[4] The question here is how to understand the role that disinterestedness played at this point in the history of aesthetic thought and its relevance for the present. I contend that modern aesthetics, insofar as it is grounded on disinterestedness and related notions, is obsolescent if not altogether obsolete. It cannot adequately account for much in the contemporary development of the arts, for the aesthetic appeal of the natural world, or for the aesthetic manifestations of industrial cultures. The aesthetics of disinterestedness offers an escape from those domains rather than an enlivening understanding of how art works.

To be sure, these traditional notions possess some valid insights into aesthetic experience. One is that attention should be intently focused on the situation and not distracted by features or factors irrelevant to the aesthetic occasion. A casual, wandering gaze or a dwelling on associations that distract one from the perceptual situation diminish the effect of the art. And there is the recognition that there are objects that possess intrinsic value. These concerns apply in all cases and to all theories. Of course, appreciating art or nature has its distinctive character, but the Kantian strategy is not one that serves well to identify it.

Moreover, these common notions in aesthetics lead to serious pitfalls. One is the transformation of experience into an intellectual puzzle that compromises the perceptual immediacy at the heart of aesthetic. Another is the tendency to fragment the aesthetic situation into separate elements, typically the beholder on one side and the art object on the other, elements that then need to be related and reconciled. Such a division has created many of the "problems" that dog much philosophical aesthetics, among them problems concerning emotion, representation, expression, and the like. Characterizing appreciation as ideally contemplative is misleading and unnecessary. An activist, participatory sense of aesthetic appreciation does not exclude an attitude of thoughtful, receptive regard when that is conjoined with intense, focused attention to the ongoing course of experience.

Such 'contemplation' is as participatory as walking through a building or accompanying a violinist in a Beethoven sonata. The art, the object, and the situation determine what mode or style of appreciative engagement is most appropriate. One can still easily distinguish aesthetic engagement from acquisitive or manipulative motives and responses, but at the same time we can recognize and appreciate those many instances in which a powerful aesthetic dimension inheres in practical or telic (i.e. "interested") activities. This fusion of the aesthetic and the practical that often occurs is something that disinterestedness cannot accommodate. Yet practical concerns are a significant factor in all the crafts, in design, and in architecture. Elements of practice may also be an inseparable element in all the arts involving overt performance. These explicitly exhibit the fusion of art and practice, a fusion that at its most successful approaches the overwhelming incalculability of the sublime. This "practical" dimension doesn't make performance or the crafts any less aesthetic. Indeed, all artistic making involves such considerations, *pace* Croce and Collingwood. On the contrary, I think it points up a dimension of all the arts and their experience that is traditionally overlooked or undervalued.

Thus intrinsic value need not be exclusive but can occur in harmonious juxtaposition with instrumental concerns. A fine painting may ennoble a room; a sculpture may sacralize the surrounding space. The moral effects of theater, literature, and music have been recognized since Plato. Furthermore, there is no need to sacrifice the distinctive, complex quality of aesthetic appreciation without separating such experience from its other modes. We can retain intense attention, perceptual acuity, wonder, and the raptness of powerful aesthetic occasions without the necessity of erecting a separate mode of experience to account for it. Surely, too, we can acknowledge the complexity of aesthetic experience without relying on the constraints of the Kantian formula to do it for us.

Better an account that is least assumptive, that explains difficulties rather than creating them, and that remains true to descriptive experience. I believe that a non-Kantian account such as I have sketched out here and developed at length elsewhere succeeds in these ways.

Endnotes

[1] Paul Oskar Kristeller, "The Modern System of the Arts," in *Renaissance Thought II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 163-227.

[2] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (1790), Sect. 5. For an extended critical account see A. Berleant, "The Historicity of Aesthetics I," *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol.26, No.2 (Spring 1986), 101-111; "The Historicity of Aesthetics II," *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol.26, No.3 (Summer 1986), 195-203; and "Beyond Disinterestedness." *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 34/3 (July 1994).

[3] Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, ed. Robertson (London, 1900), II, 55, 56. The definitive discussion of this history is Jerome Stolnitz, "On the Origins of 'Aesthetic Disinterestedness'," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, XX, 2 (Winter 1961), 131-143. The history of the idea of disinterestedness continues to be debated. See my *Art and Engagement*, Ch. 1, esp. n. 3, pp. 215-216.

[4] Some basic sources of this history are discussed in A. Berleant, "The Historicity of Aesthetics," I and II. The important literature on the history of disinterestedness includes Jerome Stolnitz, "On the Origin of 'Aesthetic Disinterestedness';" Remy Saisselin, "A Second Note on Eighteenth Century 'Aesthetic Disinterestedness'," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* XXI/2 (1962), 209; "George Dickie, "Stolnitz Attitude: Taste and Perception," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 43/2 (1984), 105-203; Jerome Stolnitz, "The Aesthetic Attitude in the Rise of Modern Aesthetics--Again," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 43/2 (1984), 205-208; Dabney Townsend, *Aesthetic Objects and Works of Art*; "From Shaftesbury to Kant," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 48, 2; and "Archibald Alison: Aesthetic Experience and Emotion," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 28/2 (1988), 132-144.

Ronald Hepburn

Response to Arnold Berleant on Disinterestedness

Arnold Berleant presents a many-sided and attractive case for "engagement" rather than "disinterestedness" as fundamental to aesthetic appreciation, whether of art or nature. A disinterested attitude may, he thinks, have been appropriate to eighteenth-century art and aesthetics, but today both philosophy and the arts must free themselves of its outmoded influence. In his *Art and Engagement*, Berleant gave examples from recent art of works that require active participation from the appreciator, "wall pieces, paintings, and sculptures . . . that respond to environmental stimuli, emitting sounds, echoes, or light at [one's] approach" (pp. 26-27). This is of course true not only of the art of today: sculpture and architecture, as Berleant well knows, have always invited, even required the appreciator to walk around them, or through them, so as to build up a many-faceted experience. Why then do I have some uneasiness about his readiness to displace disinterestedness?

Disinterestedness need not be thought of as a "separate mode of experience." It plays more roles than one, for instance, in the demarcating of aesthetic from non-aesthetic, art from non-art. It involves a snipping or displacing of attention from our individual life-concerns, from our acquisitive urges, from questions about the actual existence of the objects and the situations depicted or symbolized in and through works of art.

Disinterestedness (says Berleant) leads to the "transformation of experience into an intellectual puzzle that loses sight of the perceptual immediacy at the heart of [the] aesthetic". But that "perceptual immediacy" (I want to respond) is not so unreflective as to bypass the appreciator's recognition that the perception belongs to art (as an ongoing sequence of genres and traditions and styles) and is not to be integrated with practical living. That is to say, there is a sensed discontinuity or disinterestedness, but not one that is inimical to the sensory component of aesthetic experience. So too with aesthetic

appreciation of nature: we suspend our utility-dealings with nature, suspend equally our pleasure-seeking recreational encounter with it, and disinterestedly appreciate nature's own qualities. We can certainly be animated in that appreciation and enjoy an intense emotional response to art and to nature: we can be active in aesthetic exploration, but all within the awareness, once again, of that discontinuity from our other engagements-with work, personal relationships, amusement. We may move through, be immersed in, the ever-changing, turbulent nature we aesthetically appreciate, and yet be aware also of a contemplative, calm still centre in our consciousness. Paradox is hard to avoid: we experience, at different levels, both animation and stillness.

So construed, an aesthetic of disinterestedness does justice to the distinctness of the worlds of art from the non-art world, and the distinctness of aesthetic from non-aesthetic approaches to nature. In non-representational music, I experience the sequence of emotional qualities, tensions and resolutions, as belonging to the music itself. In a painting, the world represented is, in the end, not my own world with its objects, happenings, dramas, but, once more, the world of the painting itself. Besides, in appreciating the painting, I attend not only to the items represented but also to the spaces between and around them, and I let the whole painting, all of its components interacting, modify my perception, and create, it may be, a unique expressive quality, which is available to me nowhere else.

In other words, one's first aesthetic obligation, in considering any part of a work of art, is to take its bearings, to grasp its place, its meaning, its emotional qualities, in relation to the rest of that art-work on which one is concentrating. (That is not to deny that the work as a whole may well be related additionally to the world beyond it, on which it may comment.) Art-works, then, are not, so to speak, wired directly into the system of my desires, longings and satisfactions. There surely is some "standing back" here; at least enough to allow me to bring into a synthesis, a single grasp, what is often a multitude of interdependent components.

In the area of emotions, feelings and moods, there is an important difference-again well marked out by the concepts of disinterestedness and discontinuity-between simply suffering an emotion, on the one hand (let's say, a vague and confused fear of the inevitability of death), and having that emotion clarified, articulated, in a work of art, and so better grasped. In grasping it through fictive situations analogous to our own but sufficiently distanced, we are delivered, at least in part, from our debilitating passivity.

It should be clear now why I see disinterestedness as having several roles to play in an account of aesthetic experience: a formal role in indicating a boundary between aesthetic and other modes of experience, an epistemological role in characterizing that discontinuity, that particular posture of consciousness with which we can make most, and most appropriate, sense of complex art-objects, or attend to items of nature in a distinctively aesthetic mode. Still further, it would be rewarding if we could be aware of affinities (today less familiar and less obvious) between aesthetic disinterestedness and an overcoming of the anxious flux of everyday events and the "interested" activity (self-interested, most often) that aims, but fails, to bring calm out of conflict. In this respect, we can learn from Schopenhauer, though our metaphysic is bound to be different from his. For Schopenhauer, the aesthetic (creating and appreciating), because it is not enmeshed in our personal strivings, offers release, even if temporary, from "will", whether our own will or that of the blindly wilful "in-itself" of the cosmos as he understood it.

Surely, you may say, my readiness to accept the story about aesthetic experience as disinterested, in the sense of discontinuous with the non-aesthetic life of doing and suffering, is most obviously flawed when we try to apply it to the range of daunting and momentous experiences which have traditionally been called "sublime" (in nature or in art). Typically, in these we find ourselves confronted by the spatial or temporal vast, or by the immense forces of nature. Can there really be room here for a disinterested stance or a sense of discontinuity.? I think that we can distinguish two aspects of the sublime (in its very roughly Kantian dual form) which do connect significantly with the cluster of ideas centred on disinterestedness.

First: the daunting object of a sublime experience can seem to stand quite apart from, to be quite incommensurable with, the categories of our ordinary experience: a remote and immense snow-capped mountain peak, a supernova or a black hole. Secondly, the total

experience called sublime, in this tradition, powerfully sensuous though that experience may be, can by no means be seen simply as our being "bowled over," stunned, overwhelmed by excessive magnitude or by nature's energies. A further component is fused with that moment of sheer sensory impact—a realization (it can take different forms) that we are not pure vulnerability only, but conscious beings, free and reflective beings, mysteriously able to summon resources of intellect and imagination, which "balance" and in a measure "distance" that daunting sensory impact, and fuse both components into the one complex-daunting-and-exhilarating-experience of the sublime.

Looking back, my impression is that Arnold Berleant and I are not so far apart as is suggested by our taking opposed positions over "disinterestedness." Each of us wishes to accommodate many of the same features of aesthetic experience, though under different overarching concepts or categories. But the differences do matter: they may even determine how willing or unwilling we shall be to welcome particular radical innovations in the arts. I do not accept the view that aesthetics must be ready to remodel itself in response to any and every trend or fashion in "the contemporary development of the arts." It is possible that philosophers of art may, on occasion, speak out legitimately as critics of particular trends, having greater confidence in certain principles and values than in the worthwhileness of art which flouts or discards them. Inevitably, those principles and values will have been brought to light through the work of particular authors at particular times. But it cannot follow that what they excogitated had relevance to their own time only (nor, of course, that it necessarily applies to ours!).^[1]

Endnote

^[1] On disinterestedness and the aesthetic appreciation of nature, see also Emily Brady, "Don't Eat the Daisies: Disinterestedness and the Situated Aesthetic," in *Environmental Values* 7 (1998), pp. 97-114.

Arnold Berleant

A Reply to Hepburn

As I began to ponder the disparity between Ronald Hepburn's views and my own, I realized that a basic philosophical difference underlies them. A pervasive rationalism and cognitive privilege infuse Hepburn's defense of disinterestedness. Hepburn's argument, despite his disclaimer, distinguishes aesthetic experience from other modes of experience and leads us to differentiate non-art from complex art objects and natural ones experienced aesthetically. For him the aesthetic enables us to turn away from the tedious concerns of daily life. Doing this requires a distinction between art and non-art and between actual situations and those depicted or symbolized in art. The rational discrimination among genres, traditions, and styles is also part of the aesthetic process for him. Both procedures involve categorical distinctions: between the aesthetic and the practical tedium of the mundane, and between art and non-art. Such cognitive processes, I argue, are not inherent in the appreciative act even though they may provide some criteria that we may choose to use in guiding our aesthetic behavior. I, in contrast, insist on a continual reference to appreciative experience and to the occasions that evoke it as the basis for an account of the aesthetic.

Hepburn's sensitive defense of disinterestedness vividly illustrates the plausibility and continuing influence of that doctrine. He regards the question of whether the aesthetic is a separate mode of experience as the key question and he affirms such a separation. I claim that aesthetic experience is distinctive though not separate, and that although it is not always dominant, it is pervasive. If we think of aesthetic as intrinsic perception that is focused, intense, and fraught with significance, there is no situation or object that cannot be experienced aesthetically. Yet this experience is different from experience that is social, practical, religious, or cognitive, even though such experiences are often conjoined with the aesthetic. The dripping rain water that taps a regular pattern as it filters downward to rot and undermine a house can, at the same time, play the very same role that the clicking of train wheels did for Rossini in suggesting a musical figure. Similarly, a pervasively aesthetic culture such as the Japanese can find no object or pursuit so lowly that it cannot be enhanced by aestheticization.

Hepburn draws again on Kant in employing distance to deal with the sublime. By summoning our resources of intellect and imagination, we are able to balance the powerful sensory impact of overwhelming might or magnitude. We can then overcome "that daunting sensory impact, and fuse both components into the one complex...experience of the sublime." We see clearly here the use of such distancing as a cognitive act. Here, perhaps, it may be thought of as complementary to the aesthetic one, but it is still a different act, one that requires a shift of experience into an alternative mode.

Hepburn calls the juxtaposition of turbulence and inner calm a paradox in our appreciation of nature. This juxtaposition is a puzzle only if one is committed to the doctrine of disinterestedness, for such a "paradox" confuses the conditions for appreciation with the act of appreciating, itself. It may be desirable and even necessary on certain occasions, but it is not universally so. Thus there is a categorical confusion between conditions for appreciation and the activity of appreciation, and between a conventional setting for appreciative enjoyment and the activity itself. It does not require disengagement to take an art-object on its own terms. The "system of my desires, longings and satisfactions" does not require "some standing back here; at least enough to allow me to bring into a synthesis, a single grasp, what is often a multitude of interdependent components." Engagement allows these to enter, indeed it encourages recognizing and experiencing these connections. The key word here is 'experiencing,' for experiencing such a confusion of conditions may be central to the act of appreciation in such an instance, as it is in the case of Anselm Kiefer's powerfully evocative paintings.

Similarly with emotions. Fictive situations may indeed lead us to face the same emotions of helplessness and suffering evoked by such things as death. Insofar as such emotional feelings are an integral part of the appreciative experience, there is no reason to exclude them. But the knowledge that a situation is fictive may not diminish the emotional response. Knowing that an object does not exist or that a situation did not actually occur involves a cognitive act that may be aesthetically irrelevant. One's response to violence in film, for example, may be intense and overwhelming, even intolerable, despite that knowledge. As for the effectiveness of aesthetic disinterestedness in enabling the articulation and refinement of such feelings, what is important, I believe is experiencing, not conceptualizing, those feelings, which is what happens in art as aesthetic. We do not need to face emotions from a safe distance in order to have powerful emotions clarified and articulated. We need to encounter those emotions and live through them. Some of the most powerful art breaks down our protective defences, including distancing, to engage us in unforgettably intense feelings that we then must somehow work through.

Further, I believe that aesthetic theory has not a legislative function but rather a reactive one. As aestheticians we are not the arbiters of what constitutes art at any time in the history of cultures. This is ultimately a social decision made over time by the willingness and ability of people to appreciate objects and activities in ways we understand as aesthetic, and those ways themselves change. That there may be a circularity here is unavoidable and even desirable. Social groups and societies develop characteristic modes and patterns of experience. Philosophers have typically re-enforced such patterns in moral philosophy, where our function should be more critically reflective and assist in the evolution of ethical understanding. In aesthetic theory I believe we have a different function, to explain our capacities for experience of the sort we call aesthetic and to assist in the enhancement and enlargement of those capacities.

In citing Schopenhauer, Hepburn recognizes the strong appeal that disinterestedness has in overcoming the forces of the everyday, interested world-narrowly self-seeking, anxious, and turbulent. It is, put directly, a precious alternative to and an escape from that world, an evasion it would be sad to lose. Aesthetic engagement offers us an alternative to that violent but mundane world but not one that separates us from it. Engaging in the many and various worlds of art is no escape but an entry through magic casements into new and sometimes important regions of experience. Engagement rather forces us to confront that world as it is presented to us in the arts and impels us to seek to change what is avoidable. In that way, the theory becomes an instrument for betterment, not only because it is unrelentingly direct but because it contains a vision of reconciliation and harmony.

Ronald Hepburn displays his characteristic graciousness in suggesting that he and I are not so far apart. We do share an openness to the richness and many nuances of aesthetic experience of both art and nature. But, yes, as Hepburn acknowledges, the differences

between us do matter. There is a difference, indeed, that underlies our differences: a sophisticated yet clear conflict between an essentially rationalist approach and an empirical one.

Ronald Hepburn

Disinterestedness: Reply to Arnold Berleant's Reply

Is there any point, then, in reaffirming a view of aesthetic experience and the aesthetic attitude which gives a central place to disinterestedness? In banishing the concept of disinterestedness altogether, would we not be dismantling a gratuitous barrier, one that isolates art from life (or, if you like, takes art to be an escape from life rather than engagement with it), deprives art-emotions of their strength, directness and relevance, interposes concepts and rational structures where there should be only unconceptualized expression-and submits aesthetic appreciation of nature to some analogous distortions?

I do realize that the language of "disinterestedness" is open to a variety of understandable misreadings and that it cannot serve as our sole key-concept in aesthetic theory, yet I am not persuaded by these charges. Let me restate the core of the view I am defending (in this friendly polemical exchange with Arnold Berleant):-

Disinterestedness should not be seen as an attitude that makes our aesthetic encounters with art and nature something insipid or effete, their objects held at arm's length. We should see it, rather, as basically a disconnecting, disentangling, from the flow of life's projects, allowing wholehearted entry to the world of the art-work (or to nature out-of-relation to our practical involvements in it), a vivifying and liberating of the imagination, so as to follow and to reconstruct the intentions of an artist, or in the case of nature (with markedly greater freedom) allowing us to improvise our own "natural" aesthetic object from sensory and cognitive elements. Once constituted, art-objects or items of nature are appreciated, enjoyed and valued for *themselves*. As the word "disinterestedness" intimates, the basic thought is *negative*-"without interest", in the sense of not seeking to exploit or possess, but only to experience, to appreciate, to grasp: everything else being subordinate to these.

Arnold Berleant draws attention critically to places where I speak of concepts, categories, rational discrimination among genres and traditions-as involved in aesthetic appreciation, as internal to it. For my part, I cannot see that as part of a "distancing" process in a bad sense, the outworking of an inappropriately rationalistic mind-set that allegedly goes with a "disinterested" approach to aesthetic experience. I allow that, very occasionally (and very briefly), we may have a purely sensuous, uninterpreted, experience: but immensely more often interpretative concepts are at work helping to constitute our aesthetic experience, even if not all their work is explicit and verbalized. They ask and answer the questions we need in order to orientate ourselves with regard to our object of experience. For instance, "Is this item a piece of nature or an artefact?" I shall experience it differently, depending on which I decide it is. Or again, I can't avoid (ought not to avoid) asking, "Is this essay [or piece of music, or painting] *ironical*?" Or: "Is this reworking of an ancient myth turning out to be an entertaining but superficial fantasy, or a serious thinking-through of the human situation today?" Questions like these and their answers are important elements in the constructing of our appreciative experience; they are not added as an inessential (rationalistic) supplement.

On "the sublime": when dualistic types of sublime experience combine sensory and imaginative frustration or incapacity with a resurgent feeling of exhilaration, the latter may well be founded on a recollecting, realizing and cherishing of features of personal life (freedom, moral awareness, aesthetic sensitivity itself), features that are not measurable on scales of magnitude or physical force. I do not see how concepts can be avoided in this sort of context. If this "requires a shift of experience into a different mode" (A.B.), then again I'd say, These components-sensuous and conceptual-can be fused into a single, contemplative and moving experience, and are so in often-attested episodes of the sublime. To me, there is no problem about including cognitive components *within* an aesthetic whole. In general, aesthetic experiences would become greatly impoverished without them.

Is art a mode of escape from life? From the chaotic and formless in life, it can be; but "escape" is, in other ways and contexts, not at all appropriate. We may think of Goya's *Disasters of War* or Picasso's *Guernica*.

On *emotional intensity*, Berleant writes: "Knowing that a situation is fictive may not diminish the emotional response". I entirely agree. I may in fact experience more powerful emotions concerning the vicissitudes of a fictional character (appreciated in disinterested mode on stage or in a novel) than about a real life character in a similar situation. The situation can indeed be imaginatively realized, "brought home", in art more vividly than is often the case in everyday life, where emotional evasiveness or sluggishness may shield me from that depth and fullness of response. I also commonly experience emotions in art which I have never known in my life outside art (let us say, a leader's triumph in battle, or the desolation of a child abandoned by its parents). Yes, the expressive resources of art also "articulate" and "refine"-in the sense of giving definition, precision and particularity to emotional qualities, getting beyond clichéd concepts, and in very effective art-I readily admit-often beyond concepts altogether. (The arts can both use and transcend concepts.) Such emotional particularity is the resultant of an "all-in" use of an art medium: in music-melody, rhythm, timbre of instruments, musical forms, established and innovative-we actively bring all of them into a single whole-to-perception, almost a world in itself, the proper object (I have to say) of disinterested concentration.

The particularity of emotions in a fine work of art may, then, *preclude* conceptualizing with any accuracy. While we experience emotions, let us say *vis-à-vis* death, as they are expressed in an art-work such as Brahms' *Requiem*, we actively interrogate the work so as to discover the particular quality Brahms has given these emotions; we are not made, simply, to weep or shudder. We realize as we listen that here is a *treatment* of solemn, grave emotions, emotions surrounding death, as expressed through the filter of a nineteenth-century symphony orchestra and the personality of a particular composer, using (but doing highly individual, original things with) the musical idioms of his day. And we may ponder as we listen-how far can we make these, deeply valued, emotional qualities our own, and learn to retrieve them in memory?

So Berleant and I agree about the ability of art to communicate emotions with peculiar vividness and power. But since we (whether listeners, spectators or readers) remain aware that it is the rich resources of *art* that are opening them to us-in the complex object-of-appreciation before us (or unfolding itself for us in sound)-I cannot see that as inconsistent with my claims about disinterestedness: rather the reverse. Let us ask once again, and finally for this "reply", What do those claims amount to in such cases? It is easy to oversimplify; perhaps the following is a little more adequate.

There is an important difference between our experience of emotion-fear, dejection, joy-in non-aesthetic, everyday-life contexts, and in art. With art, we are aware that our fear has no immediate object in our personal life: our anger no target, dejection or joy no specific occasion in the episodes of our lives. When we give ourselves to tempestuous music, or to music of great serenity, we realize that this is still our own sustained act, a self-surrender that is always *rescindable*: we ourselves have put those experiences as it were within brackets. But that does not dampen or extinguish their drama, their emotional force. These persist; even though not as continuous with the dramas and emotions of our extra-aesthetic lives. Nevertheless-for our subject is irreducibly, and happily, complex-life can certainly come to draw upon aesthetic experiences such as these, often be nourished by them over long periods. What has been "discontinuous" can, in part at least, be made once more continuous, what has been "disengaged" we may re-engage and integrate.