

## THE PRINCIPLE OF ART (*IN PRACTICE*)

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper disputes the generalised definition of ‘aesthetic practice’ which leads deconstructive postmodern ‘aestheticians’ to equate aesthetic activities (eg., gardening, hair-braiding) with art-making. Reviving an understanding of Art’s single unifying Principle is a necessary precondition for restoring the meaning of an artistic practice. I describe its ancient origins, its disappearance in modernity, and reconstruct its defining criteria, showing why art cannot be confused with just any ‘cultural practice’ whereby one’s experience of the ‘general aesthetic’ can be merely mimicking Nature elicit familiar empathic responses reflectively. I argue very little real art is being made today, and AI is perfectly suited to making what has replaced it: ‘cultural artefact’. In reconstructing this Principle, I show why artistic practice cannot be predicated merely upon theories of beauty/pleasure; but rather on what Aristotle deemed the ‘higher pleasure’ of making Reason (merging beauty with truth, and freedom with necessity). This overcomes Kant’s reflective aesthetic paradigm that engendered the misguided ‘experientialism’ dominating modern/postmodern “art” - undergirding an ‘artworld’ of mainly anti-Art (in what Bernard Stiegler calls the ‘catastrophe’ of modern aesthetic experience driven by the rise of ‘technicism’). A process for applying the Principle’s criteria is briefly outlined, demonstrating how to distinguish a ‘phenomenological experience’ from ‘ordinary experience’, and thus a genuinely poetic discourse from any other form of speculative discourse. Uncovering the Principle’s origins in Aristotle’s natural science (and his discernment of ‘making’ from ‘acting’ in *technê*), separating normative from theoretical aesthetics, and unveiling art’s ‘objective’ meaningfulness in any artwork’s phenomenology, reaffirms why art’s relation to the Person (its ‘anthropological phenomenology’) is of primary concern to aesthetes. I conclude with how the purpose of all inquiry into aesthetics is made more meaningful by reviving the Principle of Art, and why this essentially renders theoretical aesthetics redundant.

**KEYWORDS:** Normative Aesthetics; the General Aesthetic; Ethical Phenomenology; the Principle of Art; Artistic practice; Cultural Artefacts

## INTRODUCTION

Recent scholarship in aesthetics has ventured to nominate *activities*, like horse riding or gardening for instance, as constituting ‘aesthetic *practices*’.<sup>1</sup> But given that *any* experience is, by nature, fundamentally aesthetic - though ‘act-ing’ alone cannot constitute a ‘practice’ – this contextually dilutes inquiry into the ‘concept of the aesthetic’ so much that it obscures its real relation to Purpose. Which I believe is essentially only made sense of through Art ‘as principle’ – ie., as a *discipline*. This paper presents arguments for why and how we should revive this Principle, rendering theoretical aesthetics effectively redundant. It shows that conflating aesthetic ‘experience’ with ‘practice’ is typical of the self-defeating philosophising concerning what is instead a normative science. And why such theorising has resulted in the stagnation of Aesthetics as a study, and reduced “art” to a generality for creating and describing familiar experientialism and pressing emotivist buttons, which is ultimately de-humanising.

Kant spoke of the artwork, not as having a *specific* purpose; rather as possessing ‘purposiveness but without a purpose’. Of rendering *human existence* with a comprehensible rational purpose located in the sensible world. This suggestion also appears in Nietzsche’s Apollonian/Dionysian nexus which he however relates, *not* to individual ‘self-creation’ or “transfiguration”, but to *speciation*. The creative will to power can hence *only* create beauty at rest ‘will-lessly’ - in the *Welt der Wahrheit* (World of Truth). Like F. W. Schelling before him, Nietzsche departs from Kant then by conceiving ‘the sublime’ itself *in* the world. In Nature, rather than *beyond* it; and as a *telos* of the *ein Mehr an Leben* (*more Life*). Thus, as ‘self-overcoming’, as fulfillment of ‘the sublime one’s heroic knowledge quests’ manifest in beauty. Distinguishing between the sublime and the beautiful like this, as Steinbuch and Guo (2025) note, ‘allows for the transition from formless movement [becoming] to a bounded rest [being]’.<sup>2</sup> To account for it, re-positioning that higher speciating purpose of *the Principle* of Art, I have elsewhere suggested reversing Kant’s description to ‘*purposeful* purposelessness’ (T2024a).

<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on a presentation given to the *Exploring Aesthetic Practices* conference Jyväskylä, Finland, 24th October 2024 (<https://www.jyu.fi/en/events/exploring-aesthetic-practices>).

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Steinbuch, and Haiyan Guo, “On Not Democratizing Art: Kant’s Cosmological Sublime Versus Nietzsche’s Party of Life and The Negative Aesthetics of Divergence: Querying Kaplama’s Super-Sensible Séance and Strong’s Magical Incantation of Transfiguration,” *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* 21, no. 1 (2025):119-49, p.139-140. Brackets mine.

Which represents a quite different purpose to what we mostly find in Arthur Danto's 'artworld'.

Rather than elevating Art as *principle* in association with the 'practical science' of Normative Aesthetics, as it must be, aesthetes have been captive of what C. S. Peirce called 'that silly science of esthetics, that tries to bring our enjoyment of sensuous beauty'. Meaning, of course, a disposition to beauty *disassociated* from truth (an association that transcends cultural differences). I will show why *that* is not 'science'; but instead betrays an inability to distinguish art as *the true* science that it is from the general aesthetic in Nature. Aesthetic 'practice' becomes downgraded to 'action'. And the ubiquity of aesthetic experience we find in Nature is assigned to the 'act', and to myriad possible 'technologies of action'. What eludes people in such nominalist deceptions is how *overgeneralising* aesthetics like this degrades Art, both as a discipline and phenomenon.

Aesthetes (theorists, 'artists', and 'art lovers') have long problematised the very idea of aesthetics, by continually re-conceptualising it to meet various changing perceptions of 'normativity'. However, a *genuinely* normative aesthetics - devoid of false laws and irreducible to algorithm – has always abided in the *Principle of Art*.<sup>3</sup> A principle as ancient as the first real artwork. Lost in modernity through various *historicisations*, buried in circular reasoning and the fabrication of formalisms, as scientism's grip on analytical philosophy and theoretical aesthetics cast it as a chimera. In fact, decimating its cohesive features into 'principled' fragments. Failure to re-discover it has fuelled the proliferation of *anti-Art* (Bowie 2003), making its reconstruction for the modern epoch now more vital than ever. Thanks to the combined insights of key thinkers, before and after Kant, we can now reframe Art's relation to Normative Aesthetics as 'complexity science'. And explain the demise of theoretical aesthetics due to its distinctly *un-*'scientific' nature (T2025a).

Theoretical aestheticians have failed to explain art because they only consider aesthetic 'normativity' in terms of manufactured 'laws'. Laws of, essentially, tastes

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<sup>3</sup> This principle is fully explained in Trimarchi (2025a), and referred to in several other publications mentioned below (noted as T2022, T2023 etc.,). Note the convention used there and here: my use of capitals usually refers to 'the ideal', lower case indicates 'the real' eg., 'Art' capitalised refers to 'Art as Principle', lower case denotes either 'art' categorically as a whole, or the 'art object' ('artwork'). Hence Person-person, Nature- (human) nature ...etc.

and styles bound only by material, formal, and efficient causes; whose ‘final causes’ must therefore be *positivistically* materialist. As such their false “ends” are not genuinely novel *ideas*. But merely ‘factual’ expressions of culturally determined forms fashioned by what Max Scheler calls ‘technologies of action’ and *the effects and affects* they produce. This addles one’s entire notion of intentionality and its *directionality toward meaning*, causing many theorists to readily confuse ‘facts’ with ‘values’ and the artist’s intention with that of the artwork’s. Art’s meaning – its ‘truth’ (and hence its *worth*) – relies on *the relation* of phenomena to ends. But ‘critical theorists’, usually reflecting only upon effects/affects *as ends*, often mistake this relationship as simply concerning *perceptions*. And, as I will later show, the Principle of Art reveals the artwork’s ‘end’ to lie in its origins.

This Principle is based entirely on phenomenology. (But we can already tell, not as this is generally understood by theoretical aestheticians). That is, as the relation between the *experience* of phenomena; the normative sciences, governing *the dyadic interrelation* of phenomena and ends; and metaphysics, the ‘natural laws’ concerning the *regularity* and *irregularity* of phenomenal interactions. The general disregard of the significance *for meaning*, in this fundamental relation between Phenomenology, Normative Science, and Metaphysics, is regrettable. Metaphysics as we will see is of particular significance regarding art, because it explains how this combination mitigates against the will to power’s false rule. Its “creative” tendency to tie humanity to lower-order utilitarian and biological values.<sup>4</sup> But even Heidegger abandoned hope for metaphysics explaining art, so the lack of concern for these relationships among structuralists or poststructuralists, leaving them unable to grapple with art’s *meaning-value*, is hardly surprising (T2024a).

Moreover, ignorance of the important difference between acts of ‘preferring’ and ‘choosing’ associated with these relations, has thus flowed on through aesthetic theorising to the entire society. Because, clearly, beliefs held by people socially recognised as ‘the ultimate arbiters in disputes about beliefs’ permeate

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<sup>4</sup> Nietzsche argues metaphysics preserves a stasis field that *resists* transformation and ‘perpetuating inherited values under a false rule’ in any potential form of domination. It ‘shields the status quo from the disruptive force’ of the will to power’s ‘creative use of suffering as a stimulus for *Mehr-Leben* (surplus-life)’ (Steinbuch & Guo 2025: 142). Nietzsche’s ‘first truth of the *Welt der Wahrheit*’ hence explains art’s unique teleology as a force for ‘self-overcoming’; for self-actualisation (‘speciation’). Or, as humanity rises above the biological values, what Schelling calls its inherent *collectivising intent*.

society's most powerful institutions.<sup>5</sup> All judgement of art (its meaning *or* value) is thus thought to be entirely subjective; or only 'objective' relative to such *materialising* criteria as afforded by 'historical significance' or 'industrial viability'. In any institutional assessment process, *artistic* 'merit' is basically considered meaningless outside of these constructs. The "arts" market therefore assigns enormous monetary value to often meaningless 'objects' (eg., a banana duct-taped to a gallery wall, a singer's vocal gymnastics, etc.,). Objective assessment boils down to "phenomenological" theorising over false ends (meaning), and what Pierre Bourdieu called a 'trade in reputations'. Hence a professionalised forensic fascination with originality, effects and affects, etc., - ie., art's apparent '*materiality*' - reigns supreme. Its higher '*immaterial*' (metaphysical) meaning-value must be assumed, since no physical evidence can be found to prove it.

In the art-person relationship then, a very subjectivised, self-legitimising, epiphenomenal notion of 'self-creation' dominates in modern practices, traditions, and institutions.<sup>6</sup> It is the *antithesis* of 'self-overcoming' (ie., self-indulgent). The reductively empiricist, or 'experientialist', mis-understanding about phenomenology explained above is characteristic of the confusion between art and the 'general aesthetic'. And how we value art as an *internal* rather than *external* 'good'. Hence the modern difficulty with discerning art from decoration (and which benefits humanity more). We no longer think of artworks as *purposeless* - having ends *in themselves*. As distinct from cultural artefacts, which have ends that are culturally/historically pre-determined – and are as such utilitarian. Such distinctions were clear in ancient Greek mythology; Aristotle separated art and artefacts phenomenologically (see Appendix A). What then could account for this complete reversal? And why is art's principle, whose 'object'-ive realisation is *self-actualising*, now reduced to a misguided 'will to power' Object of material *self-creation*?

Essentially, our modern manufacturing of the concept of art's "development" is responsible. This cast art-making in terms of history, according to changing philosophical, political, and religious *ideals*, and associated "materialising" effects

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<sup>5</sup> Arran Gare, "Science, process philosophy and the image of man: the metaphysical foundations for a critical social science." PhD thesis, Murdoch University, (1981) Libraries Australia ID 2512950, p.81.

<sup>6</sup> This mis-interpretation of Nietzsche's 'ethics of self-creation' is common among modern artistic mythologisers (eg., Bob Dylan in the documentary *No Direction Home*).

and affects, relegating that older conception of art's Purpose to the 'classical' past. An irretrievable past, because along with art's "development" of course lies "Man's" development. When Adam and Eve were thrown out of the Garden of Eden, they took Art with them – all now separated from Nature. A realistic allegory (at least in part), given both art and humanity are – via *cultures* - indeed born from, but necessarily a development of, Nature. It is *how* we were separated and 'developed' that poses difficulty. Disconnecting both simultaneously from any *primordial* notion of the connection between Nature and History created the *cosmologically* fragmenting 'modern mythology'. The historicising of both art and "man", as Schelling argued, began with Christianity. And, ever since, the cultural *over-determination* of both has rendered Art and the Person *theoretical* 'objects'. Objects lacking any ontological normativity.

Before Art as a *discipline* was considered subject to 'developments' (and sub-categorising: via periods, tastes, styles, etc.), the 'philosophy of art' did not really exist (Kristeller 1951). There was no need for it, because Art as *principle* was clearly distinguishable from acts and products of crafting or designing alone - any other fragmentary arte-factual creativity which "the arts" as a *generality* (in Greek: *technê*) was associated with (T2022). There was no question, for instance, of considering the performance of martial arts an 'artform' in the same way as a drama performance. Artists might not have been strictly accountable for why they act in the performative *making* of objects, but it was reasonable to ask that they know why they act in the *production of opinions*.<sup>7</sup> However, Kant's reversal of Baumgarten's basically correct (though problematic) coinage of aesthetics to be concerned with perceptions alone, rather than *knowing*, changed everything. It reversed the original ancient association with the 'practical sciences' (ie., *knowing* how to choose between 'goods'). This led to problematising Art as a theory of beauty *alone*. And aesthetics as essentially various interpretations of its *principle's* supposed 'development' - via subjectivised intentional orientations like 'formalism', 'hedonism', etc.

The Principle of Art has two main features that, as we proceed, will be detailed in relation to their associated properties. Basically, these position *the*

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<sup>7</sup> Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics: A New Translation*. Translated with an Interpretive Essay, Notes and Glossary by Robert C Bartlett and Susan D Collins. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011, p.283.

*Principle* as art's only 'Object' (in Reason) - from which its exemplars (artforms and artworks, or 'objects') arise *objectively*. The first feature concerns art's natural ontology and teleology, which I will soon show reveals the origin of the Principle in Aristotle's natural philosophy. The art 'object' (artform/work) is, as Schelling says, 'Organism'. Hence, related to its becoming and being, is the fact that art is a 'perfect sign' of the Person. C. S. Peirce defines the Person as a species of sign, a form of semiosis in its innermost being; and Max Scheler defines it as the *ultimate* 'bearer of values' - that is: *ethical* values.<sup>8</sup> It represents the individual-self/collective-Self relation, connecting acts/objects of *meaning* and *valuing* (phenomenologically, normatively, and metaphysically).

Scheler's philosophical anthropology reconfirms why art (as Organism) is thus a Phenomenological Object - *the Principle's* main defining criterion. The becoming-being and part-whole relations in Nature itself are hence the 'natural science' phenomena undergirding its orientation toward Reason. But Scheler also reveals in this 'perfect sign' relation a *hierarchy of values* according to which artworks can be *valued* purposively. And Peirce's 'semiotic realism' maps how *the relation of phenomena to ends* is obtained in the Object<->object (Art<->art) 'in-forming' process. In the Principle's *exemplars* ('objects'), it is then Schelling's 'process metaphysics of art' that provides a graduated framework for *the progress of meaning* toward Reason (via his three 'mythological categories': the schematic, allegoric, and metaphoric).<sup>9</sup> Together these insights unveil art's *real* Phenomenological relationships (above), exposing Metaphysics as key to understanding art-making *and* admiring. Also, why process philosophy is essential to understanding art as a complexity science, yielding a Method for assessing its *meaning-value* (T2025a).

The great significance of Metaphysics comes in linking the Principle's first main feature with its second. That is, being ontological, Art must be understood *ahistorically*. The historicising of both Art and the Person during the rise of modern mythology produced the metaphysical split of this 'double-unity' (as

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<sup>8</sup> See T2022. As Scheler (1973: 86) argues, 'the person' and 'act-being' are bearers of ethical value. Art offers us a way to 'objectify' these bearers via the subject-object interface in artworks. But we only distinguish their *ethical* value by "how this occurs as 'real'. That is, as *given*, phenomenologically."

<sup>9</sup> Note Schelling (1989) uses 'symbolic' in his categories for 'metaphoric'. See T2025 for why, also Appendix A in the present paper for the difference between symbol and metaphor.

Schelling calls it), prising apart their perfect-sign relation and separating Art from Normative Aesthetics. Hence the coinciding deterioration of the crucial relationship between aesthetics, ethics, and logic in western society (the ‘normative’, or in Aristotle’s terms, ‘practical’ sciences). It reduced Art from a ‘science’, unlike any other, to mere theory. This second feature thus reveals why Time is key to the *metaphysics* of both art as principle and ‘product’: in the former’s binding of humanity’s relation to the Nature-History nexus; and in the historicity (making) of the art ‘object’ itself.

To show how we can revive the Principle in modernity I will firstly outline its grounding in Aristotle’s ‘natural science’ (§1); then how it was lost to theory, the implications of this, and Schelling’s revival of it (countering Kant and Hegel’s aesthetics) (§2); before elaborating on its main properties, criteria, and application (in §3 and §4). In the process, drawing upon several thinkers, like those mentioned above often disregarded as philosophers of art (but known for their contributions to science), I will expand upon previous arguments for why theoretical aesthetics is thus made effectively redundant. I have elsewhere extensively argued why this Principle returns Art to the status of a ‘complexity science’, which can help to bridge the ‘two cultures’ of Humanities and Science. And why its re-institution in contemporary society is essential not only for art and any aesthetic *inquiry* to be meaningful, but to secure the future of art and humanity itself. So, here my focus turns to how this all informs the definition of an artistic practice.

A genuine Artistic Practice highlight’s Art’s oft-denied ethical dimension, revealed in its principle. Because ‘ethics’ is mostly misconstrued by theorists as an overlaid moralising *interpretation* of the artwork’s meaning - which Aristotle, Schelling, Nietzsche, Peirce, Scheler and many others reject in favour of its immanent intuitable relation to morals (T2022). The fact ethics and logic are *inherent* in any artwork’s own phenomenology, beckons Aesthetes to dispel the widespread delusionary tendency to elevate the general aesthetic over Art’s true higher purpose. To dispute nonsense generalisations like “aesthetic practice” that make deconstructive postmodern ‘aestheticians’ more concerned with questions like ‘What makes art more like an aesthetic experience?’ Rather than the far more useful one: ‘What makes an aesthetic experience more like art?’

Unless *art-making* and *admiring* are understood as the highest forms of



“aesthetic practice”, aesthetics itself becomes virtually meaningless. My hope is that aesthetes will rediscover in this principle’s *genuine* normativity a concern for ethics, humanist ideals, a realistic relation to Nature, and repudiation of the more nihilistic diversionary ‘aesthetics’ of our times driving us individually and collectively toward self-destruction.

### 1. *Art vs the ‘General Aesthetic’*

Life may imitate “art” in the modern world, but Art’s purpose is *not* to imitate Nature.<sup>10</sup> Purpose is one of the Principle’s key criteria, but quite differently construed to how theorists generally understand art’s purposiveness. Which originates in the failure to discern between art and the ‘general aesthetic’, carried over into artefacts. This is, phenomenologically, in practice essentially a distinction between (i) *Gestalts* (which are generated *auto-poietically* in Nature) being re-purposed in cultural *artefact*-making. Compared with (ii) purposefully purposeless construction of ‘objects’, using *Gestalts*, as a ‘worlding’ disposition to *Personhood* in our imaginaries.

Two different kinds of experiences are involved here in *how we attend* to objects. Which in perception and judgement may tend to confuse *resources* with *purposes*, and *qualia* with *principles*. Or, as Aristotle puts it, arguments proceeding ‘from the principles and those that proceed to the principles’.<sup>11</sup> For instance, Balance is a quality of any great artwork; but we don’t *begin* with Balance to make art, we begin with the work’s *idea* (its ‘essence’). So, Balance is not a *principle* of art, rather a feature *proceeding to* its Principle.

Let us begin to unravel these distinctions then by considering why Art’s *higher* meaning emerges from the relationship between phenomena and ends – and not just any ‘general aesthetic’ experience. These are ends (or ‘final causes’) that aesthetics, ethics, and logic *together* point to. C. S. Peirce, an eminent logician, produced an evolutionary theory for how this *Normative* relationship creates meaning (‘concrete reasonableness’) in the cosmos, evidenced in the activity of signs. Nature is ‘perfuse’ with this activity, but *human* nature has evolved to refine

<sup>10</sup> T2024a: Aristotle’s ‘mimesis’ is *not* an *imitation* of objects but a “*binding* of the subject-object relation *in the realisation of the whole*.”

<sup>11</sup> T2022: “The ‘arguments’ (in general) originating from any genuine artwork (as a ‘theory’ of Art’s *Principle*) cannot be construed as ‘many principles’ eg., <https://www.artlex.com/art-tutorials/principles-of-art/>”

its ‘general aesthetic’ application. Unlike other species, we are ‘metaphorical creatures’.<sup>12</sup> And it is our intuitive metaphoric sensibility that allows us to expand the imagination. So, the naturally occurring becoming-being and part-whole phenomena in Nature are *indispensable* to producing higher meaning in our *intellectual* intuition via the invention of Art.

To understand the ‘aesthetic’ difference in this meaning productivity, firstly consider how *Gestalts* (meaning ‘whole’) work. We are all familiar with visual *Gestalts* like the picture of a Dalmatian dog that emerges under a tree from what at first seem to only be disconnected dots. As Iain McGilchrist’s (2010) brain lateralisation theory explains, our left hemisphere, which focusses on detail, simply can’t perceive the dog or tree until the right hemisphere is activated. Then most of us experience that “ah ha!” moment when we suddenly perceive the coalescence of parts with wholes and take in the ‘big picture’.

*Gestalts*— not just visual, but audio, and gestural or movement-action type *Gestalts* — occur naturally. But we’ve learnt to use them in any pop song, dance, drawing, or painting etc., to create meaning “movement”. It is not *meaning* that ‘moves’, however, but only the *affordances* of meaning (T2025b). They arise from a combination of meaning-making modalities (eg., narrative, metonymy, synecdoche, etc.,) which, as Schelling shows, advance from schematic to allegoric to metaphoric coherence. All humans share this ability to recognise the dynamics of these part-whole and becoming-being phenomena. But so do many other animals, who thus also clearly have aesthetic *experiences*.

The Australian bowerbird, for example, arranges his nest or sings his song according to patterning behaviour that originates in Nature’s *Gestalts*. The female Nightingale selects her mate according to the comparative complexity of their songs (good singers make better fathers, apparently). It is unsurprising that even animals have a ‘general aesthetic’ sensibility, since all such *Gestalt* formation creates meaning in the organism-environment interaction. What makes humans different to other species is *our kind* of ‘understanding’. We are, as Scheler says, the ‘understanding animal’ because we are *metaphoric creatures*. And, it is Metaphor’s “autopoietic” (self-structuring) multi-dimensional morphogenesis of

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<sup>12</sup> Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination and Reason*. (The University of Chicago Press, 1987), p.279.

meaning that allows Art to offer us the highest access to understanding what these part-whole/becoming being phenomena mean for a *human* reality.

The movement-action-logic dynamism of *metaphoric* meaning productivity involves precisely the same knowledge-action nexus operative in natural *Gestalt* formation. But *Gestalts* alone do not produce *higher* meaning. So, while musical *Gestalts* for instance appear to be primordially ‘hard-wired’ – making it virtually impossible not to tap your feet along with its rhythmic potency (as birds do), or feel like you are moving through its visual landscape – humans alone progress toward contemplation of higher meaning, through art. We move to a higher ground, a higher level of consciousness; but only as our intellectual intuition finds some progression toward Reason in this dynamic.

As John Herman Randall Jr. says (in *Aristotle*, 1960), to understand the world means ‘an understanding of language, of discourse, of logos, as the instrument of thinking and knowing’. And the world is ‘the kind of world... in which things can be distinguished and defined, in which we can “reason” from one statement to another’.<sup>13</sup> This ‘logical’ or ‘discursive’ character makes ‘knowledge, like language, systematic and “logical”’. But art moves us beyond *literal* language and the *general* aesthetic in what Michael Polanyi calls the tacit dimension – or ‘the implicit’. Here we find what I refer to above as art’s ‘objective’ *immaterial* value. In the normative aesthetics-ethics-logic relationship, a certain part of logos involves the *general* aesthetic sensibility. But another part – that which we have developed Art to express - involves ‘ethical sensibility’. From which Sense (as in *Reason*) materialises through the *combined intuition* of all three.

Max Scheler, who co-founded philosophical anthropology, calls this ‘ethical’ or ‘anthropo-logical’ phenomenology. It is *intuitable* by all humans. Its ‘sense’ pertains to *knowing* not perceiving. It is *not* a matter, for instance, of perceiving colour or having ‘an “immediate experience” or “feeling”’ of it, or having an ‘existential commitment’ to it, or anything via the ‘will to power’. (Before, as Nietzsche says it comes to rest; ‘will-less’, and *only then* graceful). We experience ‘sense’ (Reason), says Randall, when we can express precisely what that ‘something’ is - and ‘why it is as it is’.<sup>14</sup> Just as, with this ‘truth’, we judge beauty.

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<sup>13</sup> John Herman Randall, Jr. *Aristotle*. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1960, p.6-7.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 7. Note this is where the *precision* of artmaking (as science) comes in (T2022).

Yet its intuition is not reliant upon explicitness (ie., *form*). In fact, according to Scheler, the *non-formal* values of objects produce all higher meaning. This is what essentially makes art via *Metaphor* – its most immanent, multi-dimensional conveyor of meaning dynamics - the *natural* discipline for expressing the merger of knowledge with action. And given the very particular way metaphor ‘worlds’ reality *only* in artworks, Schelling placed Art above all other speculation as a way of *knowing* reality, including philosophy.

Herein lies its higher value, and good reason to revive its Principle. We must thus distinguish art’s ‘materiality’ from this higher purpose, and its qualities from principles. What special features *proceed to* its single unifying Principle can then easily be discerned.

Art’s association with *any* aesthetic experience via a questionable notion of “aesthetic practice”, common now in theoretical discourses, reflects its having suffered too long under the postmodern gaze in that generalisation called “the arts”. Not noticing the conflation of ‘act’, ‘experience’, and ‘practice’, a mixed state of awe and confusion ensues tempting theorists to turn qualia into principles. But this not merely devalues the meaning of art, and what it means to be an artist or ‘aesthete’; it obfuscates Art as principle’s ‘naturalised’ normative relationship to Nature. Because art embodies *a merger* of knowledge with action, it can only really be understood *in praxis*. So, distinguishing an *artistic* practice is necessary to dispel philosophising about ‘the concept of the aesthetic’ which tends to create ‘many principles’ of Art out of art-like experiences.

Failing to discern between theoretical and normative aesthetics - *in terms of the relation of phenomena to ends* – is clearly at fault here. Some theorists, for instance Bertinetto (2022), will even blur the ‘*immaterial*’ boundaries between *artistic* practice and any *activity* involving general aesthetic *experience* - by calling improvisation or meditation aesthetic “practices”. When these are clearly only *means* to ends. This distorts the relation between facts and values, and ultimately between *praxis* (action) and *poiesis* (making). Improvisation cannot be characterised as an aesthetic end-in-itself. Since *every* human activity involves a degree of both precision *and* improvisation, clearly *neither* alone can constitute an aesthetic “practice” (surely only an aesthetic *experience*). And if *all* ‘meditative’ activity – and hence *any* form of relaxation (eg., play) - is considered an ‘aesthetic practice’, then how must we understand the difference between meditating upon

the *Mona Lisa* and on *any* activities, like knitting, playing football, or love-making?

The only answer here, of course, concerns *Purpose*: that is, distinguishing an artistic comportment from a misplaced attendance to ‘the aesthetic dimension of the everyday’. The ultimate purpose of an aesthetic education is not, as Bertinetto concludes, to integrate ‘the extraordinariness of artistic masterpieces into the ordinariness of our aesthetic life’. But rather to know the difference. Because what he claims to condemn – a purely ‘theoretical’, ‘aestheticist’ (in his pejorative sense) conception of ‘life as a work of art’ – indeed results from such overgeneralising of aesthetics. This tendency in part arises from the Cartesian ‘mind-body’ dualism fallacy dividing human nature and Nature.

With historical fragmentation of Art and the Person, aestheticising individuals equally as ‘a work of art’ - reifying pure subjectivity, artistic “genius”, etc., - posthumanist theorising advanced the now perilously deconstructive anti-humanist postmodern ideal of individual and collective Selfhood (Gare 2021). This consists in a false *symbolic* ideal of the Art-Person relation, engendering a self-legitimising notion of ‘self-creation’ and a fragmenting divided world in its reflection. It is, as Schelling claimed, via the symbolic elevation of the artwork to a ‘miracle’ - which is part and parcel of attempting to *assimilate* ‘the extraordinariness’ of Art with ordinary experience – that this distinctly unnatural way of reflecting upon, idealising, and continually ‘re-creating’ our world *defines* the modern ideology. A false mythology, limiting our imaginaries by making *genuine* idealism and realism appear antithetical.

Art’s purpose is, rather, to invoke something of what Schelling called ‘more real than reality itself’: a *phenomenological* experience. Genuine art-making cannot be reduced to mere accidentality because *mimicking* Nature like this just corrupts Art’s ontological ‘collectivising intent’. Art’s ‘auto-poietic’ accidentality is only *a part* of its process metaphysics. That part which, as in any crafted ‘object’, only involves harnessing the *materiality* of a subject’s ‘semiotic freedom’. The other part, which produces its objective *immaterial* value – the ‘thinking’ part – involves something more. It requires a different kind of intentionality, and the prudence to discern *the Truth part* of the Beauty-Truth and Necessity-Freedom relations that define Art as principle. The ‘end’ of this latter intentionality is ‘an end in itself’ (an internal good); not, like ‘play’ is to relaxation, just a *means* to an end. Art’s purpose, and an *artistic* practice, involves a higher pleasure: making Reason. *This*

is what separates Art from just any aesthetic experience or artefact.

Falsely ‘democratising’ art as just a theory of beauty, which Nietzsche vehemently opposed, only serves to dispense with the real skill of art-making. This was an unintended legacy of Kant’s aesthetics; that Hegel and even Heidegger helped embed in the modern aesthete’s psyche (T2024a). The Principle of Art’s origins reveal its natural *ontology* and *teleology*, putting its relation to the general aesthetic in proper perspective.

#### THE PRINCIPLE’S ORIGIN AND MAIN FEATURES

Aristotle – who, as Armand Leroi (2015) argues, basically ‘invented science’ - did not “invent” this principle. But it is unmistakably there in his ‘natural philosophy’. Though neither Schelling, Peirce, nor Scheler accord Aristotle specific reference in their aesthetic deliberations regarding a unified ontological conception of art, his influence on our understanding of it is indisputable. So too that of the ancient Greek mythology, which as Schelling argues is *entirely* metaphorical. Together they account for more than an incidental historical or formalistic association of it with the Classical style. They situate the Principle’s very foundations in natural science (the study of ‘the natural world’).

The fact that, like aesthetics generally, individual artforms and artworks *must* be studied phenomenologically arises in the *Nichomachean Ethics* as a matter of *process*. Not only is this clear in how Aristotle distinguishes art from artefact in *technê*, by applying the difference between *poiesis* and *praxis*.<sup>15</sup> But also in how he applies his scientific method to ethics in general. In ethics, says Aristotle, ‘as in all other cases’ we must start with some ordered information about ‘appearances’ of part-whole relata (*phainomena*), before working through ‘the puzzles’ of an experience. Identifying the problems this presents, we then collect the best explanations for them such that the *demonstrably* coherent ‘truth/truths’ of all beliefs emerge.<sup>16</sup>

The same ‘process thinking’ undergirding the phenomenology of art, that Schelling later associates *archetypally* with ‘organism’, undergirds Aristotle’s ‘natural science’. He defines nature as ‘an *internal* principle of change and rest’.

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<sup>15</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>16</sup> Armand Marie Leroi, *The Lagoon: How Aristotle Invented Science*. (London: Bloomsbury Paperbacks, 2015), p.78.

This, as Leroi points out, is ‘the fundamental difference between natural objects and artefacts... the former move and stop by themselves; the latter don’t and can’t.’ As a definition of nature really ‘built for biologists’, its purpose is ‘to pin down the mysterious way in which creatures do all that they do – and do it by themselves.’ ‘No one cranks the clockwork’, says Leroi, ‘no one points the little machine in the right direction – nature does.’ *Art’s* autonomy too - with one key difference - emerges in the meeting ground of Aristotelian teleology and ontology. Which, importantly, *connects* Nature and human nature.

Nature’s “mechanism” is, as most biologists agree, purposeless; so too art’s Principle. The latter, however, *differs* from the ‘biological principle’ in that it issues an ontological *purposefulness* for human ‘making’. Not of artefacts, which are fixed in meaning. Rather of what is *by nature* closest in essence to humans themselves: artworks - which are *never* fixed in meaning and yet, by virtue of this, more meaningful. Though Aristotle’s ‘principle’ of Nature is ‘built for biologists’, Art pursues the human condition *in transcending* the biological or vital urges (or, ‘values’). Thus, natural science’s pinning down of our ‘mysterious’ creaturely autonomy provides only a *model* for Art. The artwork’s “organism” (or organon, to return to Aristotle’s functionalist terminology) therefore doesn’t *mimic* Nature. It *transcends* it, while keeping true to Nature’s ‘accidentality’ - its *internal* principle of change and rest - or, *teleology*. (As noted in T2023, Aristotle’s use of ‘mimesis’ in *Poetics* is still mistaken by art theorists to mean mimicry *of the forms themselves*. Formalists hence confound the meanings of ‘naturalism’ and ‘realism’).<sup>17</sup>

Art’s autonomous ‘teleology’ is then an important *part* of its ontology, helping us achieve that transcendence. But it should surprise no one that *human* autonomy is also best expressed through art, for this very same reason. The Principle’s immaterial ‘Object’-ive making, via its materially exemplary art-forms/works, thus obtains optimally only in *purposeful* purposelessness. Kant’s (I believe misconceived) expression of Art’s making as ‘*purposeless* purposefulness’ betrays his unfortunate dialectical persuasion rendering artworks merely *artefacts* of the human condition. Whereas, as Schelling and Peirce each argued, the human condition is an *end*, not a means to an end. It is not arte-factual. Hence

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<sup>17</sup> See T2023, p.432 n18. My argument that “genuine art replicates *the semiotic process* of ‘*autopoiesis*’ – the ‘subject-objectivation’ merging the real and ideal” – draws upon Schelling’s advance on Aristotle.

- by virtue of the Person being *embodied* ontologically in art-making (as ‘organ-ism’)
- the only *artistic* propositions that have meaning, as we will see, concern ‘human conduct’.

The ‘*purposefulness*’ of the Art-Person (‘perfect sign’) relation embodies the future direction of nature’s ‘*internal* principle of change and rest’. This forward movement helps define Art’s ‘ethical intentionality’, present in any genuine artwork (T2024c, T2025b). The *Principle* and its exemplars are hence *constructed* in this double-unity of ‘organon’. This morphogenic relation to organism distinguishes Art from the ‘general aesthetic’ by linking it, via propositions, to *normative* aesthetic intuition. Whereupon *self-actualising higher meaning* becomes Art’s singular purpose: unifying ethics and logic. These are *preceded* by Aesthetics *only because* we make higher meaning *metaphorically*. They are why artworks, in this ideal iteration, render ordinary reality ‘more real’; because they propositionally steer our habitual *disposition* (comportment) in this ontological direction.

Most notable in this process is an artwork’s unique auto-poietic (purposeless), self-structuring potentiality - its potency. Then its ‘immateriality’ or *becoming* (its ‘process metaphysics’) as distinct from its ‘materiality’ (*being*) – or, its essence.<sup>18</sup> Which together lend the artwork itself *the character* of ‘Organism’, and through its perfect sign relation to *the Person*, a higher *purposefulness*. This apparent paradox of ‘purpose’, as noted, is what makes Metaphor art’s primary meaning-making modality. Together these three factors mark Art as a unique ‘way of valuing’; of worlding reality with purposeful purposelessness (Reason). And they do it *phenomenologically*. As opposed to the *purposeless* purposefulness that Kant prescribed, giving rise to ‘aesthetics as theory’.

The Principle thus manifests in two main aspects of every genuine artform/work’s construction. First, though both art and artefacts convey the becoming-being/part-whole relationships using *Gestalts*, art *propositionally* transforms these via Metaphor to higher meaning (through more complex ‘*Gestalt* switches’). And secondly, by this means, an artwork’s phenomenologically unique merger of knowledge with action triggers our *re-productive* imagination. Meaning

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<sup>18</sup> To avoid explaining the perils of ‘substance thinking’, for sake of simplicity I use the controversial terms of ‘material’ and ‘immaterial’ – most useful for discussing art - usually in inverted commas.



is transformed so significantly through the Person-as-organism perfect sign relation as to elevate Art to that very particular category of sciences. That is, to the *practical* sciences – which cultivate ‘*knowing* how to choose between goods’ – since, of course, they involve understanding *what it means to be human*. Theoretical aesthetics, by contrast, has no claim to science at all (§2).<sup>19</sup>

Higher meaning is thus achieved in artworks only by shifting our focus from common *empirical* to *phenomenological* experience. In the process, Art in fact *shuns* the ‘historical-empirical’ meaning that we are easily led to believe is the real subject of any artwork. That lower-order ‘topographical’ phenomenology which most structuralists and poststructuralists are concerned with. Art’s ‘organism’, meanwhile, *opens* avenues of deeper understanding via ‘the implicit’. Meaning *originating* in Nature’s ‘general aesthetic’ sensibility, that is purely accidental (purposeless), and we all take in subjectively. But which Art (propositionally) harnesses to find its *true* purpose in ‘becoming objective’. Not necessarily explicitly; just by simply shifting our attention from meaningless fragments to the *implicitly* more meaningful realisation of *wholeness*. In other words, from the historical (sequential/chronological) to the ahistorical, from means to ends (efficient to final causes). Ultimately, from ‘fact’ to ‘value’.

What I have just described is how genuine artmaking is ontologically and teleologically *bound* to Normative Aesthetics. The Principle of Art is the *embodiment* of Normative Aesthetics, through the same ontological purposeful *relation between* the practical sciences (aesthetics, ethics, and logic) which its exemplars display. This essentially reveals why Art is more concerned with the ‘immaterial’ than the ‘material’ aspects of life. Something lost in the theoretical maze ensuing from the two major problems causing art’s decline in modernity: Cartesian dualism, and Kant’s doctrine of ‘agreement/disagreement’, which effectively separated Beauty from Truth (T2022). After the initial mythological symbolic ‘re-worlding’ of reality under Christianity (with the coincident rise of individualism and the ‘private world’) these hastened Art’s separation from Nature and society.<sup>20</sup> Fragmentations of art’s once unified Principle re-emerged as theoretical manifestations of various historicisations (permanently splitting the

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<sup>19</sup> See T2022 where I argue this more fully via analysis of Kant’s aesthetics.

<sup>20</sup> See Williams (1960) for art’s separation from society.

Art-Person perfect sign). As categorisations, generated by ‘tastes’, ‘styles’, etc.

These categories facilitated the favouring of lower- (utilitarian) and middle-order (‘human’, ‘vital’, or ‘biological’) values on Scheler’s hierarchy. Both are associated with our ‘external good’ *material* needs; the latter particularly nurturing appetites and aversions. So, while Nature’s ‘general aesthetic’ offers an abundance of lower order use-values for our expression, that which *human* nature is *a part* provides plenty besides. From which emotivism, in popular modern mythology, produced many falsely idealised propositions for “art”-making. Neither sets of values can alone be aspirational for *genuine* arts practice or experience, because only the *highest* ‘spiritual/holy’ values fulfil this promise (ie., those of ‘*the Person*’, the highest *bearer* of values). Only these values separate us from Nature’s “mechanism”, offering us the power to judge over the others. Disregarding this hierarchy, Empathy alone is often considered all that is required for meaningful artmaking/admiring; but it necessarily involves neither autonomy nor altruism, and may cultivate virtues *or* vices.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, Art’s higher meaning resides not in ignoring but *transforming* the lower values. This is only achieved *transparently* via Metaphor – ie., without *mediation* by Symbol. Metaphor binds art’s higher ‘immaterial’ purposiveness (Reason) to its ‘material’ being (self-actualisation) via the ideational indifferences of Necessity and Freedom, Beauty and Truth. Billie Holiday’s recording of *Strange Fruit* (a rendering of Abel Meeropol’s poem) achieves this, by managing to combine the literal and performative qualities of proper metaphor with great skill (overcoming the inherent difficulties with ‘didactic’ poesy).

Metaphoric ‘reasoning’ is thus a key ontological property of the Principle of Art. It is Schelling’s highest order ‘mythological category’, whose significance for another such property, Intersubjectivity (‘subject-objectification’), via Reason I will now elaborate on.

#### METAPHORIC VS SYMBOLIC ‘METAPHYSICS’

Plato’s Forms, the ‘ancestor of all species of idealism’ as Leroi says, is ‘incomprehensible and bizarre’. As absurd a description of life as theories like Formalism or Hedonism are of Art. Such two-dimensional empirical reductions

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<sup>21</sup> cf. Aristotle 2011 and Young 2012. This is not to say it is not an essential *ingredient*.

of either to symbolic ideals like structure or pleasure are simply un-real. Projecting forward, Hobbesian, Cartesian, and Newtonian notions of our world as inert matter moving blindly and meaninglessly in space followed Plato's lead; contrasting starkly with Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* and Peirce's 'radical empiricism', which better describe life and art's 'process metaphysics'. The former thinkers ineptly dealt with *the reality* of meaning in the natural world. Yet their formulas provided the dominant modern paradigm for artmaking that historicised and fragmented Art's Principle, elevating 'everyday' general aesthetic meaning instead.<sup>22</sup>

Today's highest earning visual "artists" (eg., Jeff Koons, Damien Hurst) take advantage of embedded misperceptions about forming Ideals; to symbolically "create", under that paradigm, what are only really in fact cultural *artefacts*. Hence, they deliberately mostly just design *conceptual* materialisations, crafted in pursuit of some 'efficient cause', lacking any meaningful elucidation on reality. Little or no proper Metaphor is found in their work. Nor many of the most celebrated contemporary 'artworks', in any artform. Most modern dramas and literature are, at best, allegorical – lacking *character*. Just plot-point or historically driven narratives yielding to action or symbolism. Little wonder formalism/hedonism best describes them; since they only offer for our contemplation means (*acts*), or unfathomable ends, as anchors on life.

The 'materialising' of an artwork is not about "creation" anyway, but rather uncovering (or, *dis*-covering) life. Its 'materiality' – the realising of its 'being' – is rather a negation; a complexity bound by the becoming-being phenomenon emerging in the very semiotic productivity of the work itself. Its 'self-structuring' becoming, or meta-physics. So, art 'as principle' is better described in terms of a complexity theory akin to biosemiotics. And, since it is irreducible to forms or simple pleasures alone, it soon becomes clear why process philosophy and 'speculative naturalism' surpass any merely analytical "philosophy of art". The latter lacks the benefit of synopses and syntheses in its purview.

The interrelation between the becoming-being and part-whole phenomena, and hence form and non-form, is key to why Art's metaphysics is most apparent *in practice*. Aristotle's distinction between *action* and *making* in the *Ethics*, and the different kinds of 'prudence' needed in art/artefact-making, parallel his

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<sup>22</sup> See Gare 2007/2008 and 2018.

separation of different ‘classes’ of metaphor (in *Metaphysics*).<sup>23</sup> As noted, an artwork’s *organic* nature features at once as both a visceral part of the ‘general aesthetic’ and a *separation* from Nature’s beauty-truth aspects - via an artistic proposition. It is thus a specific poetic speculative intentionality, manifest in Metaphoric complexity, that defines Art’s separation from non-Art.

Metaphor has ‘inbuilt purpose’; its expression involves ‘ends in themselves’, so it is simultaneously both ‘purposeful’ and ‘purposeless’. Hence meaning - the relation of ‘phenomena to ends’ - is most transparent in this modality, marking it as Art’s primary meaning-maker.

Art’s *real* purpose, as noted, involves helping us to *understand* the world - yet in a non-explanatory way: *implicitly*, or *dispositionally*. It therefore deals not in probability (like experimental science), but in *possibility*. So, *the relation between regularities and irregularities is key to art’s ‘truth’, and what defines aesthetics as a science.*<sup>24</sup> Its meaning-making propositional disposition *requires* Art’s ‘immateriality’ to be a more significant factor than its ‘materiality’. Aristotle too saw that material forces alone could not explain the world. He thus appropriates Plato’s doctrine of the Forms (aptly described by Leroi as the ‘mainspring of [Plato’s] contempt for the perceptible world’). But Aristotle ‘destroys it, rebuilds it and turns it to the service of science’. The artwork-as-complexity science relation to Form (and Pleasure too) is clarified by this.

Realising that Plato’s Forms annihilated the study of Nature, Aristotle argues that ‘form’ (*eidos*) and matter (*hyle*) can be *thought of* in abstract terms, but in practice they must be understood as inseparable. He uses an allegory to describe their relation: If wax is *hyle*, then an impression made in it is *eidos*. The analogy with art objects is obvious: their *materiality’s* purpose is to create an *immaterial* impression. Also, why artforms/works are related ‘exemplars’ of only one *single* Principle becomes clear in Aristotle’s dual use of the word *eidos* to describe organisms. They are (i) a ‘kind’ of form (*genos*: ‘artform’), and (ii) forms *within* a ‘kind’ (‘artworks’). We can see that, as exemplars of the Principle, ‘Form-lessness’

<sup>23</sup> See Appendix A for explanation of this ‘spectrum’.

<sup>24</sup> As Potter (1997: 164) recounts in *Pierce on Norms and Ideals*, what does *not* require explanation generally is: (1) sheer regularity, because it engenders no expectation as to what is likely to turn up, and (2) purely formal regularities (eg., the law of probability), according to which certain phenomenon is bound to turn up sometime or other in the chance medley of things because these are simply part of a priori conditions of our knowing randomness at all.

is as important to the meaning of ‘the whole’ as the notion of ‘Form’ itself.

Upon examining further why this is so, we find that in both Nature and Art diversity and accidentality respond to ‘boundary conditions’. In Art, these manifest in the phenomenology of an artwork’s transformation of Nature’s ‘biological values’ (while remaining ‘organic’). And, in the ‘functional’ limitations placed upon artform/work constructions by the Art-Person perfect sign relation, for transcending directionally toward ‘Spiritual’ transparency. The indivisibility of forms which humans manifest *organically* is a clear physical limitation, leaving ‘spirit’ as the only possible passage to Reason.<sup>25</sup> In both Art and the Person, being the highest possible *bearers* of value, reasonableness therefore manifests as ‘Holy’-ness – or *Wholeness* – the highest aspirational meaning-value we can assign to any internal ‘good’.<sup>26</sup> There is no *moral pre-condition* here (cf. Aristotle’s virtue ethics).<sup>27</sup> ‘Spiritual’ and ‘Holy’ are purely observable and assessable phenomenological descriptors for art’s *ethical* reality (T2024c).

The “formation” of ‘wholeness’ thus emerges as the critical feature of Purpose in Art’s Principle, expressed by the artwork’s teleological *purposiveness*. ‘Every part of the body is *for* some action: so what the body as a composite whole is *for* is a multifaceted action’, says Aristotle when describing organisms.<sup>28</sup> If art too is ‘organism’, *Art’s* purposefulness – like *the Person’s* – is also bound by this part-whole relationship. In artworks, the ‘action’ of the parts must therefore cohere *propositionally* in Purpose. (Remembering always that it is their *immateriality* which ushers forth their greatest meaningfulness). Similarly, the Person’s ‘exemplars’ – individual humans – are only to be considered ‘whole’ in relation to a ‘whole life’ and *Other*-ness. That is, the *individual*-self identity as a ‘form within a kind’ (its *genos*: the *human*-Self identity). The ‘immateriality’ of individual persons lends them this relative meaningfulness, via actions relative to the collective. Hence

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<sup>25</sup> Only since developments in biology and physics produced Complexity Science has modern science come to grips with the idea that the best word to describe how ‘consciousness or mind belongs to the basic fabric of the world’ is Spirit (Dahlin 2021). Water being an exemplary phenomenon (see later reference to Thales).

<sup>26</sup> ‘Holy’, at the top of Scheler’s hierarchy, is the etymological derivation of ‘Whole’ (see T2025b).

<sup>27</sup> Though indeed this clearly *corresponds* to morality (see T2022). In T2025a (also T2024c) I describe how ‘Holy and Spiritual values’ are converted to phenomenological meaning markers of *transparency* of Reason (compared with an artwork’s ‘empirical comprehensibility’) via self-evident *Intent* manifesting intrinsic propositional worth (*Import*) toward higher *Purpose*.

<sup>28</sup> Cited in Leroi *TL*, 87.

the significance of ‘human conduct’ in art’s propositional intentionality (§3).

Ultimately however, it is in Aristotle’s use of *eidos* as ‘information’ that we can understand the interrelation between making (*poiesis*) and action (*praxis*) needed to separate art from artefacts. We can interpret this as ‘in-forming’ knowledge in the performative sense - *in praxis*. It is analogous with how all exemplars may be understood to be ‘formed’ by the Principle. Thus, what Heidegger called the ‘origin of the artwork’ really lies here, *in the Principle* - not in each individual artwork as he imagined.<sup>29</sup> Consider now that part of art-making of which *only* crafting and designing are the *most pertinent* actions and knowledges, which Aristotle’s analogy for *scientific* reasoning describes:<sup>30</sup>

In *The Parts of Animals* Aristotle considers how a woodcarver might explain his art. He clearly wouldn’t just talk about the wood – that’s merely the matter out of which it’s built. Nor would he just talk about his axe and augur – they’re merely tools. Nor would he just talk about the strokes that he makes – that’s mere technique. No, if he is really to convey the origin of the thing he’s making, he has to talk about the idea that he had when he began his work – the process by which it will unfold in his hands, its final design and ultimate purpose – he must talk about its *eidos*.

But this crafted object is one important step removed from what Art as Principle demands. The *ultimate eidos* of a genuine artwork involves engaging that special kind of prudence concerned with deliberating about why its whole is not merely the sum of its parts. Why it possesses an end-in-itself. For, as well as the woodcarver’s wood, tools, technique, and original idea of the object’s purpose, there must be a higher Reason *for* its disclosure. Which I suggest is formed in the artwork’s ‘DNA’: its *Principle*. Merging knowledge with action must render more than a *copy* or abstraction of reality, but a *transcendence of values* and an ever-changing movement toward higher order meaning possibility. The Art-work embodies *this* Reason in its identity, not just the reasoning of ‘means’ - like good plotting in films and novels, or *sfumato* in rendering a painting’s mood. In the end, it is the *value of the whole* that matters.

This is why I believe it is, as Aristotle says, ‘*the thinking part that each person is or*

<sup>29</sup> See T2024a for how Heidegger misconceives this origin as existing *independently* in each artwork.

<sup>30</sup> Leroi *TL*, 90.

is most of all'.<sup>31</sup> It is *thinking's* transcendent wholeness that in-forms the identity of both the Person and Art. In *Metaphysics* he explains that parts *a* and *b* require a particular progression of thought to make that specific compound *ab*. Otherwise, they could combine as *ba*. The directionality of that progress is key to each compound's identity and meaning, which is found in an artwork's phenomenology (T2024c). To understand the 'why' behind an artwork's *being*, and the emergent meaning within it, we therefore need to apply Aristotle's four causes (just as we describe changes in Nature) - material, formal, efficient, and final cause – however with more weight given to the last. Because all the technical proficiency in the world alone cannot make art, only the *thinking part* can.

Describing forms as we might describe nucleotides approaches a conception of Art as complexity science. This trades Plato's mythical 'realm-beyond-the-senses', and Kant's illusory realm of the senses, for the *real world* that Art *should* describe. The normative natural world, where we can find the immediate source and design of its immaterial meaning in any 'living' artwork. Moreover, Aristotle's natural science, in the above descriptions, backs up Schelling's phenomenological characterisations of Metaphor and Symbol - as two opposing ways of worlding reality (ie., *universalising* meaning).

Metaphor draws the universal into the particular; symbol draws the particular into the universal. In practice, this means that metaphoric action manifests the art object's becoming-being 'movement' interactively between the parts and whole of its meaning, disclosing its complex implicit multidimensional dynamics transparently. Whereas in any lower-order symbolic expression, the object two-dimensionally manifests only particularity, taking a fragment or fragments of meaning and *conceptually* universalising it (and its *familiarity* potential). Metaphor highlights real relational potentials featuring genuine possibility; Symbol, being fragmentary, drives any potential higher meaning into opacity (see Appendix A).

Thus, a genuine artist does more than lay out a pattern of rocks on a gallery floor to resemble something in nature – either particularising its accidentality or form. Or simply gather musical *Gestalts* in popular song to instil a sense of

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<sup>31</sup> Aristotle *NE*, 194.

familiarity alone. As Leonardo da Vinci is believed to have said, ‘art doesn’t imitate reality, it reinvents it’. When Van Gogh paints a sunflower, he is not approximating an actual sunflower’s appearance, but departing from it to approach an idea that can never be fully rendered in the natural world. Reinventing and comparing reality, is fundamentally how we think, reason, and examine disagreements about perception (ie., dialectics). Through purposeful *dialogical* reality re-invention we can seek truth – relationally - via disparate meanings. An *artwork’s* Truth is thus clearly *phenomenologically* different to the common reflective truth of the ‘everyday’ aesthetic dimension of our lives or its culturally determined arte-factuality. And though methods and technologies may vary, this remains the self-evident vehement semantic aim which metaphoric possibility alone yields in artmaking.

Many trying to make art today situate ‘the real’ *Ideal* as subordinate to ‘the familiar’; falsely elevating the latter with concepts/symbols, rather than troubling with Metaphor. But symbol merely represents; metaphor places the Ideal in the realm of the part-whole relation *simultaneously* with the becoming-being polarity. Metaphor expresses *the Person’s* embodiment in a ‘world’; symbolic worlding just fixes attention on an object’s materiality (or, its ‘immateriality’ only two-dimensionally). Either to its ‘topographical’ empirical, historical, cultural, conceptual experience - which *constrains* the imagination. Or its merely accidental ‘general aesthetic’ features - which work *counter to* Art’s inherent collectivising intent. Thus, the highest ‘spiritual’ expression of metaphor is made, not in any other form of speculation (including philosophical discourse), but *only* through Art. In the space-time dimensionality this uniquely human way of worlding offers.

Unaware of these fundamentally opposing intentionalities of Metaphoric vs Symbolic metaphysics, theorists lost sight of Art’s real *purposeful* purposelessness (resolving Beauty *with* Truth). And why this can only be achieved if the Art-Person perfect-sign relation remains sound. Metaphor’s worlding potentiality reveals why not just *anything* can be the subject of genuine art. Only ‘things’ related in some way to the Person can, since only *humans* have a special relation



to history (*historia*).<sup>32</sup> Whereas our *organic* nature, when merely *reflected* in works symbolically, creates the illusion that art only *imitates* Nature and its Forms.

Being entirely metaphoric, Greek art and mythology could unify human perceptions by manifesting the ‘*absoluteness*’ of the real world. It was genuinely natural and realist, in a time when there is no theoretical antithesis between these descriptions. They only became *stylistically and conceptually* separated as Modern art became a multiplicity manifesting its non-absoluteness as just a *signification* of reality. Examining next how the Principle of Art was lost in the modern mythology will shed light on why Beauty and Truth were prised apart, the Self cast adrift, and our world divided. The ancients’ art was bound mythologically to nature in archetypes. Ours manifests as providence or ‘history’ (*disconnected from Nature*); as ‘rebellion’ or ‘unconditional surrender’. In Schelling’s words, as ‘miraculous’; or as “sublimity” that is merely ‘beauty in the narrower sense’.

## 2. *Beauty in the Narrower Sense*

*“For the modern poetry of our time it is the meaningless which provides the only natural and existential meaning. Conversely, the meaningful is unnatural and false. Honest art, according to this view, portrays reality as it basically is, reflected in man’s subconscious images and in the unchangeable conditions of existence ... In all the meaninglessness of the times which it glorifies, nothing finally appears as meaningless as its own rebellion, culminating in a sterile art which contemplates its own navel ... now located in the one-dimensional present.”*

Fred Polak (1907-1985)

In modernity, the loss of Art’s principled connection to the practical sciences resulted from modification (merger/historicisation) of important relations and their meanings – which had bound the three key features described above together phenomenologically. *Most* significant was the conflation of ‘symbol’ with ‘metaphor’, whereupon preference for using lower-order symbolism became dominant (see Appendix A). Ultimately, this reversed our orientation to ‘world’ and how we understood causality in the passage to reason (attendance->perception->judgement). Our natural ‘value-ception’ (*Wertethik*) suffered, as our

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<sup>32</sup> Both ‘objects’ of our attention – cultural artefacts and Art - relate to ‘the Person’; but the former *only* generally, and the latter *only* by linking Nature with History. Other species may display incredible feats of memory, even passed on generationally. But this sense of ‘history’ is drawn from habitual sensory drives.

most important mode of worlding reality deteriorated. And the prevailing aesthetic paradigm we inherited reduced Art's original *ontological* relation to 'aesthetics' to perceptions alone. This ultimately normalised a manufactured fascination with general aesthetic reasoning and lower order value indwelling.

The ancient natural narrative order of things, which had kept Nature and History connected was upended. The combined effects of Cartesian Dualism and Kant's fraught *separation* of Beauty and Truth in art hastened the Principle's fragmentation. And as our *imaginaries* produced a divided world historico-materialistically in the social sphere, this was naturally matched by fragmentation of *the Self*. Powerful forces from all directions gradually but dramatically converged to recreate both our world and how it manifests phenomenologically through art. As humans became industrialised, so too did art. And as the 'character' of artmaking became mythologically driven into various categories of tastes, styles, and periods, it became indefinable, mystified, and idealised as 'miraculous'. Fully appreciating the logic of genuine art as 'normative' requires scrutiny of the deteriorating reality and ideality of much of western art's narrowing intentionality, arising from our 'modernising' mythology.

I will in a moment show the effects of theoretical, circular, syllogistic reasoning on all this. Compared to what the Principle offers as a way of intuiting meaning-value in the phenomenological disposition of the art 'object' itself; pointing toward the beauty-truth merger binding all cultures normatively in *humanitas*. But first, a brief overview of the modern mythological phenomenology of art is necessary.

#### THE MODERN MYTHOLOGICAL HISTORICISING OF ART

When Art as a principle related to Reason, and 'the Person' as the fundamental social individual-collective relation of selfhood in society, both became historically and culturally 'objectified', they automatically became subject to devaluation. (In both cases, theories of choice replaced ontologies, disconnecting aesthetics from ethics and logic).

In the nineteen-fifties, the futurologist, Fred Polak, described this as 'de-futurising'. Their historical and cultural 'over-determination' (while evident in earlier times too), had intensified with Christianity's symbolic idealism and the

rise of individualism.<sup>33</sup> With their *combined devaluing*, our relation to ‘the *Other*’ suffered in our *imaginaries*. Appearance and reality became more easily confused and, ‘normativity’ could no longer be associated with ‘natural laws’. Just as theories of what was morally right or wrong made less sense, as humans and society became rapidly mechanised through industrialisation, so too did theories of art vs non-art. Our collective consciousness, driven into merely two-dimensional allegorising, riveted modern fantasy to what Schelling calls modernity’s ‘world of ideals’. To the predominantly reflective subconscious exercise of a very uni-vocal symbolic ideation and imaging of reality.

Being confined now (theoretically) to the realm of the senses, art’s potential to make *any* meaning associated with concrete Reason was severely curtailed by proponents of a so-called ‘philosophy of art’ consecrating mainly subjective, artificial, norms and values. By ‘mid-modernism’, in the early twentieth century, as Polak (1973) describes it, artistic movements such as cubism, surrealism etc., returning to primitivist ideals, reflected, rebelled against, but (via Kant’s doctrine of ‘agreeability’) ultimately popularised our mythology’s industrialised aesthetic privation. Which had by now set in, as Post-modernism was effectively bankrolled by private collectors and millionaires like Peggy Guggenheim.<sup>34</sup> Gradually, the general shift from ‘Idealism’ to the ‘New Realism’ produced fragmentary corresponding artform movements which, as Polak says, all essentially amounted to ‘copy-art’ - diluting Art’s ‘inner’ metaphoric Reason, to ‘a photographic snapshot’.

Some key turning points fortified this transition in the rise of ‘art as concept’. Impressionism was usurped by various forms of Expressionism. ‘Iconoclasm’ shunned metaphor in favour of radically ‘voiding’ the artwork’s intrinsic meaning (replacing its morphogenic qualities with symbolic two-dimensionality). And Design and Craft became the ‘expressionistic’ functionaries of modernism’s symbolic idealism:<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The myth of the ‘private world’ took on a new form as artists were liberated from this revealed religion’s doctrinaire grip on productivity.

<sup>34</sup> The artist-patron relation had changed in the Renaissance, commercialising the artist’s earlier ‘vocation’ as the artist as hero myth developed (aided by such entrepreneurs) in post-industrial revolution modernity.

<sup>35</sup> Fred Polak, *The Image of the Future*, translated and abridged by Elise Boulding, (Amsterdam, London, New York: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, 1973), p.281. Seeded earlier, or course, in the nineteenth century European ‘arts and crafts’ movements.

All the expressive imagery by means of which the Other can be... [metaphorically]... revealed is radically rejected: harmony, melody, symmetry, perspective, and color. The new artistic image is atonal, abstract, or functional.

Through such ‘innovations’, we were led to believe that industrial design, like abstract art, could produce deeper meaning in some hyper-specialised examination of, in Polak’s words, ‘a series of horizontal and vertical lines and black-and-white planes, imageless images, without inspiration and without communication’. Postmodernism’s idealistic coupling of permanent revolution with this sort of deconstructed reality, eventually meant mass-production and exploitation of *any* qualia could theoretically justify any ‘thing’ entering the ‘artworld’. Even, by the twenty-first century, a *virtual world* lacking relation to, or need for, anything but symbolic value (ie., via NFTs). These ‘things’ are naturally enough usually described in positivistic historical materialist terms, given the Hegelian influence on many art historians and theorists.<sup>36</sup> But the periodic stratification of, mainly, *cultural artefact*-making is a complexity counterposed by the ancient unified principle of Art’s more enduring, ontological, organic, immateriality. Which is bound by the primordial Nature-History nexus. The problem is, by now, its historicising and theorising (ie., universalising particularity) had reduced the artwork to symbolic capital.

As the modern mythology grew, Art suffered gradually from a subtle conceptual merger of ‘action’ and ‘making’ in practice, particularly via the historicisation of our essential *modes* of universalising described earlier. The relation between aesthetics, ethics, and logic deteriorated as symbol, allegory, and metaphor effectively merged, and what had previously separated Art ‘as principle’ from art ‘as theory’ now immersed it in subjectivity. These influences include the combined effects of revealed religion and scientism, the rise of theoretical aesthetics, and the merger of art with techno-science, which I have elsewhere given a full account of (T2025a). Here I will only list the key features and associated factors disconnecting Art from Normative Aesthetics.

Key distinctions for separating Art from the ‘general aesthetic’ (or art vs artefact) include:

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<sup>36</sup> eg., Roberts 1991.

Metaphor vs symbol (or concept)  
 ‘Proper’ metaphor vs lexicalised/‘dead’ metaphor  
 Poetic vs speculative discourses (eg., science, philosophy)  
 ‘Experientialism’ vs higher meaning  
 ‘Phenomenological experience’ vs ‘ordinary experience’  
 Thinking vs imaging (the ‘truth’ of metaphor vs conceptual ‘truth’)  
 Spirit vs Life (and ‘sense’ vs interpretation) ... etc.,

Theorised conceptions like ‘realism’ vs ‘naturalism’ (among other formalisms) resulted from disregarding these. And from neglect for the associated differences between:

knowing / perceiving  
 deliberating / choosing  
 ends / means  
 ethics / morals  
 values / facts ... etc.,

All these changes coincided with the blurring of boundaries between Schelling’s three mythological categories. Allegory (in the degraded form it eventually took in modernity) came to dominate our basically *symbolic* ‘world of ideals’, narrowing our focus to the ‘factual’ and conceptual (Ricoeur, 2003). With our intuition forced to be ‘only in history’ as Schelling says, it is delimited by time and art’s claim on us is confined to materiality. This makes for predictable productivity, as Voronsky (1998) argues, that kills the imagination as it degenerates into moralising. Despite the ensuing aesthetic privation, plenty of examples of great art in Modernism are still produced. Each new appearance of it heralds a ‘miracle’ of rebirth (a *phoenix*), through reinvention of one fragment or another of the *Principle*. But their potential rapidly deteriorates. Art’s real identity was ultimately stretched *ideologically* beyond all reason to accommodate its “developments”, in institutionally and politically convenient justifications for what was never conceived to be an essentially economic endeavour.

Consider the consequences of this, and Art’s vanquished *ahistorical* character. Firstly, *any* practice variation could, theoretically now, be conceived as a ‘tradition’ if it persisted long enough. And since only historicising validations

could be considered ‘authoritative’, little else was needed.<sup>37</sup> With structuralism and poststructuralism came the inevitable collapse of aesthetic theory, then the ‘new historicist’ emphasis on ‘cultural practice’ blurred definitions of ‘creativity’. Re-badging “the arts industry” (already by the late twentieth century a mere euphemism for any *real* artistic productivity), Cultural and Creative Industries emerged in the same nominalist fashion. And the entire global economy was now fuelled by the *commodification* of art, through *any* generic ‘cultural and creative’ means available. Institutionally rendering *the word* Art meaningless (like its discipline, and phenomenology) was well underway before this megabuck industrial ‘trade in reputations’ arrived to further professionalise and ‘democratise’ art’s practice.

Absorption of ‘the arts business’ into this larger industrial generality sealed the transfer of the art object’s value to that of the “artist’s” (as engineer/entrepreneur now) or artisan’s name/brand. With art entirely reduced to symbolic capital - and the interchangeability of art with artefact, of artist with artisan, and of ‘creation’ with business - ‘artistic merit’ was simply subsumed in official arts assessments by ‘industrial viability’ criteria.<sup>38</sup> Concern for the object’s meaning was overshadowed by its “objective” industrial validation, and entirely subjective certification, by industry anointed ‘experts’ and juries of ‘peers’ (naturally enough, ‘phenomenologically’ attuned to the task). Few would dare call this sacrifice of art on the altar of false mythology a ‘crisis’. Especially since their livelihoods depended on it. And any theoretical relation to ethics or logic was easily dismissed; given no connection between these was apparent in the ‘artworld’, nor the main characters in the field – from ‘manager’ to ‘professional artist’ to ‘art lover’.

‘Normativity’ turned to mechanism, as Kant’s doctrine of ‘agreeability’ (which really just *described* modern mythological reasoning, but became theoretical *proscription*) remained the basis upon which we judge art. Nothing could challenge its powerful self-legitimizing, subjectifying promotion of ersatz artistic productivity. Industry-centred circular reasoning common among ‘aesthetes’ upholding scientism in the Humanities could colour any defence of

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<sup>37</sup> See T2025a for how meaning markers of *Sense*, *Import*, offer an alternative.

<sup>38</sup> See *Ibid*, for my critique of contemporary arts assessment methods.

Art's higher values 'elitist', stifling any hope for Art's real *organic* identity and foundational Principle to resurface. Through the social sciences, which as Macintyre argues provide the pathway to social normalisation of patently unscientific manipulations of reality, anti-Art could flourish (justifying their practices, and sometimes, existence). All value-estimation of Art's virtues was handed over to a marketplace totally incapable of making any realistic assessments; geared instead to *further* materialising artistic and human alienation from Nature, and embedding the kind of perverse moralising Kant strongly rejected.

Traditions, institutions, and practices he argued should defend Art and humanism, ultimately came to relinquish any role or responsibility for the choices people made about what to produce or admire. The Principle was lost, and much more with it.

#### REASON AND VALUE-CEPTION

*"[T]he supreme act of reason, because it embraces all ideas, is an aesthetic act."*<sup>39</sup>

F.W. Schelling (1775-1854)

What became of poesy in the modern age that could drive such a wedge between Reason and Art? That it would become common to think art entirely meaningless, and even *meant to be* so. The idea that stripping an object of all meaning might be the most realistic way any 'honest' art can depict reality, or approach the unknown, is not entirely without merit. Many inventions in science have begun this way, purely accidentally. When contemplating the lowest values of an object, possibility can emerge of its own accord. And, as Schelling above suggests, Reason enters the drama when all possibility is laid bare. With Kant's reversal of the meaning of aesthetics to be only about perceptions, it became common to conceive of art's '*natural*' purpose as offering transcendence either just by creating disagreement, or having its 'object' strike us as universally familiar.

But dwelling *only* in the 'agreeable' and 'disagreeable', the absolute *lowest*

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<sup>39</sup> Cited in Matthew D. Segall, "Poetic Imagination in the Speculative Philosophies of Plato, Schelling, and Whitehead." (Academia.edu. 5/10/2012):1-23, p.2. [https://www.academia.edu/1561702/Poetic\\_Imagination\\_in\\_the\\_Speculative\\_Philosophies\\_of\\_Plato\\_Schelling\\_and\\_Whitehead](https://www.academia.edu/1561702/Poetic_Imagination_in_the_Speculative_Philosophies_of_Plato_Schelling_and_Whitehead)

possible values of meaning available (ie.,  $x = x$ ,  $a \neq b$ ), with no end in sight, merely encourages the kind of lazy syllogistic thinking leading many to believe all meaning is entirely subjective. The truth is it is only *partly* subjective. And, as Schelling argues, Art makes it *become objective* - in a *search* for Reason. Presenting something 'purposelessly' as purely and simply beautiful or ugly alone, cannot make it art because this just expresses a syllogism. And ideas of both beauty *and* ugliness have a real objective purpose in our world: that is, in their *merger with* truth, to find Reason.

There are different ways to get to Reason (both valid, for different purposes). One is by 'calculus', the other is via the imagination. Both can lead to fantasy, which can lead to deceit – what the ancients called 'phantasy' (the losing of one's way). But properly *directing* the imagination toward what Peirce calls 'concrete reasonableness' does not necessarily involve calculating (ie., 'conceptualising' by merely manipulating symbols). Conceptualising cannot be reduced to the province of fixed concepts or symbols. That simply places limitations on the imagination (as Kant did, claiming imagination could not lead to understanding, *without* Concept). Schelling argued Reason is only approached via art through the *re-productive* imagination - a different kind of 'fantasy', using a different relational 'logic' (which Peirce later described as abductive and retroductive reasoning).

Schelling implies this in describing aesthetics as Reason's supreme originator. What he means by embracing *all* ideas, is not at all however an indiscriminate act. On the contrary it presupposes a *concern for their value relations*, in the passage to Reason which Aesthetics opens up (via ethics and logic). The manufacturing of our consent about art being relegated to the *lowest* values available, lays bare the decay of reason in the modern mythology. This became an ever-deepening habitual self-deception among those like Sol LeWitt, John Baldessari and others developing 'conceptualism'. Who either confused the 'image' and 'concept' with Metaphor or, more likely, just *chose* two-dimensional symbolic expression over multidimensional poetic meaning. The difference between genuine art and so-called 'conceptual art' is that the former produces habits of higher value-ception, rather than syllogistic reasoning.

It is thus arguably not so much that 'deskilling' occurs in the twentieth century (as suggested by Hal Foster *et al* in *Art Since 1900*) but that, with attention now fixed



on ‘the present’, and ‘permanent revolution’ (among ‘protesters’, and the ‘establishment’ alike), *the skill-set* changes. Art’s practice simply loses its way in the stratification of cultural industrialisation. Those pushing for the predominance of the idea over the aesthetic of the artwork, lose sight of the fact that ‘the idea’ *is* the artwork. A whole new ‘vocabulary of art’ is then continually re-invented to justify (and drown) it in its own language. And generations of students will find new ways to pay homage to this nominalist deception.

Not only did agreeability/disagreeability become *the* criteria for our ultimate guide to admiring. But, as Kant maintained, only among those who engage in the same ‘*modes of discourse*’. Thus, an Aesthete elite developed that not just *dwelt* in lower values, but simply needed to invent a common ‘discourse’ to legitimise this as ‘a practice’. Institutionally endorsed experiences of art and expectations surrounding it then made the lowest possible values attributable to any ‘art object’, artmaking, and appreciation, the sign of ‘progress’, of letting go the past, that would redefine ‘cultural flourishing’. And, as emotivism reshaped *moral* philosophy (MacIntyre, 2007), the middle-order ‘biological’/‘human’ (or ‘vital’) values gained prominence, along with these merely utilitarian values, so all manner of appetites and aversions could be employed to re-define art’s relation to personhood. In turn consecrating lower-order value-ception itself in various ‘*traditions*’ of art.

However, the origins and repercussions of this separation of perceiving from knowing go far deeper than the ‘artworld’. As Australian philosopher, Arran Gare, points out in a review of Iain McGilchrist’s ground breaking book *The Master and His Emissary* (2010). With the growing dominance of analytical philosophy, what took hold in universities across the world was ‘reductionist science and “scientism”, the view that by applying dispassionately and mechanically a scientific method’, scientists could produce ‘knowledge without the need for any philosophical justification or reflection’. This rationalisation, nurtured in the social sciences through neo-Darwinist modifications of the meaning of humanism, spread across society via “the arts” in popular culture:<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Arran E Gare, Review of "The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Western World." *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, 8 1 (2012): 412-449, p.417

Other academics in the humanities and artists, claiming to be radically anti-elitist... embraced deconstructive postmodernism... [A]rtists and writers... embraced and promulgated the view that the arts and literature are nothing but forms of decoration or entertainment. Rather than struggling against the fragmentation, disorientation and ugliness of a nihilistic world, they... created fragmentary, disorienting, ugly works of art which are supposed to shock people... Robbe-Grillet's 'The Secret Room' exemplifies this. As McGilchrist described it, 'This "story" consists of a series of static descriptions of a woman's corpse. Its cold, clinical detachment expresses better than any purely abstract art the triumph of alienation over natural human feeling, over in fact the body and all that it implies...'

McGilchrist's brain lateralisation thesis argues the Nietzschean 'will to power' manifests in the left hemisphere's evolving 'grasping' specialisation - attendance to the literal, utilitarian, *lower-order* values (corresponding with deactivation of the right hemisphere). He shows how in alternating intensity over centuries the effects of this on our perception and judgement rose to dominance, particularly with deconstructive Postmodernism. 'Constructive postmodernism', as Gare points out, was really a development of the Romantic tradition and antithetical to the latter (hence part of the Radical Enlightenment's resistance to the modern mythology).<sup>41</sup> Nihilism entered the artworld as what was originally an *opposition* to its diminution of values became popularly accepted and absorbed in the broader culture.<sup>42</sup> So, while many early innovations in Modernism (eg., Absurdism) were indeed radical rejections of the meaninglessness of art, modernist absorption of the abstractions of science in everyday life became manifest in their popularised *antitheses*. As Gare continues:<sup>43</sup>

It is this that McGilchrist has revealed in his study of the significance of the loss of depth in most modern and nearly all postmodern art. With this lack of depth, there is no value placed on art, except perhaps to challenge people who are bored, if they can still be challenged out of their boredom.

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<sup>41</sup> See Gare 2007/2008.

<sup>42</sup> Social dominance occurs through swarm behaviour, in humans as in Nature (eg., birds and fish rapidly changing direction intuitively in groups).

<sup>43</sup> Gare, *Review of The Master*, 438.

As well as universities, many arts institutions were of course complicit in devaluing Art. In constructing the 'artworld', even when as Malcolm Bull writes '[t]raditional aesthetic theories proved insufficiently elastic to account for the possibility that anything could become art', institutions threw oil on the fire.<sup>44</sup> Institutional theories of art, he continues, 'suggested that although anything, or almost anything, might be art, it could become so only in relationship to an artworld.' Arthur Danto used this concept to explain how 'something could be art while being identical to something which was not'. His answer, says Bull, was that 'the difference... is a certain theory of art. It is the theory that takes it up into the world of art, and keeps it from collapsing into the real object which it is'. Compare this with McGilchrist's description of the left hemisphere's influence on artmaking:<sup>45</sup>

Art becomes a game in which the emptiness of a wholly insubstantial world, in which there is nothing beyond the set of terms we have in vain used to 'construct' meaning, is allowed to speak for its own vacuity. The set of terms are now seen simply to refer to themselves. They have lost transparency; and all conditions that would yield meaning have been ironized out of existence.

Proper metaphor is only processed by right hemisphere engagement, hence its scarcity in most contemporary art. And since fragmented images/concepts are the left hemisphere's main tools for worlding reality, in its place stands a lower-order symbolism. Though faulty, we are nevertheless led to believe it is real, solid, and secure. But only temporarily. People (eg., suffering schizophrenia) who are strongly afflicted by the dominant decontextualised world of the left hemisphere lack the capacity to judge the difference between appearance and reality. They experience the world as drained of meaning, 'where vitality appears attenuated, and where things themselves seem insubstantial, to lack corporeal solidity'. They begin to doubt its actuality and develop a 'playfulness' with it

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<sup>44</sup> Malcolm Bull, "Why is there the amount of Art that there is?", *New Left Review* (2025): 151 Jan/Feb, p.2. As Bull reveals, the 'institutional theory' perpetuating the artworld not only fails 'to specify the criteria by which qualitative judgements are made, but it ignores the quantitative dimension altogether'. His own analysis however is founded on the twin fallacies - that the 'artworld' produces *genuine* art, and huge amounts of it. Sufficient though his monetary allegory is for highlighting the corrupt nature of art's industrialisation, what he claims the artworld considers as art's 'intrinsic good' has nothing whatsoever to do with the *genuine* ideal of art as Principle (which institutions and theorists have materialised into *symbolic capital*).

<sup>45</sup> McGilchrist (p.422f.) cited in Gare, *Review of The Master*, 420.

common in the behaviour of psychopaths. Certain ‘play’ activities (like video gaming, or some applications of virtual reality technology) can habituate this same lack of perspective.<sup>46</sup> Hence casting these indiscriminately as ‘*aesthetic practices*’ overlooks the fact they can equally produce aesthetic *privation*.<sup>47</sup>

The Cartesian mind-body dualism features significantly in such misunderstandings. Positivistic material fascinations with dis-embodiment in the ‘artworld’, like meaningless abstractions of the body common in postmodernism (eg., Robbe-Grillet’s ‘Secret Room’), arise from pursuing the middle-order ‘human’-value pleasures. Descartes’ dismissive ‘sensual’ characterisation of the imagination is partly responsible for such reflective detachment (or ‘distanciation’), which provides the rationale for Kant and Hegel’s insistence on keeping Beauty and Truth apart in aesthetics. In Kant, the symbolic function of beauty in art is interpreted as a *formal displacement* of ‘the Person’ (eg., the audience’s ‘self’). We *reflect* upon the human condition just as we might a waterfall, flower, or building. But, as Torsen (2016) notes, this ‘general aesthetic’ attendance to life *over Spirit* is always attenuated to a subjective thesis; like Heidegger’s characterisation of ‘worlding’, where the ‘other’ is only an object of a manufactured reality.<sup>48</sup>

Art’s ontological *inter*-subjective linking of Personhood with Otherness is however far more intuitive. Contrary to Kant’s ‘reflective’ aesthetics, the Principle of art, as Schelling had retrieved and reconceived it from antiquity, consists in the *bringing together* of Beauty and Truth. This defining complexity, *present in the artwork’s own phenomenology*, dispels the myth that art is merely a ‘theory of beauty’ (T2024a). Schelling understood that Metaphor, like art itself, relies upon *the interaction* between form and *non*-form, on the *reality* of the becoming-being and part-whole phenomena in Nature. What drove the wedge between Reason and Art in our modern epoch was ideology. The ideo-logical precepts of Scientism (‘logical positivism’), bolstering habitual Modern emotivist preference for theories of choice over ontologies.

The longstanding Nominalism vs Realism debate in philosophy underscores

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<sup>46</sup> See MacIntyre 2007 (p.99).

<sup>47</sup> eg., Bertinetto 2022.

<sup>48</sup> Ingvild Torsen, “Disinterest and Truth: On Heidegger’s Interpretation of Kant’s Aesthetics.” *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 56, 1, (2016):15-32, p.29.

this ultimately nihilistic posthumanist victory, completely splitting the Art-Person perfect sign relation (T2023). Which lies at the heart of art and humanity's joint identity crisis. Its inscrutability is reflected in the manipulative theoretically object-ive opaque Imagism of 'conceptual art' (and the literalism its creator is often forced to employ to explain it). When an object's Form dominates the form/non-form *interactive integrity* of its subject, as it must do symbolically here (eg., Koons' *Balloon Dog* or *Puppy*), reason is tied to de-contextualised explicit meaning.<sup>49</sup> The work's implicit meaning is driven to explicitness, because its *Gestalt* formation simply mimics a general aesthetic sensibility that is only processed *subjectively* (by the left hemisphere). Quite a different function that *Gestalt* formation has in genuine art. Where the interplay between implicitness and explicitness *calls up* its inherently purposeful accidentality to in-form the 'being' of an artwork's whole in 'disclosure'. As direct *value*-ception; distinct from any 'mechanical' or arbitrary factuality reflected in general aesthetic interpretation, overlaid theoretically.

Artworks in fact *model* the relationship between art's Principle and the general aesthetic as consciousness (Mind). Schelling's aesthetics proves far superior to Kant's because it is a development of his 'un-prethinkable being' conception, which links the Person realistically with Nature and liberates the imagination. Schelling's *ontological* aesthetics is 'pre-reflective', while Kant's is merely reflective. With Hegelianism taking hold instead, however, the Beauty/Truth and Art/Person separations were phenomenologically consecrated in cultural artefacts. Which, in the industrialising 'artworld' (since apparently no truth exists), could more easily become the chief means for creating agreement/disagreement and pursuing appetites/aversions. Thus, only the *materialistic* pursuit and experience of aesthetics ('as theory') could define what is really in fact rather humanity's greatest *immaterial* asset. Art as principle.

## THEORISING VS THE INTELLECTUAL INTUITION

Theoretical fragmentations and historicisations of the Principle took hold in the visual arts firstly and most prominently, spreading to every other artform (in the West, and eventually the East too), facilitating the rise of anti-Art. Periods and

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<sup>49</sup> See §4: *Art vs non-Art assessment of Urs Fischer's Big Clay #4*, for a similar example.

‘movements’ produced an “art history” continually replenished with general aesthetic qualia, re-formulated conceptually in new sub-categories. All of which, I will now show, developed from fundamentally questionable observations of experience. Aesthetic theories were thus always faced with the problem of historical epistemological contradiction. They were replaced as quickly as the next ‘revolution’ in art could knock down their door, due to a fundamental problem with the conversion of theories into concepts.

Unlike its ontological Principle, the *genuine* art ‘object’ is itself a ‘theory’ - whose own legitimate historicisation, in the making process, stands in sharp contrast to its illegitimate theorising after the event. This is because *its principled origin* consists in an ‘immateriality’ and ‘possibility’ that can never be fixed in symbol. It is always ‘becoming’, passing into ‘being’ temporarily in disclosure, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty argues (T2024b). Any theory now, *fixed* conceptually, presupposes a *positivistic* (as opposed to ontological) relation to principle - based on observation. But only a defective notion of science deems observation-based *predictions* can produce truth ‘scientifically’.

As Gare argues, no theoretically neutral language is possible because ‘the arguments adduced in support of this... and for the reality of conceptual transformations in scientific theories... lead to the conclusion that science is impossible’.<sup>50</sup> What someone sees and the meaning of the terms used to describe it must be determined by the theory they hold about what it is. Contradicting a theory would necessitate changing the meaning of the terms, which would mean that the observation couldn’t contradict it. So, because adherents to various theories ‘would see different things, and there would be no common terms in which differences between theories could be expressed’, no observation report can verify a theory. Given accurate predictions rely on the terms used to describe observations being consistent, an old theory cannot then be accurately replaced by a new one. If the goal of science is accurate prediction, this cannot be fulfilled if the relation between theories is merely analogous. Thus, as Gare says, ‘it is only when it is admitted that reason cannot be reduced to logicity can these analogies be understood’.<sup>51</sup> And such theories must then be seen as ‘analytic’, and

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<sup>50</sup> Arran Gare, “Science, process philosophy and the image of man: the metaphysical foundations for a critical social science.” PhD thesis, Murdoch University, (1981) Libraries Australia ID [2512950](#), p.209.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 209.

science ‘a non-empirical discipline’.

Danto’s ‘artworld’ rationalism confirms why Aesthetic theories are, plainly, unscientific. Given their limited view of phenomenology, aestheticians are “empirically” *forced* to submit to circular reasoning and purely subjectivised assessments of art. Their ‘truth’ amounts to a disingenuous ‘positivity’ fuelling the symbolic idealist capitalisation of Art. Besides marking historicisms, they offer only a descriptive hermeneutics of little real use. Constructed only from observations of styles, tastes, and associated social behaviours (fads and fetishes based on appetites and aversions), they merely chronicle social norms, presenting no adequate account of genuine artistic progress. In this purview, like the general aesthetic, art becomes a resource for its own exploitation; for its ‘materials’ to be re-exploited, re-energised, re-interpreted, re-entrepreneurd, and re-presented.

Being *inevitably* materialist, most theories of art therefore posit modern ‘positivistic materialism’ alone as determining artistic development/progress, rather than any genuine ‘traditions of thought’.<sup>52</sup> Hence the stagnation of ideas, and rise of mind-control industries, associated with creating an ‘artworld’ that reflects our *predilection* for anti-Art (Bowie 2003; Gare 2015). Hegel’s prefiguring of ‘the death of art’ simply recognised that aesthetics as theory would inevitably fail to retain the ideal of art that previous generations had preferred. Aesthetic ‘experientialism’ would be chosen instead, with the ‘general aesthetic’ being its bottomless quarry. Using an historicising, industrialising (albeit popular) misconception of art, based on questionable ‘laws’ and discourses sanctioning its false autonomy, we could mine this quarry forever. Art would be, as Kant had supposed, ‘infinitely interpretable’; and hence unfathomably ‘miraculous’.

This of course is untrue. Art is a discipline, not miracle, and interpretation is just a tool for understanding it. Its higher, immaterial, value to humanity is better explained through philosophical anthropology - which shows why preferring and choosing are two different acts. Both are *habituated* in ‘character’, linking ethics with morals, in developing our *thinking*. As Max Scheler (1973) shows, at its best art then presents a *phenomenological* (‘morphogenic’) object/experience stimulating the reproductive imagination via the ‘intellectual intuition’. It takes us into the ‘tacit dimension’ with such vigour and dynamism that, as ‘metaphoric creatures’,

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<sup>52</sup> eg., Roberts 1991.

we recognise it instantly. It *claims* us. Through it our *primordial* intuition places *the Person* in Time, making sense of History as Nature, expressing our individual and collective ‘ethos’ (or, *character*).<sup>53</sup> This *ethical* (anthropo-logical) intuition is not chosen but *preferred* in aesthetic comportment which is *habituated*. Our reception of it is thus as a function of *knowing*. And art’s higher purpose is revealed in Contemplation (Aristotle’s highest virtue) of this *Intentionality*.

The higher ‘end’ of artistic practice or experience is then, as Aristotle suggests, ‘the thinking part’. We do not however interpret, but *real-ise*, Art’s intrinsic collectivising worth - in understanding its meaningfulness (Intent->Import->Reason). All meaning, though *lived* in individual lives, is simultaneously *distributed* via that natural intersubjectivity and interactivity of semiosis operative in the general aesthetic. So, Nature’s ‘semiotic freedom’ (as Jesper Hoffmeyer refers to it) calls each of us to *respond* to this claim of a totalising reality primordially inculcated in humans.<sup>54</sup> That is, through *Spirit*. Humanity *embodies* the part-whole/becoming-being phenomena (‘spiritually’); hence the phenomenal *potence* of their polarities in artworks. But how we respond (intentionally) to natural constraints on Freedom posed by Necessity, in pursuits of Beauty and Truth, sets up our potential for finding higher meaning (in art *and* life).

Being ‘perfect signs’, the character or ethos of Personhood and Art is shaped together. But only in wholeness does character emerge. Thus, how we in society both individually and collectively attend to the *virtue* of art is important for how Art *and* the Person (and, critically, their relation to *the Other*) manifest as *true* Ideals. *Morals*, being chosen, are only associated with the Principle’s exemplars via an ‘ought’ (T2022). The fragmentation of Art’s character arose from falsely theorised associations with ‘semiotic freedom’ (accidentality and familiarity). It can only resume wholeness by re-association with that Normative Aesthetics which *directs* ethics and logic. Whose phenomenology (relating phenomena to ends) is subject to the *intellectual* intuition via our aesthetic *comportment*.

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<sup>53</sup> Human history is best described as: ‘The tension between cosmology, conceiving the cosmos as an immutable, timeless order, and history, concerned with actions, intentions, conflicts and the rise and fall of individuals and communities...’ (<https://cosmosandhistory.org/index.php/journal>).

<sup>54</sup> See Wheeler 2006. As Gare (2023: 13) says, Herder’s development of the idea of ‘culture’, and of feeling oneself into the worlds of others, presupposed a ‘general tendency in history toward greater humanity’.



We all intuitively understand the world holistically, in the first instance, from an *aesthetic* responsiveness. Then we focus on the parts of that world and reconstruct it in relation to the whole in terms of ethical and other logical responses. In encountering artworks, we *all* intellectually intuit their either tacit or overt meaning in the same way - which Michael Polanyi (1966) termed ‘*indwelling*’. The fact that our ‘value-ception’ occurs like this in *all* humans, irrespective of culture, is thus fundamental to the philosophical anthropology of Art’s *Principle* (the Art-Person perfect sign), its inherent collectivising intent, and *the way* it conveys meaning re-productively in its exemplars. Cultivating how to identify this ‘ethical intentionality’ thus requires paying attention to this process.

The *ethical* phenomenology of any artwork – in any artform, epoch, or culture (to the extent it is ‘intelligible’) – can thus be distinguished from what we observe in *ordinary* experience, and normally attend to in its ‘empirical’ or ‘historical’ content (ie., ‘topology’). The latter, says Schelling, is only incidental in understanding any *genuine* artwork’s *real* meaningfulness - because literal meaning is subordinate in ethical intuition. Literal meaning is the domain of the left hemisphere. And, as McGilchrist argues, problems with *Gestalt* perception: grasping wholes, intuitive processing, and understanding metaphor, occur with de-activation of the right hemisphere.<sup>55</sup> What can activate it in art’s phenomenology are more meaningful *Gestalt* ‘switches’ generated in the progress toward metaphoric reason. So, a disposition to this in practice is key.

With this phenomenological understanding, by attending closely to an artwork’s meaning-value affordances – its Schematic->Allegoric->Metaphoric ‘mythological’ progress in the Movement->Action->Logic of its features – its ethical intentionality is discernible even in the most obscure circumstances. Scheler’s value hierarchy provides the scale along which our *value-ception* of these affordances are judged to reach ascent. Their ‘movement’ and directionality can be mapped using Ricoeur’s relational ‘actantial tensions’, and Peirce’s triadic semiosis. And at its apotheosis, in this whole process, art’s Beauty-Truth merger approaches Schelling’s, Scheler’s, and Peirce’s “absolutes”.<sup>56</sup>

There is no way to “develop” Art *as Principle*, being as it is rooted *ontologically*

<sup>55</sup> Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), p.392.

<sup>56</sup> See Appendix B; also, T2024c for detailed explanation of this phenomenological method.

in Nature itself. But understanding it, and developments in its practice, tradition, and institution *can indeed* be progressed as a complexity science research programme in the Humanities.

### 3. *Reviving the Principle*

We can now define the Principle of Art, its key features, criteria, and practical application.

Schelling's revival of Metaphysics marked the first time art could be effectively cohesively re-connected with *normative* aesthetics. Three key features describe this reconnection, which restores the link between aesthetics, ethics, and logic (the 3P's):

1. Phenomenological object/experience  
(metaphoric value-ception: 'essential intuiting')
2. Propositional end  
(orientation: 'the person')
3. Purpose  
(the real/ideal, beauty/truth, necessity/freedom mergers: Reason)

Consider their significance. Firstly, Schelling's rejection of Kant and Hegel's separation of Beauty and Truth (3) is arguably the single most important turning point for art in modernity (unrecognised by 'philosophers of art'). It makes sense of Art's *Object* and *Propositional end*. Though few mark the loss of genuine art in the 'artworld', what most aesthetes neglect is that the Metaphor/Symbol (1) reversal of 'worlding' orientation in our mythology changes how we view the relations of means to ends (and hence external to internal 'goods') in *every* human endeavour. This in turn retrieves the meaning of Personhood (2). Reviving this Principle is thus essential not only to making great art, but to the important *narrative order* of things that make our *lives* whole. To the inherent 'collectivising' preferential habitual thinking we possess, binding us *ontologically* with Nature. I will first explain these features then show how they translate into criteria for practical application.

Art's greatest benefit, Schelling understood, lies in realising how its *propositional purpose* yields higher meaning-value *possibility*. Using ancient Greek archetypes as models, he managed to *naturalise* art so that 'natural laws' *governing the regularity and irregularity* of phenomenal interactions could be observed in art-forms and works

in one cohesive system – best described as ontological or ‘cosmological’. It offers far more than any ‘general aesthetic’ inquiry can, because of the key relationships between Phenomenology, Normative Sciences, and Metaphysics which undergird it. However, as explained elsewhere, Schelling’s descriptions are very complex, accounting perhaps for his Philosophy of Art being largely ignored (see T2024a, T2024b). And they require augmenting with others’ insights to make the Principle demonstrably applicable in our epoch (as suggested, by combining them with Peirce and Scheler’s).

It should be clear by now why the Principle makes sense of art’s inherent bond with the normative (or ‘practical’) sciences. And why the ideational or propositional intentionalities applied to what Schelling called its ‘subject-objectivation’ process are key to distinguishing art from the general aesthetic. Thus, elaborating firstly on how art’s *process metaphysics* separates artmaking/admiring from our *ordinary* experience, will explain why its only Object must be defined as a *phenomenological* object/experience. And why the relation of ethics to logic undergirds its intentional demonstrability.

#### THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPERIENCE

As noted, art’s ontological identification with ‘organism’ arguably qualifies its study as a research programme in Complexity Science. However, with ‘Art as Principle’ not biology as its disciplinary foundation, for reasons I hope clarified above. Aristotle’s ‘four causes’ – which are still essentially the basis upon which biologists, oncogeneticists, and other scientists describe multiple causes (‘complexity’) in Nature – are nevertheless necessarily at the core of its identity and practice. Ethics, being not a ‘*natural* science’ as such but a *practical* science, under the phenomenological directedness of its counterpart, Aesthetics, emerges in artworks via the same causal and dialectical Logic *demonstrably*.

Art’s Principle can hence be sourced in Aristotle’s *Ethics* and *Metaphysics* even more so than the *Poetics* (though the latter is certainly corroborative). Once again, returning to its origins in his natural science is instructive about its unique phenomenological ‘logic’.

The ‘demonstrative logic’ Aristotle employs, in the *Ethics* as elsewhere, involves syllogistic predicates that are typically coextensive. But, as any scientist knows, correlation does not equal causation. And as Aristotle understood, but

had no means to effectively address (his generalising, and oft used qualifier: ‘for the most part’, did this job), syllogism cannot be applied to animals.<sup>57</sup> So whereas in science, probabilistic inference may sometimes be a useful tool, human “predication” cannot be reduced to statistics, despite increasing attempts to mechanise our reality (eg., with AI) and further blur the boundaries between *regularities* and *irregularities* in phenomena.

In discussing what I have previously described as Schelling’s *dialectical* ‘process metaphysics of art’ (T2024a) – countering Kant’s *reflective* aesthetics – the more useful terms for these are ‘Necessities’ and ‘Freedoms’. Schelling recognised aesthetics, ethics, and logic are *intrinsically* implicated in these dialogically, but only had at his disposal a *descriptive* hermeneutics. Hence his application of Greek mythological archetypes to model them phenomenologically. The method suggested here and elsewhere – to be able to ‘map’ ethical phenomenology *demonstrably* - augments his systematic descriptive constructions with Scheler’s hierarchy of values and Peirce’s semiotic realism.<sup>58</sup>

As Leroi notes, Aristotle’s scientific method of inquiry in the *Ethics* (earlier outlined) appears to be about ‘demonstration’. But it in fact presents a variation from the procedure he uses in the *Posterior Analytics*, which is revealed in the use of the word *phainomena*.<sup>59</sup>

The syllogistic theory of demonstration requires that the premises of the argument be indisputably true. If they are not, then you can’t prove anything. But *phainomena* don’t have that kind of epistemological certainty since, according to Aristotle, they include opinions – opinions of ‘wise’ and ‘reputable’ people to be sure – but opinions nevertheless. We are in the realm of dialectic, which it turns out isn’t that far from demonstration after all.

Like natural *phainomena*, the study of art’s phenomenology demands no rigorous *proof* of Truth either. But it does demand an understanding of *the kind* of truth art delivers. And why it is not the common ‘factual’ truth of culturally determined artefacts.

In Art’s practice, acts of designing and crafting require scientific precision;

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<sup>57</sup> Leroi *TL*, 129.

<sup>58</sup> Schelling doubtless would have welcomed these to undergird his descriptions.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 130.

being as these are ‘the *means*’ part of art-making. Because their ‘end’ is the effects and affects garnered by various technologies of action. But Aristotle argued the artist was society’s ‘geometer’ (not ‘carpenter’) - who should know what art is and guide the political community as to its virtues. It is *such* knowing then that requires precision. But also, since Art’s truth is not fixed in ‘being’, precisely what *given* causal relations and the conditions producing *knowledge* of these there are in the artwork itself. In making and admiring art - in any art assessment - we must therefore be most attentive to *proof of these relations* and the *directionality* of meaning.<sup>60</sup> Which is found in *the dialectical transitions* of meaning-value affordances obtained *phenomeno*-logically (see §4 and Appendix B). This accounts for meaning-value variations across any conceivable artform category (even those not yet invented) according to *their own* ‘determining law’ of limitation, under Art as Principle.

We can by this method determine immediately, for instance, that ‘readymades’ (or so-called ‘assisted readymades’) are not really art – because they simply cannot produce the metaphoric directionality that art can.<sup>61</sup> Every genuine artwork has its own ‘historicity’ in the making, as Merleau-Ponty argues. But readymades demonstrably lack this, and the *purpose* we find in the directionality of any art object’s *poiesis*. All we witness in them is assimilation, not any proper exemplary exercise of Art’s *principle*. Though Readymades are ‘non-art’ (like so many artefacts), ‘anti-art’ involves the *deliberative* production of non-art as an imposter. These objects are easily distinguishable by their purposefully positivistic materialist conceptualised symbolic capitalisation (eg., Koons’ *Balloon Dog*).

Discerning the phenomenological object or experience from what occurs in Nature (that we imitate and re-present); or from re-purposed objects (like Duchamp’s ‘urinal’ or Magritte’s ‘pipe’, for instance) simply concerned with *our perceptions* of things; involves distinguishing between acts of *deliberation* and *choosing*. Aristotle clearly defines these in the *Ethics*, but the object categories of *choice* on

<sup>60</sup> Basically, once the (separate) specific criteria for determining art vs non-art are met (via adherence to Art’s Principle), the *value*-differences between ‘good’/‘bad’ or ‘good’/‘great’ art emerge via directionally predicative comparisons in the phenomenology of an artwork’s triadic semiosis.

<sup>61</sup> Note how MoMA institutionally consecrates anti-Art:  
<https://www.moma.org/collection/terms/readymade>

the one hand and *deliberation* on the other were gradually falsely assimilated in the modern mythology as it grew stronger.<sup>62</sup> Aesthetic, ethical, and logical disorientations resulted because choosing is a *pre-conditioned* act of ‘willing’ whereas preferring is an act of intuiting ‘goods’ - ie., *between* values. Including between the values of knowing and perceiving. Art’s ontological and teleological reliance on *Intersubjectivity* (particularly, orienting us toward ‘the Other’) is why artmaking’s intentionality needs to be about *knowing* how to choose *between values*.

Taking ‘practical account’ of objects like this, however ancient, was strongly supported by advances in phenomenology at the turn of the twentieth century with the advent of philosophical anthropology. According to Max Scheler, our immanent interaction with the ‘givenness’ of any object - which is not necessarily imbued with ‘picturelike content’ - is already pre-felt. Our experience of feeling-states which objects *effect* is already value-impregnated. Thus, the meaning of any bearers of ethical value, such as genuine artworks (being perfect signs of ‘the Person’), *must be given* as real even if contained within a ‘vehicle of appearance’. Or there is no value-meaning as such.

The Principle of Art thus defines art as a *phenomenological* object or experience for this very reason. It distinguishes ‘the concept of the aesthetic’ *as it relates to Artmaking* from how art relates to the general aesthetic. And, through it we can take practical account of such pretences to art as Duchamp’s ‘upturned urinal’ or Magritte’s ‘pipe’ (as a ‘*serious person*’ would, in Aristotle’s terms). These are just cultural artefacts. They (1) possess no metamorphic morphogenic phenomenology. Regarding the Person (‘human conduct’), they (2) merely challenge *perceptions* of things, pictorially. Their ‘propositional ends’ (3) are syllogistic (or as many rightly believe, just plain silly), lacking any intentional resolution of Beauty with Truth. We arrive at this first of the Principle’s key criteria then via a particular understanding of art’s *Purpose*.

That is, by enquiring into what the ‘art object’ is *for the sake of*. So it is with the same purpose that we must nominate an *artistic* practice as clearly distinct from any other kind of practice involving experience of, but holding our attention *only* to, the ‘general aesthetic’. In the general aesthetic of Nature (where all

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<sup>62</sup> T2022. The ‘carpenter’ is essentially involved in acts of *choosing*, mostly between means; rather than *deliberating* upon ends which a ‘serious person’ does and is what Aristotle claims as the artist’s vocation (the ‘geometer’).

meaning originates), the lower values abound. They are the strongest values because they are so prevalent in our experience. So, they are useful, but it takes a *phenomenological experience* to pull us away from these toward the higher values. The imagination is not *re-productively* engaged by just *any* propositions like Duchamp's or Magritte's questioning of perceptions - which only allow us to dwell in the lowest of values: agreeability. Likewise, in natural objects posing as 'art', we are only directed toward the lowest value in Nature: accidentality. The artisanship of precision in botanical drawings is, though beautiful, true to form, and of unquestionable cultural worth, thus not Art either. Nor are any purely *conceptual* objects.

Because Art's *true* purpose is in part to separate our *ordinary experience* of the world from the realistic aspirational *higher possibilities* of 'world', it is important to recognise how ordinary experience often manifests 'life' to us as only an historicisation of reality. Rendering a falsely mythological merger of beauty and truth. And hence *why* there is a key difference between preferring and choosing art's capital-O *Object*. Which our second criterion helps to elucidate.

#### THE PROPOSITIONAL END

It would make impossible demands on the concept of correspondence to say that in some sense the proposition "fish cannot speak in English if they are thrown up in the air" corresponds to something in the world.<sup>63</sup>

(Arran Gare, 1981)

Art is about the real world, and in the real world there are real relations between phenomena and ends. Ends cannot be confused with *means to* ends. Nor just appearances. But what opens greater possibility for making sense of the world through art, than a 'correspondence theory' of truth, is bringing together *disparate* meanings. *This* intent is not merely factual, to confirm reality; but to add *value* to meanings as yet not *conceived* about reality. They are two different ways of approaching 'the Real'. The latter *poetic* way, however, cannot arise in 'a vacuum' (in privation). It is not purely 'fanciful'. It only obtains in the same way Beauty and Truth cohere: surprisingly, auto-poietically, and under certain conditions. These two dispositions underscore the opposing *propositional* natures Symbol and

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<sup>63</sup> Gare, *Science, Process Philosophy*, 237.

Metaphor exhibit in making *realistic* possible ends *phenomeno*-logical. That is, Real, in the *ultimately* useful way of *valuing* the world: Ideally.

Several conditions apply for making more *meaningful* propositions, associated with this difference, concerning *Art's* truth. And thereby, determining what a genuine art object is, and what makes one greater than another. The Propositional End – ultimately, the Person - is what links Art's Purpose with its Phenomenology.

Every legitimate artwork portrays something about us, who we are, or what story we are a part of. French painter Jean-Batiste Chardin, a master of still life painting, leaves something of the human in all his best works. And, without knowing what is meant by it, one cannot fail to recognise the very particular *Person-al* (collective) grief present in John Coltrane's song, *Alabama*, exuding from the shape and landscape of its audio *Gestalts*. But these artforms inherently possess some limitations, compared with sculpture or literature for instance, in their *capacity* to convey metaphoric 'Sense' (Reason). In Chardin's case it is the subject, in Coltrane's the form, that poses a limitation (T2024b).

In any case, all great art involves what Scheler calls 'intentional feelings' and 'intentional functions of feeling' that are not simply 'representative' and 'reactive', but presuppose the value-realm of 'being'. They hence possess a '*disclosing* role in our value-comprehension' and as such they move us (not just empathically) to '*new and higher*' values.<sup>64</sup> But *only* therefore in artworks where, in the subject-object interface, this higher meaning can be discerned as *real*: as *given*, phenomenologically. Our 'essential intuiting' of Ethical intentionality is what thus orients Art's propositional *end* (or 'disposition'). What are the conditions for this?

Limitation (*Necessity*) is key; and this is actually where Art's true Freedom resides. Because of the 'purposelessness' of its *higher* purpose, as Schelling says, it is with *the removal* 'of that which does not belong to its essence' that beauty

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<sup>64</sup> Max Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, trans. Manfred S. Frings and Richard L. Funk, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p.260. As Scheler puts it, these are the intentionalities of 'loving and hating' which constitute 'the highest level of our intentional emotive life'.



‘emerges *automatically*’ in an artwork.<sup>65</sup> Any real artwork (like humans) is therefore not simply a ‘product’ of some historical sequence. It is about real life’s *essence* (Spirit). It places us *in* Time, *in* the World. In the ‘forming’ of *all* art-forms and works, Schelling follows a ‘scientific sequence’ of *potences* (defying *historical* sequence, thus redefining Art as *normative*). *Particularity* or difference first, *identity* second, and *unity* and difference (uniting the universal and particular) third. An artform/work’s various essences and potences can thus be graded in terms of (i) limitation (expression of necessity), (ii) orientation toward the absolute, and (iii) expressed ‘indifference’ of these (its wholeness or unification of these potences).

The scientific sequential “limitations” of *Particularity*, *Identity*, and *Unity* (which are, in their combination, of course imaginatively *liberating*) circumscribe Art’s defining ontological features. Firstly (viz *Unity*), since art is a phenomenological object/experience, there is just one *propositional* ‘Purpose’: Reason (hence only one singular unifying ‘Object’ of Art). And because engaging with art must involve an active subject, Intersubjectivity is a key ontological property. Art’s *Object* (*Identity*) is then a self-actualising manifestation of the subject-object relation in the Beauty-Truth merger. Its embedded intentionality is hence always directed at *the Person*, though of course this manifests as a disposition to myriad possible *subjects* (*Particularity*). The human condition is thus *always* somehow present in genuine art, because art’s fundamental *claim* on us, situating us *in* the real World, concerns a reasonable ‘resolution’ (Ideal/Real indifference) of *human* nature and Nature. Its *highest* claim is not just personally ‘existential’; it questions the very nature of our *speciation* and place in the Cosmos.<sup>66</sup>

This is how the Principle’s propositional end connects Art and the Person as perfect signs. Artistic inquiry is only meaningful, as Peirce says, if ‘of the myriads of forms into which a proposition may be translated... that form in which [it] becomes applicable to human conduct’ gives it meaning.<sup>67</sup> Specifically, ‘most directly applicable to self-control ...under every situation, and to every purpose’;

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<sup>65</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art. Volume 58 Theory and History of Literature*, Edited, translated and introduced by Douglas W Stott. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p.133. Emphasis mine.

<sup>66</sup> It asks, like Hamlet’s famous soliloquy: What am *I* to do? given how *Nature itself* ‘puzzles the will’.

<sup>67</sup> Peirce cited in Markus Arnold, “Images, diagrams, and narratives: Charles S. Peirce’s epistemological theory of mental diagrams,” *Semiotica* 186 1-4 (2011): 5-20, p.6.

imbuing it with a *futurising* dimension, placing ‘the pragmatist’ in Time.<sup>68</sup> So, not just any proposition will do. It must be suited to in-forming a subject-objectivation process: the *metaphoric universalising* of any *proper* subject’s ‘essence’. And since we can only *legitimately* ‘objectify’ bearers of ethical value (Art or the Person) via this subject-object interface, it must be *given* phenomenologically (Scheler 1973); and not all artforms or subjects are equally suited to allow this possibility. I will return to what a ‘proper subject’ for art is later, but first consider what situates this ‘Object-ive’ Identity of the artwork beyond language and interpretation.

It is not person-ality (affectation), but person-ness (being) that ‘subjectivises’ the Principle’s Object. Being ‘organic’, this Perfect Sign dictates that such propositions - involving the *formal* indifference between limitation (necessity) and freedom, hence the *ideational* indifference between beauty and truth – must emerge *in the semiosis itself*. That is, in art’s ‘metamorphic’ process metaphysics, not its *empirical* contents. In great art, this *unexpected*, ‘un-prethinkable’, novel, higher meaning arises from what Merleau-Ponty refers to as art’s ‘obscure zone’; or as Polanyi calls it: ‘the tacit dimension’ (Kaushik 2011; Polanyi 1983). And because it is relational and not *literal* meaning (or, ‘correspondence truth’), this has a bearing on *how* metaphors are applied. One can’t simply use these arbitrarily; context, and the appropriate accompaniment of schematic/allegoric lower-order value meaning affordances are necessary conditions.

*Proper* metaphor then, being the key conditional qualifier of meaningful *coherence over correspondence*, gives Depth to the separation of what Ricoeur (2003) calls a ‘poetic *discourse*’ from any other speculative discourse. By a special virtue of its *propositional purposelessness*. The highest *Ideational* ‘end’, writ large, pursues the Beauty-Truth nexus most profoundly in great art, Person-ifying art’s ontological ‘collectivising intent’, and connecting humanity *primordially*, cosmologically, in Nature and History. So, the nature of the subject is equally key to making this higher transparent morphogenic transformation of lower order meaning possible. And, in each Particular circumstance, adherence to the inherent artform-specific

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<sup>68</sup> This forward movement is identified by Schelling, Rudolph Arnheim, Susanne Langer, R. G. Collingwood, and many others as an inherent feature even in ‘still’ art like painting, corresponding with Peirce’s claim that the pragmatist’s intentional inquiry is always directed to future conduct because only this is subject to self-control.

propositional ‘boundary conditions’ is necessary. That is, the limitations of every different art-*form*; this ‘form’ however being only what *clothes* the idea. What *elevates* its meaning beyond this ‘clothing’? Only Scheler’s highest values: the Spiritual and Holy – but only pursued *purposelessly*.

It is therefore not by deliberately *ignoring* lower-order values, but recognising *the interplay between* them and the higher ones - bringing together disparate meanings - that an artwork’s imaginatively ‘re-productive’ (not just productive) *Sense* emerges. In this back and forth (dialectic), it automatically generates a *new dimension* of meaning from the tensions created; out of reasonable *coherence* in Beauty, not merely a correspondence of truths. And it does this transparently by virtue of the wholeness of its ‘essential intuiting’. We return to the *ultimate eidos* of a genuine artwork (in contrast to the Woodcarver’s ‘end’).

The artist asks not only: What must be *given* as real, or value-impregnated in this “art object”? But in the *first* instance: What is it *for the sake of*? This more serious concern for an ‘object’ of inquiry, seeking the emergence of higher values by first indwelling in *lower* values, was evident in philosophers of ancient Greece. Thales’ speculation that all life arises from water (‘spiritually’) reveals the value of metaphoric reasoning to technological innovation. Similarly, with their ‘objective’ outlooks on life, even didactic treatments of reality in the early novels of Flaubert, Dostoyevsky, or Tolstoy, elevated identification with their central figures above familiarity/‘personality’, or politics and entertainments. Science, philosophy, and art converge in this meaningful disposition.

If artists lose the reason or ability to ask and answer this question, can we seriously believe any *artificial* intelligence could replace them and make original art? It would lack the *Reason*. It simply could never develop the potential that humans possess to *need to* ask this key question originally. Even any replicant *sentient* being (if that were possible), from ‘genetic learning’, could only produce copy-art because understanding art’s meaning-value has to do with the *primordial* logic of ethical intuition. The method proposed for discerning this *in the semiosis of the artwork* (see T2024c) could possibly be taught to AI, but discerning and making are two different things. The fundamental proof of this lies in Aristotle’s natural philosophy. His principle of ‘conditional necessity’ in Nature is equally applicable to questions surrounding how an *artwork’s* ‘living-Truth’ is derived. Investigating this means asking how its integrated whole, whose every

part is adjusted to all others, ensures its transparent disclosure (see §4, Table 1).

‘If you were to shuffle parts randomly among forms’, says Leroi, ‘you would get monsters, and hopeless ones at that.’<sup>69</sup> Though referring to the products of Nature, comparing Empedocles’ absurd ‘selectionist’ schemes with Aristotle’s astute revision of the Platonic Forms, he might just as well be describing postmodern anti-Art. And that ‘silly esthetics’ of our times (as Peirce called it) wherein Aesthetes favour impotent ‘theories of choice’ over ontologies. Garnering familiar meaningless plot-driven narratives with pointless ends – and, as Schelling aptly put it: causing the mystery of life to ‘flee into the act’. Deliberately or not, nurturing our habitual resignation to the *impossibility* of truth (or just fabricated truths). What kinds of propositions emerge from an ‘idealism’ that makes Form or Arbitrariness the ‘reasonable’ ideal to pursue? Ultimately, only *counter*-utopian propositions. A *utopian* proposition/ideal makes *purpose*, ends not means, the Object.

Consider the character and ‘final cause’ of the 2023 film *American Fiction*. We are cajoled into empathising with the central figure’s moral stand against identity politics degrading the more meaningful ‘naturalism’ in contemporary literature. But he finally submits to the modern mythology rather than resist it. The propositional origin and end of this narrative is then forced to resolve in deconstructive absurdity; reducing Monk’s virtuous self-actualising aspirations to resigned enslavement in industrial, materialist, “self-creation” (and ethics to pitiful moralising). All symbolised in the denouement: a predictable reflective identification with the mythological black slave of “showbiz”. Leaving us contemplating naught *but* the lowest value: our ‘agreeability’ on modern fate (a degraded form of destiny).<sup>70</sup> So, despite having a suitable subject, this film’s simplistic, formulaic, symbolic idealist, open-ended *proposition* only yields the all too familiar modern narrative submission to humanity’s phantasy and complicit meaninglessness. Its dystopian ‘subject-objectivation’ is foretold in *its origin*.

Of the four questions (or ‘causes’) that must be examined to *understand* art, and

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<sup>69</sup> Leroi *TL*, 139.

<sup>70</sup> The modern mythology replaces the ancient idea of ‘destiny’ with ‘fate’ linked to ‘original sin’ (and hence only *God’s* judgement – for, who are we to judge?). Shakespeare converted this Christian modification again to ‘fate as nemesis’ (Schelling *PA*, 213). We readily accept Monk’s submission as ‘natural’, as we long ago abandoned natural ‘final’ for ‘*efficient*’ causes (material ‘mechanical’ succession, consequentialism, etc.).

so *to make* it, the first always concerns *its end*. To resolve Art and Humanity's *joint* meaning crisis, we need to restore a practice of thinking about *such* ends. There is no algorithm for artmaking and admiring, because the Principle of Art builds into its *character* both an ontological and teleological realness that only humans possess *originally*. It may become possible for AI to *teach* this Principle, but impossible for it to use it. It could learn and re-teach us *values* associated with practices that we don't habitually prioritise (heaven forbid the necessity). But it can never have our primordial connection to organism, which *begs this question* of the artwork's origin - upon which a genuine artist's practice relies.

#### 4. An **Artistic** Practice

AI may be taught to replace our usefulness in mass-producing cultural artefacts, but it cannot learn what we have come to know intuitively about the Science of Ideals. Markets similarly, driven just by the transfer of 'symbolic capital', are completely ineffectual in resolving dialectical contradictions. The 'external good' that art represents can never be reconciled with its 'internal good' unless a genuine 'trade' in *traditions of thought* is developed.<sup>71</sup>

Theoretical aestheticians are not mistaken in construing an "aesthetic practice" as a continuous, repeatedly performed activity of engaging with an "art"-*form*. But they are using "art" in its most general sense (*techné*); and in this sense even a Bowerbird or Nightingale must be considered an 'artist'. Furthermore, by not realising that in its proper normative sense it is not 'one artform' but Art 'as principle' (one *Object*) that we must really engage with, what must surely be defined as the *true* practice of aesthetic inquiry languishes in 'mythos'. But the kind a truly *nurturing* Mythology can't use. Even though other animals also have an 'aesthetic', only *humans* can create genuine art because only humans have a history which takes us beyond the realm of the senses. Artmaking, as a Tradition, cannot therefore be reduced to *any* 'cultural practice' whereby one's experience of the 'general aesthetic' merely elicits familiar empathic responses reflectively. (Including via the categories of psychology, cultural 'business', gaming, sport, sociology, history, media, etc., - where cultural artefact making proliferates). The fundamental motivation for *understanding*

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<sup>71</sup> This was once the domain of universities, but only de-industrialising art can now achieve this; with art becoming reconceived as a research program in complexity science and hence a new 'tradition of thought'.

aesthetics cannot merely concern pleasure gained through *the activity*; but the ‘higher’ pleasure of merging *knowledge* with action.

Contemporary theoretical arguments for shifting discourses about objects and singular experiences, to practices themselves, may be a genuine attempt to deal with the modern mythology’s subjectivising of art. Fixation on the object/experience *alone* has indeed led many to fuel elitist fascination with ‘modes of discourse’ as earlier described. The fundamental problem with their proposition, however, is that it is impossible to separate an active subject from any object of inquiry. So, the choice of *objects we attend to* and *the way* we attend to them in fact *governs* an “aesthetic practice”. *Art’s* proof lies in the subject-object interface, which is transparent in the object itself. If there is a Holy Grail of ‘aesthetic practice’, it is *Art’s Principle*. This re-connects *Art’s* capital O ‘object-ive’ – as Aristotle would say *Art’s* ‘archai’, or “first things” – with a genuine *artistic* practice. And little can be gained from philosophising about the obvious lower-order aesthetic pleasures (eg., knitting, decorating meals, crafting/designing *anything* – though all clearly possessing *other* worthwhile ends). When only higher *Reason* raises Aesthetics to Aristotle’s highest virtue: Contemplation.

It is nevertheless indeed important to centre our concerns on ‘practice’ because, as MacIntyre (2007) argues, a ‘practice’ is the only way to construct virtues in a society so that we may understand what is ‘the good’. To be able to distinguish the salutary benefits of higher-order ‘internal goods’ from the utilitarian benefits of lower-order ‘external goods’. Thus, a practice fundamentally turns a tradition of thought into ‘institution’. In deciding what is ‘good’, as MacIntyre explains, what appears first is ‘a practice’, then the narrative order of a single human life (a ‘whole’ life), and finally a collective ‘moral tradition’. This is how we collectivise the meaning of ‘good’. And (lest we forget *Art’s real* normative social role here), we pursue logic because it leads to truth, truth because it is good, and goodness because it is an admirable end (Andrade 2022).

Metaphoric meaning production - drawing universality into particularity – is however not our habitual way of worlding reality in modernity. We are more habituated toward lower-order symbolic meaning production: making particulars appear universal. This is why much in the ‘artworld’ is not art, and many theorists agree artistic practice in the ‘postmodern tradition’ is completely

misdirected (Bruns 2011). Aesthetics - as Peirce defines it: 'the science of ideals' or 'the science of admiring' - is considered the 'first science' because it *habituates* our admiring. The continual experience of aesthetic *privation*, which Bernard Stiegler called the 'catastrophe' of modern aesthetic experience in the rise of 'technicism' marking our modern mythology, thus makes *ethical and logical* disorientation inevitable. If in all human endeavours aesthetics *precedes* ethics and logic (even mathematical logic), then only restoring our attention to the subject-object relation in the art object's phenomenology can revive a genuinely *artistic* practice.

I have shown above how Art's key ontological features, including intersubjectivity and morphogenic metamorphosis, via its Principle of *unification* of aesthetics with ethics and logic, produce higher meaning *in its exemplars*. What defines *artistic practice* thus has to do with recognising firstly why genuine artforms and their respective artworks operate *relative to* this Principle. How they obtain Art's 'ethical intentionality' – *in their actual phenomenology*. And why technologies of action are simply the means to an end in any subject's 'self-actualisation'. The latter being an end-in-itself. They only produce effects and affects, the 'efficient cause' of any meaning productivity. The artwork's 'final cause' is to do with the 'thinking part'; the tacit, implicit, immaterial intentionality, which counts most toward upturning lower values.

To restore meaning to artistic practice, it must thus first be admitted that meaning is not secondary to sensibility. Meaning is as essential to the Principle's *exemplars* – individual art-form/work construction - as it is to humanity. Schelling formulates an artwork's meaning-value according to the natural archetypes in Greek art, thereby 'naturalising' its expression according to clear 'mythological categories' - metaphor being the highest. His *Naturphilosophie's* 'three stages of consciousness' explain why this became obvious to him; and therefore, why an ontological 'cosmological' conception of art was needed to reassociate it with normative aesthetics (T2025a). In practice, recognising art's meaning-value hence means facing up to the complexities of assessing its *dialogical* 'process metaphysics'. And why this 'immaterial' value must be elevated above the material 'object' in our attention, perception, and judgement. Ultimately, *habituating* the capacity to distinguish art from its general aesthetic association in *all* artform traditions is critical.

The *role* of the artist and aesthete in society must change for this practice of Art as Principle to take hold.<sup>72</sup> In education, though artefact-making/admiring should not be discouraged, learning to distinguish why making *Art* concerns the higher meaning of merging Beauty with Truth and balancing Freedom with Necessity, is key. These fundamental defining precepts of the Principle require incorporating a philosophy of 'speculative naturalism' with phenomenology as an essential subject. Some basic theoretical grounding in discerning Schelling's 'productive' (or 'dialectical') aesthetic standpoint and Kant's standpoint of reflection would be of great benefit. As difficult as all this might be *to institutionalise*, given the industrial imperative against it, the reality is that only when we are talking about genuine art-making or admiring that 'aesthetics' makes sense; and that a 'practice' and 'experience' of its *science* can be understood.

#### ART-FORM/WORK 'ONTOLOGIES' (A PROPER SUBJECT)

If a robot can be taught to improvise an action, is it having an 'aesthetic experience'? If so, what distinguishes a robot from a human? The answer returns us to the real question about discerning between aesthetic *act-ivity* and *artistic* practice; or, *genuine* art and anything just resembling it. As noted, it takes more than simple syllogistic logic to understand *Art's* ontology. So too the 'organic' complexity in its exemplars. It takes an understanding of philosophical anthropology. And, what Peirce argued were the vital additional logical intuitions that only humans can employ – 'abduction' and 'retroduction' via memory – which are simply not transferable to any form of 'mechanism'. Teleology and 'mechanism' are fundamentally different species of acts. Since no amount of 'mechanical' learning can replicate humanity's primordial link to Nature, only human intellectual intuition can decipher the problematic conflation of 'experience' with 'practice' which has confused theorists in artform/work analysis.

Several ontological factors tend to complicate matters for modern aestheticians, *phenomenologically*. First is the key understanding that art *must* exhibit metaphoric meaning not mere re-presentation. Second, associated with this though rarely even considered, as Schelling's system demonstrates all artforms

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<sup>72</sup> As in Aristotle's 'geometer'/'carpenter' comparison.



*inherently* possess individual limitations (see T2024b). And not all artforms are equal in their potential to render ‘good art’, hence not just any object, or proposition, can be a legitimate *subject* of art. Limitation (*natural* law, or, Necessity) is thus just as important as Freedom in any art-making.

These are significant parameters for any artist to negotiate. It is much easier, for instance, to produce metaphoric meaning in a human portrait than a landscape painting, or a portrait of a dog. This is because we all take in a landscape purely subjectively - so the artist must capture some cohesion in all that dominating ‘accidentality’ to introduce some *objective* meaning. Whereas a human subject already brings history with it, and hence a degree of objectivity, so their personal-feature ‘accidentality’ can be harnessed much easier to portray particularity of character, which in turn allows the artist to draw realistic universalities into this or that particularity. This again makes apparent why the part-whole and becoming-being relations are key to art-making - in praxis.

Take another example. As Schelling realised, some subjects – like human biological processes – *cannot* be made into art for the simple reason that such processes cannot move us toward any metaphoric reasoning. They remain stuck in ‘ordinary reality’. Disregarding this, Museums of Contemporary Art around the world nevertheless persist in presenting works like sculptures of a defecating woman. The ‘shock-value’ of this is all too reminiscent of what we are meant to feel upon seeing a banana duct-taped to a gallery wall receiving so much attention (and monetary validation). But the entire Purpose of “art” in such a guise is clearly self-defeating. It is not just *the choice* of object, but *its rendering*, that defines what a *proper subject* for Art is. *Naturalising* art does not just mean applying a praxis and attendance to art which takes stock of its similarity to organisms but, *more* importantly, how Art’s *Principle* integrally relates to the ‘organism’ of humanity as a whole through Nature. This point is often well made by Shakespeare.

In *Hamlet* (Act 3. Sc 2), Hamlet instructs his troop of players to “act naturally” - not overdo or underdo a performance, but use discretion to ‘give it smoothness’ with the ‘special observance’ of not overstepping ‘the modesty of nature’. Otherwise, your intention comes ‘from the purpose of playing’ (ie., it’s *un-real*). How does Shakespeare describe this unnatural “purposefulness”? As holding ‘the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image,

and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure'. You may make 'the unskillful laugh', he says, but 'the judicious grieve' - so even if it's *popular* one must avoid this at all costs. Your judgement, he says, must "o'erweigh a whole theater of others." Hamlet ends with a rebuke: 'O, there be players that I have seen play and heard others praise... that I have thought some of nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably'. The 'modesty of nature', Nature's *realness*, is to be respected; and this means elevating *Human* nature *to be able to*. So, slavishly copying Nature (hence *human* nature too) merely belittles humanity. And, not only is it injudicious to make such transgressions, but *inhuman*.

The very idea of 'copy-art' – mere re-presentation of a subject - is challenged. Copying is not REAL. Shakespeare's authorial intervention is meant to impress upon us that Nature's 'teleology' is an inspiration not a *prescription* for how we should make art render the world of humans (the Art-Person 'perfect sign'). His contempt for such impoverished 'objectivity', in what is the domain of *artists*, is clear. It is what Schelling means by 'subject-objectivation'. We are always seeking *the indifference* between 'the Ideal' and 'the Real' between Nature and *human* nature, through *any* chosen subject. This is *its* absolute Truth. All art *forms* and *works* by definition obey it via the Principle's ontology.

#### KEY CRITERIA AND APPLICATION

To summarise, it is because of *organism* that we humans *best* produce higher meaning *metaphorically*. And it is because we *can* transform lower- into higher-order values *in this very particular way*, that Art as principle is invaluable. And since *the Principle* manifests differently in different artforms, by virtue of their self-defining limitations and the limitations subjects themselves also impose, the difference between Artistic practice and what is loosely referred to as "aesthetic practice" is not an insignificant one. Its damaging obfuscation can only be ameliorated by setting out clear criteria for what the former entails in judgement.

I have elsewhere examined in more detail why philosophical anthropology reveals how we connect meaning with valuing (T2025b). And how Schelling's system for constructing artforms and works may be applied (T2024a&b) alongside Peirce's 'triadic' or 'diagrammatic' thinking (T2024c) to discern 'ethical intentionality' in the artwork's own phenomenology. Here my aim is to simply

outline the Principle's criteria and application.

*Discerning Art vs non-Art (Task 1)*<sup>73</sup>

The Principle of Art can be defined as follows. First and foremost, it describes an intuited 'Object' under the terms of what Max Scheler calls a '*phenomenological* object/experience' which is *unmediated by symbol or 'concept'*.<sup>74</sup> Separating this from '*ordinary* experience' is our most important first task in distinguishing art from non-art. During a '*phenomenological* experience' we turn away from the sensory world and 'bracket off' what is accidental, focusing on the essential nature of things.<sup>75</sup> This allows us to *indwell* in Reason. Art's singular *Object* (or 'purpose') is thus rendered a '*phenomenological*' one if *its proposition* can be identified as directionally existential (ie., directed at life via *Spirit*, implicating human conduct and self-control). And if this purpose is ontologically, purposefully, purposeless.

See *Table 1* below for applying the above discussed key criteria, Art's three 'Ps': Phenomenology, Proposition, and Purpose and how they combine to indicate the precise 'ethical' intentionality discoverable in any genuine artwork's activity of signs. They point to the Object (principle) <-> object (artform/work) coherence by discerning the latter's phenomenology as either Metaphoric or Symbolic self-structuring (via its inherent 'actantial tensions'). Which in turn discerns its Actualisation vs Reflection, its *Re*-productive vs Productive imagination stimulus, and hence whether it is Art or non-Art.

We need not ask the artist what their intentions were. The object's own phenomenology *propositionally* leads us either dialogically towards multi-dimensional possibility (ie., metamorphic 'actualisation') by universal meaning drawn into particularity. Or uni-/two-dimensional 'ordinary' reality merely symbolically. The former produces higher meaning, via tensions and relations identifiable in an artwork's 'actantial' self-structuring 'reality-shifting' morphogenesis. Or, if the object is an artefact, we are led to merely reflectively representational unrealistic propositions of particulars as universals.

<sup>73</sup> See T2025a for complete explanation of Tasks 1, 2, & 3.

<sup>74</sup> Note here how the object and experience merge, supporting my earlier claim about the folly of theoretical aestheticians seeking to shift focus from the former to the latter.

<sup>75</sup> Note, this signals the concerted activation of the right hemisphere (and the *re*-productive imagination) giving it perceptive dominance which corresponds metaphorically with *knowing*. What we are beckoned to seek here is, in Peirce's terms, the object's *real* Firstness (see T2024b).

Art's unique Phenomenology, Proposition, and Purpose are expressed in its exemplars as a metamorphosis of meaning via combined meaning affordances driving schematic, allegorical, and metaphoric 'meaning- markers' in any narrative. The 'objective' orientation of a *genuine* artwork's meaning 'drivers' (Intent, Import, Reason), in progress toward its essential 'Sense'-intuition, is transparent in the dynamic tensions and 'actantial structure' of its phenomenology. In Peirce's terms, its 'finitude' (or disclosure) manifests as real Firstness; which is only obtained after an object's thirdness returns to its real secondness. Hence it embodies the *existential* nature of meaning – but only as *becoming* (ie., involuntarily set on a trajectory of searching 'for the phenomenon of the world... ["our world"] ...which will appear thus as *ontological structure*' – see T2024c).

Metaphoric directional 'movement' is thus, as noted, the self-structuring primary 'ontological' property of art. To be more precise, it is the morphogenic transition of meaning values which occurs in metaphoric movement upward toward Reason - which is how art-making solves the part-whole and becoming-being "problems" of meaning productivity - that transforms a subject.<sup>76</sup> This is what makes art *capable* of elevating subject material in the general aesthetic. Lower-order values are upturned as higher values emerge in the transformation of schematic to allegoric to metaphoric 'movement' affordances. So, not just *any* application of metaphor, anywhere, anytime is sufficient. It takes *proper metaphor* in the right contexts (combined with other meaning-markers: narrative, metonymy, synecdoche, etc.,) to produce more meaningful 'Gestalt switches'.

When 'craft'/'design' objects are subjected to interrogation using the above criteria, we find that it is *only* the part->whole (lower-order symbolic) *Gestalt* affordances which are operative in the activity of signs.<sup>77</sup> In Schelling's terms,

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<sup>76</sup> In art, the morphogenic (part<->whole/becoming<->being) 'movement' of lower to higher meaning values - via the progressive transition from schematic to allegoric to metaphoric affordances in an artwork's phenomenology - produces this subject-objectivation (or, movement toward *Reason*). Art's *Principle* <-> art-form/work (principles) relation thus depends upon the Art-Person 'perfect sign' relation (Art's singular *Object*).

<sup>77</sup> Art's movement-action-logic nexus is absent in artefacts, where the becoming-being polarity does not possess 'ethical intentionality'. So too in any beautiful object in Nature, like a flower for instance; its 'real' necessity/freedom polarity dominates, such that we can only take in its form-formlessness relation entirely subjectively. In other words, its 'object-ivity' is not mediated by 'the ideal' (which is already fixed in 'the real').

‘the real’ is not elevated by ‘the ideal’. Art’s unique movement->action->logic nexus is missing; its morphogenic drawing of the whole into its parts thwarted by symbolic mediation. Thus, what these artefacts lack phenomenologically is the semiotic suspension of Peirce’s ‘secondness’ (or, Ricoeur’s ‘second ontology’), which only *Metaphor* offers (see T2024c, T2025b).

We can apply these criteria in arts assessments by attending to all the features outlined earlier. Any genuine poetic discourse must exhibit the attributes rendering them phenomenological ‘objects’ (or ‘experiences’). Their propositional ‘sense’ should relate to human conduct as Peirce determined. And higher order meaning-value should emerge in the transparent disclosure of the mergers earlier described in form and non-form, transforming values in a metamorphosis upwards along Scheler’s value hierarchy and Schelling’s meaning categories. We should be able to recognise each of the earlier described ontological features and their *constitutive* modalities in the teleology that makes an exemplary artwork the practical *poietic* origin of the Principle itself.

[*The example below briefly illustrates how to assess the primary determinations of a poetic discourse in a visual art object (see T2025a for the complete assessment, this being only part). It reveals why this object’s “person/public ‘statement’” has become instrumentalised to emphasise the separation of truth from beauty and art from nature. Art as artefact (just as ‘art as craft’ or ‘art as design’) is a reduction drawing attention to the ‘thingliness’ or pure ‘accidentality’ of the intentional ‘object’ (ie., its ‘materiality’) rather than features described above where higher meaning is found.*]



**Figure 1** *Big Clay #4* (Artist: Urs Fischer)

In 2017, a giant steel fabrication (pictured above) of what appears to be a representation of human faeces was installed as a piece of ‘public art’ in the famous Piazza Della Signoria of Florence. Its placement beside the Uffizi galleries could have been interpreted as pointing - either in protest or celebration (we can’t be sure which) - to the decline of art in modernity in a similar gesture to Duchamp’s upturned urinal.<sup>78</sup> But this is just conjecture, based on the ‘empirical content’ of what the object in context here appears to disclose. And there may be other contextual or historical information which could completely negate such interpretations.<sup>79</sup> All that we know is that the object poses a question.

<sup>78</sup> Clearly, much ‘modernist’ work before Duchamp and since displays both elements of protesting art’s demise and celebrating its ‘subjective liberation’ as a victory against perceived cultural elitism (arguably promulgated by classicism). This work was described in the *Florence Daily News* as an ‘innovative work... in view of the historical and artistic urban context that is Piazza Signoria, so overburdened with the marks of history, a fully-fledged Renaissance agora, the nerve centre of republican power...’

<sup>79</sup> For instance, it could be that the artist’s intention was simply to produce a steel sculpture that depicts the quality of solidity in a vibrant cultural space. Urs Fischer is described as ‘one of the leading artists on the

If it is art, its disclosure should however be transparent; so, we ask questions of its phenomenology to try to determine how well it adheres to the criteria above.

*Table 1* shows sample questions we might ask of any object, in any artform, to establish if it can be an exemplar of the Principle of Art. (Question marks denote uncertainties, followed by a ‘best guess’ determination).

<i>POETIC DISCOURSE (Characteristics)</i>	<i>Big Clay #4 by Urs Fischer  (The following suggested questions determine membership to the principle of art)</i>	✓ x ?
<i>1. Phenomenological ‘object’/experience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is it ‘essential intuiting’, unmediated by symbols?</li> <li>- Do the totality of signs find their fulfilment in the whole?</li> <li>- Does it force us to turn away from the sensory world and ‘bracket off’ what is accidental in order to seek reason?</li> </ul>	? ✓  x  x
<i>2. Proposition</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is it that form of proposition ‘applicable to human conduct...’?</li> <li>- Or ...how the reason for human existence merges with ‘how to live reasonably’?</li> <li>- Is there any propositional indifference between the real and the ideal being sought? (ie., is Object 1 suspended?)</li> <li>- Is it a proposition ‘bringing being as actuality and as potentiality into play’? (ie., placing ‘man’ in this discourse?).</li> <li>- Are there transparent tensions ...between subject and predicate?</li> <li>- ...between literal interpretation and metaphorical interpretation?</li> <li>- ...between identity and difference?</li> <li>- Is this form of proposition interpretational/reflective?</li> <li>- Or ...(re)-productive?</li> </ul>	x x x x x ✓ ✓ ? ✓ ? x

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world scene today... (who) ...for years now has been exploring such issues as imperfection and entropy or the relationship between an artwork and space...: <http://www.florencedailynews.com/2017/09/19/piazza-signoria-hosts-urs-fischers-big-clay/>

3. Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is the object's purpose to seek the indifference between beauty and truth?</li> <li>- Or ...necessity and freedom?</li> <li>- And ...by drawing the universal into the particular?</li> <li>- Does the relational structure of actants executing this purpose separate the subject from its ideas, allowing their relationship to be obtained objectively?</li> <li>- Is there purposeful purposelessness evident?</li>   <li>THEREFORE:</li> <li>- Does the object evidence ethical intentionality via these indifferences by forcing us to adopt an ethical position?</li> <li>- Are lower order values present in the work (in transition)?</li> <li>- Or...in disclosure?</li> <li>- Are higher order values present in the work?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>x</li> <li>x</li> <li>x</li> <li>x</li> <li>? ✓</li>   <li></li> <li>x</li> <li>? x</li> <li>? x</li> <li>x</li> </ul>
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**Table 1** Art/non-Art assessment of *Big Clay #4* by Urs Fischer

Basically, it is the object's poetic *purpose* that is most in question. Most evidently because there are no signs of proper metaphoric movement – of any universality (besides accidentality) being drawn into its particular/s. Therefore, we must resort to questioning what 'particular' is being drawn into any universality (Symbol), and thus what kind of imitation is being proposed. We are left to ask: Is it faeces, as its 'secondness' (object 1) points to via the interpretant (ie., 'vehicle of appearances')? Could it be a comic or serious satire? And if so of what? Or is it meant to evoke 'pure beauty'? And if so of what? In short, there is no separation of the subject from its 'ideas' allowing their relationship to be obtained objectively. We can only therefore guess at its *purposeful* purposelessness (which the relevant question marks above indicate lend some benefit of the doubt to). But if its deliberate opacity contains the object's *sole* purpose (ie., without the



contingent search for truth/meaning that the principle of art demands), then it *must* be an artefact.<sup>80</sup>

All this already tends to indicate, without any further examination, that this is non-Art. That conclusion does not solely result from any individual uncertainty above, but because together they all contribute to the overwhelming suggestion that this object does not force us to adopt an ethical position.<sup>81</sup> It manifests no ethical phenomenology. If its disclosure was intended to be something overlaid theoretically, like the published interpretations of it, or the above conjectures of it being a protest about or celebration of art's degradation, then we must accept it as a *symbolic* representation (ie., as meaning *mediated by symbol*). And this immediately disqualifies it as a phenomenological object, in turn confirming the above conclusion. Its intentionality is opaque and we are thus beckoned to overlay 'empirical-historical' interpretation (eg., Fischer's *literal* intentions).

Finally, if it *is* intended to be a symbolic reference to human faeces, for whatever reason, then it would founder in dwelling on lower order 'vital' values. Abstraction of human biology is not art, but simply returns to schema.<sup>82</sup> We could attempt to challenge or verify the entire above assessment by undertaking *Task 2* (assessing 'good' vs 'bad' art) – undertaking an analysis of its actantial structure and triadic semiosis - but it is already self-evident that an examination of meaning drivers and markers would reveal that (a) there is no metamorphosis taking place in the disclosure of this object's 'being' and (b) the activity of signs is so limited as to simply confirm this. Note this conclusion does not suggest the object is completely meaningless, just that there is no evidence of any *higher* meaning in it. It is nevertheless clearly a cultural artefact, not art.

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<sup>80</sup> That is, it is *intentionally* the opposite of what art is – disclosing its truth only in its *factual materiality*. It does, of course, arguably retain value as a cultural artefact. But that valuation is a completely different one (ie., which can be framed in terms of cultural materialism).

<sup>81</sup> See my description of this 'ethical phenomenology' in T2024c. This cannot be confused with forcing us to question what is its 'person/public *statement*' or 'moral' interpretation.

<sup>82</sup> Recall Scheler's 'vital' (or 'human') values – also called 'biological' values – do not constitute higher value, and his claim that objectifying the human form is 'unethical'. This is why Schelling also claims any referential *symbolism* pertaining to the body is not suitable propositional material for artistic inquiry. Only the metaphoric *elevation* of the human body in sculpture, or any other artform, (not its empirical depiction or abstraction) progresses towards higher values in art.

*Discerning Quality: Good, Bad, and Great Artworks (Tasks 2 & 3)*

There are, naturally, different essences and potences present in every ‘exemplar’ of Art’s Principle - in each artform and their exemplary artworks. These correspond with each particular artform’s inherent limitation. This is what accounts for variations, including as noted in their *potentials* to render higher meaning.

Meaning transparency is a key factor in distinguishing good from bad artworks because this variation becomes apparent in examining their proper metaphoric marker and actantial structure *qualities*. They point us either toward higher or lower meaning values (‘good’ or ‘bad’ art). So, beyond our initial assessment about the *directionality* of meaning, *gradients* in its quality can be assessed using the following relational factors: (i) the order of signs (and suspension of Peirce’s secondness); (ii) proper vs improper metaphor use; (iii) the gaps between all the key ‘indifferences’ (eg., real and ideal etc.,) in the work’s contents and tensions, and the values of qualities rendered by these relative to the subject; (iv) the progress toward ‘concrete reasonableness’ according to Peirce’s pragmatic maxim (ie., ‘the whole’ disclosure in actuality or reason directed at human conduct); and (v) the quality of ethical intentionality (ie., metaphoric movement toward Scheler’s higher values). Ultimately of course, these all relate to *the degree* to which all three of the Principle’s criteria are met. (See T2025a for how to apply these factors).

In such qualitative assessments we always return to the governing ontologies of artform/work constructions. Though Art is only one *Object*, every artwork is a ‘theory’ of its being materialised (thus never finished, never a ‘product’ as such). Better artworks manifest more like ‘organism’ (like the Person); as life itself elevated by *Spirit*. Lesser ones tend toward arte-factuality; being ‘fixed’, and grounded in an altogether different purpose (ie., opacity). The best art moves us from ‘fact’ to *value* with added depth. Our common implicit *understandings* of ‘organic’ logic of dynamism and tensions outweighs any common *experience* of it. (We understand the ‘container’ metaphor implicitly from having been in the womb). The relation between ‘dynamic logic’ and *action* thus produces implicit intentionality transparently which is immanently more identifiable in any good artwork. The quality of a ‘metaphoric utterance’ is similarly distinguishable from the apparently identical operation of tensions in arte-factual *Gestalts*. Movement

toward *good* reason identifiable in the former's phenomenology is palpably lacking in bad art. As noted, *Gestalt* action itself merely produces an indifference between parts and wholes; and only 'proper metaphoric' affordances produce more meaningful '*Gestalt* switches'.

We can similarly discern good from *great* art by returning firstly to the artwork's exemplary characteristics (*Phenomenology, Proposition, Purpose*) to evaluate lower- vs higher-order meaning production either inherent in the *categories of art* (ie., their formal characteristics), or in the *qualities of features* they employ (ie., non-formal characteristics such as those that distinguish between 'proper' and 'improper' metaphor).

All good artworks elevate ordinary experience to a *phenomenological experience*, without symbolic mediation, as transparently *present* in their dynamic tensions (as a perfect sign). Great artworks just do it *metaphorically better*. In this graduation, forward 'movement' is key but so too *the propositional end*. Propositions relative to *human conduct* are, as noted, the only meaningful ones for an *artistic practice*. But in great art, this meaning emerges *more so* from the 'obscure zone'; and is distinguishable from any *literal* interpretation still more by the greater quality of propositions and metaphors employed. But artforms present their own limitations. In Jacques-Louis David's famous *The Death of Marat* (1793), Marat's released pen invokes hope for the Republic draining out through his arm in a suspended moment. In Michelangelo's *David* we feel the tension of the moment before his attack on the giant in every sinew of his being. Both are clearly 'great'. Great historical painting may employ a higher form of allegory, but sculpture is *inherently* metaphorical.

We apply the same process. Peirce's 'diagrammatic thinking' points to Metaphor's key affordances in the movement-logic-action nexus which, in correspondence with Scheler's hierarchy of values and Schelling's progression toward the metaphoric, determines this divergent movement toward *higher* meaning. In Peircian terms, the difference between a good and great artwork is the difference between arriving at real secondness, and then progressing or not to real firstness. In the *good* artwork, the first object (O<sub>1</sub>) remains in suspension while we witness what returns from the interpretant. Real secondness (O<sub>2</sub>) is 'the Other' object which we find from realising the end point of that suspension in the metamorphosis of the *real* First. *This* Firstness is 'absolute firstness' – and it is

pre-cognised. It is what we *can* if attentive first intuit in the great artwork.<sup>83</sup> And more often here than in just ‘good’ art. Irrespective of this possibility, we are *always* nevertheless directed by empirical or non-empirical contents to an object (O1) in the first stage of consciousness, whether we arrive at *real* Firstness in our precognition of Object 2 or not.

When Schelling says ‘art shuns the historical-empirical’, he is highlighting this difference.

[See T2025a for full explanation of Tasks 2 and 3: distinguishing good/bad and good/great art; and further examples of the above assessment process. It demonstrates – using this method (not ‘critical theory’) - why, for instance, Vittorio De Sica’s *Ladri Di Biciclette* (1948) achieves greater heights than Alfonso Cuarón’s *Roma* (2018) in filmmaking; John Coltrane’s celebrated ‘concept album’ *A Love Supreme* labours under symbolic internalisation of the general aesthetic, failing to match his song *Alabama* which offers a metaphorically/meaningfully superior person-Person disclosure; and so on].

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In summary, accounting for the link between movement and *act* is key to the aesthetics of meaning because the act inherent in *this* metamorphosis (as opposed to simply intuitively/speculatively piecing together parts/facts to make a whole), is *prefelt* via metaphor as *ethical intentionality*. Distinguishing between the self-*legitimizing* and self-*actualising* act then frames our methodological inquiry.

An artwork’s power to actualise something as a ‘phenomenological object’, turning act into knowledge and becoming into being without assigning any permanent fixity (always allowing possibility), becomes evident in its relation to ‘the Person’. The non-empirical, non-literal aspect of this ‘act of imagination’ produces assimilation ‘in spite of and through difference’, as Paul Ricoeur says, via an *intentional act* that makes a *claim* on the active subject.

We find in the genuine artwork alone, then, all the evidence we require to link aesthetics logically with ethics; not in any historical or moral *empirical*

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<sup>83</sup> This is an ‘intellectual intuitive’ skill, habituated in praxis.

*comprehensibility*, but in the evident semiotic relations between Intentionality and Spirit present in the act of artmaking (*poiesis*). This *ethical* intentionality is not interpreted but *realised* (since it is *unmediated by symbol*). ‘Self-actualisation’ is an immanent *dual* realisation of our true relation to an ‘other’, via the Art-Person ‘double-unity’. This determines a poetic discourse, distinguishing it from any other speculation.

## CONCLUSION

To confront the joint meaning crisis which I suggest links Art and Humanity, reviving the Principle of Art is critical. I have shown why its origins in ancient Greece and Aristotle’s natural science reconnects art with the normative sciences, and makes the ‘concept of aesthetics’ meaningful. This renders it far more significant than any merely theoretical concern for aesthetics. Its defining criteria instead make the link between phenomenology and metaphysics paramount. They move us beyond Kant’s reflective paradigm that led to the rise and demise of modern aesthetics which promulgates and celebrates the flourishing of anti-Art. The primary concern for tastes and styles and art’s historico-empirical phenomenological theorising has reduced aesthetics to a generalised inquiry about the most meaningless of values.

By contrast, the Principle of Art is ahistorical. It unveils real artworks as a particular way of entering the world of fiction; as a way of valuing, whose standpoint is not simply reflective. It frees our imaginaries to be able to transcend Nature without abandoning it (as analytical philosophical interpretations of Kant’s transcendentalism encourage). My reconstruction of it for the modern epoch explains why its ‘process metaphysics’ is ontological and teleological. Together the Principle’s ahistorical, ontological, and teleological features reveal how the polarities of appearance and reality, form and formlessness, implicit intentionality and purpose, undergird the key intersubjective and morphogenic qualities that define Art as a Normative Science. These are the cohering subject-objectifying features of ‘semiotic freedom’ in which the tensions between becoming and being are revealed. And through which we can return art and artmaking to being meaningfully re-productive generators of our imaginaries in praxis.

These essentially ‘naturalising’ features of Art as principle were first revived

by F. W. Schelling, whose re-conception of art as ‘process metaphysics’ was completely ignored due to the rise of Hegelianism (T2024a). With the added insights of others such as C. S. Peirce and Max Scheler, I have shown how it offers a way forward methodologically to reorient our entire cultural habitus. As noted, this resituates art as a complexity science key to bridging the ‘two cultures’ of Science and the Humanities. Art’s metaphysics – its Identity as ‘organism’ - explains why it can have no algorithm. Yet at the same time it proceeds toward Reason and, as Schelling says, ‘becomes objective’ through the self-structuring disposition of meaning that a genuine artist initiates propositionally.

Art’s relation to ‘the Person’ (its ‘anthropological’ or ‘ethical’ phenomenology) has therefore been argued as of primary concern to aesthetes. And hence why the Principle of art could form the basis for revisiting many of the questionable deeply held assumptions about humanity which the social and other sciences are prone to fortify purely ‘analytically’. Art’s ‘truth’ shines light on these because it is not the common ‘factual’ symbolic truth of culturally determined artefacts. The truth pursued by designing/crafting which, via act-ing alone, only offers ‘the means’ part of art-making. It is an essentially ‘immaterial’ pursuit, moving us purposefully from ‘fact’ to value. By returning artmaking to this end in itself, this Principle models how we might re-value our world-making. How to know genuinely meaningful ‘internal goods’, in any endeavour.

Art’s Principle therefore goes to the very core of what it means to be human. Its loss in modernity has been partly responsible for the decline of humanism into mechanism. This manifested in art’s decline (via the ‘artworld’) into experiential consumerism. Habitual consumption of endless varieties of novelty, beauty, and pleasure, without paying any proper attention to higher truths has corrupted the public sphere (via the cult of celebrity, of ‘play’, and the pursuit of *symbolic* capital). In all manner of cultural artefacts, as in anti-Art itself, ignorance of this principle has rendered ‘the implicit’ merely a tool for the meaningless explicit expression of our narrow modern mythological imaginaries. The subjectification of art, at the source of this habituated disposition promulgated by theoretical aesthetics (though beginning with Christianity’s onset), is not too different from the political subjectification and social fragmentation that demagogues employ to wrest the power of false populism.

I have shown above why not distinguishing art’s making and admiring from

the ‘general aesthetic’ is a mistake which impacts on the intricate relation between aesthetics, ethics, and logic. Our three key means of intuitively making meaning, and ‘mythologising’ reality. The folly of much aesthetic theorising quickly becomes apparent. What human activity *cannot* be considered 'aesthetic'? Of course: *none*. Because aesthetics is what drives *all* human meaning-making. So, what is it that produces *higher* meaning? Only *the nexus between* aesthetics, ethics, and logic (hence Art’s important attachment to them). And since these sciences push us toward Reason (‘sense’) *in concert* with each other, the most dynamic form of meaning-making – Metaphor – emerges as Art’s primary modality. We are essentially ‘metaphoric creatures’ *always* in search of meaning, though usually unaware of how our aesthetic comportment *precedes* all ethical and logical thought in ordinary experience.

Most aesthetic theorists, as well as ‘artists’, however fail to see the difference between symbolic and proper metaphoric meaning production. The method proposed here hopes to remedy this. To rescue art, and ensure it can still be made and appreciated by generations to come, my argument is that there is no other option but to restore what ‘artistic practice’ really means, via the *Principle* of Art. The implications for human survival too are clear, since this may well be our only avenue to re-habituating some semblance of virtue ethics in our rapidly deteriorating modernity. Given art represents our highest form of mythologising reality, and mythology is everything, this may be the only way to reverse our current trajectory in the long term - into mechanism or worse.

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## APPENDIX A: Aristotle’s Distinction of Art vs Artefact

(*This distinction basically defines art as ‘normative aesthetics’ and was previously published in T2022. See also T2025a, where the note below distinguishing Metaphor and Symbol also appears*). Understanding how Reason is obtained relative to artistic *meaning* productivity, and the centrality of Prudence to this, requires detailed analysis of Aristotle’s *Ethics* - which must be summarised here.<sup>84</sup> Careful comparison reveals the fundamental question is one of means and ends relative to virtues. Aristotle’s normative aesthetics defines Art as having a purpose *other* than the means of its own making (ontology); while Kantian aesthetics, despite Kant agreeing with this, provided the impetus for the complete opposite (utility). Why the former generates meaning-value while the latter invited theoretical abstraction, soon

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<sup>84</sup> This extract was first published in T2022, where fuller explanation of why theoretical aesthetics is basically ‘un-scientific’ can be found.

becomes apparent.

To start with, *Reason* is obtained from *both* Aristotle's divisions of the 'rational' and 'nonrational' soul. The 'rational' part's excellence or merit comes 'of thinking' or contemplative virtue (ie., *intellect*: ethics), and the 'nonrational' part's lies in the virtue of 'character' (ie., *habit*: morals).<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, in a time when culturally determined objects (artefacts) were easily distinguished from Art, the same word was used for both: *tékhnē*. Anyone not paying attention to how Aristotle distributes *Prudence* in applying the words *poiēsis* (making) and *praxis* (action) in relation to *tékhnē*, may thus easily confuse art and artefact.

Essentially, Art produces that kind of contemplation *more* associated with the 'making' (*poiēsis*) of things than with action (*praxis*). That is, *meaning* value. The Mind-expanding productivity (both 'rational' and 'irrational') that Art alone admits in *reasoning* the indifferences between Necessities (knowledge) and Freedoms (action). Art thus 'admits of things *being otherwise*' (freedoms = *possibilities*); and things that 'do *not* admit of being otherwise' (necessities = *precision*). Therefore *this* 'art', says Aristotle, 'is bound up with making that is accompanied by true reason'.<sup>86</sup> It belongs to the realm of productivity that *does not* admit of 'artefact' since it has an end *other than its own activity* (ie., Reason). Thus, *Art proper* has a purpose whose end is *not* the means (actions) of its making.

Artefact, however, which is associated *only* with action (*praxis*), requires that prudence *not* involved in making (*poiēsis*). *Tékhnē* – the word for 'the arts' as a generality – consists of both Art and *artefacts* (whose ends *are bound to* means). Discriminating between the *different kinds of prudence* required by each, is what sets Art apart from artefact. Artists are thus discernible from artisans, and Design or Craft from Art proper.<sup>87</sup> The '*performative*' aspect of prudence, however - the 'action' part of any artistic productivity - is not in conflict with the 'making' part. Art and artefact *share* that in common. (What *essentially* separates them, therefore, is *purpose*).<sup>88</sup> This point leads to discerning Art as a *science* in its own right.

The fact Art is *partly* also to do with *action* (though distinguished *as poiēsis*),

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<sup>85</sup> Aristotle *NE*, 282.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid: (for his logic here see Book 6, Chapter 4).

<sup>87</sup> In Aristotle's time these distinctions were habituated and tacitly understood by all. Hence in the *Ethics* they appear as merely cursory accounts in support of the main argument and are easily overlooked.

<sup>88</sup> As noted, Art is a purposeless pursuit of Reason in *action*, but purposeful in *making*. Artefact is purposeful in both, pursuing Reason (ends) *only bound to means* and not for its own sake.

means it must *also* be understood as inquiry about things that ‘do *not* admit of being otherwise’ (*Necessities*). Hence, because *Science* is to do with ‘precision and self-sufficiency’ of *determination* (in Art’s case: *deliberation*), then Art must also be science. But, specifically now, a *normative* science due to *also* possessing that higher *binding* virtue, Prudence, as arbiter of *merit* in deliberation (ie., that highest purpose/virtue: *Contemplation*).<sup>89</sup> This now both distinguishes Art *as* science, and *from* the epistemological empiricism of any *experimental* science (eg., derived from theoretical physics, chemistry, or biology).

Aesthetics, understood as *normative science*, therefore possesses both ‘rational’ and ‘irrational’ qualities producing meaning-value (form and non-form) which can produce ‘ethical *intentionality*’. These, when balanced, are capable of moderating Reason: the indifference of *necessities* and *freedoms* (eg., all polarities, and apparent dualisms or paradoxes). But importantly *only without resorting to symbolic mediation*. That resort, in aesthetics according to Schelling, or in ethics according to Scheler, produces ‘artefact’ or ‘moralising’ respectively. Because *such* mediation *serves a lower order utility*.<sup>90</sup>

The reason Art is not the same science as *theoretical* science is because it deals in *possibility*, not probability. (Its self-sufficient precision lies in *deliberation*, not *determination*). This demands greater deliberation from an *active* subject (the Aesthete). In its meaning-production, how something will turn out (in the making) and what exactly that something is (in its admiring) remains indeterminate for the most part – more so the greater the artwork. It requires an active subject to *complete* it. Hence Art’s fundamental reliance on *the Person* and *Prudence*.

This necessary *uncertainty*, however, inherent in Art’s defining *propositional* role, is what in modernity – in the absence of Prudence - gave rise to an array of ‘experts’ to provide ‘authoritative’ deliberation over matters of ‘taste’, often but not always governed by ‘the many’. Unable to distinguish art from artefact, as Aristotle did, ‘aesthetics as theory’ rose to fill the role of augmenting our *natural*

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<sup>89</sup> Aristotle *NE*, 8:29-32: ‘For both carpenter and geometer seek out the right angle but in different ways: the former seeks it insofar as is appropriate to his work; the latter seeks out what it is or what sort of a thing it is, for he is one who contemplates the truth.’

<sup>90</sup> As noted, morality is chosen, and if habituated from ethical deliberation upon ‘*the real*’ becomes a characteristic mode of *preferring*. But ‘moralising’ is an *act of choosing* which, if reduced to the symbolic (and hence utility), can become deceptive *idealising*.

subjectivity with a theoretical authority.

But since such ‘authority’ came to rely entirely upon Kant’s ‘agreeableness’ (ie., false ‘lawmaking’ based on *tastes*), any deliberation about *ends* was ultimately left to the subjectivity of ‘the many’. The artist is, by and large, excused from deliberating much about *meaning*-value or ends; instead encouraged to shape accidentals and fragments, guided by ‘forms’ in the character of ‘genres’, ‘styles’, and technologies of action known to produce familiar *Gestalts*; cumulatively influenced by tastes and fashions of ‘the times’. The artist becomes a master of ‘the senses’, but not necessarily *sense*.

The illusion of an artist’s *real* autonomy thus evaporates. Likewise, an *aesthete*’s prudence and judgement. Both become knowingly or unknowingly enslaved to a field of *sensual* production/consumption bound by constructs of a market ideology locked in the present. Each is therefore compelled by the act of *choosing*, mostly between means, rather than *deliberating* upon ends as Aristotle claims a ‘serious person’ does. To further complicate matters, the object categories of *choice* and *deliberation* have been falsely assimilated in the modern mythology. Their complete merger in our aesthetic habitus has (as earlier explained) been “authoritatively” underwritten by *theories* of choice.<sup>91</sup>

Theorising always favours *choice* in judgement, even though it is ruled by *prefelt* deliberation. As Scheler shows, choosing is an act of *willing*, a pre-conditioned intention. Preferring on the other hand is *a priori* an intuitive act *if* it is directed *between* values themselves (not between ‘goods’). Ethics are thus *preferred*, via intellectual intuition. Morals are *chosen*. If someone ‘prefers’ an experience in the ‘world of goods’ they are willfully ‘choosing’, and not ‘preferring’ (preferring being of higher value than choosing).<sup>92</sup>

This, as both Scheler and Aristotle revealed, is how deception arises.<sup>93</sup> Any

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<sup>91</sup> Hence the ‘artist as hero’ myth. Rebellion and permanent revolution are thus built into the system, by necessity, as the only other real choice available is conforming (neither offering real autonomy). Both corrode the imagination, since ‘success’ becomes defined more by the indomitability of an artist’s character.

<sup>92</sup> Scheler *FE*, 87. Scheler’s ‘order of ranks’ of values establishes that regularity lies in the essence of values themselves. This essence is conceived in an act of ‘preferring’, not ‘choosing’ (and must be habituated): ‘The fact that one value is “higher” than another is apprehended in a special act of value-cognition... of *preferring*... [what is] ... “given,” by virtue of its essence... Whenever this is denied, one falsely equates this preferring with... conation.’

<sup>93</sup> See Scheler in particular (*Ibid*, 88).

modern predilection for ‘anti-art’ (or construing the general aesthetic as art) constitutes a ‘deception of preferring’. Because this is essentially based on the ‘world of goods’, not values. *Moral* deception too arises in such choices. *Both* ethical intuition and moral judgement *become habituated together* in this false assimilation of choice and deliberation. *Ethical* reasoning – only found in the dynamic tensions of an artwork’s nexus of the normative disciplines – then becomes as opaque as it does in the social dynamics and rejection of truth that we *experience* in any meaning crisis.

#### NOTE: WHY METAPHOR AND SYMBOL SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED

A closely associated distinction of that between Art and Artefact is the one between proper metaphor and symbol (which they exclusively tend to manifest respectively).

McGilchrist (2010: 51; citing research by Gloning, Gloning & Hoff, 1968, and Goldberg, 1990), describes two kinds of symbols. The kind that ‘is the focus or centre of an endless network of connotations’ and varies in strength in proportion to the array of *implicit* meanings it can convey (lending it depth and power). And the kind ‘exemplified by the red traffic light: its power lies in its use, and its use depends on a 1:1 mapping of the command “stop” onto the colour red, which precludes ambiguity and has to be explicit’. The first’s particular *propositional* kind of implicitness in its most powerful form produces what Paul Ricoeur defines as *proper* metaphor, which belongs to the realm of the right hemisphere (RH). While the latter ‘symbolic function’, even at its most powerful, is still merely ‘*representational*’, and belongs more to the realm of the left hemisphere (LH).

Though there is no clear line between them, these “symbolic” functions nevertheless consist in two opposing ‘worlding’ (*universalising*) orientations. How, in artistic expression, their application profoundly influences our attention to meaning, is self-evident in Schelling’s definition of art’s *Principle* and systemic categorisation. It clearly demonstrates why Symbol and Metaphor cannot be confused, though they are today often still used interchangeably in common usage. This semantic problem partly stems from “symbolism’s” historical association with *the full spectrum* of meanings upon which those two ‘symbolic’ orientations rest.

Aristotle helpfully divided the first kind of ‘symbol’ into different ‘classes’ of

metaphor, but the word ‘metaphor’ remained for centuries tied to the *literal* use of ‘symbolism’ (in ancient rhetoric). In modernity, their blurred boundaries conceal these different *purposes*; especially, though not only, in artistic expression. This is deeply embroiled with the problem of how art *best* renders meaning implicitly, and distinguishing *perceiving* from knowing. As C. S. Peirce noted, art is about *knowing*, hence phenomenology is key to distinguishing ‘symbolic’ and ‘metaphoric’ orientations to *Reason*.

## APPENDIX B: The Principle of Art’s Ethical Phenomenology

The ‘question of judgement’ about *Art’s* ‘Object’ is critical to that of its related artwork ‘object’. The latter must ultimately remain open and ‘non-determinist’ in any absolute sense, as Schelling, Peirce, and Scheler’s ‘absolutes’ presuppose, for Art’s ‘Objectivity’ to remain genuinely real.

Schelling’s systemic approach to *the progress of meaning* provides a categorical framework for relating the unified principle of art to ‘art in the particular’. Scheler’s *value* hierarchy provides the ethical framework, thus the means of knowing ‘what *mark* to aim for’ (ie., in Aristotle’s virtue ethics). And Peirce’s triadic activity of signs directs us toward ‘concrete reasonableness’; thus, how this mark is manifested (or not) via the interaction of signs. That is, how we can track meaning intentionality, as it emerges from what Maurice Merleau-Ponty calls ‘the obscure zone’. Meaning-value orientation in art can be more objectively obtained by the action of this ‘suspended second’ evident in Ricoeur’s ‘tensions’, and Peirce’s semiotics. Thus, the principle of art is revealed via its exemplars as a way of entering the world of fiction *whose standpoint is not reflective but meaningfully re-productive*.

Letting go of the limitations of reflection is key to recognising meaning emerging from ‘the obscure zone’. Our common tacit *understanding* of the logic of dynamism and tensions (in Schelling’s ‘mythological categories’ and Ricoeur’s ‘metaphoric utterance’) outweighs our common *experiences*, because the former

presents itself in the predicative *potences* (intentionality) of the artwork. This reveals all the dialogical evidence linking aesthetics logically with ethics, necessary to uncover the direction of its meaning-value. Not necessarily in any 'ethical' *content*, rather in a work's *ethical phenomenology* - in the semiotic links between Intentionality and Spirit present in the artmaking itself. In any true artwork this is distinguishable from seemingly identical operations in the 'general aesthetic' (ie., *Gestalts*) in the movement toward *reason* witnessed in the former's phenomenology, but absent in the latter's.

*Gestalts* in and of themselves do not produce *higher* meaning. They only produce one key aspect of it: the indifference between parts and wholes. There is no suspension of secondness in 'general aesthetic' *Gestalt* action. And when we apply Peirce's triadic thinking to the 'craft' or 'design' object - or any object in Nature - we find the activity of signs uncovering *only* the basic *Gestalt* movement which produces the operative affordances. Peirce's 'semiotic realism' thus points to the movement-logic-action nexus, revealing directionality in the conversion of values in Scheler's hierarchy, and Schelling's progression toward the heights of metaphoric meaning morphogenesis. This 'logic of Art' places any genuine artwork in the realm of what is sacred to humanity, via the intentionality revealed in the person-Person relation. 'Ethical intentionality' is thus not found in interpretation, but in immediate self-actualising disclosure - in the *dual* realisation of the *I's* true relation to *the other*, unmediated by symbol.

FIGURE 2 below depicts the emergence of higher meaning from the suspension of Peirce's second (*object 1 -> Object -> real Firstness*). Schelling, Peirce, and Scheler's 'absolutes' converge in the intellectual intuition of 'ethical' propositions, which Peirce's triadic activity of signs directs us to. Thus, Art's *Principle* is revealed, via its exemplars, as not reflective but meaningfully re-productive.



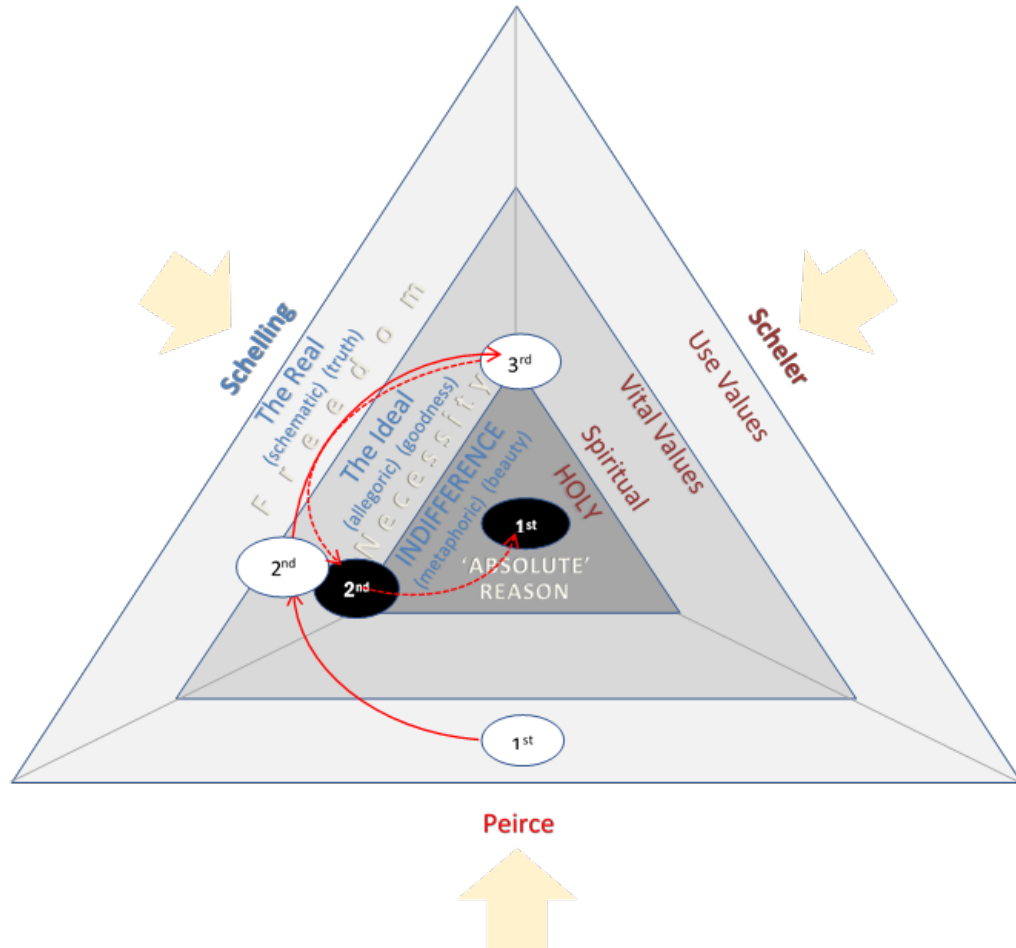


Figure 2- Schematic depiction of movement toward higher meaning-value in the realistic artwork