

Why “Appreciation” Ought be Revived as a Model for the Study of the Arts

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The scene has become tiresomely familiar. I am on some committee with fellow teachers of literature (and sometimes other disciplines in the arts) where I encounter passages like the following:

A twenty-first century liberal education must develop the analytical judgment needed for garnering valuable information and promote the linguistic powers, argumentative skills, and cross-cultural sensitivities required for receiving and deploying ideas persuasively on an international stage where the capacity to work comfortably in more than one language is the expectation and the norm.

Then a little later:

Inquiry in language and literature seeks to know what lettered things are, whether as linguistic artifact, meaningful statement, or symbolic action. It seeks to know what lettered things say about the people, times, and places where they were created and what the effort of reading reveals about the people, times, and places where they are received, discussed, and written about.¹

I want to think my frustration is exaggerated, especially since this particular committee report was obviously driven in part by the perceived interests of language departments. But then I look again at the verbs by which this statement purports to represent liberal arts education on the university level, and my anger returns. These verbs cater entirely to the public’s interest in knowing, analyzing, revealing, and persuading. There seems no awareness of families of other verbs that might at least compete for authority in constructing the ends of literary education, especially as a component of a broader model of liberal studies that might actually challenge the audiences’ epistemic orientation. One family of verbs concerns education in how we learn to enjoy various kinds and qualities of pleasure that affect how we formulate goals for our activities. Another family consists in calling attention to how education can encourage our learning to participate more fully in what we encounter as information: the relevant values here consist of modes of attention, identification, and intimacy all based on the possibility that all of the arts require learning to internalize experiences that initially seem foreign and often disturbing. Both families of terms address the dispositions framing what we do with understanding.

It would be foolish, if tempting, simply to use these possibilities in order to inveigh against the dominant ideals of knowledge. First, we have to consider how flexible the term “knowledge” has become. The knowledge that can take the form of empirical descriptions and propositions is different from the knowledge by acquaintance that gives us access to other cultures in time and in space, and different also from the pursuit of the

¹ I am reluctant to give a specific citation here for fear of being seen as traitor trafficking in insider secrets of sorts, although my opinions were clear at the meeting. I hope my readers will accept my word that I am quoting from a draft report from a group representing various universities.

kinds of coherence that gives us confidence in accounts of those cultures. But I think there are two fundamental limitations in any pursuit of knowledge, limitations that are especially striking when one thinks about humanistic education. Any strict account of knowledge must allow for an account of verification. And any account of verification must indicate how the relevant details of any one situation can be repeated in another: this is how perception is stabilized by concepts. The conditions of verification will change depending on the discipline: cultural analyses of how interests are deployed and revealed will not be held to the same standards of repeatability as propositions in science. But the accounts must indicate how the analysts propose that one case is like another in terms of the structures or laws that come into play.

Second, knowledge claims are embedded in practices and therefore need no supplementary language offering additional motives or interests. Knowledge claims are staged as answering questions, and the fact that the questions exist is all the motivation they require. But liberal education, especially education in the arts, seems impoverished if we assume that all its questions are ultimately practical and that the interests served by our educational practices are contained simply in the questions those disciplines now ask. Minimally, liberal education has traditionally emphasized the pursuit of the power to ask both critical and utopian questions not only about what is the case but about what are the limitations of assuming that our current methods best represent our overall interests in the uses to which our knowledge can be put. And in this spirit a host of further questions emerge – all involving how we negotiate values rather than modes of verification. Is it sufficient to develop empirical accounts of the natural world, or suspicious accounts of the historical world? Can we train people to experience wonder as an accompaniment of knowledge, or can we foster various kinds of care and sympathy and pride and inventiveness that are potential goals for certain kinds of knowledge? Can education systematically foreground opportunities to refine and complicate sensibilities, expand capacities in audiences for grappling with the adjustments and resistances involved in making complicated identifications, and attune our psyches to the sheer power and daunting complexities of how events unfold as humans try to leave a mark on them?

The more our questions proliferate, the more depressing I find academic statements like those that spurred me to write this essay. How can that myopic sense of the humanities even be in the interests of those presenting it, not to mention in the interests of twenty-first century students in general? Dismay, however, is not a very productive emotion. One way to begin working our way out of this morass is to recognize that discourses about the arts are rarely content with epistemic goals. So the arts provide a plausible site for exploring the kinds of experiences that project strong alternatives to ideals of objective verification – strong enough alternatives in fact to challenge our prevailing practical pictures of how and why people communicate. Aesthetic theory, like the art works it represents, may prove to matter for its exemplary powers. For there may well be good reason that most aesthetic theory in the West has stressed the effort of artists to make their work extremely difficult to translate into other terms – a strange and estranging quality in relation to ideals of practical communication and knowledge. Resistance to translation matters for two reasons: it tries to establish the work as “singular” or non-fungible, and it can use this sense of individuality to show more generally what we would lose if we translated it directly into less dense, self-reflexive “practical” frameworks (like those offered by the allegories cultural studies tend to

provide).

Because this aspect of aesthetic theory still makes a good deal of sense, I will ask how we can find a single principle capable of articulating the importance of this emphasis on particularity. And I will answer my own question by proposing that the best means of improving the lot of these twenty-first century students may be to educate them in what is involved in acts of appreciation – a deliciously nineteenth century concept for how agents might focus on the values of particular acts and contexts and thereby develop a complex repertoire of imaginative possibilities they might integrate into their own lives. Then we can spell out how the objects of the humanities invite us to make distinctions in the kinds and consequences of the pleasures that motivate us. And, more important, we can suggest the significance for twenty-first century students of what is at stake in the effort to recognize what is compelling and powerful in individual works of genius.

This return to the concept of appreciation cannot be carried out without a considerable dose of irony – in part because the concept has already had its day and become part of the junk heap of failed metaphors, and in part because my own frustration with the prevailing language makes me all too aware of how proposed alternatives must bear their own desperate and quixotic status in the confident eyes of those who are content with epistemic values. Yet one important role of modern art is to exemplify states where the most intense ironies are compatible with anxious yet resolute hope. After all, proponents of appreciation like Walter Pater never felt the need to sully the concept by attempting to buttress it by patient philosophical exposition of its constituent features. So the concept all too quickly got watered down into two kinds of practices. “Appreciation” became a class-based ability to make the careful distinctions characteristic of connoisseurship, so that the only relevant values became matters of fine attention rather than celebrations of the power of the overall works in which the particular discriminations played a part. (The class basis of ideals of connoisseurship is most evident in the ways that it was simply assumed people felt the power of the works, so the only relevant educational model was refining delicate sensibilities.). At the other pole, general education paid pale homage to the upper classes by providing labels for courses that offered “art appreciation”, or “the appreciation of literary masterpieces,” or, more recently, “the appreciation of cultural differences”. “Appreciation” in the title became a euphemism for “art history light”, or “close reading without historical context”, or “pieties about cultural difference without the economics necessary to define the plight of oppressed groups”. “Appreciation” as an aspect of a title guaranteed a light dose of any disciplinary training and an utter absence of care to state the philosophical assumptions involved in the relevant practices.

I want to begin establishing one philosophical language for the roles that a concept of appreciation based in aesthetics can play in our thinking about liberal education in general. I will have to focus on the aesthetic dimension of the term, but that should suffice to make visible how the ideals involved might affect some priorities in the teaching of history and philosophy. “Appreciation” matters because it provides an active principle by which to dramatize what considerations of affect and force in the relation to particular aesthetic objects make possible in the world beyond art. Spelling out these considerations will entail developing four basic themes. The first two are closely connected: appreciation is attuned to particular objects and events in ways that more

insistently cognitive approaches cannot match, and appreciation differentiates itself from cognitive activities because it is concerned not with describing those objects and events to include them within general frameworks but rather with specifying the possible significant power of what emerges as particular. Appreciation seeks the purposiveness within objects and events so that it can emphasize what can be exemplary for sorting experiences; it does not seek to subsume the particular within the categories available for sorting. Third, appreciation allows us to bring to bear unapologetically a full language of expertise at making aesthetic discriminations in our attributions of value both on the part of what the maker brings and on the part of what the audience can contribute. Finally, this expertise can have a significant place in social life because of the way ideals of appreciation complement a contemporary version of Kant's notions of aesthetic judgment. Appreciation offers a model for showing concretely how we reconcile subjective intensities with appeals to a shared sense of what aesthetic experience displays. And those processes of reconciliation offer directions of self-reflection providing a concrete basis for Kantian speculation about the harmony of the faculties.²

The first two themes emphasize how "appreciation" can be very useful in developing why traditional aesthetics focuses on the values involved in attending carefully to the particularity of objects and events. Appreciation characterizes what active responsiveness to "thisness" can afford in our engagement with the arts and in our capacities to make our experiences of art significant for our experiences of the world beyond art. The figure of the appreciator provides a worthy counterpart to the figure of the knower – the one seeking to flesh out the power of particulars to engage attention, the other to account for what general factors allow the particular, what significance it has. The appreciator brings the capacities of verbs to what otherwise exist as mere nouns: manner replaces matter.

We have to do a relatively intricate dance to flesh out this claim about manner. The claim participates in the long tradition, sponsored by Kant and then romanticism, of idealizing the "other" of what can be codified by the understanding. But in the twenty-first century all romanticizing of positive claims about the mystical qualities of that otherness have joined the junk heap. This seems to have left only two alternatives to this line of thinking – it can idealize the pure principle of "other" as value, making the lack of a possible positive language a reason for valuing this otherness, or it can turn to the vitalist register of Bergson's and Deleuze's emphases on qualities of becoming and eventfulness that resist the spatial nature of conceptual thinking. I want to ask less of this tradition in the hope of gaining more explanatory power. It is prudent to avoid the temptation to turn the "thisness" of a particular object or event into talk of "singularity" and "eventfulness" because such talk encourages the metaphysical achievement to

² There are several interesting affinities with my project in the essays collected in *Aesthetics and the End's of Cultural Studies*, a special issue of *American Literature*, 76, no. 3 (2004), especially in relation taking the aesthetic beyond formalism and exploring the potential of Kantian model of judgment to connect art to the political sphere. However, I think that one cannot combine the aesthetic with cultural studies without explicit resistance to the cognitive orientation of that discipline and without rejecting the language of "materialism" as binding thinking to outmoded oppositions. In attempting to demonstrate what can be accomplished by setting appreciation against such ideals of knowledge, I will have to avoid disputes about how to read Kant. My reading is not attentive to the scholarly disputes about Kant because this construction of Kant is intended primarily for use as a demonstration of the work the concept of appreciation might do. The focus is not on what Kant intended but on one possible use of one way of reading Kant.

displace the aesthetic one. It is all too easy to have the fact of “singularity” matter more than the specific qualities that do the work of resisting categorization, especially when the appeal can then be made to establish a significant other of representation free of conceptual determinants. The danger here is that any particular will do, without much concern for the degree of articulation. Recognizing this danger allows us to relish the opportunity in such cases to concentrate on the specific qualities that invite our shifting from matter to manner and so fleshing out why the particular in itself can be regarded as valuable. Then we can focus on disclosing the various senses of activity that give this particular the qualities of determinacy capable of affording a significant event.

Thanks to Pater we do not have to continue in this abstract vein. He provides striking concrete terms for how appreciation can be regarded as a mode of activity in response to an object or event that constitutes an action in its own right. For Pater this means emphasizing how a particular manifests personality and so demands affective engagement: “Literary art, that is, like all art that is any way imitative ... is the representation of such fact as connected with the soul, of a specific personality, in its preferences, its volition and power.”³ In the twenty-first century we are more leery of claims about personality, and with good reason. Yet there are other ways to dramatize how specificity can be a matter of volition and of power. After all, Pater’s great sentence “If style be the man, in all the color and intensity of a veritable apprehension, it will be in a real sense ‘impersonal’” (1437) makes us reconsider personality as something approaching a natural force rather than an invitation to speculating about inwardness. The particular matters simply because it makes the embodiment of “a peculiar sense of fact” (1425). The object (or event) must be responsive to a concern for how the particular provides a distinctive sense of what can be valued. Appreciation completes the circuit that begins with the ability of an agent to find a means of expression for the volition and power involved in this peculiar sense of fact.

Clearly, manifestations of volition and power are not confined to art objects. Indeed it is a crucial value of the language of appreciation that we can recover the force of aesthetic attitudes as framing far more than aesthetic objects. But on this occasion I will talk only about art objects, in the hope that the extension to other kinds of objects and events will be obvious. My task then is to clarify what provides the best framework for attributing that particularity on which acts of appreciation can be focused. More concretely, I have to find a way of locating the source of volition and power that is not trapped in outmoded languages of personality and temperament. My first step is to distinguish between models of intentionality that take the form of psychological claims about an intention to mean something and languages of intentionality that take the form of wanting to produce a certain kind of object. We can finesse notions of an inner intention to mean if we imagine intentionality in art as consisting in the willingness to take responsibility for letting the object be a part of the public world. The significant intentionality here is simply the manifestation that whatever the embarrassment it might cause, this work is sufficiently satisfying that the author will stake his or her identity on its being made available to audiences.⁴ Then the relevant aspects of volition and power

³ Walter Pater, “Style”, in: *Appreciations*, reprinted in Charles Harrold and William Templeman (eds.), *English Prose of the Victorian Era*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938: 1426.

⁴ There will be cases like the poetry of Emily Dickinson where we have to qualify this claim by attributing intentionality to the speaker’s satisfying herself enough to preserve the work without publishing

can only be what the work manifests, not what remains hypothetical inference to a historical psyche.

I find this distinction between kinds of intentionality especially important because we can then establish a speculative model for how this intentionality becomes visible and invites appreciation. I suggest making a sharp distinction between how we attribute intentions to performative and how we attribute intentions to what I call demonstrative speech acts.⁵ That is, rather than see the text as an action invoking or recasting the various illocutionary possibilities within a culture, we can see it as the author demonstrating what he or she can do to construct exemplary status for a particular rendering of experience. The demonstrative in culture is any act attempting to offer itself as an example rather than either predicating some truth or invoking some social convention. Demonstratives include “try it this way”, “this is how you can direct your attention if you want to learn a skill”, and “I want this to show how I can handle the difficulties involved in this task”. So the demonstrative can subordinate the agent to the task, as in showing someone how to ride a bicycle, or the demonstrative can stress the particular skills of the agent, with the audience invited to participate by fleshing out or attempting to identify with that achievement.

The most important feature shared by these examples is that we have a clear particular for our attention and a clear invitation to a specific kind of response that languages of knowing cannot provide. Both kinds of demonstratives involve appreciation of the qualities that the agent brings to the task. As Pater puts it: “The house he has built is rather a body he has informed” (1432). So appreciation has at its command the various resources of the vitalist tradition in philosophy without having to share its metaphysical speculations. The basic object for appreciation is the becoming of a subject defined in the demonstrative. And in either understanding of the demonstrative, the audience too takes on actual substance in the manner by which it encounters and defines that sense of becoming. In this sense at least appreciation is dialectical – it does not work through particulars to find a result that can stand on its own but its end is the recognition of what is valuable about the person who has been produced by taking that path.

The third quality I attribute to appreciation derives from a conversation with Marjorie Perloff in which she was lamenting what one might call the willful naturalism of politically inflected literary criticism. Literary criticism’s fear of elitism encourages representational readings of texts because the representational qualities are the most discernible, and the least dependent on any kind of connoisseurship. This orientation fits perfectly with cognitive emphases, since these representational qualities are what immediately ties the work to the world and engages an audience’s interest. But are we at all adequate to the authorial activity when we have such emphases, especially when the author creates difficulties for any transparent pictorial equation between text and world?

it.

⁵ I refer to two forthcoming essays, “The Concept of Style,” in Richard Eldridge (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Literature and philosophy*, and “Tractatus Poeticus Logicus,” in *Critical Inquiry*. I think both performatives and demonstratives provide feasible alternatives to perlocutionary discourse because they bring to bear resources from beyond the domain of language. Performatives are continuous with kinds of actions that enact conventions, like dance. And demonstratives are continuous with displays like showing one’s wares or teaching by non-discursive means. And because to those continuities, both principles are easily extended to non-verbal art. But the demonstrative is better suited to actions that emphasize the actual display of what cannot be assimilated to epistemic models.

Then training and experience become central features of any attentive responsiveness. We need historical expertise to see how the authorial act positions itself. And we need technical expertise to register and to articulate the distinctive qualities of style and of tone that make the particular sense of fact indeed peculiar in its assertiveness, yet no less impersonal in its ability to transform itself into what becomes an objective example of an attitude the audience can then test for how it can modify its own experiences. For a full appreciation of the distinctiveness and utility of authorial acts, expertise cannot be content to apologize for itself but has to become an aggressive act of modeling in its own right showing how the object can take on significance. Yet this opening to the connoisseur by no means reduces appreciation to the celebration of expertise. One has to concentrate on what expertise can do to clarify how volition and power get embodied.

Finally, I want to elaborate Kant's model of aesthetic judgment as crucial to appreciation because it provides a model for the roles that audiences play, and hence for fleshing out an account of appreciation as significant action in its own right. Appreciation is a way of representing the subject's experience. That is, one is not stating an opinion but characterizing an event. So the subject is not simply the mediator of a judgment but in many ways the center of the judgment – the qualities of the subject's response are inseparable from what the subject says about the object. The object cannot be separated from the subject, as is the case with descriptions. For the judgment is more like an expression than a description, a statement of the subject's sense of a peculiar sense of the event. But the concept of appreciation requires more than this registering of subjective pleasure. It requires treating this subjective experience as if it could have sufficient scope to be regarded as imaginatively legislating for an audience, as if the subject had so positioned itself from the start that its responses might be represented as exemplary. Then one can also say that we need not rely on any specific account of a faculty of judgment. Rather one can appropriate Kant on aesthetic judgment simply because he provides an ideal model for that disposition that best distinguishes appreciation from simple enjoyment.

These claims are sufficiently intricate and sufficiently important to require my working through the four basic claims Kant makes about our powers for making judgments in matters of taste. As to quality, such a judgment "is not a cognitive judgment and so is not a logical judgment but an aesthetic one, by which we mean a judgment whose determining basis cannot be other than subjective." Aesthetic judgment is not compelled by fact or argument since it is not "subsumptive" but "merely reflective" and so derives from the pleasure of participating in some particular intuition or reflection.⁶ Second, the quantity of such reflexive judgments also involves a claim to universality, but only on the basis of asking that a subjective state prove exemplary and thus take on the status of "subjective universality" (54). This judgment "resembles a logical judgment inasmuch as we propose it to be valid for everyone" (54). But the judgment cannot derive from concepts because "from concepts there is no transition to the feelings arising from pleasure or displeasure" (55). So such judgments extend "the predicate over the entire sphere of judging persons" (59) without having any specific concept of an object by

⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, translated by Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987: 44-45. Future references to this text will be included in the body of my argument.

which to anchor that claim in something we take as true.

Kant's third moment postulates a feature of the object that can sustain universality in judgment without having to rely on any concept. This is the role "purposiveness without purpose" plays. Purposiveness is surprisingly like Pater's personality become impersonal: "Beauty is an object's form of purposiveness insofar as it is perceived in the object without the presentation of a purpose"(84). We attribute beauty to objects when we see forming activity that is not reducible to imposing a purpose on an object: rather the object's form becomes the singular, living consequence of manifest patterns of particular shapings (the marks of power and volition). Finally the modality of a judgment of taste is its claim to necessity. We utter aesthetic judgments when we think our claim can be "exemplary": it is seen as holding for everyone "as an example of a universal rule that we are unable to state"(85).

These claims appear light-years away from anything contemporary theorists propose. Yet I think that fiddling with these elements a bit will show how Kant can be used to show how the concept of appreciation can perform tasks which the prevailing modes of thinking cannot accomplish – either in defense of cognitivist values or as critiques of those values along the lines of poststructural theories. Judgment is first of a means of clarifying what might matter in how an individual takes pleasure in particular events and objects. Or, in my terms, judgment shows how demonstratives can elicit nuanced languages of relevant qualities that contribute to the distinctiveness of the pleasures we take in those particulars.⁷ Kant's major contribution here is his dramatizing the possibility that the language of values need not be based on cognitive activity. We can make value judgments which do not derive from concepts but from our direct awareness of various qualities and of how they might fit together. And if we can treat these subjective acts as claiming a force for other people, we can see why our own work to articulate our responses might at least strive for exemplary status.

Not all subjective pleasures entail claims for the agreement of other people. Those claims derive from a distinctive disposition shaping the pleasure, a disposition oriented toward not just enjoying the object of contemplation but finding in it a cause for approval. While enjoyment consumes the object in the service of the subject's immediate desires, approval depends on the subject's opening the self to what be those properties of the object engaging its attention and allowing it to dispose itself toward a public. (There is a close analogy here to Kant's distinction between prudence and the concern in moral judgment not for happiness but for worthiness to be happy.) This complex orientation requires the equally complex concept of purposiveness – first to characterize what there is about the object that invites responses of approval and then to characterize how the appropriate response itself involves a relation between subject and object that cannot be grasped by the understanding.

Purposiveness must be contrasted to the attributing of purposes. When we attribute purposes we assign particulars to general concepts. We can understand how two

⁷ One person in the meeting that has generated this essay said: "Why are you not satisfied with this report since it does in one place refer to 'literature's educative force' as depending 'on experiences where students and faculty members grapple together with the genuine difficulties and pleasures of literary works'." She ignored the next clause, "and engage in inquiry directed to understanding literary works and the domain of the verbal generally", as well as the fact that the succeeding sentence offers the sentiments in my second quotation from the report.

different chairs both suggest that their utility is as seats. Analogously, two different arguments can both elicit a sense that their purpose is to persuade us of a specific plan of action. These are subsumptive judgments. But now imagine the reflective judgment of simply dwelling on the design of each chair or each psyche involved in forming the argument. If we attend to the individual making or demonstrating, we trace a series of imagined choices that are aimed at making the object more vivid or intense or balanced, or securing all of those attributes at once. Now we are in the domain of purposiveness. There is no governing intention that can be conceptualized. There is only the apparent intention to work on the internal structure of the object (or if we make the analogy to historical situations, the purposiveness becomes the enacting of the desire to display the kinds of care that the action might reflect). Even if this intentionality cannot be transformed into a concept, it can have a kind of public existence: the nature and force of these actions can be indicated and their effect postulated.

Purposiveness is first a concern for distinctive qualities of actions where subject and object fuse. That concept explains how the work's fitting its various qualities together in various ways can intensify our appreciation of what might be at stake in how we stage this attention, even though no concept is possible that can adequately characterize the intricacies involved. As Wittgenstein repeatedly argues, aesthetics is less a matter of straightforward description than a matter of recommendations to play something one way rather than another to test the richness of what becomes available. Then, Kant asks us to reflect on how that responsiveness to purposiveness brings out analogous features of our own responsiveness that also are too subtle and too diffuse for conceptual analysis.

Those Wittgensteinian recommendations are twentieth-century versions of Kant's notion that reflexive judgment can take on the quantity of universalization and the modality of necessity. And I think the concept of recommendations suffices to show how the language of appreciation can at least project the correlation of subjective intensities with a universality that is analogous to moral judgment. For these recommendations bridge what subjects experience and what they communicate to others as having the force of approvals. But what authority can these recommendations have? What makes them even a candidate to serve as exemplary for other people? There is no answer possible if we assume that subjectivity is just one thing, just the private modality by which the world becomes my world. We can, though, also imagine subjectivity as capable of various stances in which the effort to see as other people see becomes a fundamental subjective motive. Then we can imagine Kant asking for this modification in subjective stances. The difference between enjoying and approving is not simply a different relation toward the object but a different manifestation of what we envision the disposition of the subject to be.

One test for our interest in these various subject positions is whether we can imagine a variety of pleasures and intended satisfactions depending on how we regard our positions as subjects. I contend that the pleasures in acts of enjoyment are phenomenologically quite distinct from the pleasures involved in acts of approving what we see as the working of an aesthetic object. The pleasure in the second case is largely in becoming the kind of agent who has mastered the discipline involved in taking positions where one can attribute those subjective responses to qualities that ought to

govern the responses of others. For then one can represent one's own experience as breaking out of the limitations of "personality" – not as mere duty but as a recasting of one's capacity for pleasure. One takes pleasure in grasping what can be interpersonal and normative about subjective states. Because no concept is involved, one has to limit the demand to projecting this "ought" without any concept such as moral law might provide: one can find authority for these judgments and one has to recognize that they might not be shared. Yet that distance from concepts does not undermine the possibility that the effort at approval might find agreement, and so disclose within subjective activity the capacity for a sociality that feels as if it can sharpen and deepen judgment.

The disposition to approve derives from a subject's interest in having experiences from the point of view of their possible communication, for example in most decisions teachers make about how to represent their pleasures. Then, if we can agree that there can be utterances with analogous force to conceptual judgments but not based on cognitions, we can attribute to appreciation considerable social force. In effect, through judgments offered about acts of appreciation, agents exemplify for other agents possibilities of taking pleasure, and possibilities of willing that taking of pleasure in part because that pleasure itself forms a ground for social connection. We can see our appreciative responses as invoking a concreteness which, as concreteness, offers the potential to model what a society can find basic to its self-definition. Appreciation is that state where one feels oneself sufficiently modified by its pleasure in an object to attempt letting the terms of that pleasure shape who one becomes in the discourse about this pleasure.

A twenty-first century liberal education might begin here, with the appreciation of appreciation as fundamental to shaping our interests in what the world affords and in forging social agreements about those interests.

I ought to end here but cannot resist two final remarks. I have to admit that there is one serious limitation to the role of an appreciator. That role is not sufficiently ego-centric to account for the production of art. Rather it can only be envisioned as a model for consumption. Therefore, there has to be a parallel role for the maker, the person who even when he or she appreciates also imagines producing something different or transforming what one receives. Many critics now treat this productive force as a desirable aspect of consumption: aesthetic appreciation becomes the feeling of power to treat one's engagement as one's own production. But in my view, this brings consumption in art too close to the ego-roles projected by capitalist values. And more important, that vision locks making and responding within the depths of the ego and blinds itself to an important possible source of the kinds of sociality that stem from flexible subject positions. It is a useful corrective within capitalist society to stress ways in which appreciation can break our normal understanding of consumption. Most important, it seems to me that the difficulties and ecstasies of making are treated reductively when making is confused with mere sloppy appreciation.

We can give dramatic force to this argument by imagining various concrete roles that are played out in the domain of aesthetic activity. If we separate the appreciator from the maker, we can better see how both roles are differently positioned with respect to a third role that haunts both positions. This is the role of the boor. At one pole the appreciator is threatened by the possibility that its actions will be not sufficiently distinctive, will not separate the judgment from banal tastes and desires. At the other

pole, the role of boor seems a kind of body of fate that the maker is continually resisting, since egocentricity must always risk collapsing into the demonic other of what appreciation makes possible.

My second remark returns to the importance of appreciation seeking a strong language for what in the object manifests volition and power and a peculiar sense of fact. For while we have many languages for the limitations of imposing ideals of knowledge on the arts and on liberal education, almost all of the current languages are content with very weak accounts of the object. It is as if the only way successfully to negate the claims of knowledge or instrumental reason is to develop only negative terms for what might resist those claims. Therefore, I think the goal of appreciation provides a significant alternative to those models of resisting the rule of concepts by idealizing “the other” in both ethics and aesthetics.

This deconstructive and Levinasian idealizing of the other seems at core a Kantianism gone immensely stingy by depriving itself of the category of ideas of reason. There is left only the limits of understanding and the negative processes which continually expose those limits. Even in aesthetic and affective domains, any positive assertion seems betrayed by the very fact that it can be made positive and so re-appropriated for instrumental knowledge. So, the “other” is the only principle remaining from culture’s romance with populating the domain of the unrepresentable *ding an sich*. For only the notion of “otherness” has so little positive content it cannot be deconstructed. But this triumphant making positive of the negative seems to me a Pyrrhic victory.

Even if there is no object that can transcend the descriptions of the understanding to afford determinate positive values, we can still locate values in the ways subjects negotiate their encounters with various kinds of objects. When we stress possibilities of the subject, the other of representation ceases to be a negative force. Instead the other as subject can compose purposive states that challenge the understanding because of their excess rather than their lack of determination. These states still resist cognition. But they reward appreciation because appreciation tries to attune itself to what escapes concepts so that it can develop possibilities of agreement on how the subject becomes engaged in such states. We do not have to base ethical and aesthetic values on what refuses all determinations. What is other to concepts gains the possibility of eliciting a phenomenology that can value positive features absorbing our attention and eliciting efforts to make those features visible to one another. Appreciation is the sensitivity to purposiveness as the vehicle of an increasing intimacy with whatever concrete forms the actions of that other can take.

Having heard all too often the importance of literary education for developing various cognitive skills in relation to cultural contexts, the author proposes the possibility of resurrecting the concept of appreciation as a focus for talking about the values education can pursue through the arts. Appreciation is the study of performances – in life and in art -- that demonstrate particular skills and the differences they can make if we allow them to serve as examples of what is possible in experience. So appreciation differs from cognition in the emphasis on manner of expression, on the object as not an independent object of knowledge but exemplified features of how we sort the world, on the importance of expertise for making the

appropriate distinctions, and on the mode of judgment by which we distinguish purposive experience from experience subsumed under purposes. But appreciation does not separate art from life; instead it calls attention to intensities in our experiences of the world that cognitive languages have trouble registering.

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