

INTRODUCTORY:

PRAGMATIST AESTHETICS.

ART, EXPERIENCE, AND PRACTICES OF ART

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Pragmatist aesthetic theory is always in the making; it allows one to become a creator and not simply an observer. The pragmatist approach to the theme is two fold. In one respect philosophical theory sheds light on art practices and the experience of art. At the same time innovative forms of art and contemporary art practices contribute to the development of pragmatist aesthetics. The seven papers presented in this section explore both dimensions of this relation and at the same time act accordingly – they follow either deductive or inductive reasoning and take either aesthetics or art as a starting point. In general, the focal theme is the understanding of art that is pioneered in the works by John Dewey.

Roberta Dreon in her paper argues that Dewey's approach to aesthetics can exert a peculiarly 'refreshing' effect on the traditional analytical debate in the philosophy of art. She considers three strictly related concepts that, as she states, shape Dewey's distinctive point of view: "aesthetic experience", "aesthetic quality", and "consummation". Through her inquiries into these three concepts Dreon demonstrates that Dewey's conception of art makes sense of our common experiences and of our interaction with the environment. The interaction leads to the notion of consummatory experience and enjoyment, and to the understanding of art forms that do not fit traditional categories.

It is well known that pragmatist aesthetic theory does not operate with such categories as beauty and does not single out fine arts as the true ones. The representational theory of mind does not work in pragmatist aesthetics because mind and body are treated not as two separate entities but as an

inseparable whole in their continuity. Meaning is embodied meaning, which "emerges as structures of organism-environment interactions or transactions" (Johnson, Mark, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007, p. xii). Falling back on Mark Johnson's theory allows one to explore "the bodily depths of human meaning-making" that takes place in various situations, including the media environment and cinematography, where the visceral connection to the world is a more complicated case of interaction and mediation, and which involves several perceiving and interacting subjects.

Taking this path, Mikhail Stepanov considers the role of pragmatist philosophy of media in the development of the philosophical study of media. From his point of view pragmatism, with its central focus on experience, practice and embodiment, proves to be a precise tool for philosophical scholars of media as both the public and the professional worlds are permeated by the media, and people continuously interact with the world, with others and with themselves through media. The task of a pragmatic philosophy of media, as Stepanov understands it, is to study medial experiences. In Stepanov's view these experiences are acquired in the process of interaction between artifacts and patterns of perception. Once again, the key word here is common everyday experience, which is outside any categorization in terms of beauty or truth.

Cinematography, which is one kind of media, portrays characters in their environments, thus allowing a correlation of the body and consciousness in their continuity, and in the context of their environment. However, the cinematographic versions of interaction with the environment differ from the ones taking place in our world, not simply due to the character of the screen world and of cinematic representation but also to the multi-subject structure of organism-environment interaction. Lyubov Bugaeva in her quest for the making sense of watching movies in terms of experience arrives

at the idea of an 'active perception'. The process of watching movies from this point of view is a way of acting. While the viewer is immersed in the film flow he shapes and is shaped by the screen version of the environment. This ongoing interaction between the virtual and the real world builds the basis of enactive cinema and maybe even of the cinema of the future.

The ideas of lived experience, embodiment and interaction with environment, though taken in a different context and in different philosophical traditions that reveal unexpected similarities (Max Scheler and Williams James), permeate Rebecca Farina's paper. Art is seen as self-contained and at the same time connected with communal living. Similarly, Alex Kremer claims that Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and Shusterman's neopragmatism are much alike as they share such features as anti-foundationalism, pan-relationism, and anti-essentialism.

The theme of John Ryder's paper is also interaction and everyday life experience, though with a twist. Ryder explores the constitutive relations between city and countryside that he discovers and discloses. Contrary to the established semiotic opposition of civilization (city) and nature (countryside), Ryder claims that none of them prevails over the other and that both equally contribute to the enrichment of aesthetic experience and art production. Larry Hickman highlights the presence of the aesthetics dimension in commonplace things as well as the reciprocal and unbreakable ties between quotidian, lived experiences and fine, spiritual arts. He develops the contribution that quotidian aesthetics makes to our refined aesthetic environment and suggests that the objects of quotidian aesthetics are instrumental for creating art.

Taken as a whole, the seven papers on aesthetics presented in this volume reveal a number of principles of pragmatist aesthetics – experientiality that presupposes rootedness in common, lived experience; attention to the quotidian, which is seen as a source of 'fine' arts; the active and interactive character of art; complementarity, and embodiment. One hopes that the experience of reading them will itself be consummatory.