

## Chapter Five

### Alexius Meinong and Stephan Witasek

#### On Art and Its Objects

##### *1. Meinong and the Problem of Non-Veridical Intentionality*

Alexius Meinong was born in Lemberg of a Catholic noble family in 1853 and studied in Vienna under Brentano from 1875 to 1878. From 1882 to 1920 he was professor of philosophy in Graz, where he was the first to carry out experiments in Gestalt psychology in a systematic way.<sup>1</sup> Meinong's influence extended also to the English-speaking world, above all through Bertrand Russell, whose theory of descriptions was developed in part in reaction to Meinong's ontological excesses. The influence of Meinong and of his student Ernst Mally can be seen at work also in the development of deontic logic and of the so-called 'free logics' or 'logics without existence assumptions', which have been propagated in no small part as a means for resolving problems of intentional reference bequeathed by Meinong and the members of his school in Graz.<sup>2</sup>

The central problem of Meinong's philosophy might be formulated as follows: how are we to understand the intentionality of mental acts which lack

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1. The results of these experiments are presented above all in writings of Witasek, Höfler, Ameseder and Benussi. See Stock and Stock 1990 for a definitive bibliography of these writings. On Meinong's philosophy in general see Findlay 1968, Grossmann 1974 and Haller (ed.) 1972.

2. See e.g. Parsons 1980, Sylvan 1980, Lambert 1983. On Mally, who of all Meinong's students was closest to the new developments in formal logic, see Poli 1990.

existing objects? Two alternative families of solutions to this problem present themselves, both of which have been inspired by Meinong's work: on the one hand are what we might call 'relational' solutions, which would involve the postulation of special non-existent objects or of objects which are, as Meinong puts it, 'beyond being and non-being'. On the other hand are what we might call 'adverbial' solutions, which would appeal instead to certain special qualities of the given acts themselves in order to explain (away) their apparent intentional directedness.<sup>3</sup>

Our mental acts have the property that we seem to become related, through them, to objects of all conceivable varieties. This occurs both immediately (in our perceiving of this table, for example) and mediately (when we think about the carpenter who built this table, or about the heaviest table in Smolensk). There is, however, a crucial difference between these two kinds of relatedness. Crudely expressed, we can say that it is only in the former case that it is possible to claim, commonsensically, that a real link or connection to an object is in fact established. In the latter case, the acts in question manifest merely certain internal similarities to properly relational acts. Even here, however, the mere existence of an object will be sufficient guarantee that a relational sentence can correctly be employed to describe the directedness of the acts involved.

What, however, of those anomalous acts which are characterized by the fact that they lack existing objects? Acts of this sort can occur either because we are mistaken in our belief to the effect that a putative object exists, or because we quite deliberately exercise imagination, for example when we have to do with works of art. The exercise of the imagination is of course not always a purely mental affair. It can take the form of real bodily involvement with real objects serving as material props, as for example when the artist imagines how a finished painting will look by squinting at his canvas, or when theatre-goers allow themselves to become entranced by the actions on the stage. In all such cases, however, imagination is perforce a special way of being directed towards existing objects.<sup>4</sup> Meinong's goal, in contrast, is to find a theory capable of

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3. See e.g. Rapaport 1979. Immanentistic doctrines of the sort defended by Brentano can be included under this heading also.

4. This point has been emphasized by Ryle in *The Concept of Mind*, and also by Walton, for example in his "Pictures and Make-Believe" (1973), both of whom see imagination as primarily a behavioural matter. Ryle argues that it is our capacity to pretend, or *make-believe*, in overt actions, that is the key to the understanding of the nature of imagination in general.

doing justice also to strictly non-veridical imagining, and to all other sorts of acts which simply lack existing objects. Here the most familiar examples are provided by the acts of apparent object-directedness which are involved in our readings of works of fiction. The acts in which we follow the adventures of Sherlock Holmes do, certainly, involve the use of material props – the printed texts themselves – but not in such a way that these props would serve as objects. Moreover, for all their anomalous status, such acts do bear certain analogies to directly relational acts of perception or of memory, so that their linguistic expression may utilize the same relational forms that are employed in expressing object-directed acts of a more straightforward sort.

Brentano's doctrine of intentionality states, in one form at least, that all acts have a directedness towards an object, and that it is such directedness which marks them out as psychological. This doctrine, as applied to anomalous acts, comes in two characteristic forms. On the first, immanentistic form of the doctrine (the form in which it was accepted by Brentano himself), the object of such an act is seen as residing in some sense in the mind of the imagining subject. In this form, as we saw, the doctrine involved a radical overhaul of our common-sense conception of the veridical intentionality of our normal acts of seeing and thinking. The immanentistic idea can also be associated with a view according to which we enjoy two kinds of intentionality or relational directedness towards the objects of our acts: a transcendent relational contact, where we perceive or remember real, external tables; and an immanent relational contact, where we imagine unreal, internal tables, or 'see' tables 'in the mind's eye'. This option, too, has problems, however, not least in virtue of the existence of cases where the subject clearly does not know what sort of object his act is directed towards.<sup>5</sup> Both versions of the immanence theory will accordingly be left out of account in what follows.

The second form of the doctrine is most commonly associated with Meinong, though it originated in Twardowski's *On the Content and Object of Presentations* of 1894.<sup>6</sup> This seeks to preserve the conception of intentional

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5. Arguments against the immanence theory are provided e.g. by Husserl in LU V ' 11, by Ryle (1949, ch. VIII), and – with special reference to image-theories – by Sartre (1940). For a defence of the dual-intentionality view see Smith 1984.

6. All presentations, Twardowski says, necessarily have objects, and all objects have properties. However some objects do not exist. See his 1894, ' 5.

directedness as amounting in every case to a relation between an act and some transcendent target. It therefore embraces an ontology which sees transcendent objects as being divided into the two classes of *existing* and *non-existing*. Acts of non-veridical imagining are then seen as being distinguished from ordinary veridical acts of perception, memory, and so on, in the fact that, where the latter are directed towards existing objects, the former are directed towards objects which do not exist.

Meinong's fully developed object theory provides in every case for precisely suitable objects which are capable of serving as the targets not merely of acts such as those involved in reading works of fiction but also of acts directed towards possible and even impossible entities of every conceivable sort. His ideas in this connection have given rise to a number of valuable insights, above all in work on the logic of fiction and on the semantic treatment of sentences involving non-referring (or non-straightforwardly-referring) singular terms. Here, however, our attentions shall be directed to the psychological core of Meinong's work, to the attempt to devise a framework within which it would be possible to do justice to the characteristic features of mental acts and states of all varieties, without prejudice to those not directed towards what exists. Meinong sought to free himself from that 'prejudice in favour of the actual' which had in his eyes been characteristic of all previous metaphysics. Thus when dealing with acts of imagination and the like, he draws particular attention to the fact that such acts are normally distinguished from their veridical counterparts not merely in regard to the ontological status of their (putative) objects, but also in their form and nature *as acts*. This does not hold in all cases: the child's judgments about Santa Claus are not distinguished, in their form or nature as judgments, from his judgments about, say, Captain Cook; and Leverrier's judgments about the planet Vulcan are similarly not distinguished from his judgments about Saturn or Mars. It does, however, hold of those more interesting varieties of non-veridical acts which are involved in our aesthetic experience. For such acts are distinguished from veridical judgments, perceivings, and the like, not only in the fact that they lack existing objects, but also in themselves.<sup>7</sup>

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7. For more on Meinongian aesthetics see McCormick 1990, esp. ch. 10.

## 2. *The Phantasy Modification*

Consider, then, the family of acts which are marked by the absence or suspension of belief in the relevant (putative) object. These are subject to what Meinong calls the ‘phantasy modification’, his use of the term ‘modification’ serving to draw our attention to the fact that linguistic formulations of the effects of suspension require that one pays careful attention to certain modifying features of the corresponding expressions. These features have been described most succinctly by Twardowski, who draws a distinction between two different sorts of adjective:

An adjective is called attributive ... if it completes, enlarges – be it in a positive or in a negative direction – the meaning of the expression to which it is attached. An adjective is modifying if it completely changes the original meaning of the name to which it is attached. Thus in ‘good man’ the adjective ‘good’ is a truly attributive one; if one says ‘dead man’, one uses a modifying adjective, since a dead man is not a man.<sup>8</sup>

Modifying adjectives are divided further into the two classes of ‘determining’ and ‘abolishing’. Determining adjectives have ‘the function of a partial removal of the content expressed by a given noun’, as for instance in ‘forged banknote’ or ‘artificial limb’.<sup>9</sup> Abolishing adjectives on the other hand remove all the characteristics which combine to yield a given idea, as in ‘cancelled performance’, ‘declined handshake’, ‘frustrated entry’, and so on.<sup>10</sup>

The early Husserl, too, defended a type of modification theory, arguing that acts may or may not have the feature *existence positing*.<sup>11</sup> Modified acts are however distinguished for Husserl, at least in certain passages, not by the fact that there are special (‘non-existent’) objects to which they are directed, but by

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8. 1894, p. 13, Eng. trans. p. 11 (slightly altered). For further discussion of this passage see Mulligan 1987. Twardowski’s theory was derived in turn from Brentano (cf. 1924, vol. II, p. 62, Eng. p. 220). See also Marty 1884, pp. 179f.; 1895, p. 34; 1908, pp. 60, 345n., 518f.; 1916, pp. 198ff.; Husserl LU V “ 34, 39; Husserl 1979, p. 309; Leśniewski 1927/31, p. 48, n. 78. There is a remnant of this doctrine of modifying expressions also in Kotarbiński’s notion of ‘substitutive renderings’ or ‘onomatoids’ discussed in Chapter Seven, Section 1, below.

9. Twardowski 1923, p. 28.

10. *Op.cit.*, p. 29. Abolishing adjectives are marked also by the fact that their negations add nothing to the content of the nouns to which they are applied (consider: ‘non-fake’, ‘non-hallucinatory’, and so on).

11. See LU V “ 34f. and cf. Schuhmann 1990/91.

the fact that they *lack objects entirely*: a fictional object is not a special kind of object, any more than an averted war is a special kind of war. Thus the structure of modified acts is not, in contrast to that of their normal, unmodified counterparts, in any sense relational. It is rather to be understood in terms of special internal qualities which the given acts possess. Certainly we find it convenient to avail ourselves of talk of ‘fictional’ or ‘intentional’ objects in order to describe such qualities, but this fact has no ontological significance whatsoever, since this talk of objects is itself to be understood in a modified (abolishing) sense.

The adverbial view in question, which was worked out by Husserl in his 1894 review of Twardowski’s book and in his paper “Intentionale Gegenstände” from the same period, insists quite commonsensically that to say that the god Jupiter is an intentional object of my act is not to say that there is something, namely Jupiter, which lacks existence but is thought about by me. It is rather simply to say that my act is structured, qualitatively, in a certain way – so that it is (a) describable as a presentation-of-the-god-Jupiter, and (b) such as to lack existence-presuppositions.<sup>12</sup>

But can a position along these Husserlian lines be brought into harmony with our entrenched ways of dealing with literary texts? Or is it not rather the case that our intercourse with works of fiction, not only as readers but also as critics and as literary historians, has implications which dictate a properly ontological treatment of fictional objects and a properly relational treatment of fictional acts? It would seem, above all, to be a presupposition of much of our talk about fiction that we can *identify* fictional objects from one act or context to another. Thus we say, for example, that we have learned to understand David Copperfield on re-reading Dickens’ novel; or that Faust is a character who is dealt with both by Marlowe and by Goethe; or that our conceptions of Ophelia have matured, over the ages, with the development of our understanding of the female psyche.<sup>13</sup> The most convenient interpretation of such forms of speech is that which appeals to special sorts of non-existent objects which can be

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12. Note that to be describable as a presentation-of-the-god-Jupiter an act may have to satisfy also certain external (historical) conditions having to do with its connection to the beliefs and habits of the people of Rome.

13. See on these matters the writings on the ontology and on the cognition of literature of Husserl’s disciple Ingarden, above all his 1931. Cf. also Woods 1974 and the survey by Howell 1979, esp. pp. 151, 159ff.

compared and contrasted from one intentional context to the next. It was the tendency to make such identifications which motivated the initial talk of ‘intentional objects’ on the part of Meinong and other early followers of Brentano.<sup>14</sup>

Whether we look at experiences such as those involved in reading fiction in adverbial terms or in terms of special, supernumerary objects, however, we still require an understanding of the psychology of the relevant acts, and in this connection Meinong argues for the application of an analogue of Twardowski’s opposition between descriptive and modifying uses of language to mental phenomena in general. Such phenomena, Meinong holds, are divided into two classes of serious or genuine (*bona fide*) mental phenomena on the one hand and what he calls ‘phantasy phenomena’ on the other.<sup>15</sup>

### 3. *The Marks of Phantasy Phenomena*

A phantasy presentation is distinguished from a *bona fide* presentation by the absence of conviction or belief in the existence of the (putative) presented object. A phantasy judgment is distinguished from a *bona fide* judgment by the absence of conviction or belief in the existence of the (putative) state of affairs which is judged.<sup>16</sup> A phantasy feeling is distinguished from a *bona fide* feeling by the fact that it has as its presupposition not a real judgment affirming the existence of the object of the feeling, but rather a phantasy judgment. The same modification can apply to *all* mental phenomena: the opposition between genuine mental phenomena and ‘phantasy material’ is all-pervasive.

This simple dichotomy can be maintained only for relatively simple acts. Already when we are dealing with future-directed acts we can see that problems

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14. The defender of the Husserlian position might however argue that the relevant contrasts and comparisons can be re-interpreted in terms of the sorts of relations to which the relevant acts stand to each other. Thus our seeming identification of David Copperfield from one reading to the next can be accounted for by appealing to certain dependence relations between the acts involved in the two successive readings, relations which are structurally similar to dependence relations holding between ordinary unmodified acts involving reference to an identical object on two successive occasions.

15. See Meinong 1910, esp. §§ 15ff., 53ff. Parallel ideas are put forward also by the phenomenologist Pfänder; see his 1913/16, Part II, pp. 46ff.

16. Meinong calls such phantasy judgments ‘assumptions’. Compare also the terminology of quasi-judgments developed by Ingarden in his 1931, §§ 25ff., where Ingarden talks of quasi-judgments as being characterized by the ‘absence of a matching-intention’.

will arise in virtue of the fact that even genuine cases of desire, expectation, hope, etc. may lack existing objects and may be experienced as such. Such examples only serve to show however that the two dimensions of having or lacking existing objects and of presence or absence of presuppositions of conviction or belief are in truth independent of each other. Thus we can have a genuine feeling, a feeling accompanied by a belief in the existence of a relevant object, where no such object in fact exists (the child's feelings about Santa Claus); and we can have phantasy feelings directed towards existing objects in which we do not believe (the phantasy feelings I direct towards the objects of an emotionally moving but apparently fictional letter, which I discover only later was in fact addressed to my neighbour's wife). Normally, however, genuine feelings are associated with genuine objects, phantasy feelings with phantasy objects (or with no objects at all), and the departures from this norm will not concern us here.

The terminology of genuine and phantasy feelings (derived from Meinong's talk of '*Ernstgefühle*' and '*Scheingefühle*') should not be taken to imply that the latter are in some sense unreal. Phantasy phenomena are not mere images or phantasms of real psychic phenomena. They are simply conscious processes whose bases lack appropriate moments of conviction or belief. Hence they exist in no less real a sense than do their serious counterparts. They differ, rather, in other ways, which it will be our business to describe. The most important such difference is already clear: phantasy phenomena lack the genuine object-concern or object-directedness characteristic of unmodified phenomena, and the Meinongian terminology of 'genuine' or 'serious' feelings captures the sense in which the feeling of pleasure we have in a kindly act or in a sunset is more genuine than a feeling of pleasure e.g. in the fictional apprehension of a fictional murderer. Thus a phantasy presentation is not a special *kind* of presentation, and a phantasy judgment is not a special *kind* of judgment, any more than an imitation horse is a special kind of horse.

Phantasy presentations and phantasy judgments do of course share certain features with their normal, unmodified counterparts. Thus the phantasy feelings which are built up on phantasy presentations and phantasy judgments as their basis are in some (qualitative) respects similar to the corresponding real feelings, so that we are again accustomed to using identical expressions ('sadness', 'fear', 'pleasure') to refer to them both. Both physiologically and phenomenologically,



the phantasy feeling shares certain features with its ordinary veridical counterpart (as a forged signature shares certain features with a real signature, yet is for all that – in virtue of its history – an entity of a different sort). This physiological similarity is illustrated most clearly in our capacity to cry in the cinema, but it is illustrated also in the capacity of the actor to be carried along by his phantasy feelings to such an extent that it is as if he has been taken over by the character he is playing.

The differences between the two sorts of phenomena are however immense. They manifest themselves first of all in the fact that, taken singly, phantasy feelings (and phantasy phenomena in general) are simpler and more plastic than genuine psychic phenomena. The latter are typically not clearly demarcated from their mental surroundings and they may require psychic effort to be apprehended at all. Phantasy feelings on the other hand are clearly delineated and directly and easily apprehended, and they are much more intimately associated with the circumstances in which they arise. Genuine feelings are differentiated further by a quite specific sort of temporal Gestalt. They normally die away slowly, leaving lingering traces for what may be a considerable period even in the absence of their object.<sup>17</sup> Phantasy feelings, on the other hand, are more like intellectual acts of wondering or deliberating, in that they can be interrupted at will and in such a way that they may then disappear immediately and without trace.

Phantasy phenomena *do not go deep*. Our phantasy life is normally cut off almost entirely from the ordinary human world of actions and forebearances, in reflection of the very special causal and relational structures in which phantasy phenomena are embedded. As Hume expressed it, fictional ideas feel ‘very different from the eternal established persuasions founded on memory and custom. They are somewhat of the same kind; but the one is much inferior to the other, both in its causes and effects.’<sup>18</sup> This is seen most clearly in the case of phantasy desires, which involve no effort on the part of the desiring subject to bring about the realization of the content of the desire in question. Phantasy desires are not, of course, found only in the context of aesthetic experiences.

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17. Cf. Kenny, pp. 58f.

18. *Treatise*, Book I, Part III, Sect. X and compare Schwarz 1905/06, a dissertation on phantasy feelings written under Meinong which includes a detailed criticism of the views of Hume on the phenomena in question.

They are present whenever we are leafing idly through a magazine full of advertisements, or whenever alternative plans or projects are being contemplated in abstraction from serious intent. Thus clearly they can become transformed, under suitable conditions, into real desires. Yet the differences are for all that unmistakable. We are at least to some extent capable of experiencing phantasy feelings in such a way as to emerge from the experience – virtually – unscathed, a fact which will be called in aid as a means of explaining why we are so ready to allow ourselves to be influenced in our emotional lives by works of art.

The most important mark of phantasy phenomena, however, is that they are *subject to our will* to a much greater extent than is the case with genuine psychic material. The latter must rest in every case on some belief, on a belief in the existence of the relevant object; and the acquisition of belief is not something that lies within the control of the subject in question. It presupposes, in normal cases, that the subject invests effort in engaging himself with given objects, and where this is not possible then the acquisition of belief may depend (as unbelievers know) on something like the grace of God. Phantasy phenomena, on the other hand, dispense entirely with a foundation of belief of the given sort, so that completely arbitrary phantasies can be generated at will and without further ado.

From this, however, it follows that the scope of phantasy phenomena which we are capable of experiencing is vastly greater than that of genuine phenomena. In the production of organized combinations and sequences of phantasy phenomena, however, it turns out that there are complex constraints – laws of development and of compatibility – which have to be observed, so that individuals may find it no less difficult to call forth in phantasy the combinations they desire than to create circumstances where corresponding genuine phenomena become available. The powers of the will to give rise to complex combinations of phantasy phenomena can however be extended by the use of special artefacts called *works of art*. These are artefacts which have been specially constructed to serve as reliable catalysts in the production of complexes of the given sort, in ways which prove to be genuinely enjoyable. What we enjoy when we enjoy a work of art on the view here suggested is then precisely the play of phantasy phenomena that the work sets loose within us.

#### 4. *The Aesthetics of the Graz School*

The task of applying the Graz school philosophy and psychology to the working out of a detailed theory of aesthetic phenomena was carried out not by Meinong himself, however, but by his disciple Stephan Witasek, whose thinking on aesthetics influenced the later work of Meinong in its turn. In his *Grundzüge der allgemeinen Ästhetik* of 1904 Witasek shows in detail how our feelings undergo structural modifications when they are directed towards what does not exist. He follows Meinong in drawing the distinction between genuine mental phenomena and ‘phantasy material’, and asserts explicitly that ‘the job of the aesthetic object, whether it is a work of art or a product of nature, is to excite and support the actualization of phantasy material in the experiencing subject’. Witasek’s aesthetics might then be seen as an elaborate taxonomy of the various different sorts of phantasy material which the subject allows to be stimulated within himself in his intercourse with works of art.

Witasek was born in Vienna in 1870. Little is known of his background, though the name ‘Witasek’ suggests Croatian origins.<sup>19</sup> He studied in Graz, obtaining his Ph.D. in 1895 and his habilitation degree in 1899. In the following years, during which he worked selflessly as an unpaid assistant in Meinong’s laboratory of experimental psychology, he was employed as a librarian in the University of Graz. Only in 1913 was he appointed to the position of extraordinary professor; and only in 1914 was he appointed, as Meinong’s successor, to the position of director of the psychology laboratory. He enjoyed this position for a mere six months, dying in April 1915.<sup>20</sup>

Witasek is reported to have spent many hours playing music together with Meinong, and it was his passion for music which first brought him to study in Graz. He had been provoked by Stumpf’s *Tonpsychologie* to take an interest in the psychology of music and was attracted by the possibilities promised by the experimental psychology laboratory which had been so recently established by Meinong. At that stage the future of the laboratory was still uncertain, and it is Witasek – who was already the effective head of the laboratory long before 1914

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19. Ideas similar to those of Witasek were canvassed by the Slovenian philosopher Franc Veber, another Meinong-student, in his *Estetika*, published (in Slovenian) in 1925. (See Sajama 1987.)

20. See Ameseder 1916, Mally 1915, Meinong 1915a.

– whom Meinong credits with having done the work that was needed to set it on a secure footing.

The Italian psychologist Vittorio Benussi was one of the first to be initiated into the mysteries of experimental psychology by Witasek. Benussi was influenced in particular by the topic of Witasek's habilitation thesis (1899), which had defended the view that optical illusions cannot be illusions of judgment, since the same illusion can be present even when we deliberately do not allow our judgments to be misled by the appearances (as for example in the case of the Müller-Lyer illusion). Witasek therefore attempts to give an account of the phenomena in question purely on the level of sensations and to separate carefully the contributions of psychology and of physiology in our experience of illusions.

As will become clear in what follows, a central role is played in Witasek's work by the notion of Gestalt structure. Common to all members of the Austrian Gestalt tradition of Meinong, Witasek and Benussi is a two-storey conception of experience according to which experienced objects are partitioned into objects of *lower* and *higher* order: the former are for example colours and tones (which are, it is held, given immediately in sensation), the latter are for example shapes and melodies, complex organized wholes which are 'founded' on the former and require special, intellectual acts in order to be grasped by consciousness.<sup>21</sup> Part of Witasek's aesthetics is thus a contribution to the Gestaltist tradition of aesthetic value-theory in terms of 'organic unity'.<sup>22</sup> Here, however, I shall be interested not in this value-theoretical aspect of Witasek's work but rather in the implications of his ideas in descriptive psychology for the understanding of the structures of aesthetic experience.

Our task in what follows will be to understand precisely how, in Witasek's eyes, aesthetic experiences relate to aesthetic objects. Witasek's approach to aesthetics is a constructive one, building up gradually from simple cases (from experiences and objects of the most primitive sorts), to the point where he is in a position to deal also with those more complicated aesthetic structures which are characteristic of works of art. He begins by setting forth the most basic

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21. See, on this 'production theory', Chapter Eight, Section 3, below.

22. See Ehrenfels 1916, Rausch 1966, Nozick 1981, Ch. 5.

ingredients of our aesthetic experiences, which he classifies into five broad classes, as follows:

- (i) Pleasure in what is sensuous,
- (ii) Pleasure in what is harmonious or organically structured,
- (iii) Pleasure in perfection, in what is well-made or fitting,
- (iv) Pleasure in expression, mood, atmosphere, and so on,
- (v) Pleasure in objectives or states of affairs.

This rough and ready classification of experiences then yields also a preliminary classification of the ‘elementary aesthetic objects’ toward which these elementary experiences would be directed:

*Ad (i) Simple objects of sensation:* individual colours, tones, tastes, smells, etc. (objects of outer sensation) and individual qualitative elements of feeling and emotion (objects of inner sensation). Clearly, such objects of sensation can themselves be aesthetically pleasing to different degrees, and their power to please is in some sense basic, not capable of being accounted for in terms of other, more primitive phenomena.<sup>23</sup>

*Ad (ii) Gestalt structures of purely formal beauty.* Objects of sensation manifest themselves very rarely, if ever, in isolation. They normally occur in association with each other in such a way as to manifest Gestalt structures of different types, and such structures, too, may be beautiful or ugly. Thus it is melodies, tones, geometrical patterns, blends of perfumes or of tastes, rhythms, colour-harmonies, tactile feelings, etc., which will constitute Witasek’s second class of elementary aesthetic objects (pp. 39ff.). Note that structures of this sort are important even where we have to deal with aesthetic pleasure (or displeasure) in what is fragmentary or discordant, since such pleasure presupposes the ability to recognize what is harmonious. As Husserl points out, chaos and fragmentation themselves depend on form and order.<sup>24</sup>

*Ad (iii) Gestalt structures in conformity with norms, Gestalt structures of purposefulness or typicality.* The examples listed under category (ii) are all Gestalt structures which possess a purely formal or structural beauty. Some varieties of Gestalten, however, possess aesthetic qualities which are not formal

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23. Cf. Witasek, *Grundzüge* (1904), pp. 36ff. All page references in the remainder of the present chapter are to this work unless otherwise indicated.

24. LU VI §§ 34f. Cf. also Rausch 1966.

but material. These are the Gestalten of objects which are peculiarly purposeful or efficient, or peculiarly perfect examples of their type (what Witasek calls *normgemässe Gegenstände*):<sup>25</sup>

The Gestalt of a well-built horse has special aesthetic qualities not as a Gestalt *as such*, but rather merely as the Gestalt *of a horse*. Here it is more a matter of what kind of object the Gestalt belongs to than of how it is itself constructed. And this can be shown, too, in many other examples. The beauty of the female form lies in its softness and in the swing of its lines, where the same lines in a male body have a non-beautiful effect. (p. 47)

*Ad (iv) Gestalt structures of expression.* The fourth and most problematic category of elementary aesthetic objects is constituted by what Witasek calls Gestalten of expression, of atmosphere, and of mood (also called – for reasons which will become apparent later – the class of ‘objects of inner beauty’). What gives us pleasure in a piece of music, for example, is typically not just the sound-formations we hear or imagine. We are wont to say that the music *expresses* something, that it points beyond itself in a manner at least analogous to the expression of feelings and emotions e.g. through facial gestures. The sound-Gestalten of the musical work are, Witasek says, ‘the carriers of expression; the expression is not something perceivable with the senses, as it were side by side with the sound-Gestalten, but it is something to be grasped only in and with them.’ (pp. 50f) Thus when I hear a piece of music I in fact experience two Gestalten: the sound-Gestalt as such, which may or may not be beautiful, and the expressive Gestalt, which will turn out to have quite peculiar aesthetic qualities of its own. The same double Gestalt structure makes itself felt also for example in the fact that there are two essentially different types of beauty in the human face: beauty of form, and beauty of expression. It is not, then, the stone or the canvas in the gallery that is beautiful, according to Witasek, but associated objects of sense and higher-order Gestalt structures of different sorts, which stone and canvas help to constitute.<sup>26</sup>

*Ad (v) Objectives or states of affairs.* The final category of elementary aesthetic objects is constituted by what Witasek, following Meinongian

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25. Compare the use of the notions of standard and non-standard instances of what are called ‘norm kinds’ in the aesthetic theory of Wolterstorff (1980, p. 56).

26. This is also Ingarden’s view in his *Literary Work of Art* (1931). See also the discussions of the physical foundation of the aesthetic object in Ingarden 1985.

terminology, calls ‘objectives’ or states of affairs, which serve as the building blocks from out of which the plot of representational works of art is constructed.

Witasek seeks, now, to do justice in his aesthetics to the total content of our experiences of works of art in terms of combinations of experiences directed towards structures of these given sorts. Following Brentano and Meinong, he divides all mental phenomena into three broad classes of: *presentations*, which are directed towards objects in the narrower sense, *judgments*, and *phenomena of interest*. Acts in these classes may be joined together by relations of ‘presupposition’ (or of one-sided separability in Brentano’s terms). If I am happy about the arrival of a friend, then the presupposition of this feeling is the judgment *that the friend has arrived* and the object of the feeling is, on the Meinong–Witasek view, the corresponding ‘objective’ or state of affairs. If I take pleasure in a nice sound, then the presupposition of this pleasure-feeling is the intuitive (sensory) presentation of the sound and the object of the feeling is the sound itself. Meinong and Witasek differ from Brentano in that they see judgment as comprehending, in addition to acceptance or rejection, an extra feature: the moment of *conviction*. When this moment is lacking we have not a judgment but an *assumption*.

Both Brentano and Meinong see judgments as presupposing, i.e. as being dependent or ‘founded’ on, associated presentations, but they allow also a presupposition or dependence in the opposite direction: a presentation, too, may be dependent on a moment of conviction in the sense that it is associated with the disposition to make judgments of a given type.<sup>27</sup> But where in Brentano’s psychology emotional phenomena are founded immediately upon judgments and thereby mediately upon associated presentations (we are sad or happy *that* such and such exists or does not exist), Meinong allows feelings to be founded immediately either on presentations – giving rise to ‘presentation-feelings’ – or on judgments – giving rise to ‘judgment-feelings’.<sup>28</sup>

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27. This was the view adopted by Meinong at the time of the first edition of his *Über Annahmen* (1902). See 1910, § 36. In the second edition a presentation is seen as being a still incomplete intending of an object; this intending becomes complete only when it is bound up with the apprehension of an objective in a judgment or assumption. On similar complexities in Brentano’s theory of judgment see Brandl 1987.

28. See Meinong 1905, Baley 1916.

A presentation is an act or state of mental directedness towards an object conceived in abstraction from any associated judgments or emotional attitudes. As we have seen, this is far from being a homogeneous category. Above all, presentations can be divided into *outer* and *inner*, according to whether the objects presented are external objects or further presentations, judgments, feelings or other mental acts or states of the presenting subject. Presentations can be divided secondly into *intuitive* and *intellectual*: an intellectual presentation occurs, for example, when I present to myself an object purely in the sense that I run through a description of the object in my mind. Witasek's aesthetic theory proper begins now with the claim that,

of the two sorts of presentation, *it is only intuitive presentations that come into consideration as the presupposition of aesthetic feelings*. The shape of the ellipse is aesthetically pleasing to look at; the equation in which analytic geometry presents the same shape to the grasp of the intellect does not excite aesthetic feelings at all (p. 77, my emphasis).

It is not our job here to determine whether this rather strong thesis is correct, but merely to work out its implications in the framework of Meinongian aesthetics. Expressing the thesis in the terminology of *presentation-feelings* and *judgment-feelings*, we can now assert, somewhat pompously, that *aesthetic pleasure is a matter of positive intuitive presentation-feelings*. That is, the feeling of aesthetic pleasure has as its presupposition in every case certain intuitive presentations of objects, the constituent parts or moments of which belong to one or other of the five classes of elementary aesthetic objects distinguished above.

### 5. Aesthetic Pleasure

Matters are still relatively simple where we have to deal with feelings of aesthetic pleasure directed towards aesthetic objects in the first two categories of simple sensations and purely formal Gestalten. For here we have to deal with real, causal relations between perceiving subjects on the one hand and material objects, events or processes on the other. Thus the fact that colours, tones and formal Gestalten such as melodies or rhythms may give rise to feelings of pleasure is easy to understand: what is harmonious without is reflected, in some way – which it would be a matter for empirical psychology to investigate – by harmonious and therefore pleasurable experiences within.



Not all sensations, and not even all harmonious sensations, are however aesthetic. Witasek holds, it is true, that all *aesthetic* feelings presuppose (are founded on) intuitive presentations; but he nevertheless draws a clear line between aesthetic experiences on the one hand, even those relating to objects of sense and to simple Gestalten, and merely *sensory feelings* – for example my feeling of pleasure in the warmth of a wood fire. To follow his reasoning here we need first to recall the standard Brentanian distinction between *acts* and *contents*. The *act* is that component in an experience which characterizes the experience as, say, a memory as opposed to a perception, a phantasy as opposed to a presumption, a judgment as opposed to an assumption, and so on. The *content*, on the other hand, is that component of the experience which a perception and a memory of the same object may have in common and in virtue of which they are then *of* the same object and from the same point of view. Equally, the content is that real moment which a judgment and an assumption may have in common and in virtue of which they are then directed towards one and the same state of affairs.

The distinction between act and content now gives rise to a corresponding distinction in the class of feelings between what Witasek calls *act-feelings* and *content-feelings*:

in every presenting we can distinguish act and content. A feeling that has a sensing or a presenting P as its presupposition can either be determined primarily by the act in P and be relatively independent of its content, or it can depend essentially on the content of P and be such that the act is largely irrelevant to it. In the first case it is an act-feeling, in the second a content-feeling. (pp. 195f.)<sup>29</sup>

As an example of a content-feeling consider what happens when I hear a melody played on a violin:

I have a *perceptual* presentation of the melody mediated by sensation; when I now reproduce it for myself in my mind, after the violin has fallen silent, it appears to me in a memory-presentation. The perceptual presentation and the memory-presentation have the same content, that which distinguishes them so much lies in their act. And the feeling of well-being I experience in relation to the melody arises whether I hear it or merely reproduce it in my mind. (p. 196)

Act-feelings and content-feelings may in certain circumstances come into conflict with each other. Thus I may take pleasure in the content *bright light*

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29. Cf. also Husserl 1979, p. 293.

while at the same time experiencing pain in the act of looking into the sun. Normally however the two sorts of feeling are fused together, or the one disappears because it is insignificant in relation to the other.

Aesthetic feelings are distinguished from sensory feelings, Witasek now argues, by the fact that the former are related to the content of a presentation, the latter to the act itself.<sup>30</sup> Thus sensory feelings, but not aesthetic feelings, are directly sensitive to the quality and intensity of the act (and all sensations are, above a certain intensity, painful). Further, the sensory feeling disappears or is at least reduced to an almost unnoticeable intensity in the passage from sensation (perception) to a reproduced presentation in memory. It is because a melody is ‘already a matter of *content*’ that it need not be affected by the passage from perception to memory or imagination (p. 199).

What applies to aesthetic feelings in the presentation of objects of sense and of simple Gestalten will be seen to apply no less to other, more sophisticated aesthetic feelings. Thus we can imagine an habitué of art galleries whose pleasure is derived purely from the repetition of the *act* of seeing, regardless of its content. Or we can imagine the lover of difficult Irish poetry, who is interested solely in the bracing mental exercise involved in coming to grips with the grammar of the verses in question, not in any sense with the content of his reading acts. Both are missing precisely what is aesthetic in the objects in question, and we can now assert quite generally that *aesthetic pleasure is that variety of consciousness-state which we can call* (allowing ourselves to speak Meinongian, for the moment) a *Vorstellungsinhaltsgefühl* or presentation-content-feeling (p. 214).

The same sort of treatment can be made to work also in relation to objects in category (iii), i.e. to what is ‘normal’ or *gattungsmässig*. Thus, according to Witasek, on perceiving certain objects – for example a healthy horse or a healthy human body – we register a value of, say, purposefulness or of perfection, and then our pleasure in the fact that this valuable object *exists* becomes bound up with our intuitive presentation of the object to give rise to that positively modulated intuitive presentation-feeling which is a feeling of aesthetic pleasure. For this reason Witasek calls the aesthetic value of the normal object ‘value

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30. There are however content-feelings which fall outside the domain of aesthetics. An example would be, say, pleasure in the victory of a good cause: see, again, Duncker 1941.

beauty' (*Wertschönheit*) (p. 97). It is aesthetic beauty connected, through our real relations to the object, with some non-aesthetic value of healthfulness, vitality, cleanliness, efficiency, economy and so on. But this is not all that is to be said about *normgemässe Gegenstände*: as we shall see below, the recognition of value beauty in an object is closely bound up with the notion of sympathy and with the varieties of aesthetic pleasure associated therewith, and this will imply that objects in category (iii) have a role to play also in those more complex aesthetic experiences which are provoked by serious works of art.

## 6. *Art and Illusion*

First, however we must deal in general terms with the more problematic examples of aesthetic objects comprehended in categories (iv) and (v). Here it is no longer the case that the subject must be connected in a real relation to some real existing object. Thus his aesthetic pleasure may no longer be conceived as flowing – more or less as a matter of course – from his perceptual experiences of an existing object's parts or moments and of their more or less harmonious interrelations.

Consider the pleasure we experience in watching, say, a silent film. Here the *real thing* with which we are in relational contact – a screen upon which light is projected – is simply not the sort of thing which of itself could give rise to complex aesthetically pleasurable experiences of the relevant sort. For such experiences involve (in some sense) fear, hope, expectation, disappointment, pity, disgust and a wide range of other, more complex phenomena on our part, and such phenomena cannot be induced in any straightforward (i.e. causal) way by a mere play of light.

It will not help to say that the difference is made up, in some way, by *imagination*; the problem before us is precisely that of determining in what imagination might consist. Note, again, that our talk of 'presentation', 'hope', 'fear', etc., is here subject to *modification*; the meanings of these terms are shifted, systematically. That which I experience when I 'see' the sheriff on the screen is accordingly not, strictly speaking, a *presentation* at all, for when I here present to myself a sheriff in the throes of death, there is no (existing) object which is presented to me (and here it is irrelevant whether a certain person – an actor – was involved at an early stage in the creation of the play of light which

gives rise to my current experience or whether I am related, e.g., to a computer simulation). What we have is, rather, a *modified presentation*, which stands to a presentation in the strict sense in something like the relation of a sham to a genuine outburst of temper. Is to imagine something, then, to pretend to oneself that one is perceiving? An account along these lines would be too crude, since it is not clear that one can coherently ‘pretend to oneself’ at all: pretending seems to be associated not with mental acts, but with actions taking place in the public domain. Thus in order to pretend it is necessary that one do something, where an act of imagination can take place even where the subject does nothing at all. Yet we have already noted that there is some connection between imagination and that modification of actions which occurs in games of make-believe or in the behaviour of actors on the stage. Both pretence and imagination are for example subject to the will. A theory of imagination in terms of pretence or make-believe seems, however, to put the behavioural cart before the psychological horse. For it seems that pretence and make-believe can themselves be understood only if we already have a prior theory of the acts of imagination that each involves.

Witasek’s explanation of the phantasy modification follows the Meinongian theory of judgments and assumptions. Every non-modified presentation is bound up with a moment of conviction in the existence of its object (that is: with a disposition to make judgments of a certain sort). In a modified presentation this moment is cancelled. Where the conviction associated with a genuine or authentic presentation invokes on behalf of this presentation an actual or at least a seriously intended *relational contact with reality*, in the case of the modified presentation this intention towards reality has been put out of action.

The sham presentation is thereby cut loose from the constraints reality itself would normally impose, and it is this which explains why modified presentations are subject to our will to a much greater extent than are real or genuine presentations.<sup>31</sup> Where reality normally has us in *its* control, the phantasy modification gives us a freedom of movement which is exploited in different ways by works of art of different sorts.

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31. Saxinger (1904 and 1906) puts forward an account of phantasy desire as characterized by the absence of a ‘tendency towards realization’. For an overview of types of phantasy material see the table in Krug 1929, p. 241.

The notion of a phantasy feeling enables us to throw further light on the distinction between act- and content-feelings introduced above. For as Witasek notes, ‘There are no, or only uncommonly weak, sensory phantasy feelings’:

a pinprick or a toothache which I experience merely in phantasy does not hurt me, and he who is hungry is not helped by the experiencing in phantasy of his being satisfied (p. 199).

This is in contrast to the relatively high intensity of those phantasy feelings – a matter of the *content* of presentation and assumption – that are peculiar to the aesthetic domain.

There is a sense in which what one might call the purely qualitative factor in phantasy feelings is the same as that of real feelings. But phantasy feelings nevertheless differentiate themselves totally from genuine or serious feelings. The difference is a matter of their presupposition. In the case of genuine feeling-material this is a judgment; in the case of phantasy material it is a mere assumption, a ‘fiction’, which has and wants to have nothing to do with reality (p. 116).

Phantasy material is not merely subject to our will, it also has the peculiar property that it can *stand in for* genuine psychical phenomena in different ways (as assumptions can stand in for judgments e.g. in deductive arguments). Thus when a genuine feeling is excluded by external circumstances or by the psychic constitution of the subject, then the corresponding modified feeling can take its place. These two properties of phantasy phenomena are of crucial importance to the understanding of the place of aesthetic experience in our mental lives. As Witasek puts it:

Nobody would go into the theatre to watch a tragedy if the shock, care, sympathy and fear, and all the other, often intensive pain-feelings awakened by our participation in what is going on on the stage were real (Witasek 1904, p. 115).

Consider, as a first, trivial example of the opposition between genuine and phantasy material at work, my contemplation of a drawing of a cat. Here I enjoy a phantasy presentation of a cat, together with phantasy judgments such as ‘that is a cat’. I may also enjoy phantasy emotions of various kinds, for example a phantasy feeling of sadness awakened by the sad expression of the (putative) cat. What I do *not* have is a genuine judgment or belief to the effect that there is a cat (or feline object of any sort) before me. My total appreciation of the drawing rests on the following four presuppositions as its basis:

- the *sensory presentation* of the piece of paper with its marks: an intuitive, complex Gestalt-presentation,
- the *assumption* ‘here is a cat’, a phantasy judgment in which the represented object is recognized and named,
- the *judgment* that it is a drawing and not a cat that lies before us,
- the *judgment* that the drawing represents a cat.

There are a number of problems left open by this analysis. Thus we can ask what, precisely, is the *object* of our feeling of pleasurable appreciation in the given case, recalling that the object of a feeling, on the Brentano–Meinong–Witasek conception, is supplied by its presupposition. Because none of the given partial presuppositions alone can supply an object for the feeling, it will be necessary to understand the latter as being directed to a complex state of affairs to which the several constituents make their separate contribution, the state of affairs *that what is seen appears as a cat, but is only a piece of paper treated with artistic means* (p. 249). But how are the given constituents related together in this total experience? According to the so-called ‘illusionistic theory of art’ advanced by Witasek’s contemporary Konrad Lange, this question is to be answered in terms of a rapid alternation on the part of the observer between his judging that he sees a real cat, suddenly remembering that he has before him only a drawing, suddenly judging once more that he sees a cat, and so on.<sup>32</sup> Aesthetic pleasure, according to Lange, is rooted in such a to-ing and fro-ing of psychic phenomena, and the work of art is essentially a vehicle for the production of that peculiar ‘feeling of freedom, completely independent of specific content’ which is bound up with our recognition of successful imitation.

Witasek’s theory also recognizes superficially incompatible elements in experiences of the given sort. The two analyses are nevertheless entirely different. For according to Lange both of the phenomena between which our consciousness oscillates are *actual judgments*: the first asserts that what is seen is a real object (a cat) existing in nature; the second that what is seen is a mere imitation (a drawing of a cat). Not both of these judgments can be true. Thus if Lange is right, the appreciation of successful imitation rests essentially on our repeatedly getting things wrong, on our repeatedly allowing ourselves to be

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32. See Lange 1895 and also Möller 1903.

misled by the object, and this account is phenomenologically absurd, gaining purchase, at best, in relation to children's experiences of art, or in relation to initial phases of adult experiences of for example photo-realist works, where quite special conditions apply. Witasek, in contrast,

avoids the psychological impossibility of an arbitrary to-ing and fro-ing between two mutually opposed yet equally genuine convictions (judgments), by recognizing one of the two thoughts not as an actual judgment but as a mere assumption. (p. 253)<sup>33</sup>

Certainly it is not to be ruled out that someone may, for example while reading, become momentarily so absorbed that he forgets that he is caught up in phantasy. The moment of belief-suspension then falls away from his acts in such a way that his reading will approximate to the making of common-or-garden-variety mistakes. As Ryle puts it:

Make-believe is compatible with all degrees of scepticism and credulity ... The fact that people can fancy that they see things, are pursued by bears, or have a grumbling appendix, without realizing that this is nothing but fancy, is simply a part of the unsurprising general fact that not all people are, all the time, at all ages and in all conditions, as judicious or critical as could be wished (1949, pp. 258f).

Such phenomena are however at most an ephemeral matter, a product of special circumstances; they are not something which penetrates to the essence of aesthetic experience as such.

### *7. Gestalt and Expression*

In regard to the relatively trivial examples of aesthetic objects treated so far, our pleasure rested in each case on an intuitive presentation of something external (on the presentation of 'physical phenomena' in Brentano's sense). We have now, however, reached a point where we must turn inward and consider the feelings of higher-order aesthetic pleasure which are provoked by our presentations of mental, and in particular emotional, phenomena themselves. That is we must turn to those aesthetic experiences which are provoked by what Brentano, Meinong and Witasek called the 'inner perception' of psychic phenomena and by the peculiar modifications to which this inner perception is susceptible.

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33. Cf. also Odebrecht 1927, pp. 191ff.

We can distinguish in this connection at least the following four distinct cases:

- the genuine inner presentation of genuine psychic material (as when I present to myself my feeling of pleasure awakened by my pleasant surroundings);
- the genuine inner presentation of phantasy material (as when I present to myself my phantasy judgment that the heroine is about to die);
- the modified inner presentation of what would be genuine psychic material, if it existed (as when I imagine the feeling of pleasure I would feel if I were in pleasant surroundings);
- the modified inner presentation of what would be phantasy material, if it existed (as when I imagine the (phantasy-)feeling of fear I would experience if the heroine were about to die).

Matters are complicated still further by the fact that psychic material may be presented as belonging either to oneself or to some other psychic subject, whether real or imaginary, and by the fact that various different sorts of interplay can be set in train as between one's own feelings and the psychic material of other (real or apparent) subjects that is given in presentation via our apprehension of gestures, etc. It is at this point that we encounter once more the 'Gestalt structures of expression' which make up category (iv) of aesthetic objects in Witasek's original taxonomy. We are now, however, in a position to state more precisely in what such 'expression' consists.

Consider the spectator of a drama. Clearly, if he is to appreciate the drama in the full sense, then he needs somehow to experience the feelings expressed in the actions on the stage. But he does not need to experience the *genuine* material. It would after all be inexplicable that one should choose to visit the theatre in order to watch performances of tragedies and the like if the negative feelings awakened thereby were truly genuine. It is sufficient, however, if the spectator experiences in himself the expressed psychic phenomena as phantasy material – which 'does not after all do us any real harm' (p. 115). The aesthetic enjoyment of expression then rests on a genuine intuitive inner presentation of the phantasy material generated in the experiencing subject when echoes of the emotions of external subjects are set in train within him.



## 8. *Empathy and Sympathy*

These ‘echoes’ are of two sorts. On the one hand they are what Witasek calls *empathy feelings*.<sup>34</sup> An empathy-feeling consists in the subject’s experiencing in a modified way feelings which he grasps as having been *expressed* (e.g.) by a work of art. Of course the normal target of an empathy-feeling is a personal subject: ‘Whoever takes to himself the feeling-content of the scene “Gretchen im Kerker” ... will feel *along with the maid* what she experiences in torment, faith, pious humility and despair.’ (p. 149) But we not only feel *with* Gretchen, we also feel sympathy and compassion *for* the maid, we experience what Witasek calls feelings of involvement (*Anteilsgefühle*). The status of such *sympathy-feelings* is relatively easy to understand, at least in the case where they are directed towards existing objects: they are genuine feelings which the subject himself genuinely has when he presents to himself a given object. Empathy-feelings, in contrast, are experienced in such a way that they are one’s own feelings only in phantasy, though sometimes (where we are dealing with expressive objects having the characteristics of persons) they are presented as corresponding to genuine feelings of the objects which invoke them.

Clearly, we shall not enjoy such feelings of involvement in the face of an object if our attitude in relation to this object is entirely neutral. Sympathy-feelings are in fact distinguished by the fact that they presuppose some primitive relation of fellow-feeling between ourselves and the object which evokes them. ‘For those whom we neither value nor love, neither hate nor abhor, we have no pleasure when they are happy, no pity when they are unhappy, and no concern for their fate’ (p. 155).

Thus there are no sympathy-feelings (no real feelings of involvement) in relation to what is ‘meaningless’ (for example in relation to highly abstract music, or to purely ornamental art). Conversely, however, wherever we do have sympathy for an object, it follows that we register in that object some kind of value – and value in just the sense of category (iii) above. All objects giving rise to sympathy-feelings are to that extent ‘objects of value-beauty’ in Witasek’s sense.

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34. On empathy see *inter alia* Lipps 1905, Stein 1917, Scheler 1923 and compare D. W. Smith 1989, ch. III.

How are these remarks to be applied in such a way as to yield an account of our aesthetic pleasure in more sophisticated aesthetic objects such as certain works of drama or opera? We are confronted, first of all, by a manifold of actions on the stage. These provoke involvement: the aesthetic enjoyment of a drama would seem indeed to rest in many cases on a peculiar sort of comfortable sympathy with the characters we perceive. But they provoke also empathy-feelings. These two sorts of phantasy feelings then serve in Witasek's eyes as the presupposition of a further *genuine* feeling, a feeling of aesthetic pleasure which is induced by the drama.

Empathy- and sympathy-feelings cannot however make up the whole psychic presupposition of such a feeling of pleasure. It would be wrong to suppose – as does Aristotle in his doctrine of catharsis – that one emotional arousal in a subject can in itself and without further ado be the cause of a second emotional arousal in the same subject, that a feeling of empathetic displeasure, e.g. pain at the downfall of the hero, already and only because it is there, could trigger the pleasure-feeling of aesthetic enjoyment.

Witasek insists, rather, that since aesthetic enjoyment is a genuine pleasure, it must be related to some genuine object of an appropriate sort. But what could this object be, in cases where our aesthetic pleasure is related to Gestalt structures of expression? Note, first of all, that here the genuine feeling of aesthetic pleasure as it unfolds through time manifests a dependence on and a sensitivity to the empathetic-sympathetic emotional arousal with which it is associated. The latter is a real phenomenon in a certain subject's mind, which also manifests a real temporal unfolding. Witasek therefore suggests that aesthetic pleasure be conceived precisely as pleasure in such (modified) emotional arousal. A new layer of acts of intuitive presentation is however required, which would be directed toward this play of phantasy material within oneself. This is because it is not one's being emotionally affected in this or that way by the content of a drama or of a poem which is the cause of aesthetic pleasure. Rather, according to Witasek, it is one's becoming *aware* of this affect and as it were relishing one's own mental excitation. Sympathy- and empathy-feelings are presuppositions of aesthetic pleasure, then, only insofar as they are *consciously experienced* in intuitive presentation, and enjoyment in the drama on

the stage or in the poem on the page is bound up inextricably with a following with the inner eye of that drama which it sets loose within oneself.<sup>35</sup>

We can now see how aesthetic pleasure in what we called narrative entities (events, actions, states of affairs, etc.) can be conceived as being related exclusively to objects of the same sort as is pleasure in expression, i.e. to empathy- and sympathy-feelings *within oneself*. For the aesthetic relevance of the events, actions and processes represented in a painting or novel is seen to be confined exclusively to the feeling-material in the spectator to which they give rise. The suffering of Gretchen is aesthetically relevant only to the extent that it is capable of giving rise to our feeling for and with the maid (a modified pseudo-suffering on our own behalf). The skill of the artist here lies in a moulding of the narrative elements of the work – the states of affairs (judgment- and assumption-material) from category (v) – in order to establish relations between the different objects before our mind in such a way that the latter will constitute a kind of supporting fabric for our presentations and feelings. The proper exercise of this skill will bring it about that the feelings that are yielded by these elements will constitute rich and harmonious Gestalten capable of giving rise to different varieties of aesthetic pleasures on the part of the perceiving subject.

We can now see why Witasek suggested the term ‘objects of inner beauty’ for his category (iv) of aesthetic objects – and we can note in passing that our initial determination of the nature of aesthetic pleasure as a positive intuitive presentation-feeling has proved itself adequate to our experiences of objects in this category also. For ‘presentation’ includes both outer *and* inner presentation, and the play of pseudo-emotions is aesthetically relevant only in so far as it is experienced in inner presentation in an intuitive rather than in an intellectual way.

### 9. *Musical Presentations*

Considerations of a similar sort can be applied also in relation to our experience of music. Here, too, Witasek argues, it is phantasy feelings which are involved as the presupposition of our (genuine) feelings of aesthetic pleasure. But the

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35. Cf. p. 152. This intuitive presentation of feeling-states is, according to Witasek, just what, in traditional Kantian aesthetics, was called ‘contemplation’.

phantasy feelings that are evoked by absolute music dispense with all presuppositions similar to those which one would find in a corresponding serious feeling: such phantasy feelings are in this sense meaningless (are, as Schopenhauer might say, a matter of ‘pure will’). Whoever is sad knows what he is sad *about*, and it is the thought of this which is the presupposition of his feeling of sadness. But when a piece of music ‘expresses sadness’ then the music itself says nothing about the cause of this sadness. And if the hearer sinks into this feeling-content, immerses himself in sadness, however intensely, then it is not the thought of a sad, painful event which awakens this phantasy feeling in him, for such a thought is normally not present in his consciousness at all.

The hearing of tones, or more precisely the intuitive presentation of tones and tone-formations, is certainly not a normal, adequate presupposition of [feelings of pain, sadness, longing, etc.]. *Sadness, for example, is felt in relation to a loss, an unhappy event, not in relation to tones or melodies and certainly not in relation to those tones and melodies which give rise to aesthetic pleasure*; it is the actual knowledge of a loss which is the normal presupposition of sadness, not the presentation of tones. (p. 135, my emphasis)

The cases where genuine feelings do come about on hearing tones – e.g. on hearing a funeral march – are not of an aesthetic nature at all, according to Witasek. The feelings in question are typically founded in personal memories of the hearer or in other non-aesthetic features of the given context. Some individuals may even seek to intensify their experience of music by associating their listening with thoughts of death, or with images of tragic occurrences; but still, Witasek insists,

those critics are usually moving in completely the wrong direction who take it to be their primary task to facilitate the understanding of a musical work by listing and more or less exactly describing the outer experiences and events which it ‘depicts’ and which are therefore to be read out of it (usually struggle, death, victory, triumph, decline, conflict, etc.). (p. 143)

A composer *may*, certainly, have been brought by certain experiences into a given mood which he then reproduces in his work. But it is then the mood that is reproduced – precisely as it is reproduced – that is important to the aesthetic experience of the work, not the external experiences which were the incidental cause of its being composed.

How, then, are we able to experience phantasy feelings in listening to music at all? This is first of all a consequence of the already noted fact that

phantasy material is subject to the dictates of the will. As Witasek notes, we are already in a position to set sounding within ourselves phantasy feelings of the most varied sorts, even without any kind of external aid, though normally we succeed thereby in producing only experiences having a relatively low degree of subtlety and intensity.

Music serves to intensify, to crystallize, such induced phantasy feelings; it serves, if one will, as a pump for the production and intensification of the inner play of phantasy. But it is not as if our own contribution would thereby be merely passive:

the cooperation of the will in the releasing of phantasy feelings ... is in practice indispensable. Where it is lacking, where the good will fails to immerse itself in the expressive content of the music, then the latter will be able to bring about only a minimal effect. The hearer must meet the music half way, must, as one says, open his heart to it. (p. 137)

From where, then, does this ‘expressive content’ come from in cases of absolute music, where no objects are depicted in relation to which empathy- and sympathy-feelings could arise? Witasek’s answer to this question turns on the existence of a special functional relationship between the sound-Gestalten on the one hand and the feelings we experience on the other: the nature or quality of a given phantasy feeling depends on the character of the music which provokes it. As Mach and James, Ehrenfels and Witasek all in different ways recognized, there is a certain *similarity* between sound-Gestalten on the one hand and the psychical states to which they give rise – a fact which opens up the much wider theme of the role of *physical resonance* in the life of feeling and the relationship between feelings proper and what Mach called ‘*Muskelgefühle*’.<sup>36</sup> For it is not as if, at each turning point in a piece of music, one would need to consult a repertoire of feelings before setting loose the appropriate reactions within oneself by means of a deliberate conscious effort, as it were in time to the accompanying notes. Rather, there occurs an automatic reproduction of physical resonances correlated with what one hears, giving rise through association to a corresponding flow of (phantasy-)feelings. By appeal to such associative links, however, it is possible to extend the Meinongian account of the descriptive psychology of acts and their modifications beyond the narrative and

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36. Cf. Witasek, p. 137, Schulzki 1980, Mulligan and Smith 1988.

representational arts in such a way that it can be applied also to those cases where our aesthetic experiences do not rest on emotional elements recognizably derived from object-directed feelings and emotions of the more familiar sorts.

As is clear, therefore, and as will become clearer still from our treatment of Meinongian Gestalt psychology in Chapter Eight, the standard view of the philosophy of the Graz school as a matter of mere profligate ontologies – or in other words as a study of ‘homeless objects’ having modest implications for our understanding of the logic of fiction – must be rejected. Rather, the work of Meinong and his followers on the theory of objects is part and parcel of a more ambitious project that is rooted in the attempt to do full and adequate justice to the phenomenon of intentionality in all its breadth.