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ABSTRACT

This analysis of aesthetic appreciation provides a theoretical model to help teachers recognize the aesthetic level at which students are operating. The purpose of the study is to explain to art educators how to expand a student's capacity to appreciate works of art. The study is presented in two parts. Part I describes and evaluates theories of aesthetics from the early Greek philosophers to present day theorists. Part II delineates three dimensions of aesthetic response. The first dimension, "perception," includes the attention of the observer and his orientation toward the art object. The second dimension, "cognition," includes meditation on the work and an integration process whereby the significance of the work is internalized. The final dimension, "modification," encompasses assimilation of the aesthetic experience and a final transformation process which reorders or reinforces the value system of the viewer in response to the confrontation. References from the fields of psychology, aesthetics, philosophy, and art appreciation are included. (Author/DB)

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THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE: AN HISTORICAL REVIEW AND BEHAVIORAL HIERARCHY

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Abstract

Part I of this investigation describes and evaluates theories of aesthetics beginning with the early Greek philosophers up to, and including present-day theorists. That aspect of aesthetics which explores the total state of mind during the appreciator's encounter with a work of art is the focal point of this review.

Part II proposes a theoretical model of aesthetic behavior which delineates the stages of an aesthetic response. The complete cycle of aesthetic behavior is analyzed which includes the activities and feelings a person may follow from the initial exposure to a work of art to the possible transformation as a result of the encounter. The theoretical structure is presented as a hierarchy of developmental stages represented by the three main dimensions of perception, cognition, and modification. This kind of systematic hierarchy which describes the intrinsic steps involved in an aesthetic experience should provide art educators with a useful guideline which will reflect the level at which learners are functioning, as well as the next stage of aesthetic behavior to be pursued.

THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE:

AN HISTORICAL REVIEW AND

BEHAVIORAL HIERARCHY

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THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE: AN HISTORICAL REVIEW AND BEHAVIORAL HIERARCHY

I. Historical Review: The Aesthetic Experience

A. Introduction

There is no doubt that the remarkable phenomenon referred to as the aesthetic experience does exist; the problem which this inquiry will eventually examine is the observation that countless individuals fail to achieve the aesthetic experience when all the factors are present for such an encounter. It is generally agreed that one's life is enhanced theough the appreciation of art and it is the purpose of this study, through a retrospective investigation of aesthetics, to define or describe the threads of artistic appreciation which have persisted from man's earliest contemplation of art to the present, with the expectation that these recorded speculations will provide clues to the resolution of the previously stated problem.

Herbert Read has claimed that art is a key to survival; it is "the activity by means of which our sensa- is kept alert, our imagination kept vivid, our power of reasoning kept keen" (Fishman, 1963, p. 179). Read is also convinced that the absence of a capacity for aesthetic experience is not innate, but invariably the result of "repression by a society whose norms exclude the free expression of aesthetic impulses" (Fishman, 1963, p. 181). Indeed, Read insists that art has a "bio-

logical function," that the artist is "the sensitive organ of an evolving consciousness---of man's progressive apprehension and understanding of his universe" (1957, pp. 121-122). If these conjectures are accurate, then it is crucial to launch an investigation into the structure of the aesthetic experience. The information thus gained should establish guidelines which would facilitate instruction in aesthetics and art appreciation by making the aesthetic experience accessible to a larger population. A theoretical model of aesthetic behavior will be proposed for such a purpose following the historical analysis of the aesthetic experience.

As a field for scholarly investigation, aesthetics is relatively young. It was initiated by a German, Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten in 1750, who gave the name "aesthetics" to "the science of sensory cognition," because it was his belief that the "perfection of sensory awareness is to be found in the perception of beauty" (Osborne, 1968, pp. 15-16).

At this point, it can be acknowledged that perception and beauty are essential elements in the aesthetic experience. Indeed, perception occurs almost continuously, but aesthetic perception is of a particular kind. It implies a leisurely surrendering of oneself to the willful, purposeful contemplation of a work of art. This activity is removed from the practical concerns of everyday reality in which the perceptual processes direct interaction with the environment.

Although the specific term "aesthetics" was introduced only 225 years ago, Western civilization has been contemplating the concepts of art and beauty for almost 2,000 years, ever since the discussions of the classical Greek philosophers. In order to extract a meaningful structure from the vast metaphysical landscape concerned with aesthetics, it will be necessary to examine many of the outstanding landmarks which are considered significant configurations in this vast acreage.

The earliest philosophers developed the original science from which other sciences evolved. Their purpose was to establish some semblance of order out of the chaotic experiences of everyday existence. Over the centuries, it seems that the same questions have been asked, only the answers sometimes change, in part because the methods of answering the same questions have changed. The earliest notion of the scientific was concerned with the dialectic and inductive reasoning which matured to experimental and scientific methods utilizing deductive reasoning.

At the outset, an important distinction should be made concerning the specific context in which aesthetics will be analyzed. As a branch of philosophy termed calology, which is the doctrine of the beautiful (Gilson, 1965, p. 22), aesthetics projects a bifurcated thrust concerned not only with the true nature or essence of the fine arts, but also with the perception or apprehension of beauty in art works on the part of the beholder.

It is this latter aspect of aesthetics involving the total state of mind during the appreciator's encounter with a work of art which shall be the focal point of this study. There will be a concentrated effort to analyze the structure of sense perception as it applies to works of art. However, this investigation will not pertain to the artist's creation of beauty, for that is another operation quite distinct from the perception and apprehension on the part of the beholder.

1. Pre-Scientific Theories

Man's earliest pre-scientific theorizing was accomplished through the use of language and it was the early Greek philosophers who first utilized the dialectic as a tool in order to arrive at the truth through the use of reason. Specifically, this level of speculation deals with untested ideas and hypotheses. However, it should be pointed out that pre-scientific speculation does not imply a non-scientific attitude.

Certainly Plato and Aristotle discussed the nature of beauty and art, and the place of artists in the city-state. Plato viewed art as thrice removed from truth, " a form of imitation of reality" mimesis (Myers, 1969, p. 29). In this case, particular objects are imperfect copies of the eternal ideas; a representation of a particular object is a mere imitation of an imitation, far from the source of all beauty, truth, and goodness (Munro, 1967, p. 42). However, Plato regarded art as a source for shaping emotions and acknowledged pleasures and pains as indispensable coun-

terparts of reason (Beardsley, 1966, p. 44). In the Statesman, Plato was compelled to explain that all arts are "on the watch against excess and deficit...the excellence and beauty of every work of art is due to this observance and measure" measure implying a standard removed from the extremes (Berlyne, 1971, p. 123).

Furthermore, Aristotle associated beneficial effects with art in that the percipient of a work of art could exercise the emotions of pity and terror which might be occasioned by tragedy. The resulting effect is a purge of these emotions, the catharsis theory. Aristotle also specified certain criteria for art, "the beautiful object must have, in addition to an orderly arrangement of parts, a moderation which shall be neither too small nor too great for easy comprehension in a single glance" (Monroe, 1911, p. 51).

Later Greek thinkers attributed a mystical significance to beauty which is reflected in the writings of Longinus, a third century Greek writer. In his book, On The Sublime, Longinus insisted that the special character of sublime expression has the capacity to transport the percipient by means of a total experience. Specifically, this experience is " a sense of the amplification of our understanding of the world or of life" (Osborne, 1968, p. 154). Accordingly, the sublime has the capacity to endow with a larger vision, a more complete empathetic insight, a more vivid comprehension. Thus, Longinus also admits that the sublime in art can function as a hidden

persuader which is a characteristic that was not overlooked by the earlier Greek philosophers.

In medieval theory, works of art were considered attempts to show men the symbolic nature of real things; the importance of art was held to lie more in what it symbolized than in what it was---or what it appeared to be (Saw, 1971, p. 55).

2. Quasi-Scientific Theories

Quasi-scientific theorizing is supported by inferring certain internal operations of the organism (the percipient). Scholars may have developed this type of theorizing by generalizing from their own experiences when confronted with works of art, or by formulating theories through observation of other individuals.

This type of empirical speculation was often utilized in the formulation of notions concerning the sublime. In his Essay on the Origin of Our Ideas of the Beautiful and the Sublime, Edmund Burke attempted to enumerate the qualities which characterize objects that can be called either beautiful or sublime. More importantly, however, Burke did conceive of the possibility of correlating aesthetic feelings with certain physiological activities. According to his notion, the feelings aroused by beauty were dependent upon a general physiological relaxation, while feelings aroused by the sublime resulted from strain and tension (Monroe, 1911, p. 52).

Similarly, Immanuel Kant in his Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime, commented on this

distinction, "The mien of a man who is undergoing the full feeling of the sublime is earnest, sometimes rigid and astonished" (1965, p. 46). Kant contended that the truly sublime work required such mental effort to comprehend that some less intense parts should be included in order to relax and restore the beholder. On the other hand, Kant observed,

> ...the lively sensations of the beautiful are proclaimed through shining cheerfulness in the eyes, through smiling features, and often through audible mirth....Those in whom both feelings join the beautiful and the sublime will find that the emotion of the sublime is stronger than that of the beautiful, but that unless the latter alternates with or accompanies it, it tires and cannot be so long enjoyed (1965, p. 51).

Soren Kierkegaard further refined pleasurable experience by establishing three categories, the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious (faith). The first level of experience, the aesthetic, is lived merely at the level of "sensuous immediacy," as dictated by feeling rather than conceptual reflection. It is a momentary, fleeting, but completely sensuous experience. However, if this pleasure is reflected upon, or mediated, then the second level, the ethical, is in operation, and the experience is preserved through the process of mediation. Finally, in the third level, faith, the individual suspends all mediation through complete surrender to God, a leap of faith (Madenfort, 1974, p.5).

Various aspects of the theories of Kant and Kierkegaard seem to have merged in the formulation of phenomenological aesthetics. In his dissertation study, W.J. Macenfort describes the receptivity involved in the aesthetic experience as "a surrendering, an active giving of oneself to the environment" (1965, p. 30), for aesthetic experience is understood when the phenomena are grasped in their sensuous immediacy. Meaning arises in a communication between the body and the world, before any reflection or conceptualization on the part of consciousness. Accordingly, then, the phenomenologists stress the preconceptual quality of the aesthetic experience, emphasizing perceptual experience, rather than mediated, or conceptual experience.

Even John Dewey recognized that the perceiver is also creating an experience by ordering the elements of the whole work of art in a way comparable to the organizing process that the creating artist underwent. The percipient must also select, simplify, clarify, abridge, and condense according to his own point of view and interest. For both artist and percipient, an act of abstraction is required. Furthermore, Dewey asserted that if the perceiver is content with conventional perception, he will not "see nor hear"; in effect, he will not achieve the fulfillment of aesthetic perception (1934, p. 54).

As current views of aesthetics are approached, there is still an association between the work of art and the feelings of those who are exposed to its effects. Clive

Bell and Roger Fry have postulated the theory of a unique aesthetic feeling, a thrill which indicates that one is experiencing the genuine aesthetic stimulation, usually picked up by individuals who are sufficiently receptive to perceive the signals in the proper order and intensity generated by a work of art (Osborne, 1968, p. 97).

3. Scientific Theories

Up to this point then, it seems fair to conclude that a work of art does not exist in isolation. Perhaps its greatest value is achieved when it is recreated in some individual's experience, that is, when it has been aesthetically apprehended. Although there is some degree of certainty about this bit of information, it is not a conclusion. On the contrary, it is merely the formulation of an hypothesis which has been subjected to scientific scrutiny for almost one hundred years. A purely scientific investigation seeks to analyze causal processes by utilizing observable, measurable, and repeatable research methods. One current approach for investigating aesthetics at the scientific level has been carried on in psychological aesthetics which is closely allied with experimental aesthetics.

Both psychological and experimental aesthetics utilize empirical methods of investigation. Psychological aesthetics investigates the essential nature of the aesthetic experience, that is, human behavior toward works of art, the processes involved in artistic production and appreciation, especially perception, imagination, and emotion, as well

as the phenomena of taste and preference (Runes, 1946, p. 14). Experimental aesthetics imposes certain laboratory controls so that aesthetic behavior can be observed, measured and then quantified statistically in order to determine the validity of the experiment. This type of aesthetic inquiry specifically focuses on measuring the preferences of individuals in relation to works of art, or to the isolated elements that artists use to create a work of art, such as line, color, shape, form, any of the physical properties included in the work.

This purely scientific approach restricts itself to quantitative measurement through the use of laboratory and statistical procedures. It follows the lead of Gustav Fechner whose first studies of aesthetic preference were carried out in Germany over one hundred years ago. Fechner's procedures helped to inaugurate modern experimental psychology as well as the empirical approach to aesthetics (Runes, 1946, p. 14).

Inevitably these investigations regarding a subject's response to aesthetic stimuli took a new turn. Not only were observations recorded concerning a subject's verbal response, but it was also discovered that the aesthetic experience, so dependent upon perception, causes the same physiological changes with the individual as does the perceptual process, and can, therefore, be measured for intensity.

It is through the screening procedures of perception that humans receive information. When this information

excites the organism, it must enter by means of the perceptual process. This stimulation is often called emotion, but psychologists prefer the term arousal. Arousal is the crucial factor in aesthetic behavior, without it an aesthetic experience cannot occur. The sensory stimulation endowed within a work of art, whether it be music, literature, or the plastic arts, generates a certain kind of power that initially takes possession of the beholder during an aesthetic encounter.

In laboratory-controlled aesthetic research, this arousal may be observed by means of a number of responses:

(a) verbal comments

(b) non-verbal expressions of pleasure or displeasure such as facial expressions, eye movement, gaze intensity, postures and vocalizations

(c) psychophysiological processes (Berlyne, 1971, p. 7)

For clarification, psychophysiological processes refer to changes within the nervous system which can be observed or measured by:

(a) brain wave patterns (electro-encephalograph recordings which may reflect:

1. low arousal (Alpha type) slow, deep, regular waves
2. high arousal (Beta type) shallower, more irregular and faster waves

(b) changes in the electrical properties of the skin (usually increased conductivity, probably due to perspiration, and ordinarily measured on the palms, referred to as galvanic skin response---gsr)

(c) changes in respiration rate, heart rate, blood pressure, or blood vessel diameter (Lefrancois, 1971, p. 24).

By using these forms of measurement, experimental and psychological studies of aesthetics have isolated certain devices which the artist has at his disposal for driving up arousal or for relaxing the arousal level.

The joy or pleasure often associated with the aesthetic experience has been carefully analyzed by experimental aestheticians, and the following passage offers some clarification on the subject. According to Berlyne, a review of the evidence from several different lines of research,

> ...suggests that reward or pleasure can occur in either of two ways. First, extremely high arousal seems to be unpleasant, punishing, aversive, and generally disturbing, so that, when arousal approaches the upper extreme, a decrease to a lower arousal level is pleasurable and rewarding. Second, a limited rise in arousal, which is not enough to drive arousal up into the unpleasant range, can apparently be pleasurable. More often than not, such a moderate arousal increment is followed within a few seconds by a drop towards the initial level of arousal, but the rise is what produces the hedonic effect...(1971, p. 82)

Furthermore, Berlyne explains that,

> ...there are grounds for supposing that reward

and pleasure can come from either an arousal-increase mechanism or an arousal-decrease mechanism, with the former coming into play when stimuli raise arousal moderately and the latter when stimuli raise arousal markedly (1971, p. 92).

A brief list of arousal-increasing devices includes:

(a) the use of high intensity, such as the brilliantly illuminated figures of Rembrandt and Caravaggio which were projected dramatically from a dark ground by using white and saturated colors

(b) the overpowering effects of size, often utilized in architecture, sculpture and painting

(c) the emotional value of saturated colors and those hues in the "warm" half of the spectrum

(d) depiction of human beings and their interactions to produce arousal---the manner in which the artist portrays individuals may generate arousal in the form of fear, anger, or elation---through identification with these depicted individuals, the viewer may partake of the experience as if he were confronted with it himself

(e) the use of irregularity and unpredictability---it has been demonstrated that jagged or tortuous lines are more arousing than smooth or gentle curves

(f) strong contrasts in brightness and color have a more violent effect than palettes restricted to a few neighboring hues

(g) factors like surprise, novelty, and incongruity are principal means of inducing arousal, as in the night-

marish creatures of Bosch's paintings, the Ready-Made's of the Dadaists, and the imaginative juxtapositions of the Surrealists

(h) complexity---A complex patterns contains a large number of independently selected elements. In periods such as the Baroque and Romantic, artists were compelled to push complexity to unprecedented extremes, by crowding in more and more heterogeneous details to create tension.

(i) a combination of ambiguity and conflict are deliberately utilized by Op artists who exploit visual illusion to generate sudden shifts in appearance, movement and depth on a stationary, flat surface (Berlyne, 1971, pp. 137-161)

On the other hand, there are numerous devices which can be used for arousal-reduction. In general, the artist can do just the opposite of what tends to raise arousal:

(a) paint on a small scale, paint miniatures

(b) use subdued intensities and unsaturated colors, especially those belonging to the restful, "cool" sector of the spectrum

(c) the structures can be simple, describable as "serene," "gentle," or restrained

(d) through association, the viewer substitutes satisfaction by identification with the individuals who are portrayed enjoying advantages that the viewer would like to enjoy or acting in a way that the viewer would like to act

(e) the use of familiarity is exploited by pattern repe-

titions, as the classical Greek egg-and-dart decoration or the pre-Columbian step-and-fret motif

(f) variation consists of presentation of elements that are alike in one respect, but different in another--- a painting may contain patches of the same shape, but in different colors, or it may contain the same color in different shades or intensities

(g) and finally, dominance which merely means that one form or color occupies a greater area or occurs more frequently than others so that the perceiver uses these elements to unify or integrate the subordinate, competing visual elements (Berlyne, 1971, pp. 162-174)

Of course, if an artist combines devices from these two lists, a predictable arousal level is less likely. A Surrealist painting which utilizes surprise, novelty, and incongruity may still elicit high arousal even though executed on a small scale. On the other hand, a monumental fresco may evoke only moderate arousal if depicted as a balanced, ordered, and harmonious composition.

Besides this analysis of devices for arousal stimulation and arousal moderation, Berlyne also presents findings which indicate how these factors may be interrelated or manipulated so that the viewer or appreciator will seek various levels of arousal-increase during the aesthetic experience.

Tentatively, some aesthetic theorists have suggested that art, in addition to the traditionally ascribed func-

tions, may also serve a biological need. Ever since Paleolithic man first manifested imagery in cave paintings, this same type of artistic activity has characterized man throughout his evolutionary cycle. It is quite possible that aesthetic activities perform valuable or even indispensable biological functions at present, and that human beings are healthier and more viable with them than they would be without them (Berlyne, 1971, p. 9).

Some of these theorists go so far as to suggest that art, as an adaptational mechanism, is rehearsal for those real situations in which it is vital for man's survival to endure perceptive and cognitive tension (Berlyne, 1971, p. 283). When sorting out the information contained in a work of art, the uncertainty that is experienced, and the solution of that conflict is a form of practice and rehearsal for the perceptual processes which enables the human organism to better adapt to a rapidly-changing and often unpredictable environment.

4. Experimental Aesthetics Correlated to Historical Insights

In the preceding section, it was explained that conclusions reached in experimental aesthetics are often based on laboratory controlled situations. How do these scientific deductions measure up to the philosophical wisdom of the past? Within the scope of the retrospective review of aesthetic theory presented in sections 1 and 2, what has scientific evidence disclosed that either confirms or denies the speculations of philosophers and aestheticians who have been concerned with concepts of art and beauty

for endless decades?

The most pervasive factor mentioned by aestheticians of the past is the pleasure/pain principle associated with the aesthetic experience. Plato recognized the passionate capacities of art in terms of producing pleasure and pain. Aristotle discussed the value of the tragedy which could purge the emotions of terror and pity.

Longinus, Burke and Kant speculated on the sublime as a means of "transporting the perceiver," as a means of producing "strain and tension" within the perceiver, and as a means of generating "intense emotion" within the beholder. Furthermore, Kierkegaard and later, the phenomenologists, acknowledged the intimate association of sensuous pleasure between the percipient and a work of art. And, most recently, aestheticians such as Read, Bell and Fry admit that hedonic experience is inherently associated with aesthetic stimulation. Read's earlier stages of aesthetics stressed unconscious emotions and feelings (Fishman, 1963, p. 171). Bell and Fry proposed that "a thrill" was associated with the aesthetic experience.

It appears that scientific evidence corroborates these theories. Berlyne has suggested that the hypothesized mechanism of hedonic value, as explained on pages 12-13, may offer a satisfactory explanation regarding the two aesthetic components, the sublime and the beautiful, which have persisted for centuries (1971, p. 93). The counterbalancing factors which must be refined into a state of equilibration are the arousal-increasing and

arousal-moderating devices present within a work of art. Those devices which drive up arousal may be characterized by their effect of uncertainty, tension, and excitement within the percipient. On the other hand, arousal-moderating devices may produce resolution, relaxation and, according to Alexenberg, a "tempered continuation of the elation" described as "an aesthetic glow" (1969, p. 1129).

Another most significant finding in the field of experimental aesthetics is the concept of "moderation" in a work of art. Almost two thousand years have elapsed since Aristotle observed that the beautiful object, in addition to an orderly arrangement of parts, must have a moderation which shall be "neither too small nor too great." According to Moles, the value of an aesthetic message for a receiver depends upon:

> ...avoidance of "perfect originality," which is reached with a completely unpredictable and completely incomprehensible series of signs, and "perfect banality," or perfectly comprehensible, total redundancy, which brings nothing new to the recipient but is very easy to understand...(Berlyne, 1971, p. 124)

Berlyne has related this concept of moderation to the interaction of two counterbalancing factors (arousal-increasing and arousal-moderating elements) which establish the necessary equilibrium for aesthetic pleasure to ensue. He explained that beauty, pleasure, or aesthetic

value rises for a while; it reaches a maximum in some intermediate sector, and then falls as the opposite extreme from the starting point is approached. Aristotle had earlier made it clear that, "A master of any art avoids excess and defect but seeks the intermediate and chooses this." (1971, pp. 123-124)

B. Conclusion

Over the centuries, then, it seems that there has been general agreement concerning what constitutes the aesthetic experience. Although past philosophers and aestheticians may have utilized various methods of inquiry, this does not seem to have inhibited the concordance of their conclusions. In terms of analyzing the aesthetic experience, these various methods of examination have not been opposed to each other. On the contrary, the multitude of speculations proposed by the pre-scientific and quasi-scientific theorists appears to have been validated by the scientific methods utilized in experimental aesthetics. When related to each other, their propositions appear to fit together and to become unified; the multifarious shapes of their thoughts touch each other and slip into place like the well-ordered pieces of a puzzle.

II. Theoretical Model of Aesthetic Behavior

A. Introduction

As stated in the introduction of part I, the main task of this investigation is to propose a theoretical model of aesthetic behavior which would serve as a

framework in courses of study such as aesthetics, art appreciation and art education. It is hoped that the preceding retrospective description of the aesthetic experience will clarify and enhance the notions set forth in the model which follows.

1. Hierarchy

> Feldman describes aesthetic perception as
>
> ...the viewer's act of seeing and attempting to understand visual form. It is more than an optical process since it also involves what the viewer's brain and nervous system do with the sensory data they receive (1967, p. 280).

Furthermore, this aesthetic structure also embraces the psychological operations in a viewer which account for awareness of the content or substance of a work of art (Feldman, 1967, p. 7).

Within this context, a proposed hierarchy which describes aesthetic behavior, regardless of experiential modes, would proceed according to this format:

Hierarchy of Aesthetic Behavior

I. PERCEPTION

A. Level One---Attention

B. Level Two---Orientation

II. COGNITION

A. Level Three---Mediation

B. Level Four---Integration

III. MODIFICATION

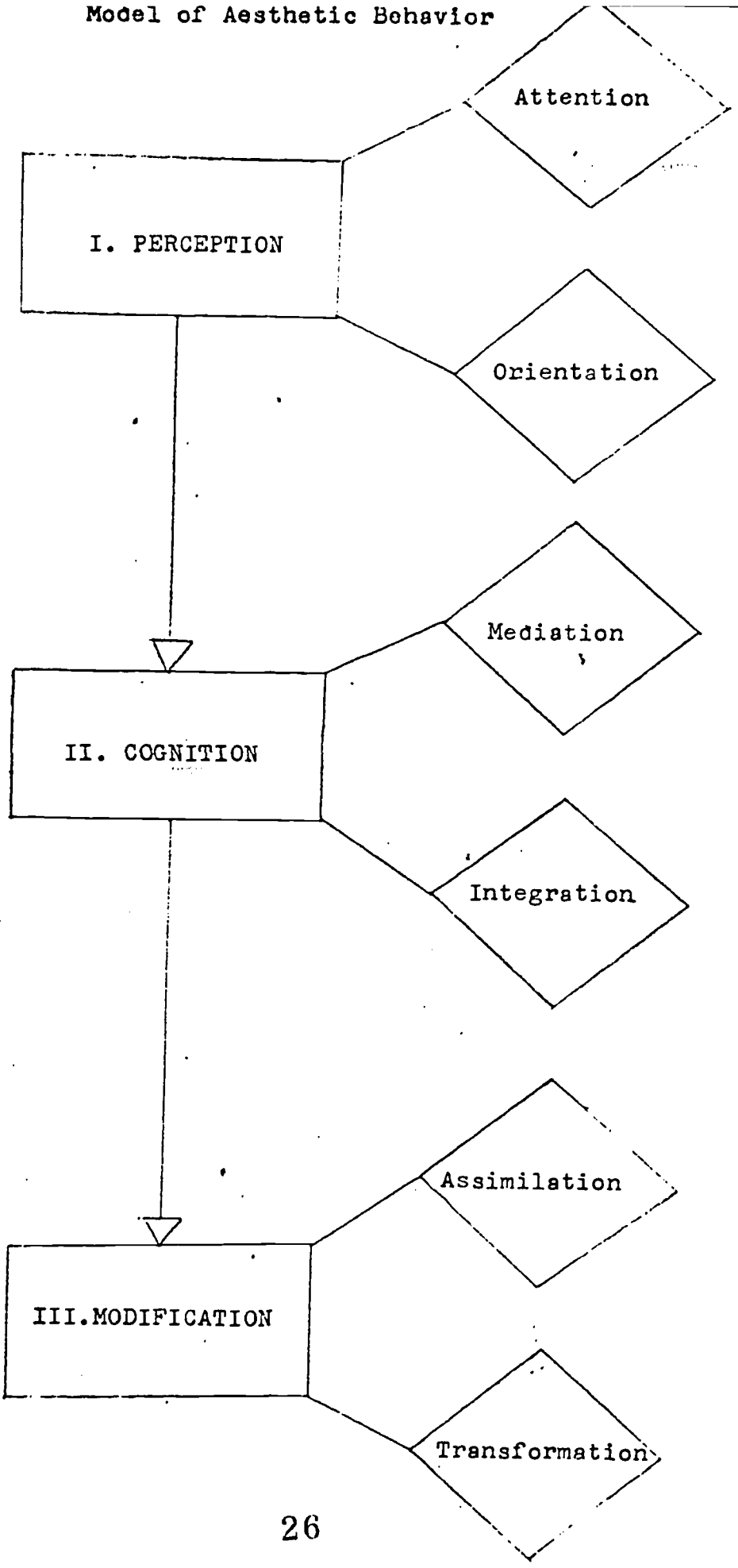
A. Level Five---Assimilation

B. Level Six---Transformation

2. Diagram

A diagram of this proposed model of aesthetic behavior follows:

Model of Aesthetic Behavior



The preceding model proposes a hierarchy of aesthetic behavior represented by the three main dimensions of perception, cognition, and modification. Not only will these three dimensions be interpreted, but the appropriate sub-levels will also be defined. Therefore, the totality of the aesthetic experience is under consideration. The complete cycle of aesthetic behavior will be analyzed which includes the activities and feelings a person may follow from initial exposure to a work of art to the possible transformation as a result of the encounter. Before proceeding into the specifics of the model, it should be kept in mind that the aesthetic experience can be positive or negative; it can extend to the highest level, or it can terminate or be terminated at any level within the model.

I. PERCEPTION

A. Level One---Attention

The percipient brings the work into consciousness by perceptually focusing on it (whether music, literature, sculpture, or painting) and taking in information from it. The activity at this level is accomplished rapidly and would be characterized by a neutral orientation of the percipient involving a physical adjustment to the work. Some perceptual activities might include, first, an initial scanning which runs diffusely over the entire portion of the work presented at that time, which enables the percipient to identify the informative points, specifically, the areas which may yield the most information

(Berlyne, 1971, pp. 197-198). Secondly, the appropriat sensory organs tend to strongly focus or concentrate on the areas of the object or event that bear the highest load of information, that is, on details that are unusual or surprising, on elements that indicate most clearly the nature of the work.

At this point, a sub-phase, perhaps termed curiosity or awareness may ensue which indicates that the individual has been activated or engaged, and will probably continue inspection into the next level.

B. Level Two---Orientation

The percipient experiences superficial pleasure or displeasure (positive/negative orientation) derived from the work's perceptual qualities, called syntactic information---color, shape, tone, size, etc. However, the work's syntactic information may be so uninteresting (generating only a low arousal level) that it is totally rejected by the percipient as unworthy of further scrutiny.

This almost instantaneous like or dislike generates arousal within the appreciator. This arousal may be observed by:

(a) bodily movements

(b) audible speech

(c) equipment which records psychophysiological processes (see pp. 11-12 for details)

II. COGNITION

A. Level Three---Mediation

The arousal generated within the appreciator in Level Two may facilitate continued contemplation of the work in order to process the information it contains.

This level is characterized by disorientation, conflict and uncertainty within the appreciator which further increases the arousal level. During this time, the work is being analyzed in order to determine the meaning of its semantic information, that is, the content.

Tolerance for indecision may very well depend on whether the appreciator is a low or high risk individual. If tolerance is at a low level, the appreciator may be more likely to abandon the investigation if a resolution is not quickly reached.

B. Level Four---Integration

Reward occurs at this level. After struggling with the discomfort of uncertainty (how to react to the work---an object or event), the appreciator is able to internally organize the significance of the work (its syntactic and semantic information). Berlyne observes that the appreciator is likely to oscillate between responses to form and content (1971, p. 152). Integration of these two sources of information, an experience of unification, occurs here.

The resulting elation experienced by the appreciator may not necessarily relate to pleasure in the work itself,

but to the solution of the problem. The appreciator's attention up to this point is now rewarded by the resulting insight. In this case, the reward causes a drop in arousal because the uncertainty has been diminished by a decline in the individual's searching activity. This drop in arousal is in itself a pleasurable experience, a relief, a solution.

Communication between artist and appreciator occurs here on the conceptual level in which ideas are generated within the appreciator; abstraction and symbolic relationships are reached at this level. The communication is not restricted to ideas, but may also include the evocation of emotions on the part of the appreciator. However, by means of an intuiting process, it may be possible for the appreciator to leap across some of the previously described intermediary phases to this level of communication.

III. MODIFICATION

A. Level Five---Assimilation

The pleasure afforded by the insight (Level Four) may serve as a source of stimulus/response (reward), a pleasant event that leaves traces by which future events will be affected or conditioned. This aesthetic experience is incorporated or interconnected with previously learned aesthetic experiences. The fact that one tends to perceive with greater frequency events or objects which have been associated with reward indicates that one's perceptions have been modified.

Since the aesthetic experience was pleasurable, the appreciator will tend to seek more opportunities of the same kind. Therefore, the work of art becomes a possible source of internal pleasure and has the capacity to function as part of the individual's personal reward system.

B. Level Six---Transformation

The insight (Level Four) may result in a permanent internal change within the appreciator whereby the individual, after having experienced the work, will never be the same, i.e., responses to certain stimuli will have been reordered (change has been effected).

In this case, the confrontation with the work of art results in a true learning experience. The work may have revealed to the appreciator a truth about himself, about society, or about the natural world; his values may have been reordered. On the other hand, the cognitive experience could have confirmed a belief or value already held by the appreciator.

Judgmental activities at this level might include the following:

(a) The appreciator may accept the communication (semantic information), but reject its manner of expression (syntactic information).

(b) The appreciator may disagree with the artist's value system as represented in the work, but still accept its syntactic information. In this case, if the appreciator rejects the artist's values, he is, in fact, confirming his own, becoming more certain of his own values.

Hence, transformation can be a change in terms of more or less. An individual can become more certain of his values after such an experience; however, if the individual becomes less certain then it may be expected that the values will be reordered.

This level of transformation may occur some time after initial exposure to the work, when the appreciator will have had time to reflect on the communication and absorb the experience internally. It is also quite possible that activities such as reading about artists and their works, as well as discussions concerning these topics could stimulate the appreciator's aesthetic behavioral level.

A dissertation study by Alexenberg has proposed dividing the intense aesthetic experience into three successive phases, the preclimactic, climactic, and post-climactic.

> The preclimactic phase is a period of conation which is sometimes an undifferentiated and perceptive striving that facilitates the broad scanning of large numbers of possible relationships. The climactic phase is reached when the artist or scientist becomes aware of a new major relationship which causes him to feel surprised and elated. The postclimactic phase is a period in which artists and scientists often attempt to communicate the new major relationships to others. It can be a period of letdown

> from the elation of the climactic phase...(1969, p. 1129)

4. Proposed Research

The set of behaviors investigated in this study falls within the affective domain, that is, behavioral patterns which reflect preferences, attitudes, and emotional responses. In order to determine the learner's operational level when confronted with aesthetic stimuli, appropriate instrumentation must be devised which would reflect the subject's current level within the proposed hierarchy of aesthetic behavior. Furthermore, a methodology which would verify this theoretical model requires experimentation. A suitable methodology would then serve as a flexible means of raising the subject's aesthetic behavioral level within the hierarchy in order to complete the cycle involved in the transformation of aesthetic behavior.

Although educators have acknowledged the importance of exploring the affective domain, there is not yet a great deal of certainty regarding a systematic process by which a learner's affective responses can be raised from lower to higher levels. The reader may be referred to Lawrence Kohlberg's research in the area of moral development which also involves affective behavior. Kohlberg (1966) has developed a systematic methodology for raising a subject's operational level within his hierarchy of moral behavior.

Present educational emphases have largely concen-

trated on the cognitive domain, and it is only in recent years, mainly through the results of psychological research, that educators have recognized the possibility of dealing with the affective domain. This type of investigation is crucial if reliable methods are ever to be formulated regarding the development of affective behavior.

B. Conclusion

By utilizing this theoretical model of aesthetic behavior, educators should be aided in recognizing and pinpointing the level at which various students are operating in terms of an aesthetic experience. This information should facilitate the development of new strategies and activities geared to help each individual reach higher levels (when appropriate) within the hierarchy. The model should also make it possible for the teacher to more easily structure experiences designed to move the student from the initial level (perception) to the most sophisticated level (modification), or to any level between (cognition), depending on the needs of the student. As a functional tool, this model is designed to ease the difficulties and uncertainties in dealing with the critical factors of expanding the appreciator's aesthetic behavior, as well as the appreciator's desire to encounter works of art.

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