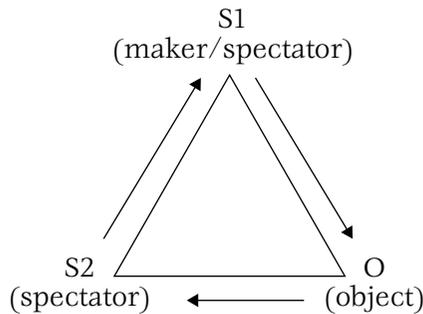


Introduction

What is beauty and what is the importance of the experience of beauty? This question has fascinated me during my whole life so far and always had a special meaning to me. As a person, I enjoyed an artistic education at art academies and besides this I was intellectually educated in the field of history of art and philosophical aesthetics. Apart from that, I was privileged in meeting all kinds of people who completed my mental and emotional development of which my partner in life was the most important person and still is. This treatise is therefore written by us both. Now to the subject.

Part I first of all deals with the dry, philosophical wording of the question. Then, the plastic execution of this question follows.



The threefold relation in time and space of this subject is as follows: maker/spectator towards object, to the passive spectator and back again to the creative maker. A triangular relation of Subject 1 via Object to Subject 2 and then back again to Subject 1. A dialectic form.

The word 'beautiful' is in this relation the linguistic and qualitative expression of an inner feeling that accompanies human perception and it feels as a full awareness of an object external to us. We describe the aesthetic experience we humans undergo, as a subjective experience or feeling. That is to say as a consciously experienced pleasant or unpleasant emotion or feeling. It is directly

or indirectly raised in our mind or heart when we perceive something in the outer world outside our body. This is the most extensive definition possible in philosophical language.

The concept of beauty is expressed in all kinds of linguistic and physical forms: the exclamation of the word 'beautiful!' counts as an immediate expression of feeling during a sensory perception. Beauty as experience has an objective and a subjective character according to classic western philosophy. As an experience it is located inside ourselves, and as a perceivable, aesthetic image it is located outside ourselves. An experience of beauty is founded on a specific mode of consciousness or awareness. It is a phenomenon of a special correlation. The philosophical problem of aesthetic taste, through which we individually decide what we deem beautiful, comes down to the fact that beauty is fundamentally undefinable. We all agree that there exist beautiful things. But we do not agree about what exactly these things would be or look like. According to Kant, we are dealing with an aesthetic judgment of feeling that in every individual is aimed at different qualities in things and situations and furthermore, these judgments have no fixed value but are very changeable. What you like today, you can already hate tomorrow. The aesthetic experience of the different, sensorial accessible worlds forms the beginning of the pleasure we enjoy from beauty. The value of this feeling for the quality of our lives points to a fundamental interest to us. Precisely because of the primary, physical and sensitive nature of our reaction to something external to us, that precedes the cognitive part in our judgment of beauty.

In Part II the question of where the experience of beauty comes from, is central. This chapter mirrors my own interpretation of what an aesthetic experience really is. With respect to this, I refer to the evolution of specific forms and behaviour in organisms that occasioned an enormous variation of organic life in nature under the pressure of necessary procreation. These answers from biology are to be found in a previous publication: M. Hovens, 'Het creatieve proces. Een filosofische verkenning' (2014). This book still is under translation. It treats the question if the biology of sexual reproduction is a wholly unconscious phenomenon and the question of which

biological mechanisms have led to aesthetic judgments. In this book I also treat the importance of pleasurable sensations in living creatures as a preliminary phase in the development of intelligence. Humans as pleasure-seekers are central to this argument and the fact that their experience of beauty has a physiological and psychological importance. The imagination as the source of culture and pleasure is central to this argument. The development of cultures is partly the result of the workings of aesthetic desire and of curiosity.

Part III deals with the significance of quantum theory as a theory of fundamental matter, as a theory of the mind and as a theory of the melting of mind and matter. Also, the relation between the aesthetic experience and cosmology is explained as well as the meaning of language, geometry and numerology. Geometry and numerology are the basic elements of mathematics.

Finally, Part IV is a short comment on the importance of Darwin's evolutionary thought and on its relation to the preliminary phase of cognitive thinking that is called 'intuition'. After that, very concise, the development of religious and philosophical thinking in mankind is pictured. The logical paradoxes that Kant discovered in his analysis of the aesthetic judgment, are more or less solved. Also, the idea of a possible objective beauty is confirmed.

In the Conclusion the philosophical question of eternity and finiteness is commented upon.