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Mindfulness and Painting:
The Relevance of Dufrenne

Colleen Fitzpatrick, M.A.

Head of School: Prof. Steven Ellis
Head of Discipline: Prof. Paul Crowther
Supervisor: Prof. Paul Crowther

School of Humanities: Philosophy

Faculty of Arts, Social Sciences and Celtic Studies

National University of Ireland, Galway

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Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between painting and mindfulness, including the notion of painting as a mindfulness based intervention. This premise is explored with reference to the aesthetics of Mikel Dufrenne. Dufrenne's theory, particularly his work, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* makes use of a number of features which characterise mindful practice and reflect the mindful attitude. Dufrenne's phenomenology of aesthetic experience centres on being present, focused, non-judgemental and attentive to the aesthetic object in order to realise its signification. These concepts are also given primary importance in both Buddhist philosophy of mindfulness and contemporary psychological theories of mindfulness. Dufrenne emphasises the psychological and ontological significance of the aesthetic experience in terms which lend itself ideally to understanding its relation with mindfulness as well as how these experiences complement one another.

Although Dufrenne's phenomenology of aesthetics does not prioritise painting, the present study will explore painting in particular, against the background of his general aesthetics and illustrate how Dufrenne's philosophy allows both mindfulness and painting to be understood in more comprehensive terms than that of their meanings considered individually. In this light, painting is understood as a process of mindfulness as well as a product of gesture. This utilises the important notion of style which reflects the artist's mode of being-in-the-world.

A number of significant features which are highlighted by Dufrenne, in conjunction with their relationship to the concept of mindfulness, will be examined in order to come to an increasingly enlightened understanding of the intrinsic significance of painting. Subject-object reciprocity is one such feature, which accentuates perception and embodiment. It is argued that the introduction of the notion of mindfulness into Dufrenne's account of aesthetic experience, with special reference to painting, allows us to go beyond and develop Dufrenne's ideas in directions that Dufrenne, himself, did not envisage.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis is all my own work and I have not obtained a degree in this University or elsewhere on the basis of this work.

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks to Dr. Paul Crowther for his excellent supervision and for sharing his invaluable wisdom and experience which brought this project to fruition. Thanks to Aoife Casby for proof-reading, comments, conversations and technical support; to friends and family for their support and interest. Thanks to my daughter, Aida, for teaching me mindful focus on a daily basis.

Introduction

> "A pair of wings, a different respiratory system, which enabled us to travel through space, would in no way help us, for if we visited Mars or Venus while keeping the same senses, they would clothe everything we could see in the same aspect as the things of the Earth. The only true voyage, the only bath in the Fountain of Youth, would be not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes, to see the universe through the eyes of another, of a hundred others, to see the hundred universes that each of them sees, that each of them is..."[1]
>
> *-Proust*

Marcel Proust's remarks indirectly point towards one of the most important aspects of painting – the way it presents the world as another person has seen it. This (and other important features) arise from a complex process involving style and gesture in how paintings are created.

The present study contends that this process has an important relation to *mindfulness*. We understand 'mindfulness' as a mental attitude that invites us to dwell on things and savour the moment rather than let it simply pass by unnoticed, or to force it into rigid patterns of recognition. It involves not only attending, but being aware of how one is attending. The relation between this and both the act and appreciation of painting is a very close one. To show this, the present work will make extensive use of Mikel Dufrenne's aesthetics - because of its detailed emphasis

[1] Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time, Volume V, The Captive, The Fugitive*, Trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, ed. By D.J. Enright, New York: The Modern Library, Random House, 1993, part I, the Captive, p. 343-344. In this excerpt Proust goes on to name 2 fictitious artists, Elistir and Vinteuil, saying, "…and this we can do with an Elistir and a Vinteuil; with men like this we really do fly from star to star."

on the ontology and psychology of all aspects of the relation between subject and object of experience. Dufrenne provides a full account of aesthetics encompassing all the arts, but, as will be shown, his subject-object emphasis is especially insightful in terms of mindfulness's relation to painting. Indeed, working with Dufrenne's ideas in this area allows new and illuminating ways of understanding many aesthetics-related aspects of painting to emerge.

Existing literature on the relation between mindfulness and painting is limited in the extreme, and such as there is, arises from psychology, and from tendencies in Buddhist thought. Psychologist, Ellen Langer is a leading writer on mindfulness and she is also a painter. She has written a book entitled, *On Becoming an Artist: Re-inventing yourself through Mindful Creativity*. This is a handbook on how to remove obstacles to creativity through mindfulness. It is a practical guide to opening up creativity. The work of Langer is hugely important in the area of psychological theory of mindfulness and will be referred to later. In this and other books, she highlights the dangers of *evaluating* as opposed to simply noticing new things and increasing awareness of changing contexts and perspectives and how they relate to creativity.

Langer's book on creativity and mindfulness is one excellent example of many books that help the reader to use mindfulness to unlock creativity. However this is not our purpose. In the chapters and discussion that follow, we will examine the phenomenology of painting and how both the creation and appreciation of painting as an aesthetic experience relates to the mindful attitude. Our purpose is to elucidate the nature of painting and thus highlight its value in human evolutionary terms. The relationship, including parallels and differences between the two experiences will be explored. Rather than demonstrating how to become more

creative *through* mindfulness, we will demonstrate how painting by its nature *is* a mindfulness based intervention. Painting, in this regard is seen as a type of *visual mindfulness* and it is viewed as an intervention on reality.

Phenomenological approaches to philosophy mirror mindful approaches to the world with emphasis on lived experience and perception. This is evidenced in existing literature which relates phenomenology to Eastern practices such as yoga and Buddhism, for example, Sarukkai's article, *Inside/ Outside, Merleau-Ponty/Yoga*[2] wherein he argues that the notion of "inside" from a phenomenological standpoint is most clearly manifested in the space where yoga and phenomenology meet.

Morley[3] similarly examines the connection between yoga practice and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology in a paper entitled *Inspiration, Expiration: Yoga Practice through Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of the Body*. Books like *Merleau-Ponty and Buddhism*[4] explore philosophy through a comparative study of Merleau-Ponty and major Buddhist thinkers such as Nagarjuna, among others. *Mind as Mirror and the Mirroring of the Mind* by Laycock[5] discusses the work of Husserl, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty in relation to Buddhist thought. Other studies and books such as these challenge the confines of monocultural philosophical thought, however none make a link specifically to art or painting. Furthermore, Dufrenne is not referred to in any of these except for a mention by Gerald Cipriani in *Merleau-Ponty*

[2] S. Sarukkai, Inside/Outside: Merleau-Ponty/Yoga, P*hilosophy East & West* 52(4) (2002) 459-478
[3] Morley, J., Inspiration & Expiration: Yoga Practice through Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of the body, *Philosophy East & West*, 51(1) (2001) 73-82
[4] Yin J. Kopf and Gereon Park, *Merleau-Ponty and Buddhism*, Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2011
[5] Stephen W. Laycock, *Mind as Mirror and the Mirroring of the Mind, Buddhist Reflections on Western Phenomenology*, New York: Suny Buddhist Series, New York University Press, 1994

and Buddhism in an essay entitled, 'Merleau-Ponty, Cezanne and the Basho of the Visible.'[6]

So, whereas some studies relate mindfulness to creativity and others relate Eastern thought to phenomenology, none explore the philosophy of painting through the lens of mindfulness. The present study explores the value of painting in relation to mindfulness in the context of phenomenology with reference to Dufrenne's theory of aesthetics. This has not been done before and hence there is no existing literature which relates directly to the current study. In essence we will examine the intrinsic significance of painting from an angle which has not been utilised to date. It is hoped that this will open new avenues to understanding the value of painting. It should be emphasised that we will also highlight where painting and mindfulness are distinct and we can learn as much as from this as we can from where they are similar.

In the most comprehensive terms it seems logical to look for a philosophical position which would find a place for both mindfulness and painting in the context of a wide-ranging philosophical aesthetics. The philosophy of Mikel Dufrenne offers such a position.

It may seem that Paul Crowther and Maurice Merleau-Ponty have offered directions in which this might be done. But their emphasis is very much on the nature of the aesthetic object, rather than the way in which it is contemplated. Dufrenne gives us an exhaustive account of the subject-object relationship and the work that is involved in the act of appreciating the aesthetic object. The process he describes fits effortlessly into the theoretical framework of mindfulness.

Heidegger might seem more promising – with his emphasis on truth as contemplative disclosure of the Being of beings. But the contemplating subject and

[6] Gerald Cipriani, 'Merleau-Ponty, Cezanne and the Basho of the Visible,' in Yin J. Kopf and Gereon Park, *Merleau-Ponty and Buddhism*, Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2011, pp. 141-154, this reference p. 144

the uniqueness of the individual artist's style disappears into this. The gesture of the artist, which reveals his or her style is a vital element which cannot be overlooked. This is connected to embodiment, which is indispensable if we are to link phenomenology and mindfulness, emphasis of which only arises after Merleau-Ponty and was not uppermost for Heidegger. Furthermore, Heidegger does not provide a psychology of subjective aesthetic experience as Dufrenne does.

Mikel Dufrenne offers something different. His Phenomenology is one of the most substantial contributions to aesthetics but has received scarcely any attention – at least in the English speaking world. Crowther provides one of the few comprehensive accounts of Dufrenne's aesthetics in *Phenomenologies of Art and Vision: A Post-Analytic Turn*.[7] Crowther explains and develops Dufrenne's theories in terms of reciprocity between subject and object of experience including spatial and temporal factors in the pictorial object. On these terms, the temporality of the aesthetic object is not a dimension of objective time but rather an atmosphere within the work itself. Crowther emphasises that, in relation to painting, Dufrenne acknowledges historical factors and integrates these into his theory of painting. However Dufrenne shows a bias toward modernist painting which precludes the possibility of viewing painting in relation to its historical development based on comparative criteria. Crowther's contribution to the development of Dufrenne's theory will be reviewed and integrated throughout the present study.

Eugene Kaelin has also commented on Dufrenne in *Existentialist Aesthetic: Theories of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty.* As we shall see, Dufrenne asserts that the aesthetic object is a quasi-subject because it is capable of expression. Kaelin is critical of this notion and devotes more time to Dufrenne's failures than to his

[77] Paul Crowther, *Phenomenologies of Art and Vision: A Post-Analytic Turn*, Bloomsbury, 2013 chapter 7, pp. 137-160

achievements. In *Handbook of Phenomenological Aesthetics*, Edward Casey[8] devotes an essay to Dufrenne highlighting his account of expression which includes "presence to representation to feeling."[9] However Casey is not specifically concerned with painting but a more general sense of Dufrenne's aesthetics including poetry and nature. Dufrenne also gets a brief mention in a book entitled *The Psychology of Art Appreciation* by Bjarn Sode Funch[10] in a discussion of the state mind involved in the aesthetic experience.

What is the reason for this neglect of Dufrenne's original and insightful contribution to philosophy and aesthetics? One possible explanation is the extremely complex and many-layered way in which he understands the reciprocal bonding of subject and object of experience in both ontological and psychological terms. The sheer complexity and the difficulty of terms used may be a deterrent.

However, it is precisely this complex treatment of the subject-object reciprocity which makes him perfect for understanding the relation between mindfulness and painting. Dufrenne's philosophy allows mindfulness to be understood in more comprehensive terms than its practitioners and theorists have achieved; and it allows painting to be understood in terms of its meaning as a process as well as a product of gesture. Indeed, the richness of his aesthetic theory and general philosophy allows the relation between mindfulness and painting to be understood in terms other than that of their meanings considered individually. The introduction of the notion of mindfulness into his account of aesthetic experience allows us to go beyond and develop Dufrenne's aesthetics in directions that Dufrenne, himself, did not envisage.

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[8] Hans-Rainier Sepp and Lester Embree, *Handbook of Phenomenological Aesthetics*, Series Contributions to Phenomenology, Springer Netherlands, 2010
[9] Ibid p. 82
[10] Bjarn Sode Funch, The Psychology of Art Appreciation Museum Tusculanum Press, 1997, p. 240

To begin, we will define and explain the origins of mindfulness and the scope of its objects in chapter one, *Mindfulness and its Objects.* This will include theory and practice which comes from its original Buddhist sources and research of mindfulness as a psychological construct as studied in the contemporary social sciences. In this section will consider different contexts of mindful experience and orientation, including actions, events and objects. Paintings as objects of mindful experience will finally be considered at the end of this chapter. Although mindfulness may be defined in concise and straightforward terms, different things are experienced in different mindful ways and the central place of certain things in human experience give them a special significance. To understand why and how this is, we then analyse Dufrenne's philosophy in both general terms and in relation to mindfulness in the second chapter.

In this Chapter two, *Dufrenne's Philosophy and the Significance of Mindfulness* we will consider the central features of experience according to Dufrenne. This will encompass not only his theory of aesthetics but his general philosophy because it is imperative to understand basic concepts which are an integral part of his aesthetics and the framework from which he emerges. This includes the notion of the a priori in general terms as well as its more specific application in relation to aesthetics as the affective a priori (which will be discussed in chapter three). At the close of this chapter we will explore the relationship between Dufrenne and mindfulness theory in more detail. However this relationship will be explored further later on in the final chapter, first, Dufrenne's theory of aesthetics must be clearly understood.

Chapter three, then, *Dufrenne's General Aesthetics* provides a full account of the nature of the aesthetic object according to Dufrenne, including its relation to the

subject. In this section we will come to understand the significance of the affective a priori, Dufrenne's criteria of art and the artist as well as truth in art, where we will define the important concepts *real, world* and *true*. The focus of the present study is painting, however, Dufrenne does not single out painting in any great detail and so every aspect of his general aesthetics applies to painting. Therefore we must thoroughly acquaint ourselves with his general aesthetics before moving, specifically, onto painting.

Only when we are clear on his general aesthetics can we discuss Dufrenne's concept of painting at length, in chapter four, *Dufrenne's Theory of Painting, Space, Time and Consciousness*. Dufrenne's complex account of space, time and movement needs first to be clarified. Next we will detail how painting qualifies as an art for Dufrenne before reviewing the notion of gesture which is an essential feature relating to otherness, universality and consciousness which all link Dufrenne's theory of painting to mindfulness.

At this point, equipped with a comprehensive view of Dufrenne on aesthetics and painting we can see where he comes up short or could possibly have developed his ideas further. In chapter five, *Critical Evaluation*, we will consider these aspects, including a distinct bias in favour of modern painting which has prevented him from recognising the value of painting in its totality, as well as discrepancies in his arguments. We will use the concept of mindfulness where possible to clarify some of his points, as well as the aesthetics of Paul Crowther.

Once we have reviewed both mindfulness and Dufrenne's ideas at length, we will summarise the salient feature in chapter six, *Dufrenne, Mindfulness and Painting*, where we will discuss the overlap between mindfulness and painting as well as the distinctions. In this chapter it should become clear how viewing

Dufrenne's ideas in light of mindfulness and mindfulness in light of Dufrenne promotes a deeper and more enriching understanding of painting. The final section of this chapter deals with the very important issue of the artist vs. the spectator. This is something which Dufrenne has not dealt with at length. The experiences of appreciating and creating art are different but there are interesting parallels, both of which relate to mindful experience.

Chapter 1 Mindfulness and its Objects

> "With my eyes more widely opened upon things, I learnt that the life we unfold can also reveal joy."[11]
>
> *-Odilon Redon*

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter we will define mindfulness, starting with consideration of the theory and practice that comes from both its original Buddhist sources and its study by contemporary psychology. Mindfulness will then be contextualized by the relation between perception and apperception (the latter understood as the subject explicitly recognizing a relation to himself or herself in the act of perception). The investigation then analyses the cognitive structure of mindful attention and the scope of what it can be directed towards - including actions, events, and objects. Objects will include, people, objects and finally paintings. It should be noted that we are approaching mindfulness from a Western and generally psychological interpretation, which is why we will not be delving deeply into the cultural and historical background of Buddhism in any detail. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to elucidate Buddhism in all its richness.

1.2 The origins and study of mindfulness

Mindfulness as a mental discipline has its roots in contemplative Buddhist practices and philosophy.[12] Through mindfulness meditation the Buddhist practitioner learns to

[11] Odilon Redon quoted in Michael Gibson (1996) *Odilon Redon 1840-1916 Prince of Dreams*, Koln: Taschen

[12] Kalupahana, D. J. (1987) *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology*. Albany: State

control attention to a greater extent and to better perceive events as they occur.[13] In traditional Buddhism, mindfulness is related to the reduction of suffering because suffering comes from the fundamental problem of the mistaken interpretation of reality:

> "The world is given to us through our senses but rather than stick to what we experience from moment to moment, we remain prisoners of our constructions."[14]

It can be deduced from this statement that mindfulness liberates the practitioner by removing misconceptions through the improved utilisation of sense perception. The mistaken interpretation of reality is a product of ignoring what is actually presented to us through our senses and rather attending to a false conception of the mind which we hold onto out of an ill-serving habit. There are many examples of this: a person who is racist and believes that black people are inferior to white people will quickly filter out the intelligent black doctor that they dealt with and choose to only remember any black people that s/he had problems with in the past, or if this doctor is remembered, s/he will be remembered with false memories of incompetence. A person with low self –esteem will only remember their failures.

This is what the Buddhists have referred to for thousands of years when they say speak of the 'prison of our construction.' Contemporary psychological science has also been aware of these tendencies for some time and has conducted research in

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University of New York Press.

[13] B.Alan Wallace et al. 'Mental balance and well-being: Building Bridges between Buddhism and Western psychology' *American Psychologist,* 61, (2006) 690–701.

[14] George Dreyfus, 'Is Mindfulness Present-Centred and Non-judgemental? A Discussion of the Cognitive Dimensions of Mindfulness' *Contemporary Buddhism* 12(1)(2011) 41-54

the field of cognitive and social psychology[15] to try to find answers to alleviate the problem:

> "People who hold strong opinions on complex social issues are likely to examine relevant empirical evidence in a biased manner. They are apt to accept "confirming" evidence at face value while subjecting "disconfirming" evidence to critical evaluation, and, as a result, draw undue support for their initial positions from mixed or random empirical findings. Thus, the result of exposing contending factions in a social dispute to an identical body of relevant empirical evidence may be not a narrowing of disagreement but rather an increase in polarization."[16]

This type of behaviour is replicated in studies of various different contexts.[17] The practice of mindfulness, from its beginnings, has been very much about 'correcting' this 'distorted thinking.' Mindfulness based interventions have been designed to foster clarity of mind through bodily practice. This is done by adopting a particular orientation which will be described below.

Mindfulness in general has been described as a kind of non-elaborative, non-judgemental, present-centred awareness in which, as far as possible, each thought, feeling and sensation that arises in the attentional field is acknowledged and accepted as it is – this means dwelling on the multi-aspectuality of its presence instead of dealing with it as a mere component in our practical involvements with things. This

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[15] See David .J. Schneider, *The Psychology of Stereotyping*, New York: Guilford Press 2005

16 See C.G. Lord et al 'Biased assimilation and attitude polarization: The Effects of Prior Theories on Subsequently Considered Evidence' *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol 37(11) (1979) 2098-2109. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.37.11.2098

17 For example L. Sinclair and Z. Kunda, 'Reactions to a Black professional: Motivated inhibition and activation of conflicting stereotypes.'Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol 77(5) (1999) 885-904. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.77.5.885

has been shown to lead to greater curiosity and better self-reflection.[18] It is a state of presence of mind, a clear awareness of one's inner and outer worlds.[19] This mental state is characterised by full attention to internal and external experiences as they occur in the present moment.

This definition may be extended to include alertness to distinction, context and multiple perspectives as well as openness to novelty and orientation to the present.[20] This requires focus on an object such that when the mind wanders, attention is brought back to the object.

Mindful perception should be differentiated from passive reception. For example, the mindful person pays attention to, and hence, actively participates in the life of the perceived object. There is focus and concentration. In contrast, consider a person staring into space for hours, seemingly staring at an object, such as an elderly person left sitting in a nursing home. Here the person is looking in a certain direction, but is not actively attending to the particularities of any object. He or she is absorbed, or more accurately, *lost* in the directedness of perception, without, as it were arriving at the destination of what his or her perception is directed towards. Even if the act is sustained over a period of time there is no active involvement and no benefit whatever to this passivity. The introduction of mindful behaviour in this context has multiple benefits.

Mindful aging has been studied by Langer, who found that the introduction of basic activities which increase mindfulness in patients of nursing homes had positive effects on mental well-being, physical health and mortality rates. The

18 S.R. Bishop et al. Mindfulness: A proposed operational definition. Clinical Psychology: Science Practice 11 (2004) 230-241

19 For more on this see A. Chiesa, et al (2011) 'Does Mindfulness Training improve Cognitive Abilities, A Systematic Review of Neuropsychological Findings' Clinical Psychology Review 31 (2011) 449- 464

20 See Ellen J. Langer, The Power of Mindful Learning, MA: Addison Wesley 1997

residents in the experimental group were required to participate in decision making, which meant that they were obliged to think, reflect and pay more attention than the comparison group, who were told that the staff were there to help with all decisions. The experimental group were also given a house plant that they had to care for themselves and decide when and how much it needed to be watered as opposed to being told that the nurses would take care of it.

In follow up studies eighteen months later the experimental group was still more alert, suffered less from depression, physical ailments and had a lower mortality rate.[21] When an individual is more mindful, s/he is living a more rewarding life through active involvement in that life, even at the most basic level, evidenced by this particular study.

This leads us back to the way contemporary psychology has also explored issues of mindfulness. In another study, creative thinking was compared to logic thinking among subjects who practised mindfulness meditation or not. Researchers found a specific positive influence of mindfulness meditation on insight problem solving. The 'Alternative Uses Task' test for divergent thinking was employed; for this task subjects are asked to list as many uses as possible for common household items. The ability to generate new ideas, flexibility, originality and fluency were examined. Those who practised mindfulness meditation showed a marked advantage over others on these activities.[22]

Insight problem solving is a class of problems where non-habitual responses or intuition are key factors leading to problem solution.[23] This suggests that

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[21] Ellen J. Langer, *Mindfulness*, Cambridge MA: Merloyd Lawrence Book, Da Capo Press, 1989

[22] L.S. Colzato, et al. 'Meditate to create: the impact of focused-attention and open-monitoring training on convergent and divergent thinking' *Front. Psychol.* 3:116, (2012) doi: 10.3389/fpsyg00116

[23] See Capurso et al 'The Influence of Mindfulness Meditation on Creative Thinking,' *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol 4 article 1020, Jan (2014) p. 1 www.frontiersin.org

mindfulness based interventions have implications for opening the mind wherein rather than responding to life in a mechanical way, the mindful individual embraces the unexpected and the unusual. S/he learns to adopt and generate ideas that heretofore were not possible. This has implications for critical thinking in a wider context.

When we think more creatively and do not cling to the familiar – embracing what previously may have been foreign to us – we see others and things around us in a less circumscribed light. From these studies we can extrapolate that mindfulness helps to break down barriers between people. We fear the unknown less because what we considered 'unknown' can now be entertained. Mindfulness based interventions work very much on a level of teaching acceptance –by embracing the present moment whatever it entails. In this way, fear in general about life, oneself, others, the past and the future, is eroded. This revised attitude helps to reduce the '*them and us'* mentality, which is based on lack of acceptance through fear and clinging to egoic assumptions with regard to the self.

Overall, the result of this practice is a mind which perceives more clearly and an individual who sees him/herself as an integral part of the world as opposed to experiencing alienation.

In systematic reviews of neuropsychological findings, researchers have found that mindfulness training improves cognitive abilities, including attention and memory.[24] In a review of 23 papers, researchers demonstrated how mindfulness meditators performed better on a number of memory and perceptual tasks. These included executive attention measures such as the 'Stroop Test.' This test shows the interference of the reaction time of a task, for example, the word 'red' may be

[24] Chiesa et al 'Does Mindfulness Training improve Cognitive Abilities, A Systematic Review of Neuropsychological Findings' 2011

printed on the colour blue and generally it takes longer for an individual to name the colour as blue, however significant improvements were observed in mindfulness groups. This group disengaged more quickly from incorrectly cued visual information and more flexibly redirected to new information.

In an 'Ambiguous Image Perspective Task,' the mindfulness group demonstrated higher abilities to identify more alternative perspectives of ambiguous images and to identify the first perspective more quickly. Attentional abilities were further studied when a group that had completed a Vipassana mindfulness meditation retreat were compared with counterparts who had not on an 'Attentional Blink' exercise. This is a process where if a second target stimulus of 2 target stimuli appears within 500ms of the first in a rapid sequence of distractions it is often not detected. The experimental group showed a significantly smaller attentional blink than controls. This was the case even where the mindfulness group were significantly older than younger controls. Normally the attentional blink increases with age.

Another study investigated the number of changes detected in flickering scenes in a group of meditators compared to non-meditators in the 'Change Blindness Flickering Task.' Again, the experimental group outperformed the controls showing greater perceptual and attentional skill. Mindfulness based interventions have also been shown to be related to superior memory specificity, which is a psychological marker for well-being, the opposite being over-general memories, which is a marker for impaired social problem solving, emotional vulnerability and future depression.

Studies substantiating the benefits of mindfulness training as a tool for positively expanding cognition and affectivity are too numerous to mention.[25] Suffice to say that mindfulness, above all, is about perceptual awareness and this is why it relates to phenomenological aesthetics. A plethora of studies verifies that high mindful individuals have been characterised as more attuned to sensations and perceptions. These individuals demonstrate superior perceptual abilities in visual work, memory and temporal tasks.[26]

Having surveyed empirical psychological evidence on the effectiveness of mindfulness, the time has come to identify in more precise terms what is involved in the mindful state. We can do this in two stages. First a general distinction between perception and apperception; and second, a more exact description of mindfulness's relation to its intentional objects.

1.3 The Cognitive Context for Mindfulness – Perception and Apperception

As we have seen, mindfulness centres on perception. However, it involves a complex extra element. To understand it, we must distinguish between perception and *apperception*. To perceive is simply to recognise something given in perception. Apperception involves more - a relation between what is perceived and our sense of self. Of course, when any perceived object is recognized this is made possible on the basis of knowledge we have previously acquired. However, the circumstances under which we originally acquired it do not have to play a part in the act of perceptual recognition itself. In such cases the apperceptive element is passive and unnoticed. It is present but dormant in ordinary perception. In other cases, the apperceptive factor

[25] Another for example, R. Chamber et al. 'The Impact of Intensive Mindfulness Training on Attentional Control, Cognitive Style, and Affect' *Cogn. Ther. Res*. 32, (2008) 303–322. doi: 10.1007/s10608007-9119-0

[26] For example, C.L. Anicha et al. Toward a Cognitive View of Trait Mindfulness: Distinct Cognitive Skills Predict its Observing and Nonreactivity Facets, *Journal of Personality*, 80(2) (2012) 255-285

becomes active and explicit. We recognize what we are perceiving in relation to our individual self and its circumstances. For example, what is an expensive commodity to a poor person may seem cheap to a rich person. The same perceived fact takes on a different meaning through apperception.[27]

This is especially the case in the phenomenon of emotion. Here, situations are not just perceived in recognitional terms through acquired knowledge, they are, rather, actively related to our self-consciousness. Some situation is appraised and we respond to it emotionally because of its implications for our own life and its values. There is also a more straightforward sense of apperception, where we are simply aware of ourselves as engaged in the act of perception. Whilst this mode of apperception is straightforward as a fact, its structure can be very complicated. It is this kind of apperception which is most involved in mindfulness.

Now, mindfulness involves sustained perception that leads to apperception, and which transforms routine attitudes towards things into something more fluid. However, given that we need to make sense of our world and this, by necessity, involves categorising and making use of past knowledge, it is important to ask how it is possible to render these categories fluid? Of course we must continue to categorise, but if we do this mindfully we will not *over*-categorise but *re*- categorise in a way that involves apperception. It is human to attempt to simplify our world in order to make sense of it; *over*simplifying is the problem. Fortunately, as humans, we also possess apperception in the form of self-consciousness. The fact that we can, as it were 'check in' with ourselves as we make sense of the world and assimilate information, means that we can avoid doing so in a lazy or mindless fashion.

[27] See Christopher .J. Ott, *The Evolution of Perception and the Cosmology of Substance: A Simpler Theory of Everything*. iUniverse inc, 2004

While we are perceiving we objectify that which is not ourselves, we are the subject who perceives the object of experience. However in apperception we can utilise the ability to also objectify ourselves. We can watch and question ourselves as we perceive others and our environment. If we perceive ourselves perceiving we can become aware of the fact that we are categorising instead of just doing it mindlessly or unwittingly. Consequently we are in a position to re-categorise if necessary because we are aware that we have already done so.

Allowing ourselves to be simultaneously subject and object immediately increases perspectives and opens up possibilities. It invites questions, for example if I perceive myself perceiving and drawing conclusions based on my observations, I am automatically receptive to looking at myself and asking why did I do that? Just as I would if I looked at an *other* person behaving in a certain way. We very often comment on the behaviour of others because we are perceiving them from a subjective point of view, the object is seen with clarity. When we do this to ourselves, clarity of our own behaviour and actions increases.

Although the term apperception is not used in mindfulness literature, it is actually an important part of the process. In psychological literature, there has long been much written on the differences between the perspective of an actor and an observer.[28] This relates to attribution theory and how we attribute our beliefs. Researchers consistently find that we are likely to blame our own negative behaviour on circumstances but if the same behaviour is engaged in by someone else, we tend to blame the individual.[29] For example if *we* are late, we blame public transport, if someone else is late, we may think that the person is irresponsible.

[28] E. Jones and R. Nisbett, 'The Actor and the Observer: Divergent Perceptions of the causes of Behaviour' *Attributions: Perceiving the Causes of Behaviour*, ed. E. Jones Morrison NJ: General Learning Press 1972

[29] See Langer, *Mindfulness*, 1989, pp. 68-72 for more discussion

Langer recommends remedying this imbalanced state of affairs through increased mindfulness, which induces us to be mindfully aware of different points of view and the perspective of others.[30] But of course, this is only possible through apperception. We can interpret our own behaviours in the same way we attempt to explain behaviour of others and this gives us increased perspectives of the self and the world. As Langer says:

> "Such awareness is liberating. For instance imagine that someone has just told you that you are rude. You thought you were being frank. If there is only one perspective, you can't both be right. But with an awareness of many perspectives, you could accept that you are both right and concentrate on whether your remarks had the effect that you actually wanted to produce."[31]

In this example, we can see that this last sentence is dependent on the ability if an individual to actively relate to the self in the act of perception, otherwise no questioning can take place. This is the self exploring a relationship with the self.

On these terms, then, mindfulness in general centres on the way apperception reconfigures rigidified ways of perceiving things. Let us now make this structure even more specific.

1.4 The Cognitive Structure of Mindful Attention

Mindful states are complex in terms of both their relation to their objects, and their enabling contexts. We shall identify a number of relevant aspects.

[30] Ibid pp 68-72
[31] Ibid p. 69

1.4.1 The principle of orientation

In order for mindful states to be possible, there must, logically speaking, be a cognitive prelude to them. This means a contextualizing or framing device wherein we choose to attend to things mindfully, or where – without us choosing it, circumstances happen to put us in a mindful frame of mind. Let us call this prelude the *principle of orientation*.

Such an orientation towards mindful engagement is something that can be developed. We become aware of the possibility of such attention and even plan for it. A cultivated disposition to elicit mindful states is especially important in relation to savouring transient phenomena encountered by chance – which might otherwise simply be noticed and then lost through submergence in the continuum of other immediate events.

The cultivation of a mindful orientation has far-reaching ramifications, which must first be situated in practical terms. Occurent mindful states are anchored in the *present moment*.[32] As we have seen, this requires attending to current experience as it is happening and having a heightened awareness of the relationship with the object of experience. At every moment and every day there are opportunities for greater engagement with experience – which are often missed at great expense. Paying attention to the environment as we pass through it, whether it is the natural or human environment is not only rewarding but useful: we would not misplace things so often, we may notice a tree that could be used for shelter in the future and if we eat mindfully, obesity would surely be reduced.

Conscious immersion in the natural environment increases our awareness of its impermanence – Parkes argues that we need more awe and humility in order to

[32] Philip Kapleau, *The Three Pillars of Zen, Teaching Practice and Enlightenment*, Boston: Bacon Press 1965

avert the environmental crisis,[33] but part and parcel of this is mindfulness awareness. A consciousness is brought to bear on the experience when a conscious effort is made to engage with present experience, which results in total immersion in the present. In contrast, we often experience the world in a 'mindless' way, going through life but not *truly experiencing* it. This is like the businessman who travels to exotic places but sees nothing because he is so absorbed in his work. He reaps no cultural benefit, nor does he manage to see from new perspectives – which is what makes travelling to places unlike our own so expansive for the mind.

A busy business man may dismiss this as he does not have time to think in this way, but if he even decided to close his laptop or turn off his phone for short periods of time during his trip and perceive the present moment in active and silent concentration he would be greatly enriched. And, as we have seen, experience mental and physical health benefits from the mindful experience. It is beyond dispute that stress related illnesses are endemic in Western culture resulting from an overly busy lifestyle where people try to attend to too much at one time instead of taking the time to pay attention to each moment and live in it. Stress results from living in the future and past too much, the former fostering worry, the latter regret.

Mindful living forces the individual to live the experience, not just pass through it. The word 'effort' is fitting in relation to this practice, as the disposition which is adopted is one which demands some work. It should be noted that the practised individual eventually lives life in a mindful way without effort because being anchored in the present moment starts to come as naturally as not paying attention does to the unpractised individual. The mindful individual approaches all

[33] Graham Parkes, 'Awe and Humility in the Face of Things, Somatic Practices in East-Asian Philosophies' *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 4/3 Autumn (2012) pp. 69-88

aspects of life with awareness, including the most menial tasks. This brings meaning to all experiences.

This ‘meaning’ really comes from the attitude of the individual. ‘Meaning’ is a state of mind and this is why according to Buddhist practice, all tasks can be practised mindfully. Obviously, for most of us this would be very difficult and presumably it would take years of dedicated mindfulness mediation practice to attain this state. It is difficult to imagine menial tasks, like cleaning a bathroom, as meaningful or rewarding but bringing a mindful attitude to every experience supposedly increases feelings of satisfaction, helping us to distinguish between that which is important and that which is unimportant, by reminding us of the radical impermanence of all things. On this subject Gandhi had much to say:

> “No matter how insignificant the thing you have to do, do it as well as you can, give it as much of your care and attention as you would give to the thing you regard as most important.”[34]

This is related to ‘karma yoga’ which is understood as selfless service, carried out happily and mindfully, it is thought to aid discipline and humility. Gandhi had strong beliefs on how this benefits humankind. In his ashrams he was reputed for giving initiates the job of cleaning the latrines (which at that time meant emptying buckets as there were no flushing toilets. This was a chore which he also performed.) There is a story of an educated young man coming to him, wishing to do something for his country and when he joined the ashram Gandhi put him cleaning the latrines,

[34] Quote cited by Tushar Gandhi, great grandson of Gandhi http://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/lessons_bapu.htm
(This article is published in 'One India One People' Magazine.) 05/02/16 10:46

after one month the young man wondered if he could do something more important. Gandhi told the young man:

> "I know that you have been educated abroad and so you feel that you must address the bigger issues plaguing India, like reducing poverty, speeding up development and eradicating illiteracy, but as long as you don't have the humility to do the humblest of jobs you will not be able to recognise the real problems that beset our motherland. If you really want to make a difference you will have to first get rid of your ego, only then will you be able to understand that it is essential to recognise the importance of the seemingly insignificant, menial tasks and have the humility to perform them, if you learn to do them with dignity and honour, the bigger tasks will become easy."[35]

From this we can see that although mindfulness may be equated with 'close attention' it is more than this as there is a spiritual and moral dimension. It is not *only* a cognitive attentional exercise, although this is an aspect. The attention which is applied in the mindful state reverberates in the real world in relation to others. The cultivation of mindfulness as a disposition – as a settled orientation - involves paying attention to the fact that we live in a shared world and there are consequences to our actions. Freeing oneself of egotistical concerns is an important aspect. Acquiring the disposition to mindfulness is, indeed, an ecological exercise understood on these terms. It rejuvenates the primordial reciprocity inherent in the relationship that exists between subject and object of experience. This reciprocal nature, which is articulated in Buddhist philosophy of mindfulness, is – as we shall see later - also integrated in Dufrenne's philosophy.

[35] Ibid

It should be noted that although mindfulness practice is executed through an initial withdrawing wherein the practitioner focuses in a solitary way, for example on the breath in meditation, the goal is to re-join the universal and feel connected to others and the environment. This is different from simple acts of recognition of our place in the scheme of things, although these acts of recognition are a prerequisite. We must be at least conscious of this but developing ecological feelings and awareness of a shared universe where we live together and all pass away equally fosters feelings of solidarity and a realisation that all living things, despite their differences must live in an interdependent state or perish. The difference is consciousness vs. heightened consciousness.

The cultivation of meditating in silence is a technique to focus the mind that is important for developing mindful orientation. The aim is to train the mind so that in situations in everyday life, the subject will take in more, engage more and connect more in ways described above. This also encompasses ephemeral events which – by definition – cannot be attended to over a period of time, for example, noticing the sound of a birdsong, the rolling of a river. For there are numerous little things that bring us into the experience of living, not just *our* lives alone but our lives *in conjunction* with all other things. This also includes things not associated with nature. The shadow on someone else's face, the colour of the brick on a building. Each little detail we notice teaches us to notice more and brings us into greater participation with the phenomenal flow. This flow is composed of kinds of events and transient phenomena. When we comprehend one through a mindful moment, it not only comes then goes, but is illuminated by the mindful glimpse – as a unique something that has taken its place in the flow that bonds all things in a shared

temporal continuity. We not only observe it, we feel also that finitude which we share with all beings.

This is an important point as mindfulness interventions are often confused with being disassociated from others because it can involve solitary meditation. On the contrary, the element of universality and expanding our empathies to others is key in Buddhist thought, which recognizes that all things are connected and empathising with others sets *us* free.

This stems from the philosophy of the nature of the 'self' in Buddhist thought. The *self* is not seen as an unchanging entity, but:

> "as a dynamic process, a shifting web of relations among evanescent aspects of the person such as perceptions, ideas, and desires…Ultimately no separation is to be found between these dynamic processes and the universal frame of reference or ground of being; all is interdependent and changing."[36]

Buddhists believe that the view of self as an enduring entity is a cause of suffering because in this case, one tries to hold onto that which is in flux and has no existence outside of shifting contexts.[37] Hence the belief in subject as part of an interwoven dynamic organism is at the very core of mindfulness training because the practice is designed to 'correct' the view of the self as a separate, fixed entity; meditation training leads to a new experience of the self, which by necessity includes the rest of the world. Each individual person's life is seen as a hologram of human social life, with its bonds and interpersonal circulation.[38]

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[36] B. Alan Wallace ed. *Buddhism and Science, Breaking New Ground*, New York: Columbia University Press 2003 p. 108
[37] Ibid p. 109
[38] Ibid p. 223

Mindfulness is not just an intellectual exercise; it takes place at the level of embodiment. Despite use of the word 'mind,' the role of the mind per se is to be passive and let the individual experience as a whole sensuous human being - to not just *think* about the current experience but *live* it. The training of the mind of which we speak is really to train the mind to integrate with the senses rather than to dominate. There is much talk of the mind in Buddhism[39] i.e. that the mind needs to be trained and disciplined in order to alleviate suffering and bring joy, but the point is that the mind is trained to allow a fully embodied existence whereby the individual lives through the whole body, including the senses and not just in the mind - which is prone to obsessing and false conceptions if left undisciplined.

The reason that mindfulness is thought to end suffering is because suffering arises from not being able to control painful thoughts. Once mindfulness has been mastered, the individual is not a slave to the mind's grasping and obsessing. Mindfulness training starts with exercises that almost seem too simple to be of importance, but when we consider the ability of the mind to cause misery through its undesirable states that seem difficult, if not sometimes impossible to eradicate, it is easy to see how being free of such states can end much suffering.

Individuals who have cultivated this approach to experience exhibit increased flexibility, fluency and originality in responses.[40] In this regard, mindfulness plays a role in creative thought – freeing the imagination.

The principle of orientation, then, is not just a cognitive pre-requisite for attaining mindful states, it can also be made into a disposition – a practice for living. We train ourselves to be in readiness for glimpses of things in their full richness and particularity – a glimpse that is also felt as a unique moment of experience for us.

[39] See Ibid P. 93
[40] Capurso, 'Mindful Creativity: The Influence of Mindfulness Meditation on Creative Thinking' 2014

This dispositional principle of orientation cannot be learned like learning to ride a bike. It is more akin to learning a musical instrument. For the seasoned observer, it may be possible to achieve mindful orientation in even the most apparently adverse circumstances; for other observers it may be more dependent on luck and chance in encountering the right kinds of objects or circumstances that spontaneously induce mindfulness.

1.4.2 Objective and subjective aspects of mindfulness

Mindful states can have an objective or a subjective emphasis (bearing in mind that there will also be interesting overlaps between such emphases). Mindfulness in its objective aspect – involves attending to the particularity of the object. So simple a thing as a tablecloth, for example can have intricate patterns and textures, and its own very distinctive feel to the touch. Visual details and textures are a significant – though as we shall see later, not exclusive - source of mindful stimuli. And even something like touch can be taken in different directions, and reveal different densities in its simple explorations of surface.

Such attentive exploration can involve a kind of *temporary* loss of self through immersion in the texture and details of the object. But the main feature of the experience is an immersion in the object that breaks through conventional perceptual modes. This can alternate with recognition of one's own sensation or feelings in experiencing the object (i.e. the apperception feature described earlier). Indeed, there will be reciprocal relation between the two aspects – the more we attend to the richness, the more the quality of our experience is enhanced; and the more enhanced the experience, the more we are motivated to explore the particularity of the object.

Mindfulness in its subjective aspect involves attending to the particularity of some feeling or sensation in one's own body – it is itself the object of our attention. Consider the following example (commonly used in contemporary mindfulness training):

> "Slowly take a raisin and examine every wrinkle and fold of its surface. Feel its texture with your fingers. Inhale its scent. Squeeze it and hear how it sounds. Raise it to your lips, place it in your mouth, explore it with your tongue. Prepare to chew. As you bite into it, notice the bursts of taste and how these change, and be aware of when you feel ready to swallow. Finally, feel the raisin travel into your body."[41]

Again, experiences such as this can sometimes involve a brief temporary loss of self through the strength of our immersion in the feeling or sensation itself, but it is one that leads to awareness of the intensity of this experience as something happening to us now. And again, there is a reciprocal relation. The more we dwell upon the experience, the more enhanced it is; and the more enhanced it is, the more we are encouraged to continue dwelling on it.

1.4.3 Inclusive disinterestedness and total quiddity

Both the objective and subjective features of mindfulness have a special quality. The principle of orientation means that our attention is contemplative – it is done for its own sake. It has what can be called *inclusive disinterestedness*. The importance of this is that without it, one could not distinguish mindfulness from mere concentrated attention driven by some practical problem that we are trying to solve. Concentrated attention cannot be the same as mindful attention, because it is focussed on getting

[41] See Hilary Swain,http://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/jan/26/mindfulness-craze-schools-university-near-you-cambridge 27/01/16 15:06

the job done – on achieving the desired outcome - rather than on attentiveness to the nature of the materials, the character of the task, and awareness of the uniqueness of the working experience. Of course, practical work can be done mindfully, but in the great majority of cases it is not – we are simply absorbed by the task in hand as a means to an end. The whole point of mindfulness, in contrast, is to overcome the rigidities of customary practical attitudes.

Interestingly, mindful attention is sometimes described as 'non-judgmental'. However, the term 'inclusive disinterestedness' is to be preferred. There is a good case for arguing that 'non-judgmental' is a clumsy term which is applied in the mindfulness context mainly because a proper descriptive vocabulary for the experience has probably not yet been devised. If by 'non-judgmental' we mean an openness to the rich particularity of the object and of our experience, then the term is very badly used indeed. As we have seen, the mindful state is not passive, rather it involves myriad layers of judgment and recognition whereby we are attentive to many different aspects of the object and of our relation to it. Using the term 'non-judgmental' signifies openness or receptivity to the thing and our experience of it. But openness is empty – merely passive receptivity - unless the openness of attention involves the complexity of judging described above.

The other meaning of non-judgemental is in the sense of being impartial, or being open to possibilities. But one can be impartial or open to possibilities in all sorts of contexts without this being mindful. This is because such qualities (operative, for example, in a judge or jury in a legal system) are geared towards achieving the right outcome rather than the mindful savouring of the evidence on which the right outcome must be decided. In other words, just as concentrated attention in practical work is *a means to an end* in producing a desired result, so too

is non-judgmentality in transactions between humans. Indeed, if mindfulness occurs in contexts where it can inhibit an outcome – especially where one is needed on ethical grounds – then this would make the mindful agent morally culpable.

The notion of inclusive disinterestedness avoids the difficulties just noted in relation to non-judgmental. It has a further advantage for the present study – as it provides an obvious crossover point to the aesthetic. This is because disinterestedness has been commonly regarded as a criterion of the aesthetic since, at least, the time of Kant. However, whilst mindfulness has kinship with aesthetic attention, its mode of disinterestedness is rather more broad-based, cognitively, speaking. It can encompass things and activities that would not usually be regarded as aesthetic. It extends not only to how things are given to the senses and imagination, but also to dispositional properties, i.e. the things that something can do, or (in the case of organic life) the ways that entities act. Indeed, mindful disinterestedness is even more inclusive because properties such as how things feel through touch, taste, smell, and sound, are *all* relevant to the mindful state in a way that they would not be in most cases of aesthetic appreciation (unless one stipulatively extended the scope of how the aesthetic is usually understood). Indeed, as we shall see in a later chapter, there is a case for regarding the aesthetic domain and that of art, as special - though narrower - varieties of mindfulness.

Let us explore, then, some features of mindfulness's inclusive disinterestedness. Consider first, the example of the fork. In mindfulness practice one would be encouraged to be aware of the fork in its own right. Every task is an opportunity to engage more deeply and live in a state of increased awareness. In the Zen Buddhism of Dogen, monks are advised on the importance of treating the

kitchen utensils with the utmost care and respect[42] and to "select chopsticks, spoons, and other utensils with equal care, examine them with sincerity, and handle them skilfully."[43] This relates to, but goes beyond aesthetic perception as it involves rather more than the sort of whole/parts exploration which is the usual focus of such perception (a topic, of course, that will be returned to). It embraces, rather, the *total quiddity* of the thing or phenomenon which sustains aesthetic features.

'Quiddity' as it is usually understood means the essence of something, i.e. that which makes it something of such and such a kind. But the 'total quiddity' that mindfulness is directed towards is not only recognition of the type of thing attended to, but also of the uniqueness of this particular example of it, and of the moment of experience that it gives to us. This is not to say that we are judging the object to be unique in some classificatory way; rather *we are attending to the features that are the basis of its uniqueness* as both an existent thing and as experienced by us. Our active contemplation of this total quiddity is the basis of the inclusive disinterestedness of the mindful attitude. Even if we are considering a functional artifact or a physical process, it is the complete object/phenomena – in all its range of sensible and dispositional properties, as well as the quality of our experience of it, that are involved. It is this inclusiveness – this total quiddity – that makes mindful attention disinterested in its own very special way.

Through this, the mindfulness practitioner becomes free to fully engage at a deeper level with aspects of life that are usually not experienced, due to increased involvement and participation through the senses which also results in more refined cognitive activity. Through single-minded focus on total quiddity, the individual

[42] Parkes (2012) 'Awe and Humility in the Face of Things, Somatic Practices in east-Asian Philosophies' 2012 p. 83

[43] Dogen, 'Instructions for the Tenzo' (Tenzo kyokun), in K. Tanahashi ed. and trans., *Moon in a Dewdrop*, San Francisco: North Point Press, 1987 p. 55.

learns to let go of mental preoccupations and embrace an enhanced dimension of experience.

1.4.4 The Scope of Mindfulness's Objects

We should now have a clear understanding of what a mindfulness based intervention is, its cognitive structure, existential ramifications, and its effects. It is clear that mindfulness can occur in and apply to many different contexts and to varied things and states of affairs. These include actions, events and objects (including other people) as well as the self. In order to comprehend the scope of mindfulness, we must now consider these types of objects in more detail.

Although mindfulness is a state of mind which can be applied to anything, the process bends to the activity or object as the case may be. Below we will consider the varying contexts of orientation including action, events and objects.

Actions - Mindfulness of actions consists of paying attention to each progressive moment of their unfolding, for the sake of observing or experiencing the unfolding as such - thus resulting in total immersion in the action, whether the subject is performing it or observing it. However mindfulness in action can involve more than this.

Zhuangzi ,[44] one of the great thinkers of classical Daoism wrote about a Woodworker who was carving a bell stand that was so awe inspiring, those around him were astonished to the point that they felt that they had seen a ghost or a spirit. When he was asked about his course of action in order to produce such a masterpiece, he explained that before he begins his work, he takes care not to deplete

[44] Zhuangzi, *Zhuangzi: The. Essential Writings*, trans. Brook Ziporyn, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing 2009

his vital energy and fasts to quiet his mind; so that after three days he has given up any concern for praise or reward. Only after a week of letting go all conventional valuations does he feel ready to search for the proper materials. At this point he enters into the nature of trees and when he sees the completed bell in one of the trees, he chooses this tree and the work begins.[45]

In this case, there is a preparation as well as a concurrent, concerted and concentrated effort involved in mindful action. This woodcarver is being mindful to the object of his actions before he even produces it. Although mindfulness is about the present moment, this does not preclude planning which sets a scene which is conducive to mindfulness. The craftsman almost created a situation of phenomenological reduction by creating a unique environment where the usual concerns and distractions are banished and he can approach the work only in the context of the work without having his judgement clouded by the usual extraneous variables. The total quiddity of the bell stand embraces not only the stuff of its phenomenal presence, but the mindful planning and actions which brought that presence to being.

Other types of actions, which we touched on previously include eating mindfully. It may seem strange to think of such a mundane process as something that can involve awareness of the total quiddity of its individual experiences, but this has, traditionally, been a seen as central. For example, according to Dogen, the practitioner's body becomes integrated with the body of the world. He frequently warns against any striving for enlightenment, which strengthens the ego rather than reduces selfishness, and he insists instead on the 'oneness of practice and realisation'. Like the woodcarver of the previous story, Dogen, as we have seen, also

[45] See Parkes *Awe and Humility* 2012 for more discussion on this. pp 78-9

recommends some preparation for mindful action (in this case consumption of food).[46]

This may help us to understand what otherwise may seem like meaningless ritual. Gratitude and reverence for what we are about to eat is a first step but also careful attention to the things themselves that are involved, including the settling of utensils. With regard to cooking, the creative interplay between activity, utensils and ingredients is a perfect example of what Dogen calls 'turning things while being turned by things.' Fully engaged activity, or total dynamic functioning (zenki), involves attention, which is critical for a sense of both how things are turning and how our turning them is in turn affecting what is going on.[47] This dynamic process is perhaps always at play in mindful activity due to its reciprocal nature.

Dogen considered mindful eating to be of utmost importance as it is the activity that sustains all human life. Ritual precedes the activity in the minutest detail from where and how to sit to the bowls used.[48] Ceremony at every mealtime is meant to inculcate care and reverence for that which sustains us. Ritual in this context may be understood as mindful preparation for an action about to be performed; it promotes the ambience for focus and concentration as opposed to thoughtlessly launching into an activity and thus not considering the action.

The traditional method for meditating, is of course, breathing with mindful awareness, which is also an action. Breathing is something that we do every day – constantly- however we do not pay attention to it. Mindful breathing is something that can be practised anywhere, anytime. The practitioner watches the breath coming and going, becoming aware of the feeling coming in and out of the nose or mouth,

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[46] See Ibid pp 82-85
[47] See Ibid p 84
[48] Dogen, 'Regulations for Eating Meals' (Fushuku-hampo), in Roshi Jiyu Kennett, *Zen is Eternal Life* Mount Shasta, California: Shasta Abbey Press, 1987 p. 113.

the feeling of the breath travelling through the body and how the body moves with the breath. There is no onus to change how one is breathing or to judge it.

Mindful awareness of actions need not always pertain to one's own actions. The subject can observe the actions of an animal (or another person) with the same focused and intentional awareness. As previously discussed, this is not the same thing as staring. At the core of all these activities is paying attention to an increasing number of details which we would not normally notice or choose to attend to and a certain amount of ceremony is in order where applicable, to prepare the mood and atmosphere.

Events - The mindful observation of events is very similar to the awareness applied to actions. Always paying attention to an increasing number of details is involved and a feeling of participation. When we speak of events, to what sort of increased participation might we be referring? Let us imagine that we are witnessing a natural disaster, like an avalanche, we might ask, what would be the point or the benefit?

First of all, mindful awareness of such an event would entail giving our full attention to the unfolding scene. This could, in itself, be rewarding, (if no one was going to come to harm) - to *actually see* each progressive movement as the natural world transforms itself before our eyes, as snow and ice detach from a mountainside, mixed with rocks and debris. A mindful observer would see individual particles and shapes, a plethora of colours in the snow, which to the unobservant individual simply appears white. One may contemplate the fact that a single snow flake can start an avalanche and invoke the impermanence of all things and how precious life and the universe are. Feeling participant to such a scene increases feelings of affiliation with in nature

Viewing events in a mindful way is akin to how the poet sees the world and records what s/he sees. The poet notices details - simple details - that never seemed to have much importance to the rest of us but when they are described artistically in a poem, they are suddenly meaningful. The same applies to the painter, who takes note of what could be considered prosaic details, prosaic scenes and somehow presents them as engaging on the canvas. These artistic endeavours can only be realised where a mindful attitude has been applied to 'unremarkable' corners of the world. A good example of this is a poem by Les Murray which he composed watching the movements of a mollusc:

> by Its nobship sailing upside down,
> by its inner sexes, by the crystalline
> pimplings of its skirts, by the sucked-on
> lifelong kiss of its toppling motion,
> by the viscose optics now extruded
> now wizened instantaneously, by the
> ridges grating up a footpath, by
> the pop shell in its nick of dry,
> by excretion, the earthworm coils, the glibbing,
> by the gilt slipway, and by pointing
> perhaps as far back into time as
> ahead, a shore being folded interior,
> by boiling on salt,
> by coming uncut over
> a razor's edge, by hiding the Oligocene
> underleaf may this and every snail sense
> itself ornament the weave of presence.[49]

We can see from this poem that its author has turned the movement and life of a snail into an event, an interesting and engaging event, by paying close attention to it and all it evokes. This reminds us that mindfulness is a state of mind which can be applied to anything 'Meaning' is a key word in this context. Where we can see meaning, life is always richer. If we consider its opposite i.e. finding the world

[49] Les Murray *Translations from the Natural World*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux 1984

meaningless, the detrimental effects and loss become clear. Meaning is always there, but needs just be activated by a mindful observer.

Both mindful and artistic individuals inhabit space with all their senses, so when it comes to witnessing an event, it is inhabited, or lived. This is the participation inherent in both processes. It is most likely that, for this reason, mindful individuals have been shown to have superior memory over others. If one *lives* an experience, one remembers it with better accuracy than if one simply *watches* it. The key to mindful living is just that – *living* every experience as far as is possible.

Having said that, some points need clarifying in relation to the observation of certain events, such as natural disasters. It could be argued that this could be more upsetting for a mindful individual because they feel that they are part of it. This is a valid point. Mindful individuals are more sensitive and being sensitive sometimes comes at a cost. However, it should be noted that in the case of mindfulness based interventions, part of the training is to aid individuals to cease judging and to accept the state of affairs (if it cannot be changed, of course, for mindfulness training is about transformation so changing a difficult or challenging state of affairs is part of being mindful.).

In Buddhism and yoga the word "attachments" is frequently used and we need to be careful how we understand it. Adopting the so-called non-judgmental stance also means remaining 'detached.' However our Western minds may interpret this as dispassionate in a way that excludes feelings of empathy. This is a very subtle and critical point because the Eastern philosophies that gave birth to this thinking employ these terms in quite a different way. We have already seen that empathy and feelings of reciprocity and universality are of paramount importance.

The ‘free from attachments’ or, better, inclusive disinterestedness which is also expounded in such philosophies and practices refers to not getting enmeshed, upset and confused to the point of not being able to empathise or function because one is so overwhelmed. Balance is always invoked. The ideal state, for example while observing a natural disaster where people may be getting hurt, is to live the experience to point where one empathises with the pain of others without becoming so distraught that one feels overpowered with grief and paralysed to act. One retains enough detachment to be keep clarity of mind and perhaps even remember the event clearly enough to want to take action later if action cannot be taken at the time.

Previously we mentioned that Parkes wrote about averting the environmental crisis by increasing our awe and humility of the natural world. The above discussion is paradigmatic in this context. If we watch a natural disaster mindfully, whether it is one that could be averted or not, it brings us increasingly into the natural world. This experience will increase our feelings of awe and humility as well as fostering an ecological conscience. If one does not attach too much to feelings of negativity brought on by witnessing a tragedy, one can move forth in an improved position to work with nature in many ways. The sensitivity which mindfulness participation in life inculcates allows the individual to be all the more empathic.

Not attaching does not refer to not feeling, but to *not attaching to negativity* and false perceptions which cloud judgment. False perceptions are similar to the overgeneralisations that people suffering from depression are prone to - discussed earlier, such as the world is a terrible place anyway, there is no point in trying. More specific memories would include many positive details about the world and the self that could not be avoided if one observed, and subsequently, recalled more mindfully.

Objects - Attention to objects is, of course, another context for mindfulness – perhaps, indeed, the main one. The reason for its centrality is that nothing exists unless it occupies space, or is the effect of some space-occupying body. Does it differ from the mindful attention paid to events? The experience may be slightly different but again, the attention paid is similar. With objects, we become aware of their spatial presence, it is a quieter experience than experiencing an event mindfully. The temporal aspect is different also because the object is not obviously changing before our eyes, whereas with an event we are following something through time, which is slightly more complicated. Although even objects alter over time, it is not immediately perceptible in the moment.

Other people can be objects where we are the subject looking on. Although the term being "objectified" in relation to people does not carry positive connotations, viewing other people carefully in their entirety is really the opposite of what we traditionally consider 'objectification.' On the contrary, we do not single out one thing about them, reducing them to a part, for example in pornographic material which can reduce a woman to a reproductive body part or a person with a disability reduced to their disability. During mindful observation, we see others as a composite, dynamic whole. Langer has shown that the more we discriminate details of other people the less likely we are to actually single out one specific detail which might cause prejudice. Langer noted that traditionally, the means to combat prejudice has been aimed at reducing our tendency to categorise other people. However categorising is what we do as human beings, it is fundamental to our nature. She suggests that mindfulness takes a different approach - learning to make <u>more</u> rather than <u>fewer</u> distinctions among people:

> "If we keep in mind the importance of context and of multiple perspectives, we see the perception of skills and handicaps changes constantly, depending on the situation and vantage point of the observer. Such awareness prevents us from regarding a person's handicap as a person's identity."[50]

Hence if we notice more about others, we don't just notice their handicap or the colour of their skin for example. Instead of seeing a man as a 'cripple,' we would see a man with a lame leg, green eyes, a mole on his left cheek, nice teeth, etc. Being taught and, subsequently, learning how to discriminate has been shown to positively combat labelling other people in numerous studies.[51]

With regard to mindful observation of inanimate objects, it is fitting to again, invoke the poet. For nothing exemplifies the experience and its subsequent benefits more accurately than Wordsworth's observation of daffodils as this excerpt illustrates:

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.
The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:
For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye

[50] Ellen.J Langer (1989) *Mindfulness*, Cambridge MA: Da Capo Press p. 154
[51] See Ibid Chapter 9 entitled 'Decreasing Prejudice by Increasing Discrimination' pp. 153-170

Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.[52]

If ever we wished to understand the riches of attending to little details in our world, Wordsworth has explained it in the above passage. The 'inward eye' is forever changed due to the experience. Daffodils are something which most people would find enticing, so let us consider a more mundane example. Mindfulness can apply to any object, for example a pair of socks. Do we pay attention to socks, appreciate them? Poet Pablo Neruda brought mindful attention to his socks in the following excerpt from *Ode to My Socks*:

> Maru Mori brought me
> a pair of socks
> which she knitted herself
> with her sheepherder's hands,
> two socks as soft as white rabbits.
> I slipped my feet into them
> as if they were two cases
> knitted with threads of twilight and goatskin,
> Violent socks,
> my feet were two fish made of wool,
> two long sharks
> sea blue shot through
> my feet were honoured in this way
> by these heavenly socks
> they were so handsome for the first time
> my feet seemed to me unacceptable
> firemen unworthy of that woven fire,
> of those glowing socks.
> …
> The moral of my ode is this:
> Beauty is twice beauty
> and what is good is doubly good
> when it is a matter of two socks
> made of wool in winter.[53]

[52] http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/174790, 29/01/16 13:14
[53] Poemhunter/poem/ode-to-my-socks/ 23/03/16 14:22

In these examples, the simple things in life are noticed in detail, appreciated and significant meaning is ascribed. A mindful attitude relates to the poetic and artistic attitude. Finally we will consider paintings as objects of mindful attention.

Consider firstly Chardin's *White Tablecloth*. This is a perfect example of a mundane object which we overlook in normal quotidian life. How often do we take the time to observe the sensuousness of a tablecloth? Yet the artist did just this. As only the artistic eye can, he looked deeper than the commonplace scene of the table with food on it and shared what he found with the viewer.

The artist manages to evoke a whole range of sentiments and a way of being by bringing awareness to a scene with a tablecloth. There is a soft sensuality, a slowness, a gently abandoned scene which is nuanced with tenderness. The startling beauty of the white in a setting of earth tones manages not to be startling but inviting in an almost seductive way. It is softened by the flow of the fabric which barely touches the ground with grace and elegance. This provokes a response in the viewer, as it clearly did in the artist.

Both viewer and artist engage in a way of seeing an aspect of the world which was previously unnoticed, with all the concomitant feeling. In terms of mindfulness, the result of this would be to live more fully by experiencing a broader range of human capacities. Through active observation we arrive at increased participation, i.e. more fully engaged. We could also say that both viewer and creator has benefitted from a new perspective. The acts of broadening horizons, increasing perspectives and exploring the bounds of being human in this way speak for themselves.

Figure 1 Chardin, The White Tablecloth, 1772, oil on canvas

Next let us reflect on Casper David Friedrich's *Monk by the Sea*. It is true that the sea is a subject which does enthral many people, unlike a tablecloth. Nevertheless, we do not often take the time to really examine what the sea evokes in us. The sheer expanse of it, qua sea is an obstacle to actually contemplating it in an accessible way. The picturing of it sets it apart for contemplation. Friedrich captures not just the sea as one may gaze upon it absentmindedly, he has created a space of tranquillity, isolation and reflection. Merleau-Ponty said of Cezanne that he "made visible how the world touches us." [54] This statement also aptly describes *The Monk by the Sea*.

The inclusion of the lone figure in the vastness evokes feelings of our own mortality, fears of loneliness or perhaps the joy of solitude. However the point is that we do not have to *think* about our own mortality, we experience a sensation that does

[54]Merleau-Ponty, M. (1993) 'Cezanne's Doubt' in G. Johnson, *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, Evanston: Northwestern University press, p. 70

not require linguistic or intellectual narratives. We do not need to know if the artist intended this painting to be melancholy or tranquil, it could be either depending on the viewer. The point is that it is evocative in a sensual way.

We see something which we have never seen before and never will again, i.e. this particular artist's view of this scene – this is his perspective on a corner of the universe – a corner that exists for all people but Friedrich noticed it. This painting is capable of inducing a viewer to look more closely at the sea and, indeed, other people and the self. This relates to why Crowther says of pictures: "They project places for exploration through virtual movement and perceptual relocation. It might be said, indeed, that *pictorial space is itself an emblem of consciousness*"[55]

Figure 2 Friedrich, The Monk y the Sea, 1808- 1810, oil on canvas

Finally, we have an example of Frederic Leighton's *Drapery Studies.* This gives us nothing less than a way of being in the world, which is alluring and provocative, considered and effortless at the same time. Here again, we have a

[55] Crowther, P. *How Pictures Complete Us The Beautiful, the Divine & the Sublime,* (in press at time of writing)

commonplace item, nothing more than a piece of material. If not for art, who would have thought that a piece of apparently discarded material could say so much? It is unclear what it is draped over and it is obviously not a human body yet it is suggestive of embodiment, of peaceful human slumber. The organic way that it flows almost feels as if it was just removed from a human being, or fell off and was carelessly left.

Of course it is likely that the artist positioned it there to draw it. But the artist must have been inspired by a piece of discarded drapery himself at some point, which he did not put in situ that stirred his imagination in order to draw this composition. The viewer's imagination becomes exercised because Leighton decided to externalise his imagination, through his particular artistic style, into the public arena.

It is irrelevant whether the artist staged this scene or not. The result is an image which speaks directly to our sensual side and activates the imagination. As a result of viewing this picture, the viewer may pause at an actual piece of material and see the beauty and wonder in its folds. Does this really enrich one's life? I believe the answer is yes. To see the uniqueness in every moment and observe beauty in the most mundane of things certainly adds to psychological completeness and contributes to the evolution of self-consciousness. For as we become more conscious of the details around us we become more conscious of ourselves. The two are inextricably linked because as discussed, we are conscious *in relation* to others and our surroundings.

Figure 3 Leighton, Drapery Study, c. 1887 chalk on paper

There is one final important issue. Mindfulness is non-hierarchal in the sense that, in principle, even the most mundane things can become an object of mindful experience. However, this does not rule out the possibility that not only are different things experienced in different mindful ways, but also that the central place of some things in human experience will give the mindful experience of them a special significance. Indeed, it may be that we need a mindful perspective in order to re-vivify existing ways of regarding them. This, as we shall show is the case with the aesthetics of painting. To understand why, we must now consider an account of the central features in human experience provided by Dufrenne.

Chapter 2 Dufrenne's Philosophy and the Significance of Mindfulness

2.1 Introduction

As we have just seen, mindfulness justifies itself within Buddhism on the grounds that it reduces suffering by improving sense perception which fosters heightened awareness thus liberating the practitioner from a prison of misconceptions and in psychology because it empirically enhances cognitive awareness and achievement. However, in our analysis of the structure of mindful attention another justification for its importance has emerged – an ontological and existential one. To develop this further, we now expound Dufrenne's philosophy and, in due course, relate it to the account of mindfulness offered in the previous chapter.

2.2 Dufrenne's philosophy in context

Dufrenne's general philosophy is worked out first in *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, and then developed further - most notably in *The Notion of the A Priori*.[56] The fact that Dufrenne's aesthetics precedes his more general philosophy, however, does not mean we should ignore the latter. The issues that concerned Dufrenne later can still alert us to major avenues of connected ideas that are of use in understanding his aesthetics. In what follows we shall first identify some of these more important later ideas and their relation to several important sections of *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience.*

The dominant philosophical tendency in continental Europe after the Second World War was a confluence of existentialism and phenomenology manifest in different ways by Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty. One feature especially is

[56] Mikel Dufrenne *The Notion of the A Priori*, trans Edward S. Casey, Evanston Ill.: Northwestern University, 1968 The book first appeared in French in 1958

common among them. They hold that irrespective of how reflective modes of thought – exemplified in such things as the natural sciences, and traditional forms of philosophy – understand the world, they tend to operate at a level that misses out on more fundamental levels of orientation in existence. This orientation is the most basic mode of how humans exist. It is *being-in –the –world* – a term used (to varying degrees) by all three philosophers. Characteristically, being-in-the-world is disclosed indirectly in everything we do including practical matters - such as our relationships with other people and institutions.

Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty understand being-in-the-world in their own particular ways and with their own particular emphases. Dufrenne is likewise committed to a notion of being-in-the-world but with an emphasis on the cognitive features that make any existential awareness possible. This emphasis is due to the way he rethinks Kantian ideas. Kant argued that whilst there is a realm that exists independently of the mind, all knowledge – be it of objects or subjective experience – is structured by human faculties of cognition. These involve space and time (the 'forms of intuition' as Kant calls them); the 'categories' (fundamental concepts such as causality, substance, and reciprocity) and the schematizing activity of imagination. It is only through these capacities operating together that experience is possible. They have what Kant describes as 'a priori' or 'transcendental' status, insofar as they are conditions of the possibility of experience.

Now, Dufrenne is not a complete party to Kant's transcendental idealism. This is because, unlike Kant, he allows that space and time are general features of the real, rather than receptive structures in human cognition. However, he is Kantian to the degree that he also believes that our experience of the real is always structured by the means of cognition. He gives an existentialist emphasis to this. Temporality

and spatiality can be known as concepts, but are experienced most fundamentally in how we engage with the world as finite embodied beings. This ontological status means that while knowledge strives towards completeness, our grasp of the real is necessarily incomplete and allows the real to be comprehended only under its particular aspects. To know the real is to know a world composed of these various aspects both individually and in systematic relation to one another. Indeed, the individual aspects of the world that sustain different modes of our knowledge are, in effect, worlds in their own right. They each have their own unique conceptual structures (of which, for example, the world of the aesthetic object and its experience is one). Dufrenne says:

> "The relation of the various worlds to the universe is precisely the relation of the particular to the universal: the real is inexhaustible, and the different worlds are diverse aspects of the real. Are these aspects real or possible? It is the real which is the possibility of the possible. But can there be two truths if there is only one reality. Yes, if every truth is only an approximate expression of the real; there can be several simultaneous explanations because they are all only partially valid for one and the same reality; but this can be so only on the condition that none of them claims to be exclusive; the astronomers sun is not the real, and the real sun is the possibility of both the astronomers and the poet's sun."[57]

Given, then, that we experience the real through these world aspects, we must ask how this becomes possible. Dufrenne's way of answering is that it is through feeling and reason that humankind relates itself to a world.

[57] Ibid p. 200

> "In the first way, the experience of the world is given in perception, which apprehends the *a priori* because the a priori is already constituent of a world. In the second way, the idea of the world is controlled by reason, which claims to grasp the universe as a totality: the experience of the world reappears in the idea of unity."[58]

The most substantial idea in these remarks is 'unity'. Our receptiveness to the world through perception and our organising of it through reason, are both orientated by a fundamental and internally complex *a priori* unity. Various features are involved in this unity, For example, in order for us to experience anything (as a rational subject) what we experience in the immediate present is given its meaning in relation to a context based on knowledge of the past and anticipation of the future. More exactly, it is made intelligible through its place in an *horizon* of interpretations of past and future in space and time that extend beyond the immediate present. The particular that way Dufrenne understands the workings of this horizon make his Kantian affinities stand out very clearly. This shows through especially in his notions of the a priori, and the schematism of imagination.

2.3 The A Priori and Schematism

Dufrenne understands the a priori as a basic accordance between object and subject of experience that is embodied in recognition and knowledge, and in feeling. This basic orientational capacity is independent of experience because such an accordance is not understood by abstracting from examples of it, but is presupposed in order to have experience in the first place. Put another way, the a priori pertains to those cognitive features that orientate and enable the relation between object and subject of experience. It is a *corporeal* capacity, in that for Dufrenne – as for Merleau-Ponty –

[58] Ibid p. 199

the mental and the bodily cannot be easily distinguished in human cognition; both are aspects of a unified field of cognitive and sensori-motor operations.

Merleau-Ponty emphasizes perception as an expression of embodiment, but Dufrenne is concerned with its more specific features:

> "When we have merely perceived, nothing has been accomplished …this is true because everything begins at this point. Perception is the beginning. It is that which puts us in the world. …we conceive in being rather than doing, as far as the a priori is given in perception, it is through perception that we are in truth because we are then in the world, in contact with the real. Our relation to truth lies in this contact."[59]

The *a priori* then is that through which object and subject of experience are reciprocally correlated in a way that allows us to engage with the real. The objective a priori itself consists of two major features. The first is the *formal* aspect which is embodied in our knowing the most general features of objective reality, for example, that space is extended in terms of length, breadth, and depth. The material *a priori*, in contrast has a more specific orientation. It involves the capacity to recognize individual things or events on the basis of their 'essences'. On these terms, we see the individual as an example of the kind of thing of which it is an instance, instead of in terms of its particularities.

The object of experience is constituted as a joint effect of all the relevant a priori. They constitute the object as object for a subject by engaging with their kind-defining properties. It should be emphasized, however, that it is the capacity to recognize in these general material terms that is a priori. Individual examples of it –

[59] Ibid p. 208

such as recognizing a dog, or a rainy day, are merely empirical instances of the a priori capacity being put to use.

As one might expect, Dufrenne also identifies a subjective a priori. The workings of this are more complicated. In *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* Dufrenne says that:

> "The subject is constitutive on at least three planes: at the level of presence. Through what Merleau-Ponty calls the corporeal *a priori*, which trace out the structure of the world experienced by the lived body: at the level of representation through the *a priori* which determine the possibility of an objective knowledge of the objective world…and at the level of feeling, through the affective a priori, which open up a world lived and felt by the deep self in the first person."[60]

Of these, the idea of the affective a priori is the one which will probably be most unfamiliar. Heidegger's idea of states-of-mind as feelings that disclose how the world is, subjectively, has some kinship to this, but Dufrenne means something more specific in cognitive terms. He suggests the startling possibility that affectivity is not so much in the subject as in the object, but immediately qualifies this,

> "To feel is to experience a feeling as a property of the object, not as a state of my being. The affective exists in me only as the response to a certain structure in the object. Conversely, this structure attests to the fact that the object is for a subject."[61]

Dufrenne continues:

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[60] Mikel Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, Evanston Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1973 p. 445
[61] Ibid p. 442

> "There is something in the object that can be known only by a kind of sympathy in which the subject opens himself to it. Indeed, at the limit, the affectively qualified object is itself a subject and no longer a pure object or the simple correlate of an impersonal consciousness. Instead of being determined from without, affective qualities involve a certain way of relating themselves to each other, a manner of constituting themselves as a totality – in short a capacity for affecting themselves."[62]

What Dufrenne describes in these passages is how in our perceptual dealings with things we do not experience them in primarily simple recognitional terms. Our relation to the object is more complex. We encounter it as a style of being – a particular and distinctive way that being is embodied. Every individual thing has its own unity that we respond to affectively as well as in simple recognitional terms. We respond in this way because we too are unified, and the unity of the thing is correlated with the cognitive hold that it allows us to take on it. This is why Dufrenne takes the object to be the bearer of affective qualities. To be unified is to have parts which cohere in a unique way – which create the whole through the unique effect that they have on one another. To be an object is, in effect, to be self-affecting. Admittedly Dufrenne is stretching things somewhat with this claim, but it is certainly true that when we respond affectively to an object or state of affairs, it is its structure that affects us; we respond because of it. And this relation is itself only possible because there is an ontological affinity between subject and object, both are constitutive of one another in making the real knowable. They have a deep affinity.

To make more sense of this reciprocity of subject and object of experience, we must consider some of the important points that Dufrenne makes about

[62] Ibid p. 442

temporality and spatiality. Temporality is not just a feature of consciousness. Our experience of it is based on our movements through and positions in space – the expression of our corporeality:

> "Now if time is …closely bound up with the subject so is corporeality. This inference might be disavowed by a philosophy which looks for the root of time in consciousness e.g. in the unity of projections. But in saying that time is a priori we do not claim that it is a form projected by consciousness onto the world – a form to which consciousness itself is not subordinated, instead we are claiming that both the world and the subject are temporal. The subject understands time because he experiences or lives it. Temporality for him is a destiny manifesting his passivity, yet this passivity lends the possibility of acting since the future is always open to him, and since the past matures him so that this passivity lends him a defence against itself, but the subject cannot evade the continuous and irreversible flow of time, time does not suspend its course for me or in me.."[63]

In these remarks, Dufrenne is emphasizing the existential emphasis of the horizonal structure of experience. All the things we do – even pauses and hesitations, and periods of rest – are nevertheless active insofar as they become occupied with thoughts about alternative times and places to our present position. Time is something we are thrown into without having choice about it. But our making sense of this temporal immersion is not simply an obstacle to be overcome; the openness of the future and our experience of the past means that we are not just *in* the present but are aware of ourselves as in a present shaped by time and space as horizons of activity. This means that:

[63] Dufrenne, *The Notion of the A Priori,* pp. 142-143

> "Self-consciousness implies a relation to the self. A consciousness of being conscious. Subjectivity manifests its interiority in this relation, for it turns back onto itself only insofar as it is turned toward the object, it is self-conscious as consciousness …this subject is active and therefore determined."[64]

Here, in other words, Dufrenne emphasizes an idea that will be very important for his aesthetics – that self-awareness involves a relation to oneself because we can only identify who we are by reference to the places we have been and the things we have done, etc., and this involves, fundamentally, the activity of the body (points will be considered again in the next section.) The body is the basis of the subjective a priori.[65]

This emphasis on the a priori is not the only thing that gives Dufrenne kinship with Kant. Unlike other major phenomenological thinkers such as Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, Dufrenne gives great importance to the cognitive role of imagination.[66] Indeed, he offers a very useful working interpretation of Kant's theory of how the imagination schematizes concepts. Of particular note is his claim that "The schema is the manner in which the a priori is prepared in the imagination" and that "it is the a priori in its original state."[67]

At the heart of these claims is Dufrenne's belief that schemata are "corporeal virtualities."[68] They are ways of contextualizing what is immediately given in perception or thought, by reference to the body's previous experiences, or its anticipations of other situations where the body might encounter or entertain such

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[64] Ibid pp. 145-146
[65] Ibid p. 155
[66] Heidegger acknowledges its importance when discussing the ontological implications of Kant's theory, but he does not offer a theory of his own
[67] Ibid p. 156
[68] Ibid p. 158

intentional objects. They relate the given to time and space as a unified horizon of experience.

Consider our response to a dog. In order to recognize it as a dog, we do not just attach the word 'dog'. In order to be able to do that, we need to schematize the concept. Dufrenne asks: "What is this schema if not a certain way of anticipating the perception within my body of a dog, of being present to a possible dog without its explicit image form?"[69]

Dufrenne's point is that in order to deal with Fido as a dog, we recognise his doghood through anticipating that, when we approach him, he will respond with certain behavioural traits rather than others e.g. barking rather than singing, or running on all fours rather than walking on two legs. A schema, in Dufrenne's sense, is a space of anticipation defined by our background knowledge of the thing we are encountering or thinking about. It is temporal because it involves linking the present perception or object of thought to our previous experiences or understandings of similar things, and - by virtue of expectations about it – to how it will behave in the future. (We expect, for example, dogs to run off on four legs when they get the chance, rather than change into a vase of flowers.) Dufrenne uses the term 'virtuality' in relation to schemata because the experiences and expectations through which they contextualize the present, are ones that are not themselves immediately present. Such schemata are acquired when, through childhood experience, we learn the meaning of words through working out that they apply to things other than those immediately present in the perceptual field. We habituate ourselves to *what it is like* for this concept to have application. Language and its concepts are bound up with schematization. Indeed, Dufrenne describes schemata as:

[69] Ibid p. 158

> "a sort of pre-language, an original orientation of the body as still not speaking – an orientation by which consciousness becomes sensitive to certain experiences that language can later render explicit but that do not refer to any particular and nameable objects; instead they concern certain forms or structures of the world which the body prepares us to experience by means of the virtual knowledge it possesses."[70]

The origins of Dufrenne's reappropriation of Kant here is especially marked in two important sections of *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* where Dufrenne deals with the relation between space and time as a means of approaching the differences and relations between the temporal and spatial arts, and with the transition from perception as such, to aesthetic perception.[71] These discussions take place towards halfway through the book, but need to be explained now as they are essential to the general philosophical position through which Dufrenne comes to address the problems of aesthetics.

2.4 Time, Space, Self, and Perception

As an interesting and unexpected introduction to what Dufrenne does here, we can note some remarks by the analytic philosopher Gareth Evans:

> "The capacity to think of oneself as located in space, and tracing a continuous path through it, is necessarily involved in the capacity to conceive the phenomena one encounters as independent of one's perception of them - to conceive the

[70] Ibid p. 159, It should be emphasized that although Dufrenne takes inspiration for the theory of the schematism from Kant, he does not follow the whole Kantian doctrine. In particular, Dufrenne makes no attempt to justify the schemata by asserting their link to Kant's categories. Instead he offers a looser approach akin to that later developed more extensively by Paul Crowther in Chapter 3 of *The Kantian Aesthetic: from Knowledge to the Avant-Garde*, Oxford University Press, 2010

[71] See Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, Chapter 7 – 'The Temporal and the Spatial Arts' pp.239-248; and the beginning of Chapter 6 'The Aesthetic Object as a Perceived Object' pp.218-222

> world as something one "comes across". It follows that the capacity for at least some primitive self-ascriptions – self-ascriptions of position, orientation, and change of position and orientation and hence the conception of oneself as one object amongst others, occupying one place amongst others, are interdependent with thought about the objective world itself."[72]

This passage is claiming that the ability to become aware of our own existence (to become self-conscious), and our ability to recognize objects as objects, are tied together – we cannot make sense of the one without involving the other. This does not mean that objects cannot exist independently of the self. It just means that we cannot recognize them *as* objective, except through recognising that they have been encountered before. In turn, to be able to recognize this enduring status entails that we link it to a previous stage of our own existence, and through linkages of this kind, we become aware of the enduring identity of the self, also. This correlated recognition of personal identity and of the objective world is achieved through the subject's movement through and amongst objects.

The conceptual truth described here is, in effect, made more concrete by Dufrenne's approach.[73] He describes the phenomenology of the subject-object correlation that is involved and offers a detailed explanation of the relation between time and space that is involved. For example, he states that there is "an originary space and time which are the source of the objective space and time which are considered the framework for phenomena."[74] At the heart of this is the relationship of

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[72] Gareth Evans, *Varieties of Reference*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1982, p. 176. I am grateful to Paul Crowther for referring me to these important remarks

[73] The link to Evans is obviously only a conceptual one. Evans wrote his remarks many years after *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* was first published, and there is no evidence that he ever read anything by Dufrenne

[74] Dufrenne *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, p. 242

the self with itself. By thinking of itself under aspects and then of them as united in a whole, a sense of the self emerges wherein space and time and the objects and events they involve, are experienced as a whole of experience. This is why Dufrenne emphasises the affective a priori, experience is not just knowing and acting, it is the feeling of our immersion in the world of things that is evoked in different ways by different kinds of and different individual objects.

Key to this is not only our feeling for objects, but the feeling of our own self in the first person – the 'deep self'. At the heart of this is the subject's relation to time. Unless there is a subject who retains, comprehends, and anticipates moments in succession, time is no more than a kind of blind process. But Dufrenne says that time in a deeper sense involves "a relationship of the self with the self…It is a pure moment of departing from the self in order to return to the self, thereby hollowing out an interiority."[75] Objective or "clock time… is a de-centralized time which is no more than externality, while temporality retains by loosening and returns by departing. Temporality is the being of a subject."[76]

However, Dufrenne (in contrast to one such as Heidegger) gives just as much emphasis to space in the constitution of being-in-the–world. Spatiality also has an originary mode. It centres on that which Merleau-Ponty emphasizes – the cognitive importance of the body. For Dufrenne this can be understood further, in a way that emphasizes how space posits the given *as* given. He states:

> "Even though the body sustains a fundamental relationship with things by opening itself up to them and, as it were, spilling over into them, we can say that, short of embodiment, the subject constitutes itself by opposing itself

[75] Ibid p. 242
[76] Ibid p. 243

> to the object, turning towards something which it is not and preparing to receive it…. Space is what is designated in this movement of opening up – space as the aspect of otherness, as what is always outside (whether it is far or near), and as an elsewhere opposed to the here where we are."[77]

Dufrenne's point, then, is that whilst the body puts us in contact with things and enables us to operate on them (and them on us) something deeper is also involved. There is an existential dynamic of self-affirmation and solicitation of that which is other than ourselves. Such a dynamic wishes to bring things nearer to us, to make them spatially proximal. This idea is the logical consequence of Dufrenne's account of the affective a priori (though he does not say this outright). The body responds to the affective ambience of things; it is comfortable with them, and would like to be close to them.

It is this opening up which orientates the body. Insofar as the world's structure of appearance is correlated with the way the subject perceives it this means that there is an intimacy in how we relate to the world – a sense of felt, affective belonging to it. In many practical situations this will scarcely register to consciousness. In other activities such as painting, this affective *a priori* orientation will be to the fore. It is a kind of acknowledging felt response in the subject to a unity that bonds it with the object, and which seems to come from the object.

The schematism is clearly implicated in all this. Kant himself emphasizes how the schemata organize temporally. They are patterns of expectation that enable what is given to be contextualized and thence recognized on the basis of previous experiences of the kind of thing in question, and anticipations of its behaviour. However, Dufrenne shows very effectively that schemata organize spatial content

[77] Ibid p. 244

just as much as they organize the temporal horizon. Whatever the differences between space and time, in the context of the subject achieving a relation to itself, they are inseparable:

> "Without that primary synthesis which constitutes time, we would think nothing because there would be no one to think. Similarly, without the spreading out of space as the locus of objects, we would also think nothing, since there would be nothing to think."[78]

Dufrenne tells us, finally, that the solidarity of space and time is expressed through movement:

> "Space is described on the basis of time and… this connection is established in the interior of an object. Consequently movement can be apprehended in the world only because movement is first the act of a subject who manifests himself by positing the possibility of a world. The subject-object relation is pre-figured, at the very core of the subject, by the relation of space and time. And movement, which exists in the subject before appearing in the object, expresses this relation in terms of the object itself."[79]

The movement in question here is not just that of the subject moving through space and encountering things (though that is, of course, crucial); cognitive activity itself has this dynamic aspect because it involves the schematism. To schematize is to synthesize - which means to *connect* the given with a context based on our sense of previous experiences in space-time, and possible ones. It might not be literally true to describe this as a 'mental movement' but such a description is consistent with

[78] Ibid pp. 246-247
[79] Ibid p 247

Dufrenne's broader insistence on the way much of our mental activity seems to interiorize spatial terms and factors.

The dynamics of the schematism also helps explain why, for Dufrenne, perception itself is so complicated:

> "The face of perception calls on us to conceive of a relation between subject and object such the one exists only by means of the other – such that the subject is relative to the object in the same way that the object is relative to the subject."[80]

However, despite the closeness of this bond, the object still exceeds us – we cannot grasp it as a 'finished totality' because we only ever perceive it under the specific aspects that our bodily orientation allows us to deal with. Ironically though, it is this very ontological transcendence that provokes us, and defines our perceptual situation. On the one hand we know that the object is perceptible only under its aspects, but, on the other hand, we also know that these incomplete aspects do form a 'finished totality'. Dufrenne says:

> "Therefore the perceived object has an ambiguous status. It is the object I perceive because it is present to me, but at the same time it is something else. It is the strange reality which perception does not exhaust, which appeals to a knowledge that wishes to owe nothing to perception… This means that perception includes a demand for truth and must be aware of its own limits. A theory of perception must remember these limits and prepare a path to reflection which seeks the truth of the object whose presence is experienced in perception."[81]

[80] Ibid p. 219
[81] Ibid p. 222

In perception, there is always a striving to comprehend the given in terms of completeness – even though this completeness is only strictly comprehensible in conceptual or reflective (rather than perceptible) terms. The rational animal is one whose perceptions are not only geared towards the demands of survival, but also the demands of truth. Clearly, someone could call this claim about truth into question. How would Dufrenne justify it? Why does perception want what it cannot have – namely, totality – at the level of sensory presentation itself? Dufrenne does not answer this question explicitly. However, the outlines of an answer are indicated – through the notion of schematism. In bringing a percept under a concept, we contextualize it through the relevant schemata – which, whilst not providing a sensible image of totality involves nevertheless, anticipation of the general phenomenal conditions under which that particular concept applies. We know *what it is like* for this concept to be applied to phenomena. This is a kind of image of phenomenal completeness, but one that exists only to issue in an abstract, conceptual form of completeness. If this interpretation is correct, in other words, it is the schematism that introduces the unrealizable yearning for completion into perception.

We have, then, gathered together the important general features of Dufrenne's general philosophical standpoint – the a priori, the schematism, and the role of the self in relation to originary temporality and space, and also the problematics of perception. At various points odd affinities between Merleau-Ponty have been noted. However, the contrasts are worth remarking on briefly in order to make what is distinctive about Dufrenne's ideas stand out in clearer relief.

Like Merleau-Ponty, Dufrenne sees the role of the body as the basis of cognition. However, Dufrenne goes beyond Merleau-Ponty in attempting a more searching phenomenology of embodied *self*-consciousness. His emphasis on the a

priori is testimony to this in itself, but even more important is his emphasis of the subject-object relation. Merleau-Ponty's later work – with its notion of 'flesh' as a metonym for the embodied subject's relation to the world – is a manifest attempt to go beyond the subject-object relation. However, as Crowther has recently shown in detail, this attempt is extremely problematic.[82] The difficulty is that in many aspects of 'flesh' the notion of the subject-object relation is presupposed in order to make the aspect intelligible.

Indeed, it is important to emphasize that in talking of the subject-object relation as an ontological fundamental, we really do need 'object' in the sense in which it is usually understood. We will remember the remarks by Gareth Evans. His point is that we become aware of the self because objects are enduring re-encounterable things that give us reference points for forming a sense of having encountered these before, and thence the basis of a relation of self to self, i.e. the one who is now remembering having encountered that object at another time.

And in this, there is an important role played by reflective thought – as Crowther's critique of Merleau-Ponty again shows in much detail. To become aware of the correlation of self and objects, means *knowing that* one is seeing such and such, as well as the pre-reflective orientation that carries the burden of Merleau-Ponty's account of embodied cognition. Dufrenne, in contrast, gives the subject-object relation, and the role of reflection (embodied in the importance he assigns to the self's relation to the self) their due. His notion of the affective a priori, in particular, offers a way of developing our sense of the ontological intimacy of the subject-object relation without attempting to supersede that relation in the direction of the problematic notion of 'flesh'. Indeed, Dufrenne's emphases not only avoid

[82] See Paul Crowther's paper 'The Poetry of "Flesh" or the Reality of Perception? Merleau-Ponty's Fundamental Error', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Vol 23, Issue 2 (2015) pp.255-278

Merleau-Ponty's difficulties, they provide deep points of contact between his philosophy and mindfulness. We shall now consider these.

2.5 Dufrenne's philosophy and mindfulness

The decisive cognitive and ontological features of Dufrenne's philosophy engage with the most decisive aspects of mindfulness's cognitive structure. It must be emphasized that what Dufrenne describes is the way we are in the world – the structures that are involved in it. We live in them practically. But perhaps there are circumstances when our existence is not just experienced, it is also possessed – we become attentive to what and who we are through the appropriate form of reflection. Dufrenne puts his finger on the why of this in his point about perception's striving for completion. It cannot ever be achieved because we are finite, but in the experience of total quiddity we engage with the way concepts are uniquely instantiated, and the active role of the self in bringing this about.

We would be wise to remember Merleau-Ponty's strictures about this. Analytic thought tries to possess its object but only by resolving into aspects and then trying to discover some principle of unity that binds these together. But the unity is already there. It is a pre-reflective one that allows us to engage with the object in the first place.

This pre-reflective unity is involved in all Dufrenne's various a priori, and the schematism. He notes that:

> "The face of perception calls on us to conceive of a relation between subject and object such the one exists only by means

> of the other – such that the subject is relative to the object in the same way that the object is relative to the subject."[83]

However, whilst this reciprocity is pre-reflective in its day to day workings, it is also informed by an explicit sense of self – that we can make reference to as required. We learn the self through marking our encounters with objects that endure independently of us and provide reference points for, as it were, taking ownership of our movements through space and time. The basic subject-object reciprocity in experience is pre-reflective, but it requires some reflective content to give it orientation.

Now although this ontological reciprocity is the foundation of human experience, it is rarely an object of knowledge in its own right, and when it does become so – through philosophical understanding, what is involved is an act of recognition that takes its place in sequences of similar acts of cognition. However, mindfulness makes us attentive to all aspects of this unity in a different way – through contemplative exploration rather than mere acts of passing acknowledgment. It makes the unity of experience into an enriching and enjoyable experience in its own right. This does not mean a pleasure in judging that subject and object are reciprocally dependent as such; it means rather that the reciprocity is felt as a pleasurable belonging. We may not be able to put the grounds of the pleasure into words but Dufrenne's account of the reciprocity of subject and object explains why mindfulness in general is so significant. It allows the cognitive and affective features define human being-in-the-world to be released from their usual practical directness, into a more leisurely and contemplative relation.

[83] Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, p. 219

Kant's notion of pure aesthetic judgment claims a similar role – it brings the basic cognitive faculties of imagination and understanding into a playful harmony, and furthers our 'sense of life'. However, as remarked in the last chapter, Kant's notion of pure aesthetic enjoyment involves a very narrow notion of disinterestedness, whereas mindfulness involves a much more *inclusive* disinterested contemplation that ranges beyond usual ideas of the aesthetic. Linking it to Dufrenne's account of the subject-object relation allows this inclusive breadth of mindful contemplation to be given an important philosophical location. Its link to cognitive and affective foundations of experience can be shown, but without the narrowness of focus found in Kant's aesthetics. To understand this in more detail, let us now remind ourselves of the cognitive structure of mindfulness.

First, in order for mindful states to be possible, there must, logically speaking, be a cognitive prelude to them. This means a contextualizing or framing device wherein we choose to attend to things mindfully, or where – without us choosing it, circumstances happen to put us in a mindful frame of mind. This is what we called the *principle of orientation*. The key point about it is that it can be cultivated as a disposition. We become open to the possibility of mindfulness.

As we have seen, Dufrenne's philosophy of the a priori holds that there is a pre-reflective unity and reflective engagement between subject and object of experience such that the two factors complement one another in enabling the possibility of knowledge and experience. In cultivating the disposition to mindfulness, we are, in effect, strengthening this reciprocity of subject and object of experience that is constitutive of human being-in-the-world. This extends beyond the very general strengthening described a little earlier. A cultivated disposition to mindfulness means that the *horizonal structure of experience* – the contextualization

of the present moment of experience against those we have previously experienced, those we anticipate, and those which we can posit abstractly through thought, are made mutually reinforcing. We do not simply consume the moment in terms of its immediate significance in practical day to day life, rather we hold on to it – allowing its meaning to crystallize in a way that makes us mindful of how its presentness reaches across the various aforementioned horizons. Mindfulness stimulates attentiveness to these.

Again, we will remember from the previous chapter how mindful states can have an objective or a subjective emphasis, with each of these also being informed to some degree by the other. Mindfulness in its objective aspect – involves attending to the particularity of the object. Mindfulness in its subjective aspect involves attending to the particularity of some feeling or sensation in one's own body – it is itself the object of our attention.

In both cases, the experience involves an immersion in the object that breaks through our conventional mode of perception. This engagement with the object (even when the object is one of our own physical or experiential states) alternate with recognition of one's own sensation or feelings in experiencing it. There is a dimension of apperception wherein what we perceive is not only given meaning through its relation to our existing framework of knowledge, but also through explicit reference to our sense of self – to the 'I' who is doing the experiencing.

The reason *why* we find this mindful experience so rewarding can be explained by reference to Dufrenne's philosophy. We will recall his idea of "an originary space and time which are the source of the objective space and time which are considered the framework for phenomena."[84] This originary space-time relation

[84] Ibid p. 242

is a reciprocal interaction that is embodied in the subject moving towards the world. We will remember also that, for Dufrenne:

> "At the very core of the subject the subject-object relation is pre-figured, by the relation of space and time. And movement, which exists in the subject before appearing in the object, expresses this relation in terms of the object itself."[85]

This originary space and time involves a relationship of the self to the self. Gareth Evans showed how the unity of the object is correlated with our sense of self through its awareness of moving through different times and locations. The self and objective times and places are woven into one another in a whole of experience. Objects are known as objects only as correlates of a space of possible movements and actions that we can take in relation to them. This is why Dufrenne suggests that we read the object in terms of the space-time relation.

Of course, we know that the elements in this whole of experience have independent existence - objects are not dependent on us in order to physically be, and we might have formed our sense of self through interaction with other objects. But the fact is that *we are bonded to things in general and have also taken a path through the spatio-temporal continuum that is unique to us*. We belong to the world of things and them to us – as correlates of the body's movements amongst them, but this belonging contains also our personal path of existence through them.

Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh in his later philosophy is an attempt to give the intimacy of this bonding of subject and object an adequate expression, but Dufrenne's notion of the affective a priori takes this further. We feel an affective

[85] Ibid p. 247

belonging amongst things, especially those which are home to us that prompts us to find an affective meaning that resides in the object itself. As we saw earlier, the object is encountered not only as a correlate of possible actions in relation to it, but also as a style of being. Every individual object and phenomenon has a particular mode of unity that involves that of being a certain kind of thing, but which also has its own unique individual unity of features. Our body too is unity, and this gives us affective affinity with the object. But all the elements in the objects general and particular unity are correlated with the particular hold we take on it – through the horizons of our own personal experience of things. This means that the affective feature is taken to a higher level still. Indeed, there is a sense in which the unity of the object as a particular is dependent on the unique role played by its parts. The object is, in effect, self-affecting. As noted earlier, there is an existential dynamic of self-affirmation and solicitation directed towards that which is other than ourselves. Such a dynamic wishes to bring things nearer to us, to make them spatially proximal. The body responds to the affective ambience of things; it is comfortable with them, and would like to be close to them.

The affective affinity just described is one of the conditions of how we inhere in the world as ones who belong to it. For Dufrenne, the subject-object relation is not a case of the former peering out at the latter, there is an affective belonging of subject and object, under different aspects. We argue that mindful attention allows this affective a priori to be *experienced in its own right* rather than just as a background condition which – as it were – enables our general sense of belonging to the world.

This mindful embodiment of the affective a priori is made concrete by one of the other features of the cognitive structure of mindfulness, namely total quiddity.

This involves the inclusive disinterestedness of mindful attention embracing how things feel through touch, taste, smell, and sound, as well as how they look. Their dispositional as well as occurent properties are relevant to how we discern the object in all its richness. Inclusive disinterested attention embraces not only the general essence of the object but also the features that make it into a unique example of that essence.

In relation to this, we must also recall from a little earlier, some further remarks that Dufrenne makes about the affective a priori:

> "There is something in the object that can be known only by a kind of sympathy in which the subject opens himself to it. Indeed, at the limit, the affectively qualified object is itself a subject and no longer a pure object or the simple correlate of an impersonal consciousness. Instead of being determined from without, affective qualities involve a certain way of relating themselves to each other, a manner of constituting themselves as a totality – in short a capacity for affecting themselves."[86]

In mindfulness the self-affection of ourselves – exploring the richness of the object, and of our experience of it might be said to have a deeper focus. Dufrenne's comments here point directly towards it. The dynamic aspectuality of the object is something we are immersed in empathically. Its unique individual whole/aspects relation is something we can identify with because it involves that which is basic to us also – a relation of self to self. Understood in merely reflective terms, an object is *just* a particular whole/part relation. But in mindful attention, this relation is made living – an intimate belonging of aspects and whole that suggests a mutual affective

[86]Ibid p 442

dependence. We, the object, and our experience of the object are suffused in a new, affectively charged whole of experience. We contemplate total quiddity.

At the end of the first chapter we suggested that whilst anything can, in principle, be regarded mindfully, it might be that some things have special mindful significance because of their structural importance in human experience. We can now follow this up in relation to mindfulness arising from the contemplation of objects, events, and actions.

We have already seen how important the object is as a correlate of potential actions by the subject. However, Dufrenne also emphasizes the formal a priori – features which are necessary conditions of experience in that without them, subjects and objects and the affinities between them would not be possible. Space as extension, and time, as such, are examples of these. Consider space. To be spatial is to be extendable in three-dimensions, and if a thing does not occupy space or cannot be determined as an effect of space-occupying things, then it does not exist. Things that are spatial have their own principle of unity. One can learn how an object occupies space by perceiving its different parts in relation to the whole that is emergent from them. To perceive this does not require that we perceive the parts in any particular order.[87] Our attention can move from up to down or left to right or other directions as we wish. This is the being of space as extension.

Events – even when they involve relations between spatial things – are not open in terms of the temporal order in which they are perceived. Our perception of them is linear – there is an inaugurating feature, a continuation of it, and a resolution. To comprehend the event we must perceive it in this temporal order - paying attention to each progressive moment of its unfolding, for the sake of observing or

[87] If one is acting on the object for practical purpose, then it may of course be important to explore the parts in a particular linear order, but this is not requisite for perceiving a spatial object qua spatial object

experiencing the unfolding as such. We strive for total immersion in the event, whether the subject is observing it, or is involved in it in some way.

Objects and events then, involve two different principles of unity in how they are perceived. When mindfulness makes us attentive to the nature of an object's spatial unity, or the full ramifications of an event's unfolding, it is finding sustenance in structures that are fundamental to our being-in-the-world. In the case of mindful attention to actions this can be taken to a higher stage. An action done in space can be studied in its development and outcomes, in all the ways described in the previous chapter. However, actions must also be regarded in relation to their origins and purposes – especially when they result in the creation of an artifact of some kind. In such a case mindful attention to the artefact thus created can involve a mindful open exploration of the spatial unity of the object that points back to our imagining or trying to recall how it came to be. This creates an interesting perspective – one that might integrate our experience of space and time that is not only mindful, but is so in a way that has an especially important relation to art and the aesthetic. As we shall now see, this connection can be developed through detailed discussion of Dufrenne's aesthetics.

Chapter 3 Dufrenne's General Aesthetics

3.1 Introduction

Dufrenne sets out to show that art is not a diversion but a serious aspect of being human. Through discussion of imagination, expression and how the intellect and body work together to process the work, his ultimate conclusion is that the aesthetic object is true in relation to the real and this is why it is important.[88]

Dufrenne asserts that the work leads us to the real through the affective.[89] The affective a priori is realised through the aesthetic object,[90] be it a painting or a piece of music. This opens up worlds[91] which bear on the real and the real needs these worlds to be illuminated. In the first section below we return briefly to the notion of the affective a priori as it is a pivotal concept.

Embodiment is fundamental to Dufrenne's account of aesthetic experience. The aesthetic object is primarily an object that is perceived and perception happens through the body. For Dufrenne the body is the basis of perception; he tells us early on and throughout that the aesthetic object first manifests itself to the body, immediately inviting the body to join forces with it.

Dufrenne essentially argues for elevated status and privileged position of the aesthetic object over the ordinary object of use. In order to clarify this argument, a number of his main points need to be considered in detail. The spectator's relationship to the aesthetic object is key as this is what actuates the affective a priori categories - which reveal the world that subsequently illuminates the real. This will be discussed in the second section on the subject-object relationship.

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[88] M. Dufrenne *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* trans. E.S. Casey, A.A. Anderson, W. Domingo, L. Jacobson, Evanston Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1973 p. 507
[89] Ibid p. 516
[90] Ibid p. 502
[91] Dufrenne makes the point that art opens up a world several times, for e.g. p. 378, p. 530-31

Next we will clarify what Dufrenne means by art, how is it qualified? Authentic art is *expressive* so it should be borne in mind that when work is qualified as art, it is, qua authentic art, expressive. Following a discussion on what constitutes art, we must examine the artist. After attempting to answer the questions: 'what is art? what does the artist do?' We will return to the notion of the affective a priori in the immediately proceeding section which will encompass expression, imagination and reflection.

Finally, we need to understand how truth in art is manifest, which is central to his theory. Therefore before summarising, we will explain his use of the terms 'true' 'real' and 'world'. These terms will be used throughout but defined in more detail in these final sections. We will conclude with a brief summary.

3.2 The Affecive A Priori

According to Dufrenne, art needs perception. But how exactly does perception animate art? This entails a process, starting with expression and ending with the affective a priori. Before going any further into this process it is necessary to remind ourselves of Dufrenne's theory of the affective a priori. It is embodied in a shared sense of belonging with things – a sharedness based on the fact that our sense of self as an embodied subject involves a unity of whole and parts. This is based on how the emergence of self is correlated with our immersion in a world of material objects, of which we explicitly know ourselves to be one. This is the ground of a felt affinity. We are drawn towards objects in affective terms.

As we saw earlier, every individual object and phenomenon has a particular mode of unity that involves that of being a certain kind of thing, but which also has its own unique individual unity of features. Indeed, the unity of the object qua particular is dependent on the unique role played by its parts. But, it is also true that

all the elements in the objects general and particular unity are correlated with the particular hold we take on it – through the horizons of our own personal experience of things. The object does not sit before us inertly; its unity is meaningful for us; it invokes an existential dynamic of self-affirmation in ourselves, arising from and soliciting the unique expressive meaning of that which is other than ourselves. In this way that which is unique in the object is taken to another level of uniqueness – through the way we frame it within our own experience. The body responds to the affectivity of things.

However, some objects exert this attraction more than others. This explains why Dufrenne gives such importance to the affective a priori in art. The affective a priori is a capacity which allows us to receive an aesthetic object with appropriate emotion because the expression constituent in the object – the way the whole and parts mutually affect one another - awakens a feeling in us which already exists. Dufrenne uses an example to illustrate this phenomenon: "We are able to feel the tragic in Racine…only because we possess an idea prior to the concrete feeling of the tragic."[92]

He goes on to say that to be equipped with our own experience is not enough to enable us to be sensitive and responsive to a work of art. There must be a pre-reflective corresponding category. We must have the kind of knowledge which allows us to recognise what we feel before we can understand what we have felt. In this case to express an affective quality, we must have an affective category. The affective a priori, therefore, is an echo in the spectator which awakens a feeling but

[92] Ibid p. 464

is not an act of reflection.[93] It is important to note that affective categories are "aspects of the world"[94] for Dufrenne.

In relation to the artist, whenever s/he expresses him/herself by expressing a world, the affective category becomes, in the words of Souriau, "a direct regulation and a law of the act."[95] According to Dufrenne affective categories and affective qualities can only be characteristics of a world *and* a subject together; a work is authentic only when the relation between it and its creator are consubstantial. This is why when an artist expresses himself by expressing his world the affective category becomes 'regulation and law'. Its affective meaning arises from the object being physically configured so that its meaning is recognized as the expression of another person's being, over and above that of being an object of a certain kind.

We will be returning to this this important concept later when we have a clearer picture of the other principle features of this theory, the subject-object relationship, discussed below is one such feature.

3.2 Subject-Object Relationship

Dufrenne invokes Hegel to illuminate the subject – object relationship. According to Hegel, the consciousness which is directed toward the object is constitutive, but only if the object lends itself to this constituting.[96] For Dufrenne the aesthetic object always seems to be embracing the subject, it commands the subject to perceive and this perceiving is a kind of giving oneself to the aesthetic object: "thus I am in the presence of the aesthetic object as soon as I belong to it."[97]

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[93] This is not new among phenomenologists, Merleau-Ponty is well known for his ideas on pre-reflective awareness before Dufrenne but Dufrenne perhaps outlines his argument more cogently or at least expands them and describes why it is ultimately important
[94] Ibid p. 471
[95] Etienne Souriau quoted by Dufrenne *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p. 467
[96] Dufrenne *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p. x1vii
[97] Ibid p. 11

One has the sense that the subject is at the whim of the aesthetic object with such language as, "The work takes him as a witness".[98] Furthermore we are told that through our bodies we remain in touch with the object but it is the spectator who submits, not the object.[99] However the aesthetic object also needs the spectator, for he goes on to say:

> "Just as man wants to be recognized by man in the celebrated Hegelian dialectic, the work needs man in order to be recognized as an aesthetic object."[100]

From an analytic point of view, we could say that Dufrenne is describing how the work *emerges* as an aesthetic object through man's perception. For example, the colours and shapes in painting are perceived *as* significant wholes – in terms of what they represent and how they cohere as formal unities. In this way, the aesthetic object is emergent from how we perceive the work's physical and/or imaginatively-intended qualities.[101]

For Dufrenne, undoubtedly, the aesthetic object finds its completion in perception.[102] It possesses a body and a truth – as a material body with such and such physical characteristics independent of perception - but needs to be recognized by perception.[103] Aesthetic perception on the part of the spectator constitutes the aesthetic object through the relation between the interpretative aspect of perception, and its engagement with the work's material features.[104] The perceiver is a witness to

[98] Ibid p. 51
[99] Ibid p. 57
[100] Ibid p. 55
[101] http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/properties-emergent/28/09/15
[102] Dufrenne *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* 333
[103] Ibid 547
[104] Ibid p. 51

the work[105] but in a perceptually active way – although the word witness may conjure up a more passive role. Because perception is key, embodiment is of primary importance in Dufrenne's theory.

The witness penetrates the world of the work, but how does s/he do this? Reference to 'connivance' is often employed in this regard.[106] There is a communion that occurs through "solitary and meditative consiousness…for the sake of its metamorphosis into an aesthetic object."[107] The perceiver must be simultaneously inside and outside the work, in order to do this s/he must adopt the attitude of a witness who is at one with the perception and "who is an accomplice rather than a judge."[108]

This is achieved through the body being wholly present to the work of art through a corporeal complicity.[109] The body is being called not to take action but to be acted upon.[110] This point is reiterated a number of times, that the spectator <u>is invited to be, not to do.</u>[111] It is not an activity but an experience. In this way art takes on meaning through the presence of the witness and the intentions of the work become realised.[112] The 'intentions of the work' are bound up with the affective a priori which will be explored in detail later. The notion of 'being and not doing' is an important one which Dufrenne, himself does not explain in great detail and hence I will provide a context for it below.

When a viewer is face to face with a painting, no action is required, this is the 'disinterested' stance which we have discussed earlier.[113] This means an ontological

[105] Ibid p. 59
[106] Ibid p. 352
[107] Ibid p. 51
[108] Ibid p. 55
[109] Ibid p. 340
[110] Ibid p. 59
[111] Ibid p. 65, 66, 85-6, 352, 376
[112] It will be revealed that the intentions of the work are to activate feeling which reveals a world
[113] Dufrenne does not use the term 'disinterested'

participation, which, of course, provokes questions but existential questions, not practical questions about how the aesthetic object might be set to work. The aesthetic object *is* the end not a means to a practical concern, for example, like the way in which a fork is approached with a view to eating with.

This is not to be confused with the popular notion of 'art for art's sake,' which is a misleading term that may be understood to mean that art has no actual relevance outside of the moment of pleasure that it gives in the act of appreciating it, because clearly for Dufrenne, art has a purpose and a cosmological function. Furthermore, the essence of the present argument, with the aid of Dufrenne, mindfulness theory and other phenomenological thinkers, is that art enhances our engagement with the world. So at no point are we suggesting that art is an end in itself such that it has no implications in the real world. Indeed it does. Of course there is a broader context that art fits into and 'functions' in, as it were.

However when we speak of appreciating art as an end in itself, this means that we do not approach it asking what shall I do with this painting, or indeed, what will it do for me? We do not say to ourselves, this is a nice painting which will neatly cover the stain on my wall. When we are appreciating it and receiving it, we are not thinking, I must concentrate now so that I can activate the affective a priori, even though there is a bigger picture into which art fits ecologically - where affective categories may be released.

This is in contrast to the carrying out of practical tasks which must be completed in order to arrive at another place. In the act of carrying out a practical task we are focused on the end result, there is often nothing about the process that absorbs us. Although as we have seen with a mindful attitude, we would be ideally always focused on the moment as an end in itself, no matter what we are doing rather

than on the future outcome or goal, in reality this is difficult and this is what distinguishes the aesthetic experience from the practical experience, we could say that the former is, *by nature*, mindful. In this way, the aesthetic object acts as the framing device, which is the principle of orientation discussed previously, encouraging us to attend mindfully to it by its very nature qua perceptually compelling.

Although the aesthetic experience leads to practical outcomes in a broader context, the moment of communion between viewer and art work is not practical in nature but phenomenological. When appreciating the aesthetic object, one does not do so as if one was going to be later examined on the piece – but simply absorbs it in the moment for what it is. Much reflection may come later but this is internal subjective reflection.

In this process, no feeling that arises is right or wrong. This is perhaps what is meant in mindfulness theory as non-judgemental, but as we have seen 'disinterested' is more apt in relation to aesthetics. Certainly we 'judge' art as good or bad but not our feeling or reaction to it and we do not attach to our value judgements. For example, we may judge a .piece to be good but not like it. We can still see why someone else would.

Dufrenne does not go into exhaustive explanations when he speaks of 'being and not doing' but he does give a detailed account of how we apprehend the aesthetic object in contrast to the object of use and so we will return to this point later in the discussion on 'what is art.'

Dufrenne does tell us that although the spectator is called to be and not do, this does not mean that s/he is not active in the sense that s/he is actively involved and almost at work in the task of realising the aesthetic object. However the work of

contemplation transpires existentially. Dufrenne makes reference to "participation"[114] which suggests active involvement. He infers that the viewer must put some effort into the job of feeling:

> "Immediate feeling is not feeling at all. Authentic feeling must be earned just as perception must be gradually gained. The aesthetic object must be fully present… We have insisted that perception is a task by indicating that there is truth to work in relation to which certain perceptions are false or insufficient…The aesthetic object cannot be satisfied with only existing halfway, in the manner of an inauthentic man."[115]

Hence the job of perception can be done well or poorly and we are at risk of 'displeasing' the aesthetic object. It is not a given that if we are in the presence of the aesthetic object that we are present to it. This requires some skill. The skills necessary are the ability to focus and give one's undivided attention to the aesthetic object. In psychological terms this attitude would be termed a 'mindful' attitude. This is the means to opening oneself up to the work:

> "I came to open myself up to the work, to be present…to experience an apotheosis of the present. My consciousness gives and demands meaning"[116]

For Dufrenne, this is part of the 'training' involved in the appreciation of the aesthetic object. There are two points to be made here in practical terms. Firstly the training has a goal – this opening up and being conscious to the work is cashed out on a practical level in terms of the affective a priori as we shall see.

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[114] Dufrenne *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p. 405
[115] Ibid p. 419
[116] Ibid p. 11

Secondly, we must look at the intrinsic nature of the advocated disposition which involves opening oneself up and being present. What is the criterion of it? This brings us back to the *inclusive disinterestedness and total quiddity* which was discussed in the first chapter. Dufrenne's account essentially describes a principle of orientation where the attention is contemplative. The notion of consciousness 'giving and demanding meaning' unmistakably describes the mindful stance as well as the aesthetic experience and centres on total quiddity.

Dufrenne goes as far as to say that the work of art is an "education in attention"[117] and that a "process of training"[118] is required in order to "cleanse ones mind by eliminating every prejudice".[119] This results in being sensitised to the work of art and it demands effort.

Through this 'training' and attention, communication with the work is enabled. Consequently a world is opened up, this *world* is germaine to his argument for art. It is important to note that Dufrenne considers the aesthetic object[120] to be a quasi subject because it has the capacity to open up a world.[121] This is because it has expressive affective qualities and an affinity with the affective a priori.

We must ask what is required in order for the subject to become sufficiently present and attentive to open up to the object? Dufrenne's explanation echoes Merleau-Ponty's philosophy on flesh and pre-reflective engagement.[122] As we have

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[117] Ibid p. 63
[118] Ibid p. 428
[119] Ibid p. 428
[120] It is important to note that Dufrenne differentiates between the 'work of art' and the 'aesthetic object'. The work of art as grasped in aesthetic experience emerges as the aesthetic object. The work of art bears the possibility of being present to a consciousness and becoming an aesthetic object for that consciousness: "the work of art, however undeniable the reality which the creative act confers upon it, has an unequivocal existence, because its vocation is to transcend itself toward the aesthetic object, in which alone it attains, along with its public sanction, the fullness of its being. In pondering the work of art, we discover the aesthetic object." Ibid p. 5. See also chapter one, *Aesthetic Object and Work of Art*, pp. 3-18
[121] Ibid p. 190
[122] Dufrenne makes reference to Merleau-Ponty himself in this context on p. 219

seen, Merleau-Ponty believes that the subject and object are the one flesh.[123] Dufrenne suggests that perception calls on us to conceive of the relation between subject and object such that one exists only by means of the other. In this way, the subject can encounter the object only if the subject is first on a level with it, "if it prepares for the object within its own depths."[124] However, as we saw in the previous chapter, whereas Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the pre-reflective aspect very heavily, Dufrenne also assigns an important mediating role to reflective knowledge - emphasising and elaborating on the assertion that one is an object in the world amongst other objects.

According to this thesis, then, the body as lived and the body as object are identified, he goes on to say that no one can extract himself from this world so long as he is in it, the pre-reflective relationship with the world is always already given.[125] Only this premise can make the relationship between specator and aesthetic object possible. The sensuous reververates within the subject, who is the place of its manifestation only because the echo of its power is capable of being recognised. Its form is not just the form of the object but the form of the relation between the subject and object.[126]

It should be borne in mind that the relationship between subject and object is not a private one. The observer is not solitary but part of a public. Elemental to this notion is the supposition that the singular is pregnant with the universal.[127] Even in singularity each human being is a delegate of humanity.[128] The specatator is part of a

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[123] See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pts 1 and 2, trans C. Smith, New York: Routledge, 2012 and Merleau-Ponty 'Eye and Mind' in G. Johnson, *Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, Evanston Ill.: Northwestern University press, 1993
[124] Dufrenne, *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p. 219
[125] Ibid p. 220
[126] Ibid p. 231
[127] Ibid p. 503
[128] Ibid p. 488

cultural milieu and the public forms a real community. He describes this community thus:

> "(It is) founded not on the objectivity of an institution or a system of representation but on the eminent objectivity of the work. The work obliges me to renounce my own differentness, to make myself the counterpart of my fellow by accepting, like him the rule of the game which is to look and as it were, admire."[129]

In practice, this is a community where human beings[130] are brought together by art on a plane where without ceasing to be individuals they feel themselves to be interdependent. Aesthetic contemplation is a social act.[131] Aesthetic objects contain the gesture of the artist (this will be discussed in more detail in chapter four). The trace of the artist's gesture gives us his/her style and as a result we have the opportunity to live their world through the art.

This world, which comes out through gesture and style is not just the world of the artist but the universal world which we all share. This is why Dufrenne states that the subject-object relation is not a private one. It contains all those others who participate in creating the circumstances of the creation of the piece. The artist has lived in the world encountering others and objects in order to create.

The style which emerges is not a private affair but the result of lived and shared experience. When the work is freed from the creator and takes on a life of its own in the world and receives viewers, these viewers are similarly "delegates of humanity." They are not only individuals but a congregation brought together, as

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[129] Ibid p. 66
[130] Dufrenne continually uses the term "men" but I am presuming that he means "human beings"
[131] Dufrenne, *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p. 68

Dufrenne states, by the art work and equally, they participate in the appreciation of the piece.

For Dufrenne, the essential otherness of humanity is laid bare in the aesthetic object where objects of use mask this nakedness through their instumentality.[132] It is necessary to clarify what Dufrenne means by this provocative statement. Objects of use are created with a function in mind, style is not part of the process or end result. They do not have a presence imbued with creativity, they have a purely practical purpose. The aesthetic object, on the other hand, places us in direct communication with its creator providing a presence[133] (a human presence) and opens up a world which can only be a shared world. This will be looked at in more detail under the section 'What is Art?' below.

Dufrenne discusses how Aaron has shown that knowledge of the other, acted upon by the multiplicity of interpretations, is neither more nor less privilged than self-knowledge. It is through an artist's particular style that s/he expresses a universal world of humanity which is received by the indivdual only as participant of the human race. This will be treated in more depth when we discuss the artist. Dufrenne asserts that "the most authentic subjectivity is that which rejoins the universal."[134]

At this point we must ask what is this aesthetic object – what is the artwork? We have seen how the subject communicates with it, activates it almost, but what constitutes it?

3.3 What is Art?

[132] Ibid p. 87
[133] Ibid p. 98
[134] Ibid p. 111

Early in his thesis Dufrenne reminds us that aesthetic experience occurs in a cultural world where we are presented with works of art and we are taught to recognise and appreciate them.[135] Therefore first and foremost it should be noted that art is a product of a culture.

When we talk about culture we mean that we can only define art in terms of a context. Dufrenne attempted to be culturally-aware by highlighting that we should not take art out of context and attempt to ascribe our own standards to it. All art needs to be understood in context, this context is culture. Ironically Dufrenne fell into this trap himself by trying to make sense of art from other cultural eras with his 20th century mind and eyes. This issue will be examined later in chapter five.

We have seen that art is something which demands perception, it is a privileged object as opposed to the ordinary object. Through what means does it reach this special status? In order to answer this, Dufrenne compares the aesthetic object with the ordinary object of use. The latter places us in a 'man-made' world and invites us to become human through its use. But this is only an indirect comunication. Lack of style during the process of production and the object's instrumentality impede the relationship between subject and object. The aesthetic object on the other hand places us on the plane of "I and thou without one opposing the other. …he opens his world without compelling me and I open myself to it."[136]

In mass-produced objects style doesn't complement use-value, however even hi-tech gadgets like mobile phones and tablets are 'designed' and contain aesthetic features – in that they are designed to seize on our abilities of perception. But Dufrenne did not acknowledge that all objects can be appreciated aesthetically. Of course, any practical object can be viewed aesthetically, for example, we can

[135] Ibid p. liii
[136] Ibid p. 113

appreciate the craftsmanship of a table aesthetically and with 'inclusiveness disinterestedness' but then we can also approach it as an object of use, how practical it is in size and shape for eating off of – this is a means to an end and in this case we do not apply the 'disinterested' stance. Even a hairdryer can be aesthetic and when we view it in this way, we are viewing it mindfully, as we have seen with the poet – who applies honed powers of perception and observation when observing the world in general.

In these examples, however, it should be noted that a mobile phone does not bear the mark of gesture in the way that the handcrafted table would. And yet, the trace of the concept of its designer can imbue such an object. It would not qualify, in any case, under Dufrenne's criteria for an aesthetic object – which is the result of embodied gestural work and individual style. Furthermore, a mass-produced object cannot be unique, even if it can be aesthetic, it cannot be an 'aesthetic object' in this context. The craftsman's table, having been made by one man, is a one of a kind, not to be repeated and so bears the mark of the man.

The aesthetic object is not a sign which points to something else, it shows and does note demonstrate.[137] It only invites contemplation, as we have seen it does not ask the subject to act. There is no intermediary between subject and object. The natural object is not even completely what it is according to Dufrenne. It is stamped with impotence.[138] This is to say, it is the product of unknown natural forces, and whereas natural forces operate according to physical rules generally, the formation of the indiviudal object by nature seems – from the human perspective – to be a chance thing. It has a meaning only in relation to the broader causal context and natural laws whose forces brought it into existence, whereas an artwork is a product of artifice

[137] Ibid p. 117-118
[138] Ibid p. 145

created so as to embody a meaning in its own individual presence. It will have broader existential implications, but these are centred on how it is given to perception as an individual meaning. Perception cannot have a direct relation with it for understanding is required, it must be grasped in context. [139]

According to Dufrenne, in other words, an object of art has a life of its own without resort to any functions: "The aesthetic object has a promise of interiority…we can understand it only by remaining close to it and constantly coming back to it."[140] One relates to the aesthetic object only on the condition of being in the world and feeling engaged.[141] We may ask why do we not relate to ordinary objects in this way?

To answer this, we must look at specific aesthetic objects in comparison with non-aesthetic ones. Consider a practical object, such as a cup, which we may judge by its effectiveness as a drinking utensil. When we ordinarily pick up a cup – an object of use- to drink from it, we see it in light of how it serves us. We are going to *use* it. We have a vested interest in how well it serves its purpose so we are not detached from its form, shape or anything about it because we want it to function to its optimum capacity.

The aesthetic object on the other hand is an end in itself. We are not interested in what it can do for us in concrete terms. It functions as an object of perception and in so doing it creates aesthetic space. It calls on us to perceive it for its own sake because it is perceptually compelling. Of course, as previously highlighted, there has to be a purpose to this otherwise art would not be the serious

[139]This point is still debatable because a handcrafted ceramic work, just like the table, which also has a function, can be seen as a work of art. I would argue that we must separate its aesthetic life from its functional purpose in order to avoid conflict on this point.
[140] Dufrenne, *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p. 145
[141] Ibid p. 155

business that Dufrenne insists it is. Dufrenne does not note, however, that it sharpens our perceptual skills, rendering us more mindful.

Clearly this brings us back to 'being and not doing.' We relate to the aesthetic object contemplatively. There is a mutual exchange at an ontological level. For Dufrenne, an object which requires interpretation for use (the ordinary object) cannot meet the subject at an ontological level and vice versa. Dufrenne does not say why an aesthetic object that also happens to have a function cannot do this when it is acting as an aesthetic object. Presumably, he felt that the two could not be separated but this subject is worthy of debate that is not forthcoming.

Dufrenne submits that the aesthetic object manifests a certain quality which words cannot translate, this quality arouses a feeling – evoking a world.[142] These *worlds* and what constitutes them will be discussed later. The common denominator among aesthetic objects is the circumstance of lived experience.

Dufrenne states that art derives its value from the fact that it is deeply rooted in human experience of the world, which is the common world of coexistence.[143] An aesthetic object, because of this, is a quasi subject, i.e. it is capable of expression - expressing a world. It bears a world within itself and bears its meaning in itself.[144] An object that is not aesthetic only signifies its use and cannot reach beyond its own objectivity. The aesthetic object must be created to demand perception rather than interpretation.[145]

Now we must be able to recognise what art is and what art is not, what are its unique characteristics? As mentioned above, art must be capable of expression, therefore it should be noted that what is true art is also that which is capable of

[142] Dufrenne, *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, p. 178
[143] Dufrenne p. 191
[144] Ibid 194-199
[145] Ibid p. 286-7

expression. The following account is equally the criterion of true expression in contrast to the poorly expressed in art as well as an answer to 'what is art?'

Art, to be true and to be expressive, must strike a balance. It must convince rather than titillate. However it must not try too hard. It must not be saccharine. It does not grasp at the hearstrings.[146] Although the presence of the aesthetic object to the body is necessary, it must not exist for the body alone. The body is always linked to perception and the artist who does not establish this alliance has failed for Dufrenne. He terms works which were not conceived with the hands "tiresome" in this regard.[147] Nonetheless he states:

> "It is dangerous for art to be no more than the occasion for bodily excitement or emotion…the painting flattering the eye speaks too vividly to the body to move the mind. We have spoken of works of art that fail through their very excess of expressiveness. They also fail – and it is basically the same phenomenon – through an excess of corporeal eloquence."[148]

One wonders what Dufrenne's opinion of Fragonard's paintings was. Although he does not provide examples of what he considers to be these excessive disappointments that try too hard, Fragonard's *Happy Lovers, The Swing* and *La Gimblette* come to mind. The eponymous *Gimblette* -a half-naked young girl lying in bed exposing her bottom to the viewer, with only the tail of a puppy covering her genitals as she plays with him, seems to be bear all the hallmarks of the overly titillating, saccharine, heartstring grasping failure of which Dufrenne speaks.

[146] Ibid p. 136
[147] Ibid p. 341 This may provoke discussion on digital art, conceptual art and much postmodern art which Dufrenne does not address as perhaps it was not a feature when he wrote this work
[148] Ibid p. 342

Figure 4 Fragonard, La Gimblette, 1770, oil on canvas

The work of art should have a structure which is apprehendable to the body because our body is the instrument of our presence to the world but it must be able to move the mind. Otherwise art will not achieve its ultimate function, i.e. activating the affective a priori.

For Dufrenne authentically expressed art is distinguished from its parody in that its desire to astonish remains in the service of the desire to signify,[149] using strangeness only as a stmiulant for attention. The provocation of astonishement alone, Dufrenne says, is too simple to achieve. If art presents itself correctly, its strangeness takes on a necessity:

> "It awakens within us, not our ordinary reactions but rather the feeling of a necessity internal to the object, a necessity which must be sensed and felt rather than understood."[150]

The aesthetic object possesses a depth which uproots us from our ordinary habits in order to bring us face to face with a new world, which demands a new outlook. The object which simply astonishes results in a distracted response,[151] achieving nothing deeper. Evidently the work functions as a proxy for its creator,[152] therefore the accomplishment of the desired response goes back to the artist. Hence it is up to the artist to effectuate the aesthetic response. Nevertheless the work provides evidence not only of the personality of the author but also the nature of the real world in which the artist has lived.[153]

A good example of 'art' which would not qualify under these criteria is the work of Allen Jones. Let us consider his *Women as Furniture (Hatstand, Table and Chair)* series that consists of pornographically stylised, highly realistic and life sized mannequins of women in sexually subservient and degrading positions –acting effectively as furniture. As Dufrenne notes the provocation of astonishment alone is

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[149] Dufrenne has noted that art is not a sign, unlike the ordinary object, however in this case he seems to be referring to art's signifying function (which is to demand perception in order to activate the affective a priori) not signifying its use as an every day object
[150] Ibid p. 409
[151] Ibid p. 408
[152] See Dufrenne p. 196: The aesthetic object contains the subjectivity of the subject who has created it and expresses himself in it, and whom it in turn manifests."
[153] Dufrenne *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p. 544

too simple to achieve and here is a perfect example. Jones simply created something that would be shocking but not artistically unique or sensuous.

Figure 5 Jones, Hatstand, Table and Chair 1969, installation

The work is not amenable to the body because it does not speak to the senses in an educated way, but neither does it make a significant address to the intellect. Shock or outrage is one possible response if one is female, which arises from a thought process. This results possibly from an emotional reaction but emotion has a cognitive basis. In any case, even if we were to concede that the response is affective in nature, there is none of the concomitant reflection which expands consciousness, this simple knee-jerk reaction which results from 'astonishment' does not go any deeper. Studies in psychology show that shock tactics are often effective in getting a viewer's attention, but they do not seem to change behaviour.[154] This is very much

[154] See for example, Stephen Sutton, 'Shock Tactics and the Inverted U' *British Journal of Addiction*, 87(4) (1992) pp. 517-519; or I. Lewis. B.Watson, R. Tay, B. M. White, 'The Role of Fear Appeals in Improving Driver Safety: A Review of the Effectiveness of Fear-arousing (threat) Appeals in Road Safety Advertising' *International Journal of Behavioral Consultation and Therapy* Volume 3, No. 2, 2007

related to changes in consciousness and abilities of reflection. Possibly it is more difficult to assimilate an image that is devoid of deeper, communicative meaning, in which case a transformative result is not possible.

If the work of Jones speaks to the body in that a viewer may become aroused, then the work is pornographic rather than artistic. This is not to preclude erotic art, of which many fine examples can be found, but if the work is devoid of artistic content and its sole purpose and sole outcome is sexual arousal wherein no other affective or reflective connections are made, the work can be only pornographic. *Women as Furniture* can be contrasted with one of Klimt's erotic drawings, of which there are many.

Figure 6 Klimt, erotic drawing c. 1907-1908

This one could not be more explicit as it depicts a woman lying on a pillow in the act of masturbating. But what makes it different from the work of Jones? Klimt's drawing seems to describe an experience, a moment of total relaxation. Of course it is erotic but in no way does it seem solely pornographic. Klimt's beautifully undulating lines carry the viewer through a private, unsullied and hypnotic moment of freedom. Klimt's works were certainly considered pornographic at the time and today's viewer is still taken aback at the starkness of what is portrayed. There is no

doubt that it is still astonishing to behold but in the sense that Dufrenne described: "If art presents itself correctly, its strangeness takes on a necessity."

Indeed one has the distinct sense with the Klimt that it was not the artist's intention to shock or upset, but that the pose of the model, the subject matter, the composition, use of line and material all work together as a unified whole to make the work artistic. Klimt used this subject because nothing else could have portrayed the feeling he wished to express. Clearly Klimt is a master of his materials and a keen observer of human nature. Jones, on the other hand, uses no artistic skill and the overall impression is that he set out with an intention but not an artistic compulsion.

Finally if a viewer is neither shocked, outraged nor aroused by *Women as Furniture,* then the work suffers from the banality of trying too hard to shock; this would result in the apathetic and distracted response that Dufrenne has described. Jones' work is not art but some sort of commentary. It speaks of a need in the author to communicate something but he is unable to do so artistically and hence the work does not speak. When Dufrenne spoke of being uprooted from our superficial selves, it is unlikely that he meant that art work should be provocative in the extreme or offensive as a means to harness our perceptual awareness because when this happens, the work is discarded and leaves no trace, hence a shift in consciousness cannot occur.

The response to true art in contrast to its lesser counterpart is contrasted to that of a lover by Dufrenne:

> "Instead of exciting us to a point at which we are beside ourselves, the aesthetic object lulls and charms. It is as

> discreet as a lover is passionate, as serene as a lover is tempestuous, as delicate as a lover is violent."[155]

Art is a serious business which cannot be pleasing and true at the same time, i.e. art that is suited to please us without moving us emotionally is not art.[156] However we must not be moved emotionally to the point of distraction. Clearly in Dufrenne's view there is "art" that lacks the delicacy of true art, and fails dismally in its task. He is resolute in his view that true art requires skill and diligence. He asserts that there is no art without technique. Therefore for art to be expressive, it must be the product of practice and hard work.

Art must not be superficial, otherwise it says nothing. It must be marked by style. This is reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty's thesis, where he disagrees with Malraux on the 'genius' of the artist. Merleau-Ponty asserts that the artist is not a genius but an ordinary person trained in the art of perception, who works at his/her craft and perfects it.[157] On this point Dufrenne would perhaps also agree with Parkes who stated:

> "If you take that democratising movement toward 'de-skilling,' for example, where the artist doesn't need to acquire any particular skills, the result, as far as I'm concerned, is a lot of ugly art that isn't at all interesting, because it hasn't been sufficiently crafted or thought through. With respect to Nietzsche's notion of the function of the arts, that stuff is

[155] Ibid p. 433
[156] Ibid pp. 512-513
[157] See Merleau-Ponty 'Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence' pp 76-120 in g. Johnson Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader 1993

> hardly (at least for me) a stimulus to life, or something that enhances our existence."[158]

Above all, art is not imitation, it is creation. For if it were only imitating what we have already seen, it would do so poorly. It must be more than this. Dufrenne illustrates this point by way of example:

> "We believe that art repeats what we have seen because we can identify what art represents…But in fact we have not seen any of these things before. We had not yet seen the writhing power of the human torso before seeing Michelangelo's slaves or the tortured form of the iris before seeing Van Gogh's bouquet…Art does not copy because there is no reality given in a previous perception which aesthetic perception must simulate. We could almost say that perception begins with art."[159]

Another artist worth mentioning in this context is Tracey Emin. In her work, *My Bed*, she clearly wished to convey feelings of desperation and despair after the break-up of her relationship. She felt that the scene in her bedroom conveyed all of this. However, instead of using the imagination to convey such feelings though style, technique and materials which she had mastered, she simply reproduced the exact scene, as it unintentionally assembled itself in her room, in an art gallery.[160] This would qualify as imitation rather than creation and, furthermore, is stamped with the 'de-skilling' of which Parkes spoke.

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[158] Colleen Fitzpatrick, 'Where the Butterfly meets the Moth, An Interview with Graham Parkes' *The Postgraduate Journal of Aesthetics,* 10(3) (2013) pp. 2-12
[159] Dufrenne, *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p. 543
[160] This could be said to bear the hallmark of the natural object discussed earlier, which is stamped with impotence; it is purely the product of chance. Although many artists use found objects, if they are not skillfully assimilated into a sensuous whole which works artistically these found objects are useless objects from an aesthetic point of view.

Figure 7 Emin - My Bed, 1998, installation

Figure 8 Detail from Emin's 'My Bed'

My Bed certainly brings us into contact with its creator, but whether this is through aesthetic space or not is debatable. When we walk into anyone's personal space we are brought into contact with them, but this is not an aesthetic experience. This type of art, which has been termed 'confessional art,'[161] is more about the person that devised it than it is about art itself. It is a therapeutic act on the part of its

[161] Christine Fanthome, "Articulating authenticity through artifice: the contemporary relevance of Tracey Emin's confessional art," *Social Semiotics* 18:2 227, 2008

author and may or may not speak to a viewer perceptually and aesthetically. Although all art can have a therapeutic element, it must go beyond the therapeutic exercise in order to qualify as art. Imagination must play a role, unique ways of representing ordinary or extraordinary things and situations is constituent in the artistic process. *My bed*, again, might speak to the mind and foster feelings of pity for the artist, but so too would a visit to her home or a conversation with her.

Artist, Cornelia Parker, on the other hand re-assembled an explosion, entitled *Cold, Dark Matter*, which is entirely unique and creative. The end result speaks to the senses and demands endless reflection. The exploded contents of a shed is restored in a three-dimensional installation where it is suspended from the ceiling lit by a single light bulb so that the fragments cast dramatic shadows on the gallery walls. Parker stated that 'cold dark matter' refers to stuff in the universe that hasn't been measured[162] but even without the title, the work reaches out to the viewer in a chaotic rush of lights and shapes and, to paraphrase Dufrenne's words, is something that we have never seen before.

[162] http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/cold-dark-matter/introduction 19/02/16 15:27

Figure 9 Parker - Cold, Dark, Matter, 1991, installation

Although Dufrenne does not say so, for a work to have this kind of uniqueness, we must recognise its difference from more mundane works. This logically presupposes reference to a comparative horizon, which has been discussed by Crowther.[163] This is based on our experience of the medium in question. An experience of this kind can be counted as educated if it has been actively worked on through a process of comparison and contrast with other examples of art. What counts here is the relation between the works appearance and that of other art works.

[163] See Paul Crowther *Phenomenologies of Art and Vision, A Post-Analytic Turn*, Bloomsbury, 2013

Dufrenne favours modern art because it does not strive to imitate and in relation to painting he has definite ideas on representational art, which will be explored later under 'Painting.'

3.4 The Artist

According to Dufrenne we know the artist through the work – not the circumstances of creation. What Dufrenne terms his "real act"[164] is irrelevant to the aesthetic experience. A certain truth of his/her being is revealed through aesthetic experience alone and this is what we are interested in. The truth of which we speak is the lived experience of the artist in the world, which is manifested in the work. The aesthetic object does not serve or solicit any practical use and therefore allows us to explore its creator and speaks of its creator. The means by which it is able to do this is pivotal to Dufrenne's philosohy. It does this by manifesting a style. Although style will also be discussed in chapter four under 'Painting' it is necessary to give a brief account of it here.

Style defines the creative activity of the artist. Dufrenne concedes that style may apply to craft also and that all art begins as craft.[165] He refers to Malraux who suggests that a psychology of creation must combine tradition and invention in order for art to emerge. Although the artist, unlike the artisan, must create and not imitate, the artist must first be a good craftsperson. Presumably this presupposes style. He states:

> "It is true that invention does occasionally stem from rebellion, but nevertheless a continuing apprenticeship is required. For the artist to be himself, he may have to rebel

[164] Dufrenne, *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, p. 102
[165] Ibid p. 103

> against others, but he must be a good worker first of all. Moreover concern for craftsmanship in no way prevents self expression."[166]

The ultimate mastery of the artist is to attain style and style is the locus in which the artist appears.[167] This reference to self-expression may seem to reflect the artist as troubled genius as presented by Malraux,[168] which Merleau-Ponty so vehemently disputed. However Dufrenne would side with Merleau-Ponty. Malraux, on the other hand, depicted this artist as expressing *himself* and asserting his individuality. Dufrenne's view, on the contrary, is all about the universal. Every human being radiates a world,[169] the artist, however succeeds in opening a world up to others. We will define what constitutes a 'world' in detail later as this is an important notion in Dufrenne's philosophy. Dufrenne considers art to be generated from the diligence and premediated act of an individual artist but he contends that this results in a bringing forth of human spontaneity. This is something that is truly primitive which is shared by all humans and "manifests a kind of life wisdom of which we are the beneficiaries but which bears no mark of individuality at all."[170]

The artist presents his/her way of seeing to us; this is done through the technical aspects of style. By making arrangements and combinations in order to create a work of art 'man' adds to nature and asserts 'his' freedom. Dufrenne uses examples to illustrate this.

Caravaggio's lighting contrasted in depth which represents a scene in high relief is a technical feature but results in presenting a whole way of seeing. Picasso's

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[166] Ibid p. 103
[167] Ibid p. 105
[168] A. Malraux *Psychologie d'Art* quoted by Merleau-Ponty in 'Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence' in Galen Johnson, *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press,1993 pp.76- 120
[169] Dufrenne, *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p. 177
[170] Ibid p. 104

insect-faced woman is a cubist technique, however what he expresses is the stifling universe within which he dwells.[171] Most importanlty these aesthetic worlds specified by a style are human worlds. A world of things which is there for all of us.[172]

Ornament, unlike art, has nothing to say because it does not radiate the artist's *weltanschauung*.[173] That is unless the 'ornament' achieves a cosmological function, as in a cathedral which expresses the world of the artist. What does Dufrenne mean by 'world' in this context? Style expresses a world when a certain vital relation of 'man' to the world is discernible. A "style of life" is evident. [174] Consider the example of Caravaggio's style which expresses a world:

> "It signifies a certain, mystery and a certain brutality, a resistant world which is not pleasant or smooth and for which we must be armed with the nonchalant courage of conquistadors."[175]

In this case, and the case of any expressive art, the technical schemata are not just a means for creating the world but expressing a world. Further examples which Dufrenne cites include the way in which Monet dissolves the hard stone cathedrals in an acid of light. Monet's style invites the viewer to consider the world in a new realm of light.[176] The viewer has never seen the world in this way before, this is why art creates rather than imitates, this is not the objective world as we know it but the world of the artist, which was hitherto unknown.

In this way, an authentic artist is able to imbue the work with a creative emotion; we cannot but sense a consciousness behind it: "To understand the

[171] Ibid p. 105-7
[172] Ibid p. 110
[173] Ibid p. 108
[174] Ibid p. 106
[175] Ibid p. 106
[176] Ibid p. 105

language of the work is always to understand someone."[177] This is why as we shall see Dufrenne asserts that 'worlds' are selected from the 'real' – they are selective worlds which speak to us of a certain vision that comes to us through style. Dufrenne has thoroughly humanised art, we cannot speak in abstract or impersonal terms about art, Dufrenne is clear: "The Gothic style is the style of the Gothic man…what is important is that he is always a man and that he invites me to be his counterpart."[178]

So we can see what Dufrenne means when he states that every human being radiates a world but the artist succeeds in opening up this world to others. There is a consciousness inhabiting and giving life to the worlds revealed through art. Biographies of the creator do not give us the world of the artist. In fact they can be a danger, diverting us from the work[179] and therefore the world of the aesthetic. The truth of the creator and of human beings at a primitive and universal level is in the work - the expression of it and the perception of it. A human being is revealed through the work, one who "does not exhibit or prostitute himself"[180] but expresses.

Neither does the artist represent or interpret the world. For Dufrenne what stimulates and interests the artist in mundane objects is not what has been created but what awaits creation. The world is already formed, the artist does not want to interpret it. The artist liberates the humblest things through expression.[181]

Another feature which distinguishes the artist from the artisan is use of materials. Artists' materials do not simply exist as matierials but as a support for the sensuous in its activity. When an artist puts his/her materials to work, they do not try to convince, for example like fake stone as ornament which tries to appear like stone. The artist's materials leave us free to attach ourselves to the appearance presented

[177] Ibid p. 109
[178] Ibid p. 110
[179] Ibid p. 111
[180] Ibid p. 133
[181] Ibid p. 316

before our eyes.[182] Art, then, is conducive to being true to that which is actually presented to us through our senses, which was discussed as a key aspect of mindfulness.

The artist must be capable of expression but it must be genuine expression. Like art that tries too hard, the artist who tries too hard fails:

> "To strive to express by all the devices at ones disposal is to place oneself outside of expression."[183]

When the artist lets the human come through his/her expression, it should be an organic and an ontological process. Dufrenne argues that for the artist, being and doing are the same thing[184] because any excessive striving would surely suggest an unnatural doing which would shut down the possibility of expression.

As we have seen a work that is truly expressive demands of us a new outlook. Works that are not expressive are merely pleasing at best. If there is no shift in consciousness on the part of the viewer the work has failed. This entails looking with new eyes, it is an expansive experience rather than restrictive or even uneventful. Remember that Dufrenne states that perception begins with art – if we look at the represented object (in the case of representational art) differently after viewing the aesthetic object, the art work has been successive.

Hard work also comes into the equation because the artist must be master of his materials and method in order to effect a style which is capable of expression and which can produce the affective in material terms so that others can participate. Art expresses the human, even when it expresses the inhuman (such as a landscape).

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[182] Ibid p. 303
[183] Ibid P. 328
[184] Ibid p. 500

Neither science nor praxis can achieve this.[185] In this way the artist contributes to the consiousness of meaning.[186]

Let us consider some further examples to clarify this. A Turner painting such as *Landscape with Distant River and Bay* expresses the mystery in all of us, unanswered questions, the nebulous, the unknown and unnameable. It represents that which we cannot quite grasp although we know we are moved by it. His *Burning of the Houses of Parliament* also brings up the same feeling. There is a searching loneliness which 'expresses the human' as Dufrenne says.

Figure 10 Turner – Landscape with distant River and Bay, oil on canvas, c. 1840-1850

[185] Ibid p. 549
[186] Ibid p. 551

Figure 11 Turner- The Burning of the Houses of Parliament, c. 1834-1835, water, gouache on paper

Truly a master of his materials, Turner brought oil and water colour to a new level. He manages to present an element of fear - and yet we want more. Many emotional states are expressed and although he is known as the painter of light, he is also the painter of darkness for he leaves us wondering.

Whereas Monet also used a technique whereby he blurred the edges, a technique based on a lack of clarity – an 'impression' indeed – it is altogether different from Turner. Monet's introduction of orange for example in his *Impression, Sunrise* lifts the emotional note; there is a feeling of hope and renewal. His pictures are not clear but not daunting or formidable the way that turner's are. His use of colour, materials and subject matter produce a completely different effect. In *Impression, Sunrise* there is a feeling of morning, a sunrise rather than sunset, a new beginning and a new day.

Figure 12 Monet, Impression, Sunrise, 1872, oil on canvas,

Constable's landscapes give us another take on similar scenes. These are settled worlds of peace and tranquillity, almost predictable in a comforting way, such as *Wivenhoe Park.* Although one does not often see human life in his paintings to a large degree, there are no feelings of isolation, rather a sense that the humans are there somewhere, we just cannot see them. There is a definite darkness to *Hadleigh Castle* but one which we can immediately grasp. It is not a mysterious darkness.

Figure 13 Constable, Wivenhoe Park, 1816, oil on canvas

Figure 14 Constable, Hadleigh Castle, 1829, oil on canvas

For Dufrenne, artists must be capable of uncovering something human in us, even if they recount nothing individual, it must "reveal a singular nuance of the human even if it is repeated from one artist to the next."[187] This human element is the

[187] Ibid p. 507

affective and it is art's function to activate the affective a priori and thus illuminate the real. This is the basis of Dufrenne's phenomenology of the aesthetic and will be explained in the proceeding sections. At this point, we will return to the affective in conjunction with reflection and the expression which liberates it.

3.5 Affectivity, Reflection and Expression

Now that we understand that art expresses a world to us, activating the affective (which is what makes it a quasi-subject), one may pose the question, was Tracey Emin not expressing her world? But the answer in the aesthetic sense is no. She *presented* her world to us, as easily as if she had told us she was miserable and that her life was in chaos. Expression in art involves a creative way of demonstrating a feeling, which draws us in and invites contemplation because it touches us in a way that simply stating something does not. *My Bed* in reality, conveys a definite feeling of neediness coming from the artist. One senses that she is looking for someone to rescue her and this type of neediness fosters the opposite reaction. One feels compelled to disengage. Whereas during an aesthetic experience, on the other hand, one is motivated to want more, even if the feeling is uncomfortable.

Equally, we could say that when an artist attempts to express something not of his/her experience of the world, it comes across immediately as artificial and inauthentic. This is why if one individual overtly copies another artist's style, the result is strained, wooden and awkward. The work is not based on lived experience. This is also what Dufrenne means when he speaks of trying too hard.

With regard to the viewer, the recognition of an emotion in a work of art evidently involves more than spectating. Feeling really means participating in

Dufrenne's terms – it is an indentification through participation.[188] This sounds very much like empathy – being able to recognise *and* respond and live specific emotions, through perception of self *and* the other. Empathy is an important concept which we will return to in relation to painting.

Dufrenne has stated several times, in various ways, that the subject must be capable of receiving the aesthetic object, must be intelligent enough, willing and interested. The incapable person even "degrades" the aesthetic experience and this can be due to selfishness and self-absorption.[189] One has the sense however, based on Dufrenne's discussion of the universal and the other, that he probably believes that all people are capable of having these affective categories realised, but some are disadvantaged through circumstances for various reasons. It is likely that he does not consider any person irredeemable.

Patently, the ultimate access to the work of art lies in feeling. Yet Dufrenne states that "no one really comes to grips with feeling who has not undergone the experience of reflection. The work of art provokes the intelligence as well."[190] Thus judgement and feeling are both involved: "It is a perpetual oscillation between critical attitude and feeling attitude."[191]

Now we can see why art must not only stimulate the body but must also address the mind. The aesthetic object must be present to the body, but this is even before feeling arises, for we are told, "The lived presence is the condition for feeling and not feeling itself."[192] The expressive offers up its affective meaning immediately but meaning is not truly grasped until the body harmonises with the sign, i.e. the body must be present to it from its very depths. Dufrenne gives the example of a

[188] Ibid p. 482
[189] Ibid p. 431
[190] Ibid p. 391
[191] Ibid p. 416
[192] Ibid p. 417

mother's smile – it is tenderness to our eyes only because we are bodily capable of wearing a smile.[193]

According to this view, aesthetic experience culminates in feeling but reflection cannot be eliminated. Aesthetic experience is located between the two and knowledge is made corporeal.[194] In order to reach this point perception must be intelligent, otherwise it will not be felt – this is what constitutes 'reflection.' For this reason, Dufrenne disputes the argument that the aesthetic belongs to the poor in intellect but open in heart. He sees this as simplistic. Thus far we can trace the steps of aesthetic experience:

expression -

perceived (body) -

felt -

reflected (mind) -

affective categories activated.

However a key component is yet to be discussed in more detail, that is, imagination. Perception is not wholly confined to the level of the pre-reflective, we move from the lived to the thought. The Imagination creates the liaison between the body and the mind. Even if it is rooted in the body, it makes us see.[195] Imagination in this context is both nature and mind, in that it has a foothold in both: "as nature it brings us into accord with nature, as mind it allows us to think nature."[196]

Imagination is always linked to perception, it continually enlarges the field of the real, "understanding thinks a world but imagination opens up a

[193] Ibid p. 41
[194] Ibid p. 424-25
[195] Ibid P. 345
[196] Ibid p. 353

world....imagination is reproductive, not productive."[197] This is a strange choice of words as 'reproductive' has connotations of copying, duplicating something, productive sounds more like making something, *producing* something new as opposed to *reproducing*.

This sentence may be ill thought out by Dufrenne but we can assume that he means 'reproductive' in the sense that that imagination depends on our having perceived things that already exist, or, at least composing the image from schemata of elements that we have perceived previously (for example, in the way that the image of a unicorn is composed from combining the schemata of a horse and a horn). The domain of the productive, in contrast, pertains to things that come into being, persist, and pass away, independently of whether we perceive them or not. He does qualify this by saying that imagining produces the *possibility* of the given. Imagination is distinguished from perception as the possible is distinguished from the given.[198]

His view is related to that of Merleau-Ponty who said that art makes the invisible visible, as imagination for Dufrenne does not furnish the content as perceived but ensures that something appears.This correlates with Crowther's view that imagination allows for "visual possibility,"[199] similarly, Dufrenne states that to imagine is "to open up the possible."[200]

Imagination allows aesthetic experience to happen because the subject must be sufficiently interested but not so much that s/he takes it to be real. A detachment is required by the body and senses. For example, a cloud on a canvas manifests only

[197] Ibid p. 357
[198] Ibid p. 357
[199] See P. Crowther (2013) *Phenomenologies of Art and Vision, A Post-Analytic Turn*, 2013 p 56
[200] Dufrenne, Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience, p. 357

itself, not the possibility of rain. Imagination, however, allows the possible to arise and one does not lose sight of the aesthetic object[201] or miss the aesthetic experience.

Now if we accept that the apotheosis of aesthetic experience lies in the liberation of affective a priori categories, we may still ask "to what end?" This is where Dufrenne introduces truth and what he means by this will now explained.

3.6 Truth in Art

As we have seen the affective a priori is manifested through the aesthetic object, be it a painting or a piece of music. Consequently, the work of art leads us to the *real* through the affective. In this way and by necessity, the real is illuminated through the world(s) of the aesthetic object.[202]

To understand Dufrenne's concept of truth in art we must begin with his assumption that humanity is never totally transparent to itself: "Men are continually blind to some aspect of men."[203] Following from this it is clear that something(s) need to be uncovered or as Dufrenne puts it, discovered, in order to reveal truth.

First however let us explain Dufrenne's notion of the real. When he says 'real', he is referring to "the real world."[204] Is the real world the objective world? Apparently not. The 'objective world' is conceived by science, which has a unity of understanding alone. The real on the other hand does not yet have a determinate signification and therefore can accept the signification which the aesthetic object confers upon it.[205]

Unlike the objective world:

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[201] Ibid p. 361
[202] Ibid p. 530-1
[203] Ibid p. 500
[204] Ibid p. 528
[205] Ibid p. 529

> "The real is pre-objective. It is manifested in the bruteness of fact, the constraining character of being-there, the opacity of the in-itself. The reality of the real is a presence which I encounter and to which I submit."[206]

It would seem that the 'real' is the lived world. This is akin to Merleau-Ponty's 'flesh' into which all things, including ourselves are interwoven. Both science and art can illuminate the real, but the important point is that the real does need to be illuminated. Otherwise the real only appears in boundary situations such as serious illness or death.[207] However even where presence of brute being guarantees reality, it does not provide a place for truth in Dufrenne's opinion. It is at this point that we come to how art plays a key role in revealing truth:

> "There is truth only through the discovery of a meaning which illuminates and transfigures the real and through the ability of a subjectivity to seize this meaning."[208]

Truth is not the appearance of the real but of a meaning which illuminates it and a human subject seems to be the catalyst - so we see why the aesthetic object needs perception. The real is always already there in its opacity and it is the body which experiences the real and instructs us. For Dufrenne tells us that even nonsensical aspects of the real make sense at the level of lived experience.

It seems that Dufrenne is saying that when the real is placed in the spotlight, because meaning has forced us to look at it, truth is revealed. The human subject must be present to perceive this – embodiment is at the centre of this discovery. The aesthetic object provides the meaning, opens the door and shines the light.

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[206] Ibid p. 530
[207] Ibid p. 530
[208] Ibid p. 531

This account by Dufrenne can be clarified by juxtaposing it along side two other philosophers' interpretations, namely Merleau-Ponty and Crowther. Merleau-Ponty asserts that art makes the invisible visible by revealing normally unnseen aspects of the world.[209] Crowther, similarly, argues that art reveals 'transperceptual space.'[210] Transperceptual space consists of visual details, possibilities, or associations that are there but not usually noticed explicitly.[211] Both of these accounts are examined in detail in chapter four on painting under the heading of 'Universality' because this aspect of Dufrenne's theory is specific to painting although he does not acknowledge this.

In Dufrenne's account, the aesthetic object (meaning) also reveals aspects of the world that may not have been seen otherwise. These aspects are termed the 'real' and the 'real' applies to real lived experience, hence a human subject is necessary because these real experiences must, by necessity, be lived by an embodied human subject and an embodied human subject can only perceive the meaning (art) that reveals these aspects.

The real should not be confused with 'a world' as it does not have the shape of a world.[212] It has an inexhaustible character and overflowing resevoir. The real contains unities of incongruities. Dufrenne uses the example of flowers blooming at the gates of death camps.[213] Such a contradiction cannot constitute a world, although it is part of the real. A world exists only where a person discovers and selects from the real certain significations. Truth is the selective creation or recomposition of

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[209] Merleau-Ponty 'Eye and Mind' in G. Johnson, *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, p. 127
[210] Crowther, *Phenomenologies of Art and Vision*, A Post-analytic Turn, p. 29-44
[211] Crowther uses this term in relation to abstract paintings but it can equally apply to painting in general.
[212] Dufrenne seems to be referring to a kind of earth-world relationship of which Heidegger spoke in *The Origins of the Work of Art*.
[213] Dufrenne, *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p. 531

meanings whose clues are provided by the real world but whose articulation makes the world exist in a *fuller* way. By this we mean that something is embodied in a form where its broader human significance is made manifest through how the artist makes it appear. The artist's style opens up a world in that it offers a strategy for perceiving things according to how another perceives or imagines things to be.

The aesthetic, then, can contain a world – the world of Kafka, of Picasso, Debussy. These worlds are revelations of an aspect of being, manifested through human perception, resulting in the liberation of categories of the affective a priori.[214] The real is the resevoir of possible worlds. The possible worlds cannot reach fruition without being illuminated, when this happens a world is formed and this is truth. In brief we could say that truth is this discovery, which this illumination allows to happen.

This becomes clearer with examples. Dufrenne refers to Van Gogh, of whom he says, his "touch is his tragic quality."[215] Through the technicalities of style Van Gogh utters a certain cry and Dufrenne quotes Artaud who says of Van Gogh, "evoking the abrupt and barbaric atmosphere of the most moving, emotional and impassioned Elizabethan drama."[216] Artaud goes on to say that Van Gogh succeeds in emotionalising nature and its objects in a way that no world renowned writer could surpass. These worlds are *shown* by art rather than described in words. In the case of Van Gogh, it is his brushstrokes and colours which express despair and love, not the *Bedroom* or the *Wheatfield* he depicts.[217] The subject of the work only appears through the feeling awakened by expression. Van Gogh's bedroom is not merely a room where someone lives:

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[214] Dufrenne tells us that "This meaning is true because it is the affective dimension through which the real may appear and not the reality of the real which a physical formula could capture." P. 516
[215] Ibid p. 106
[216] Ibid p. 106
[217] Ibid p. 137

> "It is a room haunted by Van Gogh's spirit and which in the light of day, urges us to sense the mystery of a night which the painter could not enter without being utterly overwhelmed."[218]

This is the world which Van Gogh reveals; a human world full of emotion but it is a piece of the world at large, i.e. the 'real'. This is why it is "the world of Van Gogh"- the world of this one human being, it is personal *and* universal, but always a selective part.

Figure 15 Van Gogh, Wheatfield with Crows, 1890, oil on canvas

With Kafka, Dufrenne shows us that multiple interpretations are true, the meaning revealed can be the search for unattainable truth, which would fulfil and justify the individual, or the anguish of a consumptive or the dereliction of the Jew.[219] The worlds revealed by Kafka are worlds of alienation, transformation, absurdity. For the reader, a relief washes over as these categories are freed, released from their dormancy, dare we say from the *subconscious*, though Dufrenne never suggested that the affective categories were subconscious, he certainly indicates that the concomitant feeling becomes *conscious* with the trigger of the aesthetic object. This,

[218] Ibid p. 227
[219] Ibid p. 321

of course can only occur where the reader is a *participating* reader. As we have seen, it is a task, requiring effort.

We could further conclude, given that Dufrenne states that truth *is not the appearance of the real but of a meaning which illuminates it,* that truth lies in the aesthetic object – for the aforementioned illuminating meaning is constituent of the aesthetic object. Hence truth is in the aesthetic object but is only realised when the aesthetic object is perceived in such a way that the real is revealed without obscurity. This opens up worlds which emerge from the resevoir of the real.

It must also be shown, however, that the worlds which are opened up by aesthetic experience bear upon the real, that the human world is an aspect of the real world and that therefore, "art has a cosmological function."[220] If we were to accept Malraux's account of the lone artist struggling to express only him/herself, this would not be possible. For in Malraux's account, art does not go beyond the artist. Art is personal, not universal, in this case, there is no cosmological function. According to Dufrenne, on the other hand, for reasons already discussed, the signification of the aesthetic object transcends the subjectivity of the individual artist who expresses him/herself – the singular is pregnant with the universal.[221]

Similarly if we believed that the spectator simply projects his/her feelings onto the aesthetic object, it would not be possible to show that worlds are opened up which bear upon the real. For the world revealed must not be a subjective world of an individual. It cannot simply be for the creator or a private experience for the viewer. It must be a universal world, a world full of possibility, thus bearing on the real. In fact, if this is not the case, art is not even true according to Dufrenne for he explains that art is true for two reasons:

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[220] Ibid p. 503
[221] Ibid p. 503

> "The signification of the aesthetic object transcends the subjectivity of the individual who expresses himself in it. This signification bears finally on a real world which is the locus of our judgment and decisions"[222]

These two reasons are almost the same and could have been combined into one. In any case, we have seen that Dufrenne considers the aesthetic experience a communal one. Self-consiousness is universal. This point is considered in more detail in chapter four under 'Consciousness.' By the same token the artist is expressing a universal world in which we all live. The affective a priori is not a private individual matter. Art has a cosmological function – that is, that the human world, which is revealed through art, is an aspect of the real world.[223] So this brings us back to the *revealing* function of art.

And yet how can we finally be sure that the affective a priori revealed through art bears on the real world? Dufrenne maintains that we can easily verify this: we can discover Bach in the innocent games of a child or the sparkling grace of a dancer. We can see that the joy which is released in these works bears on the real.[224] And so, in this example we know that Bach's world is true.[225] These verifications may seem flippant. They are phenomenological justifications, anecdotal rather than scientific, Dufrenne is assuming that we can all draw on lived experience and his statements will resonate and if we consider examples, we will see that this is true.

On a pre-reflective level, for example, we know the piercing pain and anguish evoked in Munch's *Scream* or feelings of the simple oneness with nature in

[222] Ibid p. 503
[223] Ibid p. 503
[224] Presumable when Dufrenne says "bears upon" his intended meaning is "is constituent of"
[225] Ibid p. 519

Monet's *Poppies in a Field* or the buzz and excitement of *Le Moulin de la Galette* by Renoir. These are things we find in the everyday world and we know that those feelings *do* exist in us in relation to the world. It is irrelevant whether one has experienced these feelings or not. They are not alien to the human condition and this is the pre-reflective. There is an affective a priori category which corresponds to the affectivity which is revealed through these paintings. The feelings emanating from these works of art are Dufrenne's evidence that they bear upon the real because as human beings we know them – even where we have not experienced them.

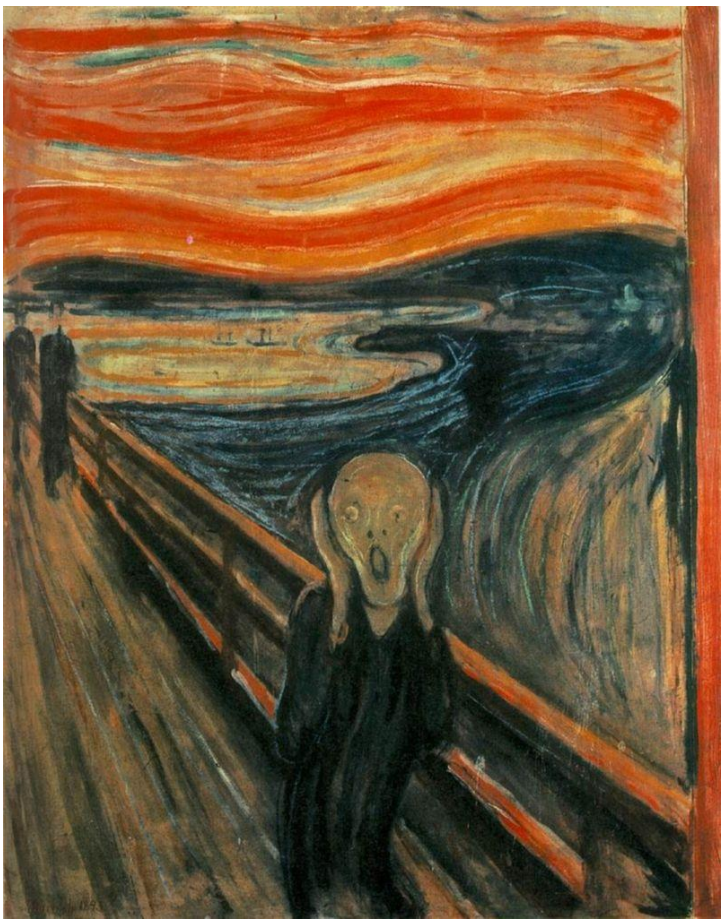

Figure 16 Munch, The Scream, 1893, oil, tempera, pastel and crayon on cardboard

Figure 17 Monet, Poppies, 1873, oil on canvas

Figure 18 Renoir La Moulin de la Galette, 1876, oil on canvas

3.7 Summary

To summarise, Dufrenne's aesthetics places embodiment at the centre. Perception, which is a key factor, is always incomplete. The aesthetic experience uncovers the truth and this reveals new perspectives on the self by activating feeling, i.e., the affective a priori. These feelings were dormant but become liberated through

aesthetic experience.

This calls for effort on the part of the artist and the viewer. The creation and appreciation of art is an experiential task which requires practice and hard work. Through this process, one is uprooted from one's comfort zone and the result is a new outlook.[226] This entails being present, focused and non-judgmental. In order to cultivate this, subjective experience must prevail over intellectual knowledge. We have designated this stance as *disinterested*.

Although this may sound like a personal journey, according to Dufrenne, this is a universal journey. Art uncovers something human in us but this is not individual. We are all delegates of humanity. An artist's style may be personal to him/her, but it manifests as the shared human world. The world of lived experience emerges from the work, regardless of the fact that an individual artist created it.

Ultimately, we could say that in contemplating the expressed world of an aesthetic object, we experience the fundamental bond between human subject and world, which belongs to being.[227] The parallels between Dufrenne's account of aesthetic ontogeny and mindfulness should be clear at this point.

In this chapter, painting has already furnished our most important examples of the aesthetic object. It is time, therefore, to focus on Dufrenne's explanation of the ontology of painting – making use of the concepts of gesture, style and universality, on which we have already touched.

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[226] Dufrenne *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p. 408

227 See Gustav Jorgen Pederson, Art, Empathy and Truth, on the Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience by Mikel Dufrenne. MA Thesis, Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas, University of Oslo 2013 pp 61-66 available online at https://www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/35951/PedersenxMaster.pdf?sequence=2

Chapter 4 Dufrenne's Theory of Painting – Space, Time and Consciousness

4.1 Introduction

Dufrenne's theory of painting is a logical continuation of his theory of the aesthetic. In his general theory of aesthetics, Dufrenne discusses notions which are specific to pictorial space although he does not apply them to it directly. His ideas on spatiality, temporality and movement would appear to be linked to consciousness and universality with particular relevance for painting. In addition, although Dufrenne does not state this, his comments on gesture and style can be applied more specifically to painting than the other arts. In order to illustrate this it is necessary to draw on the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty and Crowther. We will also refer to aspects of mindfulness throughout, however direct parallels will be examined in more detail in the chapter six.

First we will look at what Dufrenne considers most important in painting, namely space and time. It is through analysis of the difference between spatial arts and temporal arts that Dufrenne differentiates painting from the other art forms. Movement is a key concept in this discussion because Dufrenne argues that movement unites space and time. However it will be argued that it is consciousness, which unites space and time, and that Dufrenne has overlooked this, confusing movement with the role of consciousness.

Before presenting this argument it is necessary to be clear on how Dufrenne qualifies 'painting as an art,' as well as how he defines gesture, style, otherness and universality. These concepts will be explored before finally discussing consciousness, including imagination and the role of empathy, in more detail and finally summarising the ideas presented in this chapter.

4.2 Space, Time, and Movement

The preceding discussion on art in general applies to a painting as much as it does to any other aesthetic object. Nonetheless, Dufrenne does distinguish painting from the other arts in certain respects. He begins his reflections by highlighting temporality and spatiality in relation to pictorial space. Once this has been clarified, he proceeds to his analysis of painting through musical reference. Through this analogy he describes the structure of the pictorial object. He finally observes the nature of colour (vs. drawing) as a characteristic distinct to painting.

Dufrenne states that music has duration and thus belongs to temporality whereas a picture is an art of space.[228] A painting can manifest itself in a single viewing but a sonata or a novel reveal themselves successively - their contemplation requires a past and a future.[229] Although it seems self-evident, it is an important feature to highlight. A picture can be approached from any direction or angle, appreciated from top to bottom or vice versa. It has no beginning, middle or end. Music and other *temporal* arts unfold in time and painting manifests itself in space.[230]

Dufrenne notes, nevertheless, that the aesthetic object implies <u>both</u> space and time, even if in a given case it appears to be either spatial or temporal. Hence painting has a relationship to time, just as music has a relationship to space.[231] According to Crowther, Dufrenne's theory of painting is one that emphasizes the reciprocity of space and time in the pictorial object.[232]

This is relevant because the human subject involves both spatiality and temporality. Dufrenne invokes and develops Heidegger's notion of *Dasein* in this

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[228] M. Dufrenne *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience,* Northwestern University Press 1973 p. 275
[229] Ibid p. 364
[230] Ibid p. 241
[231] Ibid p 241
[232] See Paul Crowther, Phenomenologies of Art and Vision, A Post-Analytic Turn, Bloomsbury 2013 pp. 137-160

discussion. Da (there) and sein (being) = Dasein, referring to existence, infers our relation to space and time. Temporality is the being of the subject. Time is the dimension of human depth in that our experience of the past and childhood is what affects us most deeply and the future is what exalts us.[233] The work of art also contains an 'inner sense' which is time.[234] It enters into history and this is the source of its subjectivity.

Where temporality is constitutive of being, space on the other hand, is the experience of externality. Dufrenne is critical of Heidegger for interpreting Dasein in purely temporal terms.[235] Dufrenne, on the other hand, attempts to show that space and time are equally primordial. Dufrenne maintains that *space* is objective; it is where we meet the other and the object. He invokes Merleau-Ponty here, who understood that space posits the given as given. Although the body sustains a fundamental relation to all things by opening itself up to them, we can say that the subject constitutes itself by first opposing that which it will open itself up to. The opposing is a kind of preparing to receive.[236]

According to Dufrenne, Heidegger analysed this brilliantly but wrongly attributed it to time and not space. Space is what is designated in this opening up – space as the aspect of otherness. *Da* in these terms signifies an upsurge of an absolute presence. This is a presence where a subject enters into relation with an object and as an object among others.[237]

In other words, we meet the other in space as well as we meeting ourselves

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[233] Dufrenne, *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, p. 243. It may be recalled that Dufrenne said that the present is what allows us to penetrate the aesthetic object, through the body remaining close to the object in that moment. When he states that the past is what affects us most deeply here one wonders where that leaves the present.
[234] Ibid p 243 'inner sense' is, of course, Kant's term for time
[235] Ibid p. 232
[236] Ibid p. 244
[237] Ibid p. 244

through time. In which case, Da, meaning 'there' relates to the other, the object - and ultimately the self as object - in space; and sein, meaning 'being' relates to the self – as subject - in time.

Dufrenne tells us that the solidarity of space and time is expressed through movement:

> "Space is described on the basis of time and this connection is established in the interior of an object. Consequently movement can be apprehended in the world only because movement is first the act of a subject who manifests himself by positing the possibility of a world. The subject-object relation is pre-figured, at the very core of the subject, by the relation of space and time. And movement, which exists in the subject before appearing in the object, expresses this relation in terms of the object itself."[238]

Movement here alludes to the affective a priori especially – where our own sense of the unity of self-consciousness (a temporal process that engages with experienced objects) is answered by the resonance in how the object coheres as a unity. Whilst this felt affinity is basic to experience as such, Dufrenne holds that the reciprocal relation between time and space is manifested most clearly in the aesthetic object. The structural schemata are built up through "the temporalisation of space and the spatialisation of time."[239] This is a connective activity, which enables awareness of the ontological correlation of self and the object – as Crowther states, they are mutually dependent on each other's duration.[240]

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[238] Ibid p. 247
[239] Ibid p. 247
[240] Crowther, *Phenomenologies of Art and Vision*, pp. 137-160

Dufrenne emphasises that the solidarity of temporality and spatiality in the *subject* leads us to comprehend this reciprocal relationship in the *object*. Through this we discover the aesthetic object's own space and time. This is internal to the object and involves a relation of the self with itself. The relationship of the aesthetic object to itself is a unique one. The reason for this is that it is a unity which is emergent from creative work by the artist, and whose achievement involves also the one who perceives the work. It is a complex unity of different identities acting upon and modifying each other.

In the case of painting, although it is an art of space, it also has an *internal* temporality. According to Crowther, Dufrenne sees four different levels of temporality at work in the picture. However, they are not of equal importance. They involve:

1. Time that is involved with the specific subject-matter represented (i.e. whether it is presented as moving, or as motionless)
2. An 'objective time' consisting of both the actual historical period or date in which the painting was created, and the picture's physical existence as a material object enduring through time
3. The time involved in perceptual/ocular scanning of the painting
4. A time or 'duration' which is internal to the picture qua created

Only number 3 and 4 above are of particular significance in Dufrenne's theory and 4 is "the distinctive temporality of pictorial art."[241]

The reciprocal relationship between temporality and spatiality is related to consciousness of the self, as discussed above with reference to Dasein. These complicated schemata are built up in the painting through its history, as a witness to

[241] Ibid p 137-160

gesture and the trajectory of movement in its creation. This is what that makes it a quasi subject capable of expressing a world,[242] that is to say that the painting, qua imbued with embodied gesture, is capable of expression.

In relation to the self having a relation with the self, we need to consider three and four above. When the subject is perceiving and scanning the painting, this is an act of the self i.e. the self is relating to the self scanning. This brings to mind apperception, which was discussed in chapter one in relation to mindfulness. The duration that is internal to the painting involves a recollection of the gestural work of that artist. This process is happening through the self via the imagination. Obviously the artist and the artwork are the catalyst for this experience, nevertheless in this case the self relates to the self in the act of imagining.

Once we understand the significance of space, time and movement in the aesthetic object we can discuss the structure of the painting. As an aesthetic object, a painting does not have a straightforward relation to movement. Dufrenne considers painting a difficult art to understand and therefore savour. It is the most abstract of the arts because it is limited to two dimensions which limits movement and thus rejects the means of persuasion which are employed by the other plastic arts, which set the spectator to motion and suggests movement.[243] In this way, a painting is 'inert' and we are generally inert before inert objects.[244]

Its planar nature requires considerable imagination from the viewer to bring it to life. In contrast when viewing a sculpture, the subject can walk around it, take in its three-dimensional spatiality. Music involves vibration, which is its inherent movement and induces movement in the listener. Theatre involves almost continuous movement between stage sets and actors. Any form of reading necessitates

[242] Dufrenne, *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* pp. 247-8
[243] Ibid p. 278
[244] Ibid p. 278

movement of the eyes, neck, head and hands, regardless of the content. Only in the case of the painting is it possible for both subject and object to be perfectly still in the act of viewing. Of course this state of stillness would not be recommended because ocular scanning is required to *appreciate* a painting, but do all viewers realise this? If a viewer looks at a painting without using the eye muscles and travelling across the canvas, it is likely that they will get very little out of the experience.

In this respect a painting presents an object so external to the spectator that it often leads him/her to nothing according to Dufrenne. The fact that it invites him to become immobile is an obstacle. To understand what Dufrenne means by the painting leading the viewer to 'nothing,' consider the accessibility of music. Almost everyone listens to music, regardless of age, gender, socioeconomic status or any other orientation. It is clearly accessible. Books, equally, have universal appeal.

Performance art, such as theatre productions and film draw in the spectator with their entertainment value. The spectator is engaged at the outset in these cases as there is some kind of narrative which enables this engagement.

Work is required, on the other hand, in order to understand or even enjoy paintings. Many people do not frequent art galleries because if they did, they would enter the gallery, stare at the paintings and wonder what the point is. There is no doubt that the viewer needs to make a conscious effort in order to reap the benefits of appreciating paintings. Often the spectator is, indeed, led to nothing.

This is overcome by more than one fact according to Dufrenne. The look wanders over the painting and never comes to a complete stop (really Dufrenne should clarify that the look *should* wander over the painting, some spectators, unaware of this, may abandon the exercise after a single look), this is no. 3 above -

the time involved in perpetual scanning. It is by this movement of the look that movement of the work appears. This movement allows the object to penetrate our intimacy. But this is not enough. We need to be affected more deeply because, as Dufrenne has pointed out,we are generally inert before inert objects.[245]

The way in which we become affected more deeply is through the transference of the movement of the creator to the spectator (this is no. 4 above - the internal temporality of the work). The movement is immanent in the object itself and manifests through lines and colours: "The plastic element vibrates as if it retains something of the movement of the hand which placed it on the canvas."[246] This statement is of great importance because it introduces the gestural element of painting which is an intrinsic part of its value as an art form, distinct from other art forms.

Dufrenne considers this to be especially the case in modern painting which does not seek to hide its brush strokes and therefore retains evidence of the work such as erasures etc. The work is a witness to the movement of its process. It remembers duration. It is important to note that it is not the movement of the *represented* object which is at issue (that movement would be no. 1 above- the time that is involved with the subject matter)

A picture which represents running figures or a storm can be inert and silent. For example, Van gogh's stationary olive trees with their twisted roots contain more movement than Gericault's horses.[247] For genuine movement is not simply spatial displacement. It is self-movement. It is an unfolding of meaning. Movement strives towards the other but is constitutive of the self.[248]

[245] Ibid p. 278
[246] Ibid p. 279
[247] Ibid p. 279
[248] Ibid p. 281

The arts of time, such as music have an overt duration. Perception in this case is sequential. In the case of paintings, perception will take place in a single look rather than following the flow of duration.[249] Dufrenne has, unfortunately, not explored this statement of his own making because perception of painting '*in a single look'* is the crux of the problem. The painting may be 'perceived' in a single look but not *appreciated*. It should be highlighted that much ocular scanning and *many looks* are what is required for the appreciation of a painting in order to bring it to life. Dufrenne does not seize this point as emphatically as he ought, in fact he does not highlight it at all.

Mindfulness, as discussed in chapter one, elucidates this point. The *mindful* appreciation of paintings is what Dufrenne strives to describe but he does not have the means. As we have seen, mindfulness, involves attending to the particularity of the object, its *total quiddity*. In order for a viewer *not* to be led to nothing, they must engage in attentive exploration and not a 'single look.' Every detail takes on meaning.

When a painting is perceived in a single look, its category is registered, and it is registered as something of such and such a kind – it is perceived as 'a painting.' We have seen from the a priori that this is how we make sense of the world: a single look at a painting results in perception apprising us – "I have seen this before, this is a painting." However if we speak of *total quiddity*, we are not only recognising the type of thing attended to, but also the uniqueness of this particular example of it and the moment of experience that it grants. We now attend to its unique features rather than simply its classification.

[249] Ibid p. 275

Now the experience that it grants involves the self relating to the self. This is because – as well as attending to the object's sensuous particularity - mindfulness involves also attending to the particularity of our experience of it as an individual feeling. It becomes the object of our attention and this is linked to reflection. During the process of scanning which was listed as number three in the four levels of temporality internal to a painting, what takes place is both *mindfulness* in its objective and subjective aspects and it is part of the process of appreciation of the painting.

On these terms, mindfulness and Dufrenne's insights into the nature of painting have reciprocal illuminating power. The notion of mindfulness is extended, by the way our attention to painting's duration takes in surprising levels of total quiddity – a plenitude of presence that embraces coming-to-be as well as what is present in immediate physical terms. Without Dufrenne's theory, however, we might not have even thought to regard painting in such terms in the first place. And, even if we did, the reflective knowledge provided by Dufrenne's theory is something that enriches our approach – it provides us with an enhanced principle of orientation. Later on, (in chapter 6.3) we shall clarify in detail, the ways in which mindfulness and aesthetic appreciation are different from each other but are able to influence one another's respective modes of attentiveness.

For Dufrenne, then, what is at issue is the painting's internal duration. Again it must be emphasised that the pictorial work is a *witness* to its duration. But the nature of this bearing witness is many layered. Dufrenne suggests that the eye-movement of the spectator (i.e. the scanning of the picture) invokes the movement of the creator (i.e. the gesture involved in the painting's creation). This implies that it is the spectator who activates the movement involved in the painting's internal duration

as an imagined process, insofar as we cannot perceive the actual sequence of gestures in the exact temporal order in which they were originally painted.

Crowther summarises Dufrenne's position:

> "We engage with painting in the deepest sense when our perceptual scanning of the immobile finished object is continued, imaginatively, through evoking the work's gestural and compositional origins and progression towards its final state. Whereas the representation of some object or event in time renders its subject immobile, our perception of the pictorial object does the opposite."[250]

Although earlier, Dufrenne said that the viewer is led to nothing with paintings and this seems a disadvantage, Dufrenne, ironically, goes on to say that movement of meaning in the temporal arts is masked by the sensuous movement of the aesthetic object – and this is not the case in paintings. In arts fated to immobility, in contrast, we can more easily discern the work's impatience to be heard; its impulsion toward meaning is not masked but laid bare. This means that in the arts of a sequential nature the dictatorial temporality interferes with its intrinsic meaning, silencing the voice of the work. Ultimately, therefore, he seems to be saying that painting is more transparent than the temporal arts, such as music, which is "masked" by its own overt duration. This overt duration too readily suggests movement and so does not allow the subject the freedom to discover it. There is an imaginative freedom in being able to appreciate a painting from any direction and in any order one chooses. Instead of duration being consumed in the temporally linear experience of it, it becomes a potential object of contemplation.

[250] P.Crowther, *Phenomenologies of Art and Vision*, p. 310

We can infer, accordingly, that whereas overt duration[251] in a work of art limits imagination in the spectator, in a spatial art such as a painting, the experience of duration is more open. As a natural consequence, the spectator is at liberty to use his/her imagination to perceive the work in a way that is not as prescriptive as in the temporal arts.

Temporality is secret in painting *qua* art of space but resides in the internal movement by which the work unifies itself. It seems, then, that whether temporality is concealed or not, it is not absent as it exists in the structure of the aesthetic object. All artifacts are by definition made – which means they are they outcome of a process of making. Painting refers us back to this process. Temporality must exist in order for the aesthetic object to function because movement between time and space is an essential aspect in the manifestation of aesthetic experience. We have seen this with Dufrenne's criticism of Heidegger, 'being there' implies both subject and meeting of subject and object, temporality and spatial reference.

Dufrenne resorts to musical references in order to assist him in his explanation of how this is achieved in paintings. The same structural categories of harmony, rhythm and melody can be discovered in all art according to Dufrenne.[252] Harmony is the principle of movement in painting.[253] Rhythm belongs to drawing – drawing represents the plan.[254] Melody is the music of the picture, it is the subject.

[251] This term 'duration' originally derives from Bergson, who asserted that the idea of a homogenous and measurable time is an artificial concept, formed by the idea of the intrusion of space into the realm of pure duration. He believed that time eluded science, once one attempts to measure a moment, it is gone, former states can never recur. (See Henri Bergson (1950) *Time and Free Will, an Essay on the immediate data of consciousness,* trans by F.L. Pogson, orig pub. 1910, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd) It should be noted that Dufrenne is not a Bergsonian, and wishes to speak of the process of duration, not in purely physical terms, but as spiritually infused and existentially charged.
[252] Dufrenne *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p. 248
[253] Ibid p. 291
[254] Ibid p. 292 and 295

Melody is the expression of the total aesthetic object.[255] This might be best understand in an example.

Consider Hans Hofmann's *Pompeii*. This is a very dynamic painting. On the basis of Dufrenne's approach this dynamism arises from harmony because, in this work, different geometrical shapes are juxtaposed against organic abstract shapes, creating tension through the discordancy. This brings about movement because of the different harmonies involved, i.e. the geometrical shapes are blocks of colour and the other shapes appear like brushstrokes. These incongruities cause the picture to vibrate. This encompasses the colours – which cause the push-pull effect.

Figure 19 Hofmann, Pompeii, 1959, oil on canvas

[255] Ibid p. 299

The rhythm of the picture comes from the outlines; if the colour was removed, we would still have a 'plan.' For Dufrenne, the melody is the overall effect and in the case of *Pompeii* this is an energetic and emotional explosion and yet it is a controlled explosion, due to the geometric shapes which ground the picture. Hofmann said that "space is energy"[256] and this is the so-called melody in *Pompeii.*

In pictorial works straight lines and curves balance off each other's sense of velocity and colours advance and recede in different cadences, depending on whether they are warm or cold, pure or mixed. Although Dufrenne contends that rhythm belongs to drawing, he also describes this velocity as rhythm and tells us that this rhythm is internalised in the structure of the sensuous. In this regard, a painting is endowed with the 'potential' of temporality.[257] Harmony was described as the movement, but the rhythm of the composition and the colour evidently also suggest movement.

Dufrenne contrasts the structure of the aesthetic object, which is described above, with "inert things" – such things "do not deserve the attention of a look because they are only what they are and are not animated by a relation of the self with the self. This sort of duration indicates a movement of the object."[258] This movement is towards meaning. With inert things, there is no call for scanning or imagining as discussed earlier in relation to the aesthetic object. Hence, although he

[256] Helmut Friedel, Tina Dickey and Hans Hoffman, *Hans Hofmann: Wunder Des Rhythmus und Schönheit Des Raumes : [exhibition at the Städtische Galerie Im Lenbachaus in Munich, from 23 April to 29 June 1997, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, from 12 September to 2 November 199*, Hudson Hills, 1998

[257] Ibid p. 310
[258] Ibid p. 310

employed the term in relation to paintings, it seems they are not intrinsically 'inert' after all.

Dufrenne also refers to colour as harmonic.[259] For we are told that every picture is built on a harmony of colours and as we have seen with Hofmann's painting, it is true that this is an integral part of the movement, which Dufrenne called harmony. Sometimes these colours haunt the artist to such an extent that we can recognise his/her canvas. This goes back to the notion of the style of the artist and of course this is all-important because style and gesture are inherent in the aesthetic object as opposed to the 'inert objects' and 'objects of use' to which Dufrenne contrasts them.

Rhythm organises space and furnishes the element of repetition which is indispensible to movement, so although Dufrenne said that rhythm was the plan of the picture it is more than that. Although this may not seem to apply to paintings but to decoration, Dufrenne assures us that "what is repeated is the fundamental form of the work in its subdivisions. The work unfolds by making its unique formula explicit and not by indefinitely repeating the same design through mechanical addition, as in decorative art."[260] It is difficult to discern what Dufrenne means without examples, possibly he is saying that we see the same style repeated throughout the painting, for example in Waterhouse's *Lady of Shalott*, the gloomy reeds in the foreground echo the landscape in the background, the darkness of the Lady's eyes are also found in the dark waters and the trees, creating an overall sense of sorrow and mystery.

[259] Ibid p. 289
[260] Ibid p. 296

Figure 20 Waterhouse, The Lady of Shalott, 1888, oil on canvas

It is certainly the case that each painting has its own unique 'formula' that furnishes an overall effect but it is not clear if Dufrenne is referring to a particular atmosphere, as with *The Lady of Shalott*, would we call this rhythm? It is unfortunate that Dufrenne feels he must use musical reference to describe all the art forms as it possibly does not translate as effectively as he may have wished and lack of examples on his part does not serve us well.

This rhythm of repetition would be easier to discern in a Klimt painting, for example *The Tree of Life*, but this is almost too easy due to its ornate quality and does not help us to identify it in other paintings because most others do not contain so much decorative repetition. A decorative Klimt painting, of course differs from

decorative wallpaper in that the latter exists not to be noticed. Decorations in mosques, on the other hand are there to there to be seen. Formulaic, religiously functionally art is unlike 'decoration' which sits in the background. Hindu yantras quite intentionally contain repetition as a tool to harness perception, but it seems that Dufrenne was not considering such examples.

Figure 21 Klimt, The Tree of Life, 1909, oil on canvas

Dufrenne reminds us that music, unlike painting, does not contain a subject which neither represents nor imitates reality. Because paintings are usually somewhat representational we approach them as we would the represented object – looking for the missing bit that we cannot see. Dufrenne invokes Sartre who stated that he perceives more than he can see[261] i.e. our sense of things always involves our understanding of their whole and not just immediately given aspects. This introduces the imagination, because it is the imagination that completes the picture.[262] Dufrenne uses this notion as a springboard to articulate his stance on modern vs classical

[261] J.P Sartre, (1966) *The Psychology of Imagination*, trans. B. Frechtman, NY: Washington Square Press p. 154 quoted in Dufrenne p. 275

[262] This notion may seem at odds with mindful looking which would encourage seeing what is really there and not completing it with a pre-conceived image of the mind. But using the imagination knowingly as in aesthetic experience is not the same as misperceiving something in reality unwittingly. Dufrenne himself makes the point that we do not take art to be real, as in expecting rain when we see a painting of a cloud.

painting. He favours the former for explicit reasons. This brings us to Dufrenne's views on what qualifies painting as an art.

4.3 Painting as an Art

In order for painting to qualify as art Dufrenne has unreservedly stated that art must be a will to creation and not imitation.[263] It is not surprising then, that he champions modern art, which generally makes a point of being more abstract. In abstract art, the subject matter is open to question and ambiguity. This leaves room for the imagination to complete the picture.

Elaine de Kooning's abstract painting, *Bull Fight*, for example brings to mind many things – a forest, a flower garden, human figures, animal figures, storms, the tropics… one could get lost in the possibilities forever. Dufrenne's point, then, would be that modern art provides more possibilities, but this point is debatable, for there has been much disagreement over the purpose of a simple pair of shoes which Van Gogh painted.[264] Nonetheless, for Dufrenne, there is no need make straighforward representations of external objects – this would just be mimesis and have nothing to do with creation or art.

[263] Dufrenne p. 287
[264] See P. Crowther, *Phenomenologies of Art and Vision*, chapter 3, 'Truth in Art, Heidgger against Contextualism'

Figure 22 Elaine De Kooning, Bullfight, 1959, oil on canvas

When Dufrenne indicates that the imagination can finish the picture, he uses it as an opportunity to say that:

> "The men of the Renaissance worried over imitating depth to no avail. In so far as we look for an image of a real object in the pictorial object, we perceive it without difficulty. Indeed the painter should react against this facility on the part of the spectator. If the painter wants to turn us away from the represented object in order to return us to the pictorial object, he must discourage and paralyze our tendency to perceive perspective and pitilessly lead us back to two dimensions. We know that modern painters…renounce trompe l'oeil effects and traditional perspective which presents the illusion of depth."[265]

Dufrenne elaborates this point to highlight his view that at all costs art must not be seen to imitate. This raises questions which we will need to return to later.

[265] Ibid p. 275-278

He seems to share Merleau-Ponty's view that colour and line in painting should not be used to create illusion but to compose a visual reality that draws attention to how things become visible. For Merleau-Ponty, line does not imitate the visible.[266] What these views share in common is that linear perspective, in contrast, is a static, articifial view on the world – and worse - is utilising a technique to imitate. Dufrenne is highly critical of linear perspective. He considers it illusionistic and mimetic, in which case creativitiy is lacking.

This argument continues for Dufrenne as he links the debate between drawing and colour to the problem of confusing the pictorial object with the represented object. Drawing was given primacy in Cartesian times when it was considered to be a more readable sign and more readily represented the object being depicted.[267] Dufrenne tells us that "the apostles of drawing have always had the support of rationalistic thought."[268] This is because drawing defines primary qualities like shape and outline and is more closely aligned with imitation in this sense. Colour is associated with mood and atmosphere, it could be considered more abstract and spiritual in nature.

Dufrenne concurs with Cezanne, who reacted against this and stated in relation to seeing that "when color realizes its proper richness, form is fulfilled."[269] With this insight, painting is emancipated and Dufrenne feels that colour needs to be given a privileged position. Dufrenne associates colour with the modern painters who have freed themselves from strict representation.

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[266] Maurice Merleau-Ponty *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphons Lingis Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968, p 257

[267] This is debatable in any case as how could a sunset be clearly depticted without colour?

[268] Dufrenne, *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, p. 285

[269] Cited by Dufrenne *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience,* p. 284

On the point of colour, Dufrenne considers the introduction of oil paint to have been revolutionary. Unlike fresco which predated oil paintings, oil allows the painter to become conscious of his/her activity. Artists had to work too quickly with quick drying plaster and water colours. In addition water colours are limited in their spectrum of colour.[270] Dufrenne proffers the surprising opinion that the quick drying medium resulted in a more finished piece – which is closer to representation. In this way oil paint frees the artist from the imitation.

Whether one agrees with Dufrenne or not on this point, it is beyond dispute that oil painting was a breakthrough for painters and subsequent viewers and Dufrenne is one of the few philosophers who devotes time to pictorial media in this way. Any new discovery brings new horizons. For Dufrenne, championing oil is an opportunity to champion colour, "Colour is no longer an ephemeral and weightless matter, a sort of sensuous quality which the eye barely grasps"[271]

He also links oil paints to embodiment : "It is now embodied in a think untucous matter to which our hands can relate as easily as our eyes…The brushstroke, the sign of a project which unites the human body with the body of noble matter, becomes an intrinsic element of painting." One would think that this, at least, would be specific to painting alone among the arts but the correlation with music continues: "In the same way the composer details the universe of sounds with this harmonic science, but also with the entire aid of his body in accord with the piano."[272]

Dufrenne concludes on painting by adding that pictorial language is a cultural history. Colour for the painter can only exist through the progressive humanization

[270] Ibid p. 287
[271] Ibid p. 288
[272] Ibid p. 288

of the sensuous. This is not particular to painting, however. He makes the general statement that aesthetic creation and perception are possible only in a cultural milieu.

As with the other arts, when we perceive a painting, we are never alone. There is a connivance with the object and a meeting of the artist and all the others who built up the tradition which the artist works from.[273] The spectator also stands with the community of spectators. This is an aspect of art which would appear to especially apply to painting. Despite the fact that Dufrenne does not single out painting in the discussion of otherness, we will highlight how this can be done in the following section utilising the concepts of gesture and style.

4.4 Gesture, Style and 'Otherness'

Although Dufrenne talks of the community of spectators in relation to all the arts, the special relevance for painting, qua art of space, is something which he does not address despite the fact that it is he, himself, who points out that painting is an art of space. Dufrenne is at pains to tell us that Heidegger missed the point about Dasein – not recognising that we meet the other in space. In painting this is connected to gesture and style, but before discussing these concepts at length it is necessary to revisit the notion of spatiality, specifically its importance in relation to painting in this context.

According to Dufrenne, space is an aspect of otherness; it is what is designated in the movement of opening up. It represents that which is always outside as an elsewhere, as opposed to the *here*, which we are. In space we turn to something which we are not and open up to it.[274] Furthermore, he tells us that:

[273] Ibid p. 289
[274] Ibid p. 244

> "Self-consiousness can take place only insofar as the self withdraws and creates a distance. Is this not the function of originary space, namely, to place us before a being which we are not or, more precisely, to render this situation of being-before possible?"[275]

Dufrenne goes on later to describe painting as an art of space but does not discuss this very important aspect in any detail which links painting, more so than other art forms, to self-consciousness or otherness. Nevertheless, according to his description of spatialised arts, it could be argued that painting has a special place among the arts as a meeting point where the other is received and consciousness is expanded. We will develop Dufrenne's theory in this direction using his own ideas but also expand these ideas in a way which he did not. In order to do this it is necessary to make use of the aesthetics of Crowther and Merleau-Ponty.

Firstly let us examine in more detail Dufrenne's notion of movement, space and temporality. It will be recalled that Dufrenne considers painting an art of space and that space and time are united through movement. According to Dufrenne, movement acts as a delegate for time. That means that "movement is the side of space which is turned toward time, and it is the means by which space manifests time."[276] The reason that this has significance for painting is because pictures become temporalised when we become aware of the paint as trajectories of movement.[277]

This point is worth emphasising: Dufrenne distinguishes between movement and the trajectory of movement. Movement leaves a wake which attests to its occurrence in space and this is the movement of paintings. Quoting Bergson on this issue, Dufrenne reminds us that from an ontological viewpoint, it is not what moves

[275] Ibid p. 245
[276] Ibid p. 277
[277] Ibid pp. 277-8

but the result of movement.[278] Above all, there must be a consciousness which is capapble of deciphering the painting: "breaking the spell which holds movement captive."[279] We have already seen that this liberation requires a spectator.

The principle reason why the trajectory of movement is of such great importance in paintings is because it embodies the gestural work of the artist. This is pertinent because gesture gives us the style of the artist and it is style which manifests a way of being-in-the-world. This is one of the unique aspects of paintings which we will return to later.

Dufrenne states that movement manifests the creative gesture in the work and that this is not only a movement *from*, but a movement *towards.* There is movement from creative gesture whose impetus it retains and there is movement toward signification. Dufrenne summarises that movement strives towards the other but is constitutive of the self.[280]

This means that movement in the subject is related to consciousness of the self but consciousness of the self is incomplete until it encounters the external world, including objects and others. At this point the subject makes sense of the self in comparison and contrast to things which the subject is not. Hence movement begins with the subject but must by necessity continue externally – increasing both self-consciousness and consciousness with each external encounter. Of course, these external encounters must be marked by aspects of mindfulness in order to develop self-consciousness.

Indeed, it is in this area that the perfect complementarity of mindfulness and Dufrenne's aesthetics of painting is clearly shown. Movement in a painting, unlike

[278] Ibid p 277
[279] Ibid p. 278
[280] Ibid pp. 280-281

movement in the temporal arts is not about putting the work together in a sequential format but reaching a state of unity in space:

> "It (movement) directs itself not toward a final chord of resolution, as in the temporal arts, but toward the state of accord which composes the work and presides over its unity."[281]

Now that Dufrenne has highlighted the importance of movement and we can see the integral relationship between the trajectory of movement and gesture, we will discuss the significance of gesture and style in painting in more detail. This will illuminate the uniqueness of painting among the arts.

Painting is an embodied, autogaphic gesture. Painting is imbued with human expression because it is the work of a gestural process. From a phenomenological perspective we could say that gesture expresses a way of being in the world. When gesture works through a physical medium - such as paint, onto a surface -such as canvas, there is a reciprocal interaction between the creator and the viewer. This interaction is born of movement and perception.

Now, anything that is done by hand, even ordinary painted walls have this autographic aspect. But it need not be unique authorship. If a wall needs painting anybody in principle can do it, and the resulting work will not invite us to attend to it. Artistic painting in contrast, solicits our attention because of the quality of its autographic gesture – its distinctive style of having been brought into being. We become aware of its uniqueness of appearance and of the uniqueness of the process through which it was created. Here, the mindfulness that has to be achieved through

[281] Ibid p 281

contemplative discipline in many situations, is actively encouraged by how the object engages us.

Interestingly, once the work is finished it is ontologically freed from its creator and takes on a life of its own in the real world. Like any independent entity, it has the ability to engage other independent entities. In this way gesture through painting can expand being by increasing engagement with the world.

Gesture begins with embodiment. Everything that is known about the world is known through an embodied perspective.[282] Merleau-Ponty quotes Valéry, who said that it is by lending his/her body to the world that the artist changes the world into paintings. To understand this we must go back to the working body, which intertwines vision and movement.[283]

Merleau-Ponty defends the uppermost position of vision. He prizes the gesture of the body over intellectualism and concludes that what animates the painter is not the expression of opinions; what is of value is "that instant when his vision becomes gesture, when, in Cézanne's words, he "thinks in painting."[284] Painting is a product of the interaction between visual perception and bodily gesture. Both are concerned with finding our way around an environment and inhabiting a world. This is where the concept of style is introduced because we all inhabit the world with a particular 'style.' When a person's style of being is recognized in reflective terms – when we think about it and value it, then it is regarded mindfully.

As we have just seen, the artist expresses his/her style through bodily gesture resulting in the finished work, which then becomes discontinuous from the creator

[282] Maurice Merleau-Ponty 'Eye and Mind' in Galen. Johnson, *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern Press, 1993 p. 123
[283] Ibid, pp. 123-4
[284] Ibid, p 139

and part of the public domain.[285] Style is a product of the interaction between the artist's body and the world.[286]

Painting absorbs meaning from the world rather than trying to make sense of it and gesture gives us something which speech cannot, it is free from rules of usage and ethics.[287] This means that a work of art, unlike philosophical or political thought, contains better than ideas, i.e. *matrices of ideas* i.e. the possibilities are endless. The painting dwells and makes us dwell in a world we do not have the key to.[288] In this regard, the action of culture allows us to dwell in the lives of others.[289]

Crowther argues that in everyday life continuity of gesture is consumed in the tasks carried out; drawing and painting preserve it in the finished work.[290] He says that the viewer comes to inhabit the style of another human being, increasing perspectives on life. As Crowther also states:

> "Style allows us to inhabit the things we imagine, and make them into an expression of freedom. Through all these factors, imagination is fundamental to our existence as individuals. It is not some luxury 'add-on' cognitive capacity, but rather one through which we live."[291]

This 'freedom' to which Crowther refers draws on all aspects of the artist's personal history and makes it accessible in a shareable form. So when we appreciate style in the painting we are becoming mindful of how the object of experience is not only subjectively accessible, but is an accomplishment of the embodied subject – one

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[285] P. Crowther, *Drawing and Painting as Symbolic Forms, Liberating the Image,* unpublished manuscript 2015 p. 50
[286] See M. Merleau-Ponty in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, G. Johnson, Northwestern University Press 1993
[287] Ibid, p 89
[288] Merleau-Ponty *Eye and Mind* p 114
[289] Ibid, p 112
[290] Crowther, *Drawing and Painting as Symbolic Forms, Liberating the Image,* 2015 p 110
[291] Ibid p 46

that further develops the creator's unique individuality by allowing us to perceive it and imagine it rather than just recognize it as a fact. The complex mindful relation between explicit awareness of the different tiers of the object/subject relation is shown with great lucidity through the art of painting. The freedom of visual possibility is what making of pictures is founded on.[292]

Paintings *qua* physically made particular artifacts, differ from literature, music, conceptual and installation art. All those arts involve deliberation and gestures of one sort of another, but these features tend be concealed. In painting they are much more accessible. They are emblems of gesture (instead of things that just happen to involve gesture in the process of being created). Real creativity in drawing and painting, in other words, centres not only on what the final visual outcome is, but also the physical and experiential means by which it is realized.[293] This harkens back to Dufrenne's differentiation between movement and the trajectory of movement. The trajectory is witness to a physical process. The exploration, deliberation and choices inhabit the trajectories and can only be the product of a gestural process by an embodied subject in possession of a style.

Regarding sculpture, it is true that it is also a physically made artifact. Although it clearly embodies gesture, it differs from painting in that painting is based purely on vision. This combined with style and gesture gives us a *view* on the world. Sculpture has a tactile element; it is about *feeling* ones way around an environment rather than seeing. Both seeing and tactility are involved in both art forms, but painting gives us the perspective of another embodied being qua based on vision.

[292] Ibid, p 46-47
[293] Ibid. p 118-119

This is not hierarchical; rather we are simply discussing what gives painting its unique significance. Sculptural works, like all art forms have their own uniqueness, but we are not discussing them here.

> Drawing and painting transform how reality appears, creating aesthetic space.[294] The artist's style facilitates an aesthetic empathy embodying a special psychological identification with this way of seeing the visual world and of representing it. With paintings, then, the selection of the content and the style in which it is rendered allow us to share the artist's vision to some degree. He or she offers a way of seeing – of interpreting and evaluating the visible world.[295] Similarly, Merleau-Ponty asserted that "when a painting is successful, it will have united these separate lives, it will no longer exist in only one of them."[296]

Because paintings in particular have this unifying aspect - for reasons relating to gesture and style - Dufrenne's points on universality and otherness in his general phenomenological aesthetics apply more specifically to painting than the other arts. Now that we have clarified the special place of gesture and style in paintings, we will turn to examine *universality* in Dufrenne's aesthetics more closely. The points examined below do not fall into Dufrenne's theory of painting but his general theory of aesthetics, however the contention is that they relate to painting specifically.

4.5 Universality

[294] Ibid p 120
[295] Ibid, p 160
[296] M. Merleau-Ponty, 'Cezanne's Doubt' in G. Johnson, *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, pp 67-70

As we have seen, Dufrenne's aesthetics indicate a position of prominence to the universal. Every human being radiates a world[297] and the artist opens up a world up to others. We know that Dufrenne asserts that the most authentic subjectivity is that which rejoins the universal[298] and that it is through an artist's style that s/he expresses a universal world of humanity which is received by the indivdual only as a delegate of the human race.

Dufrenne has stated that through the technical aspects of style the artist presents a way of *seeing* to the viewer. 'Seeing' has special implications for painting qua visual art, although he does not acknowledge this. Dufrenne, himself, it will be recalled, uses paintings as examples to illustrate this point: the paintings of Caravaggio and Picasso which open up human worlds through technique and ultimately style.

Dufrenne makes a number of such references to the visual. For example, that the aesthetic object brings us face to face with a new world by uprooting us from those habits which are the embodiment of the superficial self. This demands a new '<u>outlook</u>.'[299] Use of the word 'outlook' again suggests a way of seeing things, which is particular to painting. Where Dufrenne stated that we believe that art repeats what we have *seen* because we can identify what art represents but in fact we have not *seen* any of these things before, this again seems very much to apply to paintings. For music and literature do not represents things that we have *seen*. Again, sculptural works can, but visual represenations usually refer to a painting.

In this way, paintings provide us with the 'mindful perspective' discussed earlier. Although we have acknowledged that mindfulness is non-hierarchical and the most mundane things can be become an object of mindful experience, it is also

[297] Dufrenne, *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p. 177
[298] Ibid p. 111
[299] Ibid p. 408

true that some things have a central place in human experience and provide a more favourable principle of orientation to put us in the mindful frame of mind. Paintings are a case in point. Just as Dufrenne asserts that art reveals, we could say that paintings re-vivify existing ways of seeing by presenting things in a new perspective in the same way that the levels of consciousness involved in mindfulness emerge.

Let us focus on Dufrenne's use of the term *outlook.* For Dufrenne, humanity is never totally transparent to itself. Through the aesthetic experience, a revealing takes place and this brings about a new outlook; that is to say, we see in a more complete way. Remember that he stated: "Men are continually blind to some aspect of men."[300] 'Blind' refers to the visual aspect of art which reveals the truth, i.e. a more complete picture. This 'more complete picture' constitutes an increasing number of 'worlds' are opened upon the 'real.' As such we are experiencing more aspects of the real.

The arts, in general, can open up new ways of thinking and experiencing but visual details which are opened up are the domain of pictorial space. In other words, a new *vision* applies to painting. It is necessary here to refer again to Crowther and Merleau-Ponty, who recognise this feature of pictorial space and developed this notion.

Merleau-Ponty tells us that painting gives visible extension to what profane vision *believes* to be invisible.[301] The use of the word "invisible" is actually a misnomer because what he means is invisible *to us – the profane viewer.* For he goes onto to say that the painter brings our awareness to actually seeing the world.[302] Hence painting provides a pause and points to the visual world, to aspects that are

[300] Ibid p. 500
[301] Merleau-Ponty, 'Eye and Mind' in G.A. Johnson, *Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader* p. 127 (italics are mine)
[302] Ibid p. 127

already there but we did not notice them. Similarly, Hans Hofmann said: "To be able to sense the invisible and be able to create it – this is art."[303] Being able to create this aspect that was hitherto 'invisible' is critical because then spectators can participate in the publically accessible artifact and share in the revelation. But how does one manage to sense the invisible in the first place? We could answer this by saying "being artistic," but this demands further explanation, which is quite simply: by attending mindfully to the world.

Vischer said that the artist lives in a constant state of amazement.[304] This is a very interesting choice of words and a very apt description. This means that the artist approaches the world as a child does – constantly with fresh eyes, seeing things as if they were continually new, and they are new if new things are seen each time, or old things are seen in a new way. In Buddhism, there is a differentiation between 'fabricated perception' and 'actual perception.' In fabricated perception, we fabricate around what we are perceiving. We start labelling and trying to think through and make sense of that which is being perceived, in this case one becomes lost in what one thinks one already knows - not the actual experience. For example, with a particular sound (that's a bird) or an object (that's a table).

'Actual' perception is the more mindful perception and is different from fabricated perception because one hears the sound or sees the object without thinking about what it is and is absorbed in the actual experience rather than what it might signify.

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[303] Helmut Friedel, Tina Dickey and Hans Hoffman, *Hans Hofmann: Wunder Des Rhythmus und Schönheit Des Raumes : [exhibition at the Städtische Galerie Im Lenbachaus in Munich, from 23 April to 29 June 1997, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, from 12 September to 2 November 199*, Hudson Hills, 1998, p. 7

[304] Robert Vischer, Harrry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, *Empathy, Form and Space, Problems in German Aesthetics*, Getty Centre Publication, 1994

. In fabricated perception, it is not just the experience of the immediately given and known but perception that is contextualized by more general attitudes concerned with *what we think we know* and it is this stagnancy of the familiar which prevents us from living in a 'constant state of amazement.' As we have seen with the a priori, this is a natural way for human beings to make sense of the world, but it must be tempered by the mindful attitude, which is also the disinterested attitude, so we can receive things not just as categories but as fresh experiences. Otherwise we cannot be open to the unexpected, we have closed off the unexpected and everything has a box, nothing is new and nothing is amazing. When we do this, we stop paying attention to detail because we assume that we know what's in the detail. We already have the bigger picture and think that is enough.

If we go through life ignoring much of it because it is easier to attend to the most obvious features, we exist in a constricted state. Entering into a more expanded state where we can actually see more, and hence experience more, provides the opportunity for greater consciousness and greater ability to focus. Therefore being becomes more complete because we can begin to engage with what (else) is really there. For these reasons, living in a state of awareness is not a luxury but a necessity to a life fully lived. It is clear that aesthetic awareness and the mindful state intersect at the juncture of perception.

In order to paint, painters have to slow down, pause and observe; they find details in the world that other people may have overlooked. It is an interaction between what is observed on the outside and how it is perceived and then processed by the embodied artist on the inside. This is with the aid of imagination and the artist's particular perspective on the world. The result is then once again externalised and presented to the world as a shared experience.

Similarly, Dufrenne maintains that the artist is not simply working from within and painting for the individual. The painter must always draw inspiration externally as well as internally and the artwork is a product of both the individual and all others who share the world. This summarises the universality of Dufrenne's aesthetics.

The other who is a member of the artist's audience is also universally connected to the artist and the artwork by virtue of sharing the world with the creator – all artworks it will be recalled bear the hallmark of human experience. There are certainly aspects of the spectator in the painting, which may be what draws him/her in. All human beings are of a shared species with shared capacities, living in a shared world. We saw with the a priori that this is a uniquely human capacity, uniting individuals with regard to how they receive the world. Dufrenne has not actually dealt with the audience as other, but the audience has the ability to receive the artwork qua humanly created artifact.

It should be noted that this applies equally to abstract art as well as representational because an abstract artist may be fuelled by the imagination but s/he must have had to have engaged with the world and *seen* so that the imagination is fed by the environment. Imagination cannot work in a vacuum and hence the significance of the visual in painting, regardless of the subject matter.

The painter extracts what *seems to be invisible* by going out into the world and not just looking but participating. Klee referred to this when he said that the trees were talking to him. He was a participant in their world. The painter then shows us, and our being is expanded through heightened awareness, i.e. we see things that we did not see before.

It is clear how a painter may be affected by this expanded state of awareness through intense engagement with the world as a prerequisite to creation, but the viewer who chooses to pause at a painting and look at what has been set aside for contemplation will also witness the normally hidden aspects of the visible. This attitude becomes part of the layperson just as it does the practiced painter.

As an example of this, I have a personal experience of being with a friend who was viewing drawings of the Sheefry Mountains in Connemara by artist Ailish Crean. These are large, imposing, charcoal drawings containing details and contours rendered by tonal work. These mountains were actually on my friend's way home and she had passed them many times. After she became enthralled in appreciating the drawings, she said, "They're amazing, I'm going to stop on my way home and look at them again." This is why Dufrenne says perception begins with art. In this case, my friend had not benefitted from the magnitude and natural beauty of the mountains, they were just part of the comings and goings of the day but the artist brought out aspects not discernible to the busy motorist driving past them. This truly brings the viewer into greater engagement with her surroundings, not just the beauty but many details which induce reflection of the natural world. This is also an example of art bringing mindfulness into the individual's life.

Figure 23 Crean, Sheefry Mountains, 2015, charcoal on paper

The concept of how paintings play a special role in revealing the world is further developed by Crowther. According to Crowther the phenomenal field is composed of the immediately perceptible together with factors that are "invisible" in the sense of not being presently attended to, or not being available to perception under normal circumstances. Merleau-Ponty discussed how paintings make the 'invisible' 'visible',[305] however Crowther clarifies this notion.

He highlights the way in which paintings call attention to aspects of the visible world which we do not normally notice. In this sense, these aspects are not "invisible" as Merleau-Ponty says, but simply not attended to in everyday life. For example, normally when we see a mountain we do so without noticing the relationships of light, texture and colour, which constitute its visual appearance. However the painter composes his image in a way that brings our awareness to these features.[306]

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[305] Merleau-Ponty 'Eye and Mind' in G. Johnson, *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, p. 127

[306] See Paul Crowther, *Art and Embodiment, From Aesthetics to Self-Consiousness,* Oxford University Press, 1993

Crowther uses the term ‘transperceptual space” to describe these, usually, hidden aspects of space, which paintings bring our attention to. Although Crowther coined this phrase in relation to abstract paintings, it has implications for painting in general. He describes it thus:

“It is the space of those unnoticed or hidden details that subtend immediate appearance, and of our sense of possibilities and transformations that might emerge to perception if we could change our current spatial and temporal position….It is only exceptionally that we attend to transperceptual space –usually in cases where recognition is difficult and a configuration has to be scrutinised closely, or acted upon.”[307]

Transperceptual space consists of visual details, possibilities, or associations that are there but not usually noticed explicitly. Our relation to the transperceptual hinges on cognitive habituation. We are inclined, generally to attend only to the salient features of things.[308] When we pay greater attention we experience greater engagement with the world. The creation and appreciation of paintings play a role in this by heightening our awareness to visual details.

Having referred to Merleau-Ponty and Crowther, we can see that Dufrenne deals with this same concept – i.e. that aesthetic experience constitutes a revealing - but he does not tie it specifically to painting. This argument is particularly relevant to painting and that there is an express relationship between painting and consciousness, which is realized through the revealing that occurs in aesthetic experience. In the following section we will explain how this ‘revealing’, painting and consciousness are integrally related.

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[307] Paul Crowther, (2013) *Phenomenologies of Art and Vision, A Post-analytic Turn,* London: Bloomsbury p. 35-36
[308] Ibid p. 36

4.6 Consciousness

Dufrenne's thesis is peppered with references to consciousness without actually developing a theory of how aesthetics relates to consciousness. In a discussion about 'depth,' which he ultimately links to consciousness, he gives us insight into how he might define consciousness. This is a starting point for the expansion his theory:

> "To possess depth means to situate oneself on a certain level where one becomes sensitive throughout one's being, where a person collects himself together and commits himself. Having such depth can best be understood in contrast with those ways of being indifferent, detached, or superficial when the subject is not really himself. Such a subject lives at the whim of the moment, projectless and without memory…To possess depth means to reject the idea of being a thing, which is always external to itself and is dispersed and practically dismembered in the passing of time. It means being capable of an inner life, collecting oneself within oneself and acquiring an intimacy. As Pradines remarks, echoes of all of this are contained in the word "consciousness," which connotes the emergence of a for-itself, not as the power of negation but as a power of affirmation."[309]

In a word, all of this refers to *awareness.* Extents of awareness are what is at issue here. To have depth therefore and to be conscious involves not just 'being there' but being 'committed' 'Projectless and 'without memory' refers to a complete lack of participation and lack of reflection. For without a memory one cannot learn from an experience, one goes through life robotically performing tasks, 'at the whim of the moment' but not being present to the moment which would have long lasting

[309] Dufrenne, *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* 403-4

effects. 'Collecting oneself with oneself' echoes the self relating to the self which Dufrenne has discussed and the apperception discussed earlier.

This means looking at details on the mountains, as in the previous example, and seeing them, not just passing them by in haste on the way to somewhere else. This connotes engaging with the world of which we are a part, feeling an ecological bond. This entails showing things to ourselves as we would to our children, when we want to help them see and understand something for the first time. In this way we constantly update our information, thought process and reflective abilities.

Dufrenne tells us that aesthetic feeling has depth not only because it unifies us but also because it opens us up. Having depth means being available and receptive: "In fact, to lay myself open is not merely to be conscious of something but to associate myself with it."[310] This is where the relationship with the mountains comes in and how we become part of it, or more accurately, become aware of how we are part of it, the invisible bond which we did not see before becomes visible. In this case, we can barely distinguish mindfulness from the aesthetic experience.

From this we mean that consciousness is not only linked to being open but also to participating in the space where the other emerges and ultimately the self: "Consciousness of the world can take place only insofar as the self withdraws and creates a distance."[311] As we have seen Dufrenne feels that this is the function of originary space – to be face to face with otherness; that which we are not, only then can the self emerge.

Withdrawing and *creating a distance* means we can only understand who and what we are through comparison and contrast with other human beings.[312] This is

[310] Ibid p. 405
[311] Ibid p 245
[312] See Paul Crowther, *How Pictures Complete us, The Beautiful, the Divine and the Sublime,* (in press at time of writing) 2015

self-consciousness. In order to do this, we must stand back and experience otherness, then we can return to ourselves and make sense of what we find. This happens in space.

Dufrenne states that any voyage through space, including the drawing of a straight line establishes self-consciousness.[313] Of course this is an oversimplification. As we travel through space - drawing, encountering others and objects - self-consciousness is enhanced but not necessarily 'established'. There are certain encounters in space which are more conducive to the establishment of self-consciousness than others. The creation and appreciation of paintings is one such example.

Any exercise that heightens awareness, and this aspect of painting has already been discussed, encourages self-consciousness. For we may indeed voyage through space but in a mindless fashion unless we have awareness, which ultimately peaks interest in furthering consciousness. In this case very little is 'established' except movement from A to B. The voyage must be a mindful one.

The following statement from Evans, which was referred to in chapter one, warrants further review in the present discussion:

> ''The capacity to think of oneself as located in space, and tracing a continuous path through it, is necessarily involved in the capacity to conceive the phenomena one encounters as independent of one's perception of them – to conceive the world as something one "comes across". It follows that the capacity for at least some primitive self-ascriptions – self-ascriptions of position, orientation, and change of position and orientation and hence the conception of oneself as one

[313] Dufrenne *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p. 246

> object amongst others, occupying one place amongst others, are interdependent with thought about the objective world itself." [314]

Evans also highlights that as we move through space the 'I' emerges through recognising one's changes of position in relation to objects. Knowledge of objects and of the self are reciprocally correlated, and movement through space is what enables the correlation. In this way one learns objectivity. It should be immediately noted, however, that Evans uses the words 'think' and 'thought' in relation to this idea. For the ability to reflect on this experience is the key to self-consciousness developing out of it. At the same time, we must live the experience mindfully in order to reflect to an optimal degree.

Of course, all human being beings have the ability to think to some extent but if we are talking about 'establishing' self-consciousness, as opposed to simply recognising, on some deep primal or subconscious level, that we are separate beings in a vast universe which somehow binds us all together, an *intervention* which increases awareness (i.e. the ability to reflect consciously) is on order. This is where painting becomes an intervention.

These aspects of space integrate the notion of the other/universality, consciousness/self-consciousness. Although Dufrenne referred to this, Crowther develops it and relates it directly to aesthetic experience – particularly pictorial space - in a more conclusive way, wherein he utilizes the all-important notion of style.

Crowther explains how seeing a picture discloses things and how this happens through an aesthetic empathy, which he describes thus:

[314] G. Evans *Varieties of Reference*, Clarendon Press, 1982, p.176

> "A mode of identification with the artist's way of seeing and representing visual possibilities of space-occupancy. As social beings, the ways in which other people find meaning in the world is something fascinating. Of course, a person might simply tell us what aspects of the spatial world interest them or move them, or how we ought to see them, but no matter how detailed the description, we cannot literally see as they do. However, in the case of pictorial art, the selection of content and the style in which it is rendered allow us to share the artist's vision to some degree at the level of space itself. He or she offers a way of seeing – of interpreting and evaluating the visible world – that we can share or turn away from as we please." [315]

In this respect, we are not only imaginatively absorbed by the artist's style we also learn things about our own possibilities and limitations. Aesthetic empathy through pictures, therefore, facilitates psychological completion in personal as well as social terms.[316] Artwork reflects our mode of embodied inherence in the world. In the creation and reception of art, we are able to enjoy a free belonging to the world.[317] However we do not do this in a vacuum, but alongside other embodied beings.

Paintings allow us to imaginatively identify with the artists struggle at the level of empathy, or to appropriate the work in another way in which it is possible for us to view being.[318] 'Species-identity' is not only to be conscious of oneself but also conscious of being part of a shared species - to see oneself as part of a broader

[315] See Paul Crowther, *How Pictures Complete us, The Beautiful, the Divine and the Sublime,* (in press at time of writing) 2016 p. 13
[316] Ibid p 14
[317] Crowther, *Art and Embodiment* p. 7
[318] Ibid p 99

phenomenal field.[319] This involves recognizing what others are, giving and receiving recognition. Empathy functions at this level.

It could be said that one can recognize otherness without being empathic, but there can be no empathy without first recognizing the other. This is, undoubtedly, a step – a prerequisite - in the empathic process. Although Dufrenne opens this arena for further discussion, he does not venture into it.

Kernel to his theory is that paintings do not have an overt duration, in contrast to music for instance. It has already been noted that this allows the spectator to employ their own imagination in ways that are not possible in the temporal arts, which have a prescribed duration. We have seen that this allows the viewer to scan a painting from any direction in order to appreciate it. This clearly involves work on the part of the viewer that involves the imagination. The development of the imagination is undoubtedly related to empathy, because to contemplate and entertain alternative perspectives *is* to imagine alternative perspectives. It has to be imagined because we cannot be two places at the same time in the same body so only the imagination can take us there. Painting forces one to develop imagination – through visual possibility already discussed. There is a freedom involved in this unlike recognising circumstances through cognition.

The ability to imagine oneself in someone else's shoes is an essential component to empathy. Often when individuals cannot empathise with the plight of others it is because they have no imagination and therefore no capacity to do so, even if they are not unsympathetic or dispassionate. Some people may see refugees dying on boats and cannot imagine what it is like to be them, others can imagine it vividly. The latter will most certainly empathise more. In turn empathy is inextricably and

[319] Ibid p 151

reciprocally linked to self-consciousness because as we have seen consciousness of others brings us into greater consciousness of ourselves.

Temporality is a key part of this discussion. As Crowther states, for Dufrenne, temporality is constituted by self-consciousness and this makes sense when we consider that a self-conscious being "becomes conscious of itself through its connective cognitive movements in apprehending, and acting upon, spatial items and states of affairs."[320]

It will be recalled that Dufrenne states that movement unites space and time but space and time are already interwoven irrespective of movement for the following reasons: If we cannot separate our consciousness of ourselves from our consciousness of others and if consciousness of ourselves is related to time and consciousness of others is related to space, as Dufrenne clearly asserts, then space and time are already interwoven by *consciousness*.

Movement may happen in space through time as Dufrenne describes but we do not need movement for time to take place in space. Time is taking place already, in any case, whether there is movement per se or not. In fact, if time occurs in space, which it does, and if time does not stop, which it does not, time *is* movement in space. Or we could even say that all movement happens through time. Perhaps this is the gist of Dufrenne's argument but he arrives at it through slightly different semantics.

Nevertheless there is no need to speak about movement uniting space and temporality. It is consciousness that "spatialises time and temporalises space" And it is mindfulness which evolves both consciousness and self-consciousness. Indeed, Dufrenne, himself, states:

[320] Crowther. *Phenomenologies of Art and Vision*, p. 296

> "On the foundation of this coexistence of both an originary temporality and an originary spatiality in the subject, and moving now from the phenomenological noetic level, we can understand the solidarity of space and time in the object as it is revealed and established by consciousness."[321]

Of course, when Dufrenne states that it is "revealed and established by consciousness," what he means is that a conscious subject must witness the work in order for the work to become animated. To take this further, what this means is that the observer must be mindful, for the subject is clearly 'conscious' if s/he is viewing the work, but is that enough, is s/he participating? Dufrenne is clear that an aesthetic object needs a witness otherwise it is not activated. However we must take issue with this word 'witness.' It has a nice romantic ring in this context but it is not accurate. A witness is an observer, an on-looker. This sentient but passive presence is not sufficient to 'reveal the solidarity of space and time in the object' which leads to the transformative effects of the aesthetic object.

We have described the (objective) mindful experience as one which is characterised by complete immersion in the object which breaks through our conventional mode of perception. Dufrenne, himself, has pointed out that in relation to the aesthetic object in general, much work is involved in the establishment of the subject-object relationship and that with painting, in particular, all the more work is needed because temporality and movement are 'secret', or we could say more discrete, in the arts of space – rendering them more resistant to penetrate. Although once this penetration takes place the rewards are increasingly enriching because arts of space are not masked by an overt duration and the imagination flourishes. To

[321] Dufrenne, *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p. 245

conclude, the point is a 'mindful collaborator' is what Dufrenne's theory calls for, not a mere 'witness.'

In any case, because paintings open us up to being through the ways which have been discussed, including increasing our engagement with the world, others and ourselves, increasing perspectives and attention to experience – via gesture and vision- we can say that paintings play a significant role in consciousness through mindful attentive awareness. Paintings provide an optimum principle of orientation – cultivating mindful engagement at both a spatial and temporal level.

Temporality of mindfulness happens on two levels: firstly through sustained attention to an object over time and secondly, as will be discussed in more detail in the chapter 6.2.4, the retentive ability of the mind, which is of vital importance because it is what allows for future recollection of the present moment[322] and this allows the subject to make sense of and reflect on the experience, which enables growth from the experience and increased conscious awareness.

If we accept that pictorial space is related to consciousness, and if we accept that consciousness unites space and time, paintings have a temporal dimension not expressly acknowledged by Dufrenne. This is because paintings are arts of space that play a role in consciousness and consciousness happens through time – through both sustained and retentive attention. That is not to say that Dufrenne's other points on temporality in painting that have been reviewed are invalid, but he overlooks the role of consciousness – both how paintings have a marked relationship with it and how it unifies space and time.

Finally on the relationship between painting, temporality and consciousness we could say that painting, qua art of space, is one where duration is not marked by

[322] George Dreyfus 'Is Mindfulness Present-Centered and Nonjudgmental? A Discussion of the Cognitive Dimensions of Mindfulness' *Contemporary Buddhism,* 12 (1) 2011pp. 41-54, this reference p. 8

an overt, prescribed chronological progression through time therefore in order to savour it, an active sustained attention in the present moment is called for. Let us contrast painting to the 'arts of time' in order to clarify this point. Consider a piece of music, a book or a play which has a distinct beginning, middle and end, the spectator is 'carried' though the piece, with or without effort on the part of the spectator. This means that the participant need not employ sustained attention to receive it because the natural chronology of the piece 'passively' transports the subject from A to B.

In the case of an art of space such as painting, it is impossible to journey through it without actively employing attentive abilities, as the piece does not do this for the subject. This relates to the discussion of the imagination in the case of painting, which must be activated to a higher degree for the same reasons. In other words, in this context, although painting may be seen as an art of space, whose internal temporality is covert, it is this very feature which induces in the viewer active participation, i.e. where temporality is passive, the viewer must be active.

4.7 Summary

Dufrenne devotes little time to painting as a special category, however through a review of aspects of his own theory of aesthetics and with the aid of Crowther's account of pictorial space, Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of painting as well as mindfulness theory, we have attempted to show that there is more to say on paintings as an entity in their own right among the arts. In relation to Dufrenne's aesthetics there is room to develop the notions of style, gesture, temporality, spatiality and exhaust the possibilities of how these relate to consciousness and universality.

If paintings are an art of space, they play a special role in relation to the other, if space is where we encounter the other and we develop our self-

consciousness as we increasing encounter the other. Gesture, as the result of physical embodiment, is the hallmark of painting. This brings us in touch with individual style. The gestural and spatial nature of painting is one of the features that intrinsically links it to universality and the development of self-consciousness. And finally, temporality, being internal and covert in painting contributes to the very same thing by encouraging active engagement.

Chapter 5 Critical Evaluation

5.1 Introduction

Dufrenne's description of how the aesthetic experience functions as a channel for affective a priori categories is generally clear and cohesive. One is reminded of Merleau-Ponty, who tells us that art opens us up to the world, but does not go as far as Dufrenne in attempting to explain how this happens. Dufrenne echoes Merleau-Ponty with his views on embodiment, the self in relation to the other and how art is instrumental in the journey from opacity to openness. As we have seen these views also echo mindfulness theory. His arguments are generally clear but a limited number are undeveloped and some of his ideas are not effectively articulated.

Critical evaluation of some of Dufrenne's less than clear points reveal disparity between aesthetics and mindfulness at times, indeed Dufrenne never set out to discuss paintings or aesthetics in relation to mindfulness and his theory of consciousness in relation to aesthetics remains incomplete. However introduction of the concept of mindfulness illustrates how we can actually develop Dufrenne's theory in directions which he chose not to but are still in keeping with his thought-process and can even assist him to complete his explanations. Dufrenne's phenomenology of aesthetic experience emphasises being present, focused and non-judgmental.[323] A theory of art which consciously encompasses these elements and deals more explicitly with the notion of self-consciousness emerges from Dufrenne's ideas. Below we will investigate points of confusion in Dufrenne's theory, and where possible we will use the concept of mindfulness to elaborate and clarify where Dufrenne did not.

[323] Dufrenne recommends that the subject be accomplice rather than judge, See *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973 p. 467

In the following chapter, we will first explore Dufrenne's ideas on the subject/object and subject/world relationship. We will highlight areas where Dufrenne has not been clear and at times contradictory: firstly, we will attempt to clarify to what extent Dufrenne considers the human subject to be 'of the world' or independent from it. He seems to contradict himself on this point. Secondly, the subject/world relationship with regard to the nature of expression will be examined because Dufrenne vacillates on just how much the subject is constitutive of the world and vice versa. This is related to the previous point but in this section we will specifically look at how this has an effect on subjective expression.

The proceeding section deals with aesthetic affectivity because Dufrenne states that art moves us to feeling but not emotion and this notion is questioned. There is the possibility of clarifying his argument with reference to mindfulness. Finally the nature of aesthetic perception in Dufrenne's view requires analysis because he appears to be inconsistent.

In the next section we will hone in more specifically on painting. As we know, Dufrenne favours modern art over classical art. This section explores three areas where Dufrenne's bias in this context has prevented him from seeing the bigger picture. We will begin with his disdain for linear perspective. In this context, Crowther's ideas on this subject will be juxtaposed with those of Dufrenne to provide an alternative standpoint.

Following on from this, we will discuss Dufrenne's opinion on the subject matter of paintings. For Dufrenne, assigning status to subject matter gives precedence to the represented object over the aesthetic object and for Dufrenne, this implies imitation rather than art. We refute his stance including examples to show where he is misguided. Finally in this section we will look at Dufrenne's ideas on

colour, line and material with examples, specifically oil paint in contrast to fresco. Oil, being a more modern material, is hailed by Dufrenne, as is colour over line.

5.2 Subject/Object Relationship

Dufrenne's views on the relationship between subject and world occasionally call for clarification. We have seen from Dufrenne's aesthetics that the subject/object relationship as Dufrenne describes it is only possible because "no one can extract himself from this world so long as he is in it, the pre-reflective relationship with the world is always already given.[324] He also states that man's being present to the world signifies the impossibility of being an objective observer[325] and these statements clearly echo the Buddhist tradition which contextualises mindfulness in an interwoven unity.

Having equated Dufrenne's ideas with those of Buddhist notions of consciousness, it is confounding to find that Dufrenne also states: "I am both subject and object which distinguishes me radically from objects, I am in the world without being of it."[326] This last statement seems to place him at odds with a belief in a unified position. Not being of the world is quite a different stance from that which he otherwise seemed to espouse.

And yet Dufrenne quoted Guerolt who said, "in reality there is only a single universe of substances, all of which including corporeal substances possess memory and life."[327] The idea of a single substance, with which Dufrenne agrees does not suggest that one part is *not of* another part. For Dufrenne elaborates Guerolt's notion by saying:

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[324] Ibid p. 220
[325] M. Dufrenne *The Notion of the A Priori*, trans Edward S. Casey, Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009 p. 207
[326] Ibid p. 187
[327] Ibid p. 221

> "Being spontaneous and capable of expression, every substance – as distinguished from aggregates, which have no objective reality – is a subject in a certain sense. Everything within the harmonious universe is promoted to the status of a subject."[328]

Here he seems to be speaking of a unified whole, not independent parts. So does Dufrenne contradict himself? Does he seem to echo the notion of a unified integrated universe at times and refute it at others? Interestingly, he quoted Merleau-Ponty when he said that "no one can extract himself from the world so long as he is in it and the pre-reflective relationship with the world is already given"[329] and this clearly resonates with a belief in a unified whole

Perhaps he is saying that the relationship between subject and world, subject and object, is one based on reciprocity but does not go as far as suggesting that it is an interwoven one, of the same flesh. Although referring to Merleau-Ponty, he further states:

> "Merleau-Ponty restores meaning to Gestalt psychology: the form is not the figure of the object immediately given as an articulated and meaningful totality but the totality that the subject forms with the object, in which one can only artificially distinguish between subject and object"[330]

He goes onto say that "perception is precisely this close bond between object and subject."[331] Take note of the word <u>bond</u>. If something is of the same flesh, it does not need a bond because it is already *one.* Interestingly, he then tells us that this bond allows the object to be lived by the subject in the irreducible experience of an

[328] Ibid pp. 221-222
[329] M. Dufrenne *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p 220
[330] Ibid p. 220
[331] Ibid p 220

original truth.[332] From this we could infer that the bond is the instrument of the subsequent 'flesh' which the subject and object share. The word irreducible again implies the one substance.

From this we should conclude that although Dufrenne's notion of the subject-object/world relationship is analogous in some respects to that of Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh, which also echoes the mindfulness stance, it is not the same; Dufrenne does not seems to subscribe entirely to the concept 'flesh.' Reciprocity, nevertheless, remains key.

Although the next point concerns the nature of expression, i.e. whether is it individual or universal, it is related to the previous point. The degree to which the subject is embedded in the world or constitutive of the world is once again at issue.

In Dufrenne's general theory of aesthetics he was adamant that all individuals are delegates of humanity. [333] In relation to the artist, creative expression is not individual but expresses the universal; it expresses the shared world: "The most authentic subjectivity is that which rejoins the universal"[334] the work provides evidence not only of the personality of the author but also the nature of the real world in which the artist has lived.[335] Dufrenne's account of universality is one of the points of commonality with mindfulness theory.

We learned that although Dufrenne considers art to be generated from an individual artist, he contends that this results in a bringing forth of human spontaneity: "This is something that is truly primitive which is shared by all humans

[332] Ibid p. 220
[333] Dufrenne, *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p. 148
[334] Ibid p. 111
[335] Ibid p. 544

and manifests a kind of life wisdom of which we are the beneficiaries but which bears no mark of individuality at all."[336]

Dufrenne's position here seems unequivocal: creative expression is universal, even though a lone artist may manifest it, the work expresses the shared world of experience. Surprisingly then, Dufrenne also states that the subject expresses himself not the world.[337] How do we reconcile this with his other assertions? Let us look more closely at his statement:

> "The subject can also be expressive so far as he is part of the world, but he expresses himself, not the world; he manifests the meaning which he carries in himself…"[338]

This apparent discrepancy is related to the confusion over whether the subject is 'of the' world or independent from it, discussed above. Similarly, we find Dufrenne vacillating between individual and universal. Presumably if the subject is not 'of the world' s/he cannot express it but only the self. Even if this is what Dufrenne meant, it must be acknowledged that when he spoke about creative expression he categorically stated that the individual expresses the universal, not the individual. In any case, this would make more sense; if the subject lives in close reciprocity with the world, whether we accept 'flesh' or not, the artistic individual must, by necessity express the world of their experience, which is firmly embedded in the shared world.

Fortunately for us all, individuals have different perspectives on the same world of shared experience and therefore we find variations in style of expression, otherwise we would not have artistic expression at all, but simple robotic

[336] Ibid p. 104
[337] Dufrenne, *The Notion of the A Priori* p. 225
[338] Ibid p. 225

interpretations of the world. In this way, the self and the world are not one but are reciprocal and intertwined. Expression reflects both the individual and the universal. There must be individual selves in the universal world. Is this indeed, what Dufrenne meant to convey?

5.3 The Nature of Aesthetic Affectivity

5.3.1 Feeling vs. Emotion

Dufrenne is clear that in aesthetic experience, the affective of which he speaks is feeling and not emotion. This point is debatable. For Dufrenne, this feeling, once realised in perception is actually knowledge because reflection has occurred. For example, the emotion of fear is not to be confused with the feeling of the horrible.[339] This is because the world of art is inoffensive, almost a sounding board, a safe place to try out feelings, question ourselves as to whether we can feel this feeling, and move on, but perhaps as a more conscious being:[340]

> "The world of art is an inoffensive world that we need not take completely seriously . Participation does not go all the way to the level of emotion."[341]

It shall be recalled that Dufrenne argues for art to be considered a serious business, in which case, possibly what he means here is that we know not take the emotional consequences which take place within us to be real, although the concomitant feeling has real consequences for releasing and realising the affective a priori capacities and revealing hidden aspects of the world.

[339] M. Dufrenne, *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p. 378
[340] This is kernal to his overall theory because if feeling has a noetic function, it reveals a world. See Ibid p. 378
[341] Ibid p. 379

His notion of art being a safe place wherein the development of the individual can occur is indeed a valid argument – if this is his argument. However the assertion that we are not stirred to emotion leaves room for doubt. Although Dufrenne denies that we are moved to the level of emotion by art, it is certain that many people would say that they are. Individuals cry in the presence of great works and can certainly feel the tragic in a performance to the extent that real emotion is present.

Although they are in a safe environment where the emotion can be seen as an exercise, one can extrapolate the emotion to real world situations, thoughts of which the art has awakened. If we compare the aesthetic experience to a therapeutic experience – not that it is, overall, the same thing – we see parallels.

In such a situation, emotions and dispositions are provoked so that the individual can process them in a safe environment. These may be emotions that were repressed or that the subject was previously afraid to explore. The therapeutic situation poses no danger but the feelings which arise can give birth to very real emotions from alternative situations and it is in this way that the subject can learn to cope with certain emotions. Undoubtedly, an individual can feel fear, and not just the horrible, in "inoffensive" situations. This may not be rational but such is the world of affectivity.

It is equally possible in aesthetic experience for someone moved to feeling to experience strong emotions – even if the subject *knows* fundamentally that they need not take these emotions 'seriously' as Dufrenne states – that is a product of the thinking and rational mind, not the world of affectivity. If Dufrenne is to discuss the world of affectivity he needs to acknowledge it in its fullness and irrationality. In

fact, he does not do this. Affectivity is a complex subject, worthy of a clear definition before further expatiation.

It seems likely that the experience of art can lead to emotions by awakening feelings. Another way of looking at this issue is in light of the 'detachment' which was discussed earlier in relation to mindfulness. It was acknowledged that the mindful individual is sufficiently sensitised to be moved to empathy and real feeling but not to the point of distraction. Dufrenne's description of feeling vs. emotion, e.g. the feeling of the horrible not to be confused with the emotion of fear could actually invoke this same sentiment. The mindful experience may clarify this point for Dufrenne: we could elaborate that similarly in the aesthetic experience, feelings are stirred and even empathy can be generated but not to the level of overwhelming emotions like fear which overpower the experience, paralysing the individual.

5.3.2 Ephemeral vs. Enduring

A different point, but also in the area of the affective, relates to how lasting affective effects of the aesthetic object are. As we have seen, the experience of mindfulness has long lasting effects on the individual, it is undisputedly a transformative process. Of course, this did not seem to put it at odds with Dufrenne, who denoted the aesthetic experience a transformation also.

Ironically, Dufrenne later states that the aesthetic object must be constantly present lest its effects vanish. This is because feeling is nourished by concrete presence, unlike knowing which results in lasting impression once it has taken root. And yet, he stated that feeling combined with reflection brings us into the presence of knowledge, This seems rather convoluted as Dufrenne had already articulated that the aesthetic object has a noetic function and results in knowledge (which implies 'knowing') yet he subsequently states:

> "Aesthetic experience, once finished, leaves no more than a pale and futile memory, and the knowledge by which it is replaced cannot compensate for its disappearance. Hence the difference between knowing and feeling – feeling is nourished by concrete presence….feeling tends to waste away."[342]

This seems an obscure departure from trying to convince us that art is to be taken seriously and it certainly puts it at odds with the mindful experience – whereby memory and imagination play a significant role because retentive memory is at work to keep the object in mind, in conjunction with reflective abilities - leading to shifts in consciousness. From Dufrenne's point of view, surely the release of the affective a priori has a lasting effect, with or without the presence of the aesthetic object and surely the retentive abilites of memory sustain the experience once it is over. Dufrenne's objective in this line of reasoning is unclear and it is a mystery why Dufrenne would state that "feelings tend to fade away" without qualifying this statement.

Whatever his actual belief on this subject it should be noted that although feeling may be nourished by concrete presence, and given the fact that the release of affective categories leads to reflection (that is in the case of true art which must not stimulate the body alone but also the mind) this feeling has the potential to lead to lasting effects for the individual subject of the experience. Could he mean that the feeling vanishes but its effects remain? He does not say this, but in order to develop and clarify his theory, this must the case.

Any experience which awakens feelings provides the possibility of change. The possibility is tempered in proportion to how self-conscious the subject is – hence

[342] Ibid p. 429

mindful attention leading to greater change than passive or distracted attention. In any case an increased amount of experiences should lead to an increase in self-consciousness, as there are only so many times that a conscious, embodied being can remain indifferent to affective experiences or any experience.

Affective experience and self-consciousness are reciprocally related. Art is a 'serious business', to use Dufrenne's term, because it is an affective experience and this ultimately leads to shifts, through reflection, self-consciousness and growth. It is through these dispositions that greater engagement with the world can occur.

Like the wake left behind in the painting which attests to movement of the brush or gesture of the artist, feeling from aesthetic experience leaves a wake which remains, not, as Dufrenne states "a pale and futile memory." And yet Dufrenne himself already eloquently articulated that feeling implies a new attitude on the part of the subject:

> "I must make myself conform to what the feeling reveals to me… That is why through feeling I put myself into question... Whether or not I am capable of having the feeling will constitute a self-testing and provide a measure of my authenticity."[343]

This description of self-questioning and shifts in attitude infer the development of self-consciousness in ways similar to the mindful experience, illustrating that Dufrenne has contradicted himself in this argument.

5.3.3 *The Nature of Aesthetic Perception*

We could argue at this point that both mindfulness and the aesthetic sense according to Dufrenne are bound up with evolutionary features based on their links to

[343] Ibid p. 377

consciousness. However Dufrenne makes a very ambiguous statement which puts his stance into question: "It is unarguable that aesthetic perception goes against nature."[344] After putting forward quite a cogent argument in support of aesthetic perception being an intrinsic part of our nature, this departure is inconclusive. If we argue that aesthetic experience is bound up with affective categories which reveal truth through opening up worlds then it is linked to an expanding self-consciousness.

The drive toward developing self- consciousness is an evolutionary feature in human beings. It is self-evident that preservation and advancement of the species must largely depend on this especially human feature. How can an evolutionary aspect of a species go against nature? After stating that aesthetic perception goes against nature he proceeds: "perhaps this is why aesthetic perception leads us back to the golden age."[345] This arcane statement demands further explanation, which is not given. He concludes on the point that the body needs to be educated to contribute to aesthetic experience. Does this not contradict the corporeal complicity and corporeal a priori of which he previously spoke?

There is a means of reconciling Dufrenne's statements, where he did not attempt to do so, with reference to mindfulness. What he terms, "aesthetic perception" is something which, as has been argued, is akin to mindfulness or a mindful attitude and as we have seen this involves work, practice and education in perception – just as aesthetic perception does. If it takes so much practice, could it be said to go against nature, for it does not seem to come naturally?

It is possible that this is what Dufrenne meant; that aesthetic perception does not come naturally (i.e. without training) and as he has argued, it requires practice. Many people who try to practice mindfulness and find the mind continually

[344] Ibid p. 343
[345] Ibid p. 343

wandering may also reach this conclusion, but “goes against nature” is a misguided choice of words. The point is, it can be mastered and anything that can be mastered cannot go against nature – for the task is achievable within the bounds of the human body, it is not impossible like learning to fly, for example.

Dufrenne speaks at length about the a priori. Clearly in this context we have an a priori for aesthetic perception, or it would not be possible. And like the right to lead happy lives, we know it is possible so we work at it. We do not work at learning to fly because we know this can never be – this is something that goes against nature. Having our basic human rights denied to us goes against nature; hence why people revolt against repressive regimes and occupying forces, risking death. This obviously requires much effort, but that does not make this behaviour ‘unnatural.’ Something which we can achieve, however difficult it may be, like aesthetic perception or mindfulness does not go against nature, it just takes work.

5.4 Modern vs. Classical Painting

We have noted Dufrenne’s bias in favour of modernist painting, The result is that he fails to appreciate the aesthetic and mindful nature of varieties of artistic painting that are capable of engaging us. Painting from any tradition can intervene upon the world and the subject’s perception in mindful ways. Dufrenne champions modern art and utterly fails to comprehend the multifacetedness of many other different types of art. His views on linear perspective, subject matter, colour vs. drawing and materials are all designed to illustrate that modern art is superior. This bias prevents him from examining these concepts in their fullness.

5.4.1 Linear Perspective

Dufrenne seems not have taken the time to consider the value of linear perspective and how it brings us into contact with the way we move through space. Dufrenne makes flippant remarks about Renaissance painting in this regard which are ill-thought through. Consider his statement on the subject:

> "The men of the Renaissance worried over imitating depth to no avail. In so far as we look for an image of a real object in the pictorial object, we perceive it without difficulty. Indeed the painter should react against this facility on the part of the spectator. If the painter wants to turn us away from the represented object in order to return us to the pictorial object, he must discourage and paralyze our tendency to perceive perspective and pitilessly lead us back to two dimensions. We know that modern painters…renounce trompe l'oeil effects and traditional perspective which presents the illusion of depth."[346]

In the case of the Renaissance artists who pursued perfect perspectives in their work, Dufrenne claims that exactness is being subordinated to expression. Although this is an interesting point worthy of relfection, it is an opinion which is a product of its time. This comment is culturally biased, even though Dufrenne himself has reminded us that art is a product of its culture. [347]

Dufrenne wrote this in the 20th century when ability to achieve perspective in paintings was already taken for granted. For the 'men' ofthe Renaissance, it was groundbreaking and cutting edge and one can only imagine the sheer joy of hours spent in the act of mindful creation when artists were trying to perfect this technique

[346] Dufrenne *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience,* p. 275-8
[347] Ibid p. liii

as well as the contemplative rapture with which viewers must have experienced on first viewing such paintings. It is all too obvious that Dufrenne proffers this opinion not as a practitioner but as an intellectual who cannot see beyond his own historical and cultural milieu.

For a practitioner, it is an instinct to perfect one's craft and the focus and concentration which this calls for can undoubtedly be termed 'mindful.' The 'men' of the Renaissance were rising to a challenge while at the same time expressing themselves. Dufrenne earlier stated that "concern for craftmanship in no way prevents self expression."[348] When modern artists choose to experiment and turn away from representation and perspective it is because it has been done before and they are looking for a new challenge.

Abstract art could not have happened if 'men' of the Renaissance were not "worried" as Dufrenne puts it, about depth because this had to be exhausted before other experimentation could begin. Even today artists find it challenging and absorbing to create very realistic and naturalistic pictures while they express themselves.

The BP Portrait Award Exhibition held at the National Portrait Gallery every year in London illustrates just how valued excellent draughtmanship actually is as well as how many artists love to rise to this challenge as can be seen from the example below. An artist can express him/herself through a variety of means whether or not s/he chooses to paint in an abstract or extremely naturalistc/realistic fashion. This includes use of light, colour, composition, choice of content, size, use of the edge of the picture plane, use of materials, to name a few.

[348] Ibid p. 103

Figure 24 Matan Ben Cnaan, Annabelle and Guy, 2015, oil on board (first Prize Winner BP Portrait Awards)

Figure 25 Michael Gaskell, Eliza, 2015 (Second Prize Winner BP Portrait Awards)

Dufrenne recommends that the imagination should complete the picture. He elaborates this point to highlight his view that art must not be seen to imitate. Indeed, the imagination should be at exercised with art but the imagination can still set to

work on perspectivally accurate pictures. We are always presented with another individual's view on the world, leaving many dimensions and unanswered questions to be explored. For example, why did they artist choose this standpoint, execute this composition, what happened before and after this scene, why this scene, was it really like this – how much liberty did the artist take, why was it so important for the artist to present it in a perspectivally accurate way? One can get lost in mindful exploration ad infinitum, regardless of whether a painting is modern or classical. It should be noted that this type of mindful questioning is part of the reflective process which follows mindful contemplation of the disinterested fashion. For in the contemplative phase, the subject remains close to the object without questioning but simply absorbing the experience. However mindful thinking is also a dimension of mindfulness which not only involves feeling but cognition and in this experience memory and thus temporality are involved because reflection follows feeling. We will return to this subject in chapter 6.2.3 under *Temporality, the Present Moment and Mind-Body Collaboration*.

What his view expresses is that linear perspective is a static, articifial view on the world – and worse - is utilising a technique to imitate. Hence, Dufrenne is highly critical of linear perspective. He considers it illusionistic and mimetic, in which case creativitiy is lacking. It must be said that it is difficult to see why this criticism should not be the levelled at all figurative and representational painting. If Dufrenne were to take this view to its final conclusion, only abstract art would be truly expressive and creative. Dufrenne's bias in this area prevents him from seeing the bigger picture and the significance of linear persective.

Dufrenne, himself, has highlighted the importance of gesture in art. Gesture is present in all paintings, we could argue that it is a sign of greater excellence that

gesture and duration are hidden in perspectivally accurate and realistic paintings, but we know it is there. This is a fact which is intriguing in hyper-realistic painting. Most people who have ever appreciated a painting that is highly realistic and perspectivally accurate will remember getting lost in it whilst searching for the signs of gesture which yield proof that it is indeed a hand-made artifact. These types of paintings have their own way of tendering the mindful experience. We need not worry about imitation because a painting will never be a photograph, the artist's choices and gesture still characterise the work in a way that an imitation cannot.

Crowther, makes a convincing argument for linear perspective and its place in painting. He argues that perspective does not attempt to be true to the ocular impression. Like all pictorial representation it presents a monocular viewpoint only. Binocularity is not possible in a static planar-based medium like painting: "All painting transforms the appearance of what it represents – and in this, perspective is no different from the other principles for unifying pictorial space."[349]

Linear perspective does, however, show us how we systematically occupy visual space. Crowther highlights that the things we see change in appearance to our own changes in movement, that is to say that the body immerses us in the world systematically. He is referring here to the 'systematicity' of spatial changes in correlation with bodily movement.

In this way perspectival paintings offer us something which their counterparts do not, and this is an important aspect of our relation to visual reality. Crowther cites as an example Duchamp's (1912) *Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2* as a work which attempts to evoke sequential movement. However it does not embody this unique relationship that our movements have with space.

[349] Paul Crowther *Drawing and Painting as Symbolic forms: The Liberation of the Image,* Unpublished manuscript reprinted by permission of the author 2015 p. 147

Linear perspective provides visual exemplars of the systematicity of that relationship:

> "Because the recession of objects in perspectival space from the viewer is so rigorously presented, we know that if we were to move towards the horizon in the picture, the things further away from us would appear smaller, and the ones nearer to us would appear larger. If, within the confines of a monocular visual medium, one wishes to convey the systematicity of how we inhabit visual space, linear perspective is the optimum means to this."[350]

Hence, while Dufrenne's point, that painting should not strive to imitate, is well intentioned, the value of linear perspective as a means of making the world visible - including the way in which we inhabit space and move through it - is unacknowledged in his argument.

5.4.2 Subject Matter

From the mindful perspective, we could say that subject matter in a painting operates as one element which enhances its facility as a principle of orientation. If a painting provides a principle of orientation, the subject matter is a sub-principle. In his continued endeavour to champion modern art, Dufrenne, amazingly, discards subject matter in paintings. It is baffling that someone who has developed a theory of aesthetics does not recognise the importance of subject matter. Of course mindful exploration of a painting would include all the features of the painting, and subject matter is one such feature which captures the attention. Total quiddity encompasses all aspects of the object in question.

[350] Ibid p. 147-8

Dufrenne is at such pains to point out that art should not imitate, he disregards anything which he feels is associated with imitation and as with linear perspective, this is a case in point. It seems he has made the error of adhering rigidly to his chosen stance and building his arguments in a state of myopia rather than opening up to ideas that seem to be in 'another camp'. These features which he dismisses can indeed be part of the process of engagement which he describes between subject and object.

Dufrenne asserts that aesthetic intelligence is inversely proportional to the attention devoted to the represented object: "When a picture attracts attention for what it represents all the worse for the picture."[351] He also disdains the critic who is fascinated by a picture because of what it represents.[352] Dufrenne does not seem to acknowledge the middle ground whereby what is represented is an integral part of the picture as a whole. Why must it be one or the other, i.e. either what is represented attracts the attention of the viewer or the painting attracts the attention of the viewer?

Once the represented object is used as an inspiration for the picture and some version of its image appears, it constitutes the *content* of the painting. The content is an essential feature of the work. It speaks to us of the artist's choices and experience in the world before s/he began to paint that picture. Dufrenne has discussed the 'real' and the 'worlds' that artists create from the real. We could say that Van Gogh's 'The Bedroom' presents us with the world of Van Gogh in a way that walking into that actual room could not, because he has infused the work of art with his style.

[351] Dufrenne, *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p. 276
[352] Ibid p. 276

Figure 26 Van Gogh, The Bedroom, 1888, oil on canvas

Van Gogh has created this 'world' out of the 'real' – the possibilities in which we find the represented world. The actual room - the represented - is part of the real, so if the real has importance, which it clearly does for Dufrenne, so then should the subject matter represented in a painting. The painter selects from the real. In the case of the bedroom, Van Gogh's choice is of great importance.

We feel his vulnerability in this painting because his room is the perfect vehicle for conveying his presence. Through his particular style, Van Gogh uses his materials in such a way which gives us his subjective response to his subject, and this subject is as much a part of his process as anything other element in it. The fact that he has chosen a room with four walls and a floor allows him to use perspective in a way which suggests intimacy, a personal space. This is almost a self-portrait without a face and that this is conveyed very much through the subject matter is this is of interest. It illustrates Van Gogh's creativity

The feeling evoked by this work could hardly have been achieved using a different subject matter. These include feelings of calm and warmth or solitude. There is almost a guarded optimism and a hopeful simplicity coupled with a lurking loneliness. These are the affective categories of which Dufrenne speaks. How does he expect the artist to aid the liberation of the affective a priori if the represented object is not given as much importance as any other aspect of the composition?

Many artists are celebrated for their subject matter. It is often part of their style. How Picasso represented his women is of note for example 'Weeping Woman' and 'Woman dressing her hair'. The weeping woman is monstrous, not sad, the woman dressing her hair is disfigured, contorted, disabled. This world of Picasso which we glimpse is disturbing. Relationships between men and women and not just Picasso and his women, are laid bare. How could we be privy to these worlds did Picasso not represent women in them?

Figure 27 Picasso, Weeping Woman, 1937, oil on canvas

Figure 28 Picasso, Woman Dressing her Hair, 1940, oil on canvas

Of course they attract attention for what they represent. Just as Jenny Saville's paintings attract attention for what they represent – women and bodies. In an interview in the Telegraph with Saville, author, Mark Hudson begins with the sentence, "Jenny Saville paints flesh…"[353] because this is of great note, she could have painted anything else using the same techniques but not to the same effect. Saville herself states, "I paint flesh because I'm human."[354]

Figure 29 Saville, Branded, 1992, oil and mixed media on canvas

[353] Mark Hudson, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/art-features/10920986/Jenny-Saville-I-like-the-down-and-dirty-side-of-things.html
[354] Ibid

Figure 30 Saville, Strategy, 1993-1994, oil on canvas

Her representations of women's bodies in the era of airbrushing is of the highest relevance. The subject matter is one of the most important principles of orientation in the fostering of mindful attention because the uniqueness of Saville's way of presenting her subject immediately invites contemplation. Where else in the times we live in would we see women like this if not in art? In this regard we could say that choice of subject matter is of cultural and historical importance. The way in which our era depicts flesh in the mass media is what makes Saville's paintings so interesting in contrast. Similarly, history can be traced, to great satisfaction, through subject matter – from religious to secular. How 'the represented' informs 'the aesthetic' is a vital piece in the artistic process.

We could take any artist and come to the same conclusions. Constable is associated with his landscapes. How Rembrant represented himself is intriguing. The subject of a painting is part of what speaks to our perception of it. Even in abstract paintings, what they *appear* to represent is often what draws us in. Certainly a painting cannot be valued for what it is a painting of alone, but content is a vital and constitutive element in the process and finished work. The same could be said of

colour or composition. The subject of the painting can often inform the whole tone of the work and how it proceeds. As artist David Park stated:

> "I have found that in accepting and immersing myself in subject matter I paint with more intensity and that the "hows" of painting are more inevitably determined by the "whats."[355]

5.4.3 Colour, Drawing and Materials

Dufrenne also links the debate between drawing and colour to the problem of confusing the pictorial object with the represented object. Drawing was given primacy in Cartesian times when it was considered to be a more readable sign and more readily represented the object being depicted. Dufrenne tells us that "the apostles of drawing have always had the support of rationalistic thought."[356] However we could just as easily assert that drawings transform reality just as paintings do. Dufrenne sides with Cezanne, who stated in relation to seeing that "when color realizes its proper richness, form is fulfilled."[357] With this insight, painting is emancipated and Dufrenne feels that colour needs to be given a privileged position. Dufrenne associates colour with the modern painters who have freed themselves from strict representation. Classical painters also use colour - rendering this an implausible association.

It is unfortunate that Dufrenne allows himself to fall into the dogma that Descartes and indeed Cezanne did – that we must privilege one over the other when they are equal but different. It is ironic that the pendulum swings from drawing being privileged to colour being privileged when in fact the two cannot survive without the

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[355] Caroline A. Jones, Bay Area Figurative Art, Berkley: University of California Press, 1990 p. 1
[356] Ibid p. 285
[357] Cited by Dufrenne *Phenomenology of |Aesthetic Experience* p. 284

other. Painting is simply drawing with a brush[358] and using colour. It is impossible to imagine how an artist could paint without drawing or draw without colour.

Crowther differentiates drawing from painting:

> "To draw something is *to directly inscribe or mark a surface using a solid medium* such as graphite, charcoal, or crayon, or a solid instrument such as the pencil or the engraver's burin. To paint something, in contrast, involves marking a surface with *viscous or liquid pigment*."[359]

However we can still say that at its most basic level, painting is drawing <u>with</u> *viscous or liquid pigment* to use Crowther's terms. Separating painting from drawing is an unnatural delineation. The important thing, as Crowther has highlighted, is that all these pictorial media change how reality appears in their own distinctive ways.[360] From a mindfulness perspective, placing them in a hierarchy does not seem helpful.

On the point of colour, Dufrenne's interpretation of the strides made with oil paint is also designed to contrast modern art with more representational art. It will be recalled that he believed that frescos, due to their quick drying nature, resulted in a piece closer to representation. When he discussed the benefits of oil paint he communicated his view that oil painting freed the artist from strict representation. This is a very curious argument. Dufrenne seems to be using backwards reasoning whereby he begins with what he wants to believe and then tries to justify it.

One would expect an artist to achieve more representational results from using oil but Dufrenne believed that the painter had to seek a definitve version immediately with quick drying materials, giving the picture a more finished

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[358] Or fingers or rags or whatever tool the painter chooses
[359] Crowther, *Drawing and Painting as Symbolic Forms* p. 89
[360] Ibid p. 89

appearance. This is a thought provoking concept but it is highly debatable and quite paradoxical. It is true that the fluidity of oils gives an artist more time to consider and be conscious of the activity but this is exactly what allows the opportunity to concentrate on detail. More variety of colour and time to 'perfect' a picture, in the case of creating a likeness, means that one can create a more realistic picture.

One need only look at the many examples of hyper-realistic oil paintings to see that a plethora of artists consider oil to be material of choice for achieving these effects. For example, New York based artist Bryan Drury or Jan Van Eyck's works such as The Arnolfini Wedding whose attention to realistic details is so precise that we can see clearly into mirror in the background.

Figure 31 Drury, Portrait 1 and 2, 2011, oil on Canvas

Figure 32 Jan Van Eyck, The Arnolfini Wedding, 1434, oil on wood

As an artist I would say that if my goal was to achieve a likeness to a polished degree I would need more time to focus on detail and I would choose a material accordingly. In addition, oil, due to its fluid nature, allows for working over mistakes. It is worth noting that artists included here have not used ‘airbrushing’

techniques. Oil is not particularly suited to this technique because of the toxic fumes which would result as the oil would have to be thinned with spirits to be used in an air brush.

A quick drying medium could be said to induce the artist to "go with his/her gut" without labouring too much. Dufrenne did assert the view that the artist must not try too hard lest expression is lost.[361] And he has reiterated many times that for the artist being and doing are the same thing.[362] In light of this, one could argue that a quick drying medium could allow the artist to truly express without interfence from overly fussy consideration during the process. There is very little room for mistakes or overthinking with a quick drying medium.

A medium like fresco painting is not for novices but for highly skilled painters. In the case of quick drying fresco painting, this would be better suited to a surrealist painter who is more concerned with revealing the contents of the subconscious than with representational accuracy. This is because it leaves little time for equivocation and would allow free association to emerge without interference from over-thinking. For these reasons this type of medium is well suited to modern and abstract art which does not desire to imitate a represented object. Again, hierarchy is not at issue and as we shall see in the final chapter, each medium has its own way of expressing that brings us into the mindful state.

5.5 Conclusion

At this stage it should be acknowledged that some of the above criticisms of Dufrenne and apparent conceptual obscurity whereby he appears to contradict himself could indeed be due in part to reading his work in translation. The reading of

[361] M. Dufrenne, *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p. 328
[362] Ibid p. 500 for example

Dufrenne's work in its original French form may well clarify some of the issues raised in this chapter.

Thus far we have made connections between Dufrenne's theory of mindfulness and painting at various stages of the argument. In the present chapter we begin to see that Dufrenne's theory opens up an approach to painting which mindfulness not only complements but actually deepens. We shall now investigate this complementarity in greater detail and summarise the main point in the final chapter, chapter six.

Chapter 6 Dufrenne, Painting and Mindfulness

6.1 Introduction

Having critically dealt with Dufrenne's theory of painting and used mindfulness in relation to it, we can now take matters much further. As we have seen, Dufrenne's repeated references to 'being not doing', attention and being present to the aesthetic object in order to realise its signification harken Eastern philosophies and psychological theories of mindfulness. He also spoke of a "solitary and meditative consciousness"[363] where the spectator communes with the work. In addition, he continually recommends a moderate balance in the approach to both the creation and appreciation of art which echoes the Buddhist middle path.

In the rest of this chapter we first explore those areas where Dufrenne's aesthetics directly correlate with theories of mindfulness and how painting, in this light, may be seen as *itself* a mindfulness-based intervention. Second we examine the differences between aesthetic experience and mindfulness noting also, however, how both can, nevertheless be involved in the experience of painting. We then consider an important feature that Dufrenne does not fully explain, namely the relation between the artist and the spectator. It is shown that this relation can engage with mindfulness in interesting ways. Finally, we offer a general conclusion to the thesis as a whole.

6.2 Points of Commonality

For the sake of clarity the following discussion on where Dufrenne, mindfulness and painting intersect will be divided according to the six points of commonality that have emerged and are listed below:

[363] Ibid p. 51

Points of Commonality: Mindfulness-Based Interventions and Aesthetic Experience of Painting

1. Both are interventions with transformative effects - a revealing takes place which facilitates a more fully engaged life
2. Similar stance adopted: Inclusive disinterestedness
3. Being, not doing – must be fully engaged in the task but in an experiential and existential way
4. The present moment and temporality are of major significance and are manifest in the unified relationship of the mind-body.
5. Universality, Empathy and self-consciousness are key concepts – self-others-environment – interdependence emphasised
6. Perception and Embodiment at the root of both practices

6.2.1 Transformative interventions

> "The strangeness possessed by the profound or the deep results from the fact that depth is experienced only on the condition that it exiles and uproots us from those habits which are the embodiment of the superficial self, in order to bring us face to face with a new world, which demands a new outlook. Whenever the aesthetic object is incapable of surprising or transforming us, we cannot afford it full merit."[364]

Although Dufrenne makes many references to aesthetic experience that echo the mindful experience, perhaps this statement is one of the most striking. According to it, the aesthetic object's job is to transform us, uprooting us from old patterns –

[364] Dufrenne, M. *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press 1973 p. 408

which serve nothing but fatigue it would seem - bringing us to a deeper level of consciousness, changing how we see the world. Dufrenne has already described how this happens through the affective a priori, but what he, himself, did not realise is that the end result which he describes is what we would call the mindful attitude of a more self-conscious subject.

It is the transformative nature of both mindfulness practice and aesthetic experience that render them 'interventions.' We have seen that the purpose of mindfulness practice is to allow the practitioner to see reality clearly, live without limiting preconceptions. This helps him/her to have greater acceptance of the self, others and the world (the term 'acceptance has been touched upon earlier but we will return to it for further clarification under the section '*Inclusive Disinterestedness'* in 6.2.2 of this chapter) There is no doubt that this is considered a transformative process and mindfulness practice is understood to be an intervention whereby the world is revealed in its fullness. The practitioner can then participate fully in both the world and as a member of the human race.

What of painting, can we call it an intervention? According to Dufrenne, aesthetic experience has a 'transforming' effect. Although he does not use the word 'intervention', surely this is the function of an intervention. Let us turn briefly to Crowther, who has argued that painting *is* an intervention on experience by virtue of how it changes the appearance of things. In his words:

> "The artists' style, changes of scale, and projection within the timeless plane mean that pictorial drawing and painting transform how reality appears. They intervene on it. And the most striking aspect of this is the way that a momentary appearance of the represented subject is eternalized. The

> notion of the moment or immediate present is of the most supreme significance in human existence."[365]

The making of paintings, in this way, alters our perceptual relation to the spatial world.[366] Thus, we enter into a more expanded state where we can actually see more, and hence experience more, providing the opportunity for greater consciousness. This raises questions as to how both painting and mindfulness-based interventions transform, what do they do exactly when they 'intervene' on reality?

According to Dufrenne and both Buddhist and psychological interpretations of mindfulness, a revealing takes place through these experiences. The painter extracts what seems not to be immediately available to visual perception by going out into the world and not just looking but participating. When the painter, Klee stated: "In a forest, I have felt many times over that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some days I felt that the trees were looking at me, were speaking to me,"[367] he referred to being participant in their world.

The artist must engage with the world in a mindful fashion to increase powers of observation and stimulate the imagination, otherwise s/he is not in a position to create. The viewer who pauses at a painting and looks at what has been set aside for contemplation will witness the normally hidden aspects of the visible also. An image can reveal the world to us and awakens powers of dormant vision.[368]

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[365] Paul Crowther, *How Pictures Complete Us, the Beautiful, the Sublime and the Divine* (in press at the time of writing) 2016 p. 120
[366] Paul Crowther, *Drawing and Painting as Symbolic Forms: The Liberation of the Image*, unpublished manuscript) 2015 p. 147
[367] Galen A. Johnson, *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, trans. M.B. Smyth, Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993 p. 44
[368] Ibid p. 142

This stance, which is assumed both in order to create and to appreciate paintings, is clearly a mindful one and the result is that more of the world is revealed. Recall Dufrenne's statement:

> "We believe that art repeats what we have seen because we can identify what art represents…But in fact we have not seen any of these things before. We had not yet seen the tortured form of the iris before seeing Van Gogh's bouquet… We could almost say that perception begins with art."[369]

Explicitly, Dufrenne is describing a new way of looking, perception begins with art because art makes us see things that we never saw before; after viewing a painting we look back at the real world and see with renewed visual acuity. In the same way, mindfulness practice opens our eyes and increases our engagement.

Dufrenne categorically tells us that art brings us into increased contact with ourselves and others and this includes our environment. For Dufrenne humanity is never totally transparent to itself: "Men are continually blind to some aspect of men."[370] Following from this it is clear that something(s) need to be discovered in order to reveal truth.

Similarly, Buddhism recommends that we start living in the world of momentary experience.[371] This is achieved by seeing life for what it really is and accepting it. To free ourselves from suffering we need to stop living in an imaginary self-centered universe and embrace present experience because the past and the future are not immediately real, hence dwelling in these places is living in illusion. This does not preclude learning from past experiences or planning for the future but

[369] M. Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p. 543
[370] Ibid p. 500
[371] George Dreyfus, 'Is Mindfulness Present-Centred and Nonjudgemental? A Discussion of the Cognitive Dimensions of Mindfulness' *Contemporary Buddhism* 12(1) 2011, 41-54 p. 4

obsessing over what might have been or what could happen is considered a source of misery.[372] This is why truth is revealed by living in momentary experience, truth cannot be found in illusion but in what is. This unveiling of reality, and as such truth, is thought to come about through mindfulness because it quiets the mind and focuses observation on the present. It should be clear that what is shared by both of these theories is that the world remains to be uncovered in order to fully engage with life and there are interventions which facilitate this process.

6.2.2 Inclusive Disinterestedness

In both traditions, there is a stance which is adopted in order to effectuate this end. Previously the stance that Dufrenne recommends was discussed and it was characterised by 'inclusive disinterestedness.'

What has been termed a 'disinterested' stance in relation to aesthetics[373] echoes the 'non-judgemental' attitude which is adopted in mindfulness practice. In this case, the practitioner does not get stuck in intellectual analysis but rather experiences the moment in a detached way, neither judging nor holding onto practical considerations. This stance is what sets the practitioner free, otherwise the mind is a prisoner of its unbridled discursivity.[374] This non-judgmental state which is cultivated also allows an empathy with others because it increases our abilities of *acceptance.* 'Accepting' is at the opposite end of the spectrum to 'judging.'[375]

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[372] Focus on the present means, on one level, focussing on the impermanence of the moment but on another the eternality of the present moment whatever its content. Either way, seeing the picture as completed gesture – as a process that converges on the eternalized moment, means that the present is lived as the present and as something whose character is determined by the things that came before it.

[373] See Paul Crowther, *The Kantian Aesthetic, from Knowledge to the Avant-Garde*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013

[374] G. Dreyfus, 'Is Mindfulness Present-Centred and Nonjudgemental? A Discussion of the Cognitive Dimensions of Mindfulness' *Contemporary Buddhism* 12(1) 2011, 41-54 p. 5

[375] It should be noted that this accepting attitude is reputed to extend not just to others but to the self and circumstances

A few words on the notion of acceptance are in order - as it is at the heart of both the so-called disinterested and the mindful stance. In this context, acceptance means not resisting and this allows the subject to fully engage with the experience. Acceptance comes when one stops questioning and judging a situation. Acceptance implies a detached embracing. In the case of difficult situations, energy is not lost wondering, *"why did this happen to me?"* That question carries with it a judgement: *This should not happen to me*. Acceptance, on the other hand, means moving on because it *did* happen if it cannot be changed. This is reality. Of course as mindfulness is about transformation, this acceptance is only employed when the situation cannot be changed. Obviously when one can learn from one's mistakes and make changes this is the course of action to be followed, but when something happens that cannot be changed, for example a death, the mindful individual accepts the situation and declines to obsess over 'if only' scenarios, this is a waste of energy and only serves to torment. Accepting a gift without wondering, do I deserve it or does the giver have ulterior motives, is another form of acceptance.

With regard to other human beings, the reason acceptance is related to empathy is because when we accept human beings as they are we stop *othering* them. This means that when we accept that others are human beings like ourselves, we can come to stand in their shoes - which could be our shoes in under different circumstances. At that point empathy can enter the equation. This acceptance, which is such a large part of the aesthetic and mindful disposition, is crucial to entering into the experience, because one cannot participate in any experience if a judgmental attitude prevails, one remains outside the experience – judging. Accepting before a painting means receiving it on its own terms – as an entity in itself and experiencing

it as such. In all instances it is the experience that is accepted for what it is, as in the disinterested stance.

Now it could be said that questioning is healthy and often in front of paintings one asks many questions which enhance the experience and this is true. So it is necessary to clarify the different ways of questioning. In both experiences, of course, there are many questions and there is curiosity, but no laboured intellectual analysis which is laden with judgement. The questions are in the spirit of curiosity rather than regret or rejection. Some questions, on the other hand, are euphemisms for judgements. For example, *"why did this happen to me?"* truly means *"this should not have happened to me"* and "*why doesn't that person stop acting like that?"* means, "*that person should behave more like me*." So if another person is behaving poorly, instead of endlessly questioning why and trying to make sense of it, the mindful individual simply takes the necessary action (avoiding the person for example) without wasting energy trying to make sense of the culprit. The saying, "it is what it is" sums up this attitude. That does not preclude dealing with "it" but accepting the state of affairs *and* dealing with it.

With regard to paintings, the same question can have very different meanings, depending on whether the viewer has entered into the accepting, non-judgemental attitude or its opposite. For example, a viewer who views a Jackson Pollock painting and says, *"Why would anyone drip paint all over the canvas like that?"* but really means *"All that dripping just looks like a mess, anyone could do that"* will gain little from the aesthetic experience. However the same question could also be in the spirit of open minded curiosity and be asked as a genuine question, asked without judgement. In this case, the viewer may come to learn something about seeing the world from a different perspective, whether or not the painting is to

his/her taste. This new perspective is, of course, not just personal but historical and culturally charged and can only expand the individual's viewpoint. This, indeed, is an embracing.

This does not mean that at the end of the day the viewer may still not say, "I, personally, don't like this painting," having an opinion is not the same as making a value judgement. Value judgements actually prevent us from having real opinions, which are the result of genuine reflection and experience. Finally, it must be said that after reflection a viewer may reach the conclusion that a painting is not truly a work of art, it can, indeed, be a very poor painting, lacking style, skill or originality. Entering into the non-judgemental attitude of acceptance does not mean that we should like *or* value everything, but at least if we approach the experience in this way, *if* there is something to be gained, we will be the recipients.

6.2.3 Actively Involved but at the Level of Existential Participation

We know that Dufrenne's phenomenology of aesthetic experience is very much about being present, focused and non-judgmental.[376] He also makes repeated references to 'being not doing.'[377] Dufrenne begins with the moment of perception. For Dufrenne, the witness penetrates the world of the work through a 'connivance'.[378] This word makes the act sound unlawful or secretive but Dufrenne probably meant to convey a sacred kind of a union. In this respect we see that although the person is an observer, s/he is also engaged through a communication which occurs through "solitary and meditative consiousness."[379] This is an interesting choice of words which sounds blatantly spiritual, directly echoing this statement by

[376] Dufrenne recommends that the subject be accomplice rather than judge, Phenomenology of *Aesthetic Experience* p. 467
[377] Ibid p 65 for example
[378] Ibid p. 352
[379] Ibid p. 51

BKS Iyengar, one of the most influential yoga practitioners of contemporary times: "Nothing can be forced, receptivity is everything."[380]

If the spectator does not participate and remains on the outside, the judging voice predominates. Just like interactions with people, dictating opinions is not an interaction. Entering into the spirit of acceptance requires exchange and an openness, which prepares one to receive. This applies to artwork and to human interactions. If no exchange takes place there has been no intervention, there can be no transformation. This is why the subject-object relationship is described by Dufrenne in such detail, it is at this level that the transformation occurs.

The perceiver must be simultaneously inside *and* outside the work, in order to do this one must be at one with the perception and "an accomplice rather than a judge."[381] This is achieved through the body being wholly *present* to the work of art through a corporeal complicity.[382] Furthermore, there should be no excessive striving on the part of the artist. Dufrenne argues that for the artist, being and doing are the same thing.[383]

Although the spectator is invited to be, not to do[384] Dufrenne makes reference to "participation"[385] which suggests active involvement: "We have insisted that perception is a task"[386] This requires skill and is reminiscent of the effort put in by the mindfulness practitoner because the skills necessary are the ability to focus and give one's undivided attention to the aesthetic object:

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[380] BKS Iyengar, *Light on Life*, Rodale Books, 2006
[381] Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p. 55
[382] Ibid p. 340
[383] Ibid p. 500
[384] Ibid p. 65, 66, 85-6, 352, 376
[385] Ibid p. 405
[386] Ibid p. 419

> "I came to open myself up to the work, to be present…to experience an apotheosis of the present."[387]

If there is any doubt about the effort required, we are reminded that the work of art is an "education in attention"[388] and that a "process of training"[389] is required in order to "cleanse ones mind by eliminating every prejudice".[390] This results in being sensitised to the work of art. We are left in no doubt that there is work involved in aesthetic appreciation. Dufrenne has stated many times that the subject must be capable of receiving the aesthetic object, must be intelliegent enough, willing and interested. The incapable person "degrades" the aesthetic experience and this can be due to selfishness and self-absorption.[391]

He is very prescriptive. Without realising it, Dufrenne is describing a *practice* – similar to that of the mindfulness practitioner, who must work and practice in order to cultivate the desired disposition – which will ultimately set him/her free through increased consciousness.

'Bare attention' in Buddhist thought[392] is thought to be conducive to the uncovering of truth. This description could equally apply to aesthetic experience. Attention to detail is a paramount to both practices.

Mindfulness is described as paying attention to present perceptions and experience.[393] This entails controlling the attention in a purposeful way in the context

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[387] Ibid p. 11
[388] Ibid p. 63
[389] Ibid p. 428
[390] Ibid p. 428
[391] Ibid p. 431
[392] Thera Nyanaponika, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, London: Ride, 1962

[393] See Cali L. Anicha, et al. 'Toward a Cognitive View of Trait Mindfulness: Distinct Cognitive Skills Predict Its Observing and Nonreactivity Facets,' *Journal of Personality* 80(2) (2012) pp. 255-285

of open-minded acceptance.[394] All of this echoes Dufrenne's notion of aesthetic experience as an "education in attention" whereby the mind undergoes training in order to be equipped for the task.

The goal of mindfulness based interventions is to improve the individual's abilities to observe what is occurring while it is occurring. This results in a mind that is more perceptually observant[395] and of course, perception is at the centre Dufrenne's theory of aesthetics. Dufrenne uses the words such as: being present, not judging but witnessing, not just observing but being absorbed.

The 'hard work' involved in aesthetic perception of which Dufrenne speaks in practical terms may be understood as cognition that is attentive to the following:

A} Formal qualities

B) Expressive qualities

C) Figurative content (where applicable)

D) The way all these are directed by the artist's style of handling in autographic terms – something that only stands out when considered against the comparative horizon of other works.

One must allow oneself to open oneself perceptually, to the visual fullness of what's there.[396] This is the *total quiddity* which is the hallmark of mindful attention. The criterion of this is attentiveness geared towards the picture as a whole, but it moves from this global sense of the work to the specific aspects listed above, and back – sometimes in an attentive too-ing and fro-ing that doesn't separate its individual aspects out from one another explicitly.

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[394] Scott R. Bishop et al. 'Mindfulness: A Proposed Operational Definition' Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice 11(3) (2004) 230-241

[395] James Carmody, 'Evolving Conceptions of Mindfulness in Clinical Settings. *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 23, (2009) 270–280.

[396] This is why paying attention to subject matter as discussed in chapter 5 is of importance

In mindfulness practice, similarly, the practitioner may single out a detail for attention, like the breath, or a noise to focus upon, but also integrates these things into the bigger picture of life and comes to be open to as many details as possible around him/herself. There is equally a too-ing and fro-ing between specific objects of attention and a global attention to a whole which results in an integration between subject and object/ subject and world.

Although it is true that mindfulness meditation is usually associated with focused attention on one object, another stage of meditation is termed "open monitoring"[397] wherein the practitioner is open to all internal and external stimuli. In most advanced stages the practitioner gradually reduces the focus on an explicit object and the monitoring faculty is concurrently emphasised.[398] The open-monitoring stage may be seen as the re-joining to the whole.

It should be noted that in mindfulness practice, it is said there are no actions to perform.[399] However the person is actively engaged in the practice. This correlates with Dufrenne's numerous assertions that aesthetic appreciation should involve being and not doing although there is work involved in proper appreciation. It is a task – for all purposes a practice - like other forms of mindfulness based interventions. Similalry for the artist being and doing are one. This is what Yeats wished to convey when he said: "O body swayed to music, O brightening glance, How can we know the dancer from the dance?"[400]

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[397] Alberto Chiesa, Raffaello Calati, Alessandro Serretti, 'Does Mindfulness Training Improve Cognitive Abilities? A Systematic Review of Neuropsychological Findings' *Clinical Psychological Review* 31 (2011) 449-464,

[398] Ibid p. 451

[399] M.A.Lau, et al. 'The Toronto Mindfulness Scale: Development and Validation' *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 62, (2006) 1445–1467.

[400] http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/172065 11/03/16 13:14

In both mindfulness and aesthetic training there is an existential and organic process of being opened up to the world, and therefore truth.

6.2.4 Universality, Empathy and Self-Consciousness

The shared belief in universality is another common trait. Both mindfulness theory and Dufrenne's aesthetics address a reciprocal aspect. 'Right' mindfulness as it is termed, has implications for ethics and awareness of others. Dufrenne includes a dimension of universality and concept of the other. Reciprocity is an indispensable consideration to his philosophy; he champions the universal, whereby each individual is a delegate of humanity.

Furthermore, the observer is not solitary but part of a public. Aesthetic contemplation is a social act where individuals feel themselves to be interdependent.[401] Dufrenne asserts that "the most authentic subjectivity is that which rejoins the universal."[402] It is worth reiterating that mindfulness-based interventions are not designed to separate the practitioner from others but to enable the subject to feel fully integrated in the world. A sense of universal belonging is a constituent of this process. Emotional empathy is a key element to the mindful attitude

We have already touched on aesthetic empathy. Dufrenne describes aesthetic space as a place which conveys affective meaning. He also suggests the artist gives us a new standpoint from which to view the world. These dispositions are constituent of the empathic process, along with the accepting attitude discussed above. The central role of the artist's style involves seeing-with – an *aesthetic empathy* embodying a psychological identification with the artist's way of seeing the visual world. The pictorial nature of the painting allows the viewer to share in the artist's

[401] Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p. 68
[402] Ibid p. 111

view without the pressure associated with face to face interactions.[403] This aesthetic empathy is not entirely different from the universal connections which are realised through mindfulness practice. Dufrenne does not, it should be noted, emphasise aesthetic empathy, which is surprising as he implicates it on numerous occasions.

The mindfulness practitioner usually practices in solitude, or part of a group in silence – focusing the attention on a point, often the breath. This training cultivates attention to detail, hence expanding consciousness of the self, others and the environment. So it should be clear at this point that this practice has wider ramifications for experience outside of the mindfulness practice itself. Without the pressure of what Crowther termed above, "face to face interactions", the practitioner learns a mode of living in another's shoes, which is brought to bear ultimately on real life experiences.

This discussion inevitably leads to the question of self-consciousness. The development of self-consciousness through both aesthetic and mindful experience is a vital component in this discussion. Dufrenne's arguments often point to self-consciousness without centralising this very important concept. His discussion on reciprocity and universality unwittingly pivots around self-consciousness, for awareness of the self and awareness of the other is inextricably linked. Again, we can develop Dufrenne with the aid of Crowther's theory of painting, not only because he develops this notion but also because he applies it specifically to painting and Dufrenne has failed to single out painting as special in this way.

Self-consciousness means that we can only understand who and what we are through comparison and contrast with other human beings.[404] Crowther explains how

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[403] Paul Crowther, 'How Images Create Us, Imagination and the Unity of Self-Consciousness' *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, No. 11-12, (2013) pp. 118-119

[404] Crowther, *How Pictures Complete us, The Beautiful, the Divine and the Sublime,* (in press at the time of writing)

seeing a picture discloses things and how this happens through an aesthetic empathy, which he describes thus:

> "A mode of identification with the artist's way of seeing and representing visual possibilities of space-occupancy. As social beings, the ways in which other people find meaning in the world is something fascinating. Of course, a person might simply tell us what aspects of the spatial world interest them or move them, or how we ought to see them, but no matter how detailed the description, we cannot literally see as they do. However, in the case of pictorial art, the selection of content and the style in which it is rendered allow us to share the artist's vision to some degree at the level of space itself. He or she offers a way of seeing – of interpreting and evaluating the visible world – that we can share or turn away from as we please." [405]

This is a description of 'seeing-with'. In this respect, we are not only imaginatively absorbed by the artist's style we also learn things about our own possibilities and limitations. Aesthetic empathy through pictures, therefore, facilitates psychological completion in personal as well as social terms.[406] Artworks reflect our mode of embodied inherence in the world. In the creation and reception of art, we are able to enjoy a free –belonging to the world.[407] However we do not do this in a vacuum, but alongside other embodied beings

Paintings allow us to imaginatively identify with the artist's struggle at the level of empathy, or to appropriate the work as another way in which it is possible for us to view being.[408] 'Species-identity' is to be conscious of oneself but also

[405] Ibid p. 13
[406] Ibid p 14
[407] Crowther, *Art and Embodiment* p. 7
[408] Ibid p 99

conscious of being part of a shared species - to see oneself as part of a broader phenomenal field.[409] This involves recognizing what others are, giving and receiving recognition. Empathy functions at this level.

Similarly, through mindful attention to experience, the subject increases perspectives. This is achieved by not just 'going through the motions' in life, but by being alert and this involves being alert to fellow human beings, as they are a large part of our experiential field. It has been noted that mindfulness interventions increase flexibility. This has implications for tolerance and a more open mind. The more that we engage, the more we reflect and connect with our environment. Clearly this means abandoning a parochial attitude and narrow view of the world and others. This is a type of empathy, which occurs at a similar level to *aesthetic empathy.*

Note that the contemplation of paintings, like mindfulness practice, takes place in the privacy of one's own consciousness, but as with painting, there are sequential effects in the external world.

6.2.5 Rooted in Embodiment and Perception

Finally, phenomenology and Buddhist philosophy have a shared heritage. Dufrenne's philosophy is in opposition to Cartesian dualism and science, which celebrated rationality and observable experience. Dufrenne disagreed with Descartes notion, "I think therefore I am." That we perceive through the body is central to Dufrenne's aesthetics. As previously discussed, mindfulness practice is grounded in the body; heightened perceptual awareness is the method to expanding the mind, as opposed to over-thinking. The practice entails fully engaged bodily experience in each moment. This, of course, has subsequent effects on the mind. As we saw with the mind-body collaboration aspect, the point of the practice is to calm the mind, but

[409] Ibid p 151

the means is embodiment. Consider this statement from Dreyfus, which illustrates the concordance between Dufrenne's aesthetics and mindfulness theory:

> "Western medical and psychological science has historically emphasized intellectual knowledge and concrete experience as the main stream of human knowledge. The concept of mindfulness derives from a culture that places higher emphasis upon subjective experience as a source of inquiry and understanding."[410]

To summarise in simple terms - perceptual attention to the present moment as it is occurring through embodiment is at the centre of both mindfulness and the aesthetic theory discussed.

6.2.6 Temporality, the Present Moment and Mind-Body Collaboration

Although perceptual attention to the present moment as it is occurring through embodiment is at the centre of both mindfulness and the aesthetic theory discussed, both acknowledge that reflection must take place and that the practice is not for the body alone. This shared aspect is integrally related to temporality. This is because the process, from bodily perception to mental reflection has a chronology to it. It requires sustaining a feeling over time and developing it into a cognitive reflection.

Dufrenne highlighted that paintings have their own internal temporality and connected to this is the 'self having a relation with the self.' This is critical because this relationship begins at the moment of perception through the body and consequently culminates in noetic activity.

While aesthetic appreciation begins with feeling it must be combined with reflection to bring us into the presence of knowledge. For Dufrenne, we have seen

[410] Dreyfus, 'Is Mindfulness Present-Centred and Nonjudgemental? A Discussion of the Cognitive Dimensions of Mindfulness' 2011 pp. 8-9

that the artwork must stimulate the mind as well. Like mindfulness, the practice begins in the body – breath awareness for example in mindfulness-based interventions. In aesthetic experience with regard to viewing a painting, sensory visual perception begins in the body.

Dufrenne asserts that aesthetic experience involves not just feeling, but *subsequent* reflective ability of the mind to make sense of the affective experience. Dufrenne states that "no one really comes to grips with feeling who has not undergone the experience of reflection. The work of art provokes the intelligence as well."[411]

The criteria ABCD described above offer material that both engrosses perception, but also leads us to stand back from it, and reflect upon what's there. The reflection can involve thinking 'how great this is' or 'how awful' or perhaps 'this means' or 'this is so unlike what he/she did before'. Sometimes these reflective aspects will preoccupy and obsess us – taking us beyond mindfulness. But other times, the seeing-with, empathic aspect will put everything in a harmonious flow, In order to 'see-with' it must be recognised that this is by someone else, but the element of apperception comes in when one recognises also that one is finding oneself through it. This means that the artist has created something that engages an openness to possibilities that the artist's style has embodied and made shareable.

Dufrenne and Buddhist scholars such as Dreyfus, would also agree that the *present moment* is of fundamental significance. Dufrenne has emphasised being present in the moment during aesthetic appreciation but Crowther develops this notion and claims that this is because the present moment is the major principle of temporal unification, i.e. the present is more than just a temporal point or instant. It

[411] Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* p. 391

both connects and separates our experienced past and anticipated future.[412] Dreyfus, on mindfulness, asserts that the retentive ability of the mind is of vital importance because it is what allows for future recollection of the present moment. He goes on to say:

> "I would further argue that this retentive ability of mindfulness is crucially connected to working memory, the ability of the mind to retain and make sense of received information. When we see an object we are not just presented with discrete time slices of the object we integrate it within a temporal flow so that it is given as making sense. …consciousness involves the ability to put in resonance and various cognitive processes so that the information they deliver make sense and produce coherent patterns."[413]

6.3 Points of Distinction

Now, it must be acknowledged that mindfulness interventions and painting do not correlate directly; painting invokes visual perception; mindfulness, perception in general. In addition, mindfulness practice recommends focused attention where possible to any and all aspects of the world. In contrast, the aesthetic object is the unique focal point for contemplation. Every context provides an opportunity for mindfulness, however Dufrenne singles out the aesthetic experience as something special and unique. It is evident that in the type of mindfulness related to painting the other senses constellate around the visual. This is why we have highlighted that painting provides a particular principle of orientation in the process of mindful perception.

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[412] Crowther, *Drawing and Painting as Symbolic Forms, Liberation of the Image* p. 74
[413] Dreyfus, 'Is Mindfulness Present-Centred and Nonjudgemental? A Discussion of the Cognitive Dimensions of Mindfulness' 2011 p 8

The point here is that although aesthetic experience and mindfulness are not the same, aesthetic experience is, among other things, a type of mindfulness - a visual mindfulness. In this way, it is an intervention. The creation and the appreciation of paintings, by their nature, carry many of the benefits of a specifically mindful intervention.

We have emphasised the parallels between painting and mindfulness-based interventions in order to enhance our understanding of painting. However it is not suggested that they are the identical; painting is an art and mindfulness has its roots in spirituality and more recently it has been taken up by psychology – which recognises its cognitive significance. This does not make them mutually exclusive but there are clear distinctions.

Clearly, with regard to aesthetics, there is a finished work which is a product of gesture. In the case of mindfulness, there is no such thing. The finished work, really, is the mindful individual – who is always a work in progress. 'Aesthetics' applies to perception, but mindfulness does also, even though it is, at its roots, a spiritual practice, it utilises the fact of embodiment as a means. Both involve attention to the present moment as it is occurring. And so, one could argue that the end goal is still the same, i.e. to more fully engage with life and hence expand being. In any case, Dufrenne did not rule in or rule out a spiritual aspect to aesthetics, his universal approach and emphasis on 'being' in any case often seems spiritual in nature. Hence the spiritual background to mindfulness does not necessarily separate it from aesthetics.

This has implications for *the other*- how aesthetic experience acts as a unifying experience and we have seen how Dufrenne asserts the universal aspect of art. Universality is an integral element of the Eastern thought which gave rise to

mindfulness practice. The practice is meant to connect individuals because once the individual perceives more accurately, s/he sees that we are all one, ecologically existing in the same universe. A sense of union is experienced. Although this is an entirely different path to get to universality than that which Dufrenne espoused, the sentiment nonetheless, is similar and the concept of empathy and identification with the other is key.

Both involve a bridging of gaps - socially and culturally. Painting, as opposed to language is in a unique position to do this. The symbolic nature of painting gives it a universal appeal and allows an open-ended means to communication.

Both mindfulness training and painting have been described as interventions but again there are nuanced differences. Dufrenne spoke of the *transformative* character of aesthetic experience and how in paintings we see things we never saw before. Buddhist philosophy recommends mindfulness practice *not to change reality, but to render it more clearly*. The subject will *see reality as it really is*, without illusions clouding judgement. Psychological research in this area, as we have seen, corroborates the notion that mindfulness training does improve perceptual and other cognitive skills.

Dufrenne does not specifically state that the intervention of painting *clarifies* reality, but transforms it. In any regard, it seems certain that the connection between painting and self-consciousness - the way in which it expands being - indicates an increased clarity. Either way, given that aesthetic space has a role to play in self-consciousness, it is evident that we are not speaking of a *lack* of clarity. If reality is altered, surely it is not in the direction of delusional perception.

What do we mean when we say that painting intervenes and transforms the world? That is to say, not how it manages to do this, but what the end result is, i.e., how has the world changed? Or more specifically, in what way do we see it differently? Aesthetic space *reveals* and this indicates that more of the world is perceived, which is actually in line with Buddhist thought on reality being revealed in its true form. For if we see *more*, we see *more accurately.*

In contrast again, however the Buddhists speak not of imagination, but of reality. With art we speak of invoking imaginative possibility. Nevertheless, imaginative space is part of the real world, in which case, although Buddhist thought seems not to address it, perhaps it is there as a constituent of true reality. It is possibly the birthplace of the expansion of being because we have to be able to imagine before we can perceive. The employment of the imagination, it must said, is one of the features that sets aesthetics apart from any other intervention, including mindfulness, even though it has been acknowledged that mindfulness has a role to play in creativity and flexibility of thought.

And what of the ultimate goal of both these interventions? In Buddhism, mindfulness is not an end in itself. Its goal is to end suffering. Happiness can only come about when perception is cleansed of its misconceptions. Is this where theories of aesthetics and mindfulness part ways? Perhaps but not necessarily.

For Dufrenne being present to the aesthetic object is not an end in itself. This state activates the affective a priori, i.e. categories of emotional feeling, which were dormant become liberated. This expands our being and engagement with ourselves and the world. Dufrenne does not mention the elimination of suffering but presumably liberation of emotional categories is a benefit to the development of self-consciousness and therefore well-being and happiness.

Furthermore, in the present context, it seems that the creation and appreciation of paintings appear to bring focus to the reciprocal nature of being. Surely this would reduce suffering – as a sense of oneness is inculcated. So it seems that although there are areas of discrepancy between mindfulness and painting there are possibly more points of similarity.

The most important difference between mindfulness and the aesthetic experience of painting is as follows. In the mindful experience we are orientated towards a given phenomenal object in a contemplative way seeking to embrace the fullness of its being. This means attentiveness to its structure and particular details, and, in the case of an artifact, the ways in which it was brought into being by the planning and activity of the creator arises. We are also concerned with the special way the object engages us – how we feel in the act of contemplating and responding to it.

It must be emphasized that the focus of this mindful activity is on the object in its actuality. If it is an artifact that we know to have been planned and made, we know that the work followed a specific rule of making, and that whilst there were possibly creative variations in how it was made, it is still bound closely to the following of a rule concerning how artifacts of that kind should be made. In the case of drawing or painting things are different. Obviously to make a drawing or a painting involves taking up the relevant materials, and in order to create an image of such and a thing or state of affairs the materials must follow a rule that results in a configuration that can be recognized as an image of this thing or state of affairs. However, the main emphasis of meaning is on how the rule is interpreted in particular terms and not simply on recognizing the kind of thing depicted. In a skilfully made practical artifact, we often note traits of the craftsperson's particular

style – but this is as a pleasing by-product; it is not the purpose for which the artifact was made. In artistic representation the opposite is the case – the artifact exists not to serve a function but to draw attention to how it has been made stylistically speaking.

It is through these contrasts that the mindful contemplation and the aesthetics of painting can be distinguished. Whereas mindfulness focuses on the rich actuality of the object, aesthetic appreciation centres on the image and its genesis – which means the realm of possibility. One can mindfully consider how a rule was followed in creating any artifact, but in the painting we focus on the fecundity of all the gestures and thought that went into its making – and the way these project a possibility of experience, rather than an actuality. Even if a painting represents something that exists, and even if we have experienced it, what is in the painting is something that has gone into the past, and which, in any case, we could not see by occupying the body of the artist. There is an invitation to 'see it like this'. And this invitation extends to envisaging the actual process of gestural creation itself. We cannot do so at the level of actuality. We know that the image emerged from gestures and we can imagine what these might have been like, but this is only a fantasy of possibility on our part.

This leads to the key point. When we aesthetically regard painting we are engaging with another person's expression of the world. But our seeing with them is only a fantasy. In everyday empathy with another person we try to engage with their actuality – to really try to feel as they feel. But the painting is not a person. It has become physically separate from its creator, and that means there is a distance between the artist and the viewer that allows imaginative freedom. We identify with a possibility of engaging with the world that is not tied down by the psychological pressures arising from 'real life' empathy.

The main difference between mindfulness and aesthetic appreciation, then, comes down to this. The aesthetic experience of painting converges upon the imaginative possibilities that the object projects for us at the level of space-occupancy whereas mindful contemplation of the object centres on the richness of its actuality. Elements of fantasy can enter in - when we try, for example, to imagine the gestures of the worker in making the artifact; or (when relevant) we appreciate associations arising from its formal qualities. But such aesthetic elements are subsumed within, and converge upon our sense of the object's actuality in *all* the dimensions that we can be mindful of. They become parts of a contemplative whole that ranges far beyond aesthetic attention. With drawing and painting, however, an opposite dynamic is at work. In attending to formal and expressive character of the painted surface *as* a painted surface we are attending to features that are also part of the work's fullness of physical being – things that can be regarded mindfully. But what really interests us is how such mindfully relevant features enable and function within the artist's vision of things – that possibility of seeing the world which is embodied in how the work exists as the fulfilment of a style of gesture.

The aesthetic experience can involve attention to total quiddity – it can use the techniques of mindfulness. But, ultimately these acts serve to open up possibilities of experience at a virtual level. The mindful attention is subsumed within the aesthetic experience. And similarly, in mindful attention to something we can attend to its aesthetic unity - its structure of appearance – insofar as it is one aspect of the sensuous particularity of the object in its total quiddity. In this case the aesthetic is subsumed within the mindful.

The result of these arguments is that mindfulness and aesthetic experience often swap and exchange patterns of attention – and, in this, they are mutually

reinforcing. But what separates them ultimately is their *overriding* principle of orientation intended – to either culminate in the mindful comprehension of an actual phenomenal object; or the deep aesthetic projection of a possible way of engaging with another person's way of experiencing the sensible world. It is the contrasting principle of orientation that gives them different intentional directions, the overlaps between them notwithstanding.

It may also be that the emphasis on mindfulness and on aesthetic experience, respectively, return us to the very foundations of the perceptual process, namely recognition and schemata. As shown in chapter two, Dufrenne explains our cognitive relation to the world. The various aspects of the a priori involve recognition of the formal and material conditions of our being and of the objects we encounter. We saw also the importance of the affective a priori – a felt affinity between the coherence of things and that of our own individual existence as an embodied subject. The a priori structures give us knowledge of things. They are meant to enable us to deal with the spatio-temporal flow of phenomena through grouping individuals under concepts. However, the individual - in contrast to category or classification, in all its individuality, escapes this net. To come to terms with 'uniqueness' in all its fullness, requires a special deployment of our recognitional capacities in the most focussed terms. This is what we have called mindfulness. It brings our cognitive hold on the world to completion by comprehending that which eludes the generality of concepts.

Aesthetic experience completes the cognitive process at another level. We will recall from chapter two that Dufrenne assigns a central role to schemata in the perceptual process. These are the features that orientate us in perception and enable concepts to be formed and applied. They are acquired when, through childhood experience, we learn the meaning of words through working out that they apply to

things other than those immediately present in the perceptual field. We habituate ourselves to *what it is like* for this concept to have application. Language and its concepts are bound up with schematization. Indeed, let us remind ourselves of Dufrenne's own description of schemata as:

> "a sort of pre-language, an original orientation of the body as still not speaking – an orientation by which consciousness becomes sensitive to certain experiences that language can later render explicit but that do not refer to any particular and nameable objects; instead they concern certain forms or structures of the world which the body prepares us to experience by means of the virtual knowledge it possesses."[414]

This yields the critical point. Schemata are our sense of what it is like for a certain kind of thing to exist in the way it does. Our sense of this is based on repeated engagements with individual examples of these things, but the individual cases on which this experience is based, drop out of view. The schemata accumulate gradually (as dispositions to engage with specific kinds of things in a certain way) as our body coordinates its hold on the world. However, when we draw or paint, we can represent things – often in great individual detail, without having to directly copy them, and can even do this without any reference to a particular actual instance of the thing we are representing. This suggests that *in drawing and painting, it is the capacity to schematize which is exercised*.

Normally, our schemata orientate us towards the relevant kind of perceptual given; sometimes they will operate purely in imaginary terms – as when we countenance the possibility of such and such a kind of thing without having an

[414] M. Dufrenne, *Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, p. 159

actually existing example of it in mind, but in these cases the schema is only a means to a cognitive end; it does not result in any kind of object on its own account. With drawing or painting, it does. Even if the image is based on something which does or did actually exist, it is not physically reproduced in terms identical to that existence. The artist creates an interpretation based on schematization exercised through pictorial means. S/he shows a way of being that characterises a particular possibility of how visual things of this kind might exist. We dwell on this because its aesthetic structure draws us to attend to it. It follows that whereas our individual encounters with the relevant examples of things are absorbed within the process of schematization, in the drawing or picture as aesthetic object, it is returned, and finds a mode of existence at the level of the sensible particular.

On these terms, then, mindfulness, and the aesthetic experience complete perception by presenting constitutive elements of perception, as objects of perception in their own right.

6.4 The Artist and the Spectator

Throughout, we have not differentiated clearly between the artist and the viewer nor did Dufrenne to any significant degree and this is an oversight. It is important to acknowledge that the respective experiences are different but also that they are not entirely different. Wollheim reminded us that the artist is also a spectator of his/her own work.[415]

Let us begin with the artist. It can be justifiably argued that the artist, engaged in the work, is practising a mindfulness task, akin to meditative breath-work. Any practising artist will recognise that time spent creating feels, in fact, like a suspended temporality, because focus becomes so concentrated that all else is

[415] Richard Wollheim, Painting as an art, London: Thames Hudson, 1990

excluded and time becomes meaningless. This is truly a mindful experience and one that is easier to enter than breath-work, where one has to force oneself to focus on the breath. Artist, McNiff articulates the artistic process accurately below:

> "The discipline of creation is a mixture of surrender and initiative. We let go of inhibitions which breed rigidity and we cultivate responsiveness to what is taking shape in the immediate situation."[416]

The creation of art is an *effortless* mindfulness experience because it happens by itself at a certain point in the creative process. This is what artists term "the zone". This state is characterised largely by what psychologist Abraham Maslow termed, "peak experiences."[417] This is, apparently, connected to affectivity, just as Dufrenne philosophised. Neuroscientists and psychologists have found that emotions affect the body in various ways[418] and that emotional and brain activity work together to produce transformative effects on the experience of embodiment.[419] Although the creation of art is an intentional action and requires much effort, this zone which is entered is actually entered *unintentionally.* In mindfulness practice, this zone is a similar place and this is why it commonly said that *yoga happens to you.* In this case, it is considered a 'spiritual' zone, by all accounts.

With regards to art, where does this leave the spectator, who did not engage in the creative process and merely spectates? This is where we would make the most use of Dufrenne's notion that aesthetic appreciation is a task; that viewing a painting

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[416] Shaun McNiff (1998) *Trust the Process: An Artist's Guide to Letting Go.* Boston: Shambhala Publications p. 2

[417] Abraham Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being,* 3rd Ed., New York: Wiley, 1998 pp113 - 126

[418] See A. Damasio, The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness, Orlando: Mariner Books, 2000 and A. Damasio, Descartes Error: Reason, Emotion and the Human Brain, London: Penguin Books 2005

419 See L. Nummenmaa, et al "Bodily maps of emotions," Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, vol. 111 no. 2, (2014) pp. 646–651

can lead a viewer to nothing; that hard work is in order. Although it is equally true that the artist must put in hard work, the artist is motivated by a vocational pull that is rewarding and at some point in the creative process, effort ceases. This is similar to 'asana-jaya' in yoga, which is the point at which the practitioner masters the posture and effort ceases, although, of course, the practice continues and deepens. Similarly, when an artist masters his/her style, the work improves all the more – the real work begins.

Essentially, for the spectator to gain anything from the aesthetic experience, the word 'spectator', to begin with, is itself a misnomer. In order to enter into the aesthetic process and experience aesthetic space, Dufrenne is correct, the subject must do more than 'spectate', they must participate. Dufrenne focuses most of his attention on the 'spectators' but perhaps this is because their task is all the more challenging – to enter into a process not of ones making. In order for the spectator to experience a painting as a mindfulness-based intervention, s/he does indeed have to put in the work that Dufrenne recommends - deliberate focus, attention, presence of mind, and the benefits will come only after much *intentional* action. The appreciation of paintings, can for many people, be a challenge in this way if the desired intention is not there, other art forms, which Dufrenne terms 'temporal' (as opposed to spatial arts) such as music, literature and performance art all seem to envelop the subject with an organic ease.

This same stance which the spectator must adopt in order to reap the benefits of the aesthetic experience must of course also be adopted by the artist in order to create, but the point is, this is the natural stance adopted during the creative process and although the artist must establish an atmosphere conducive to this, it will then happen of its own accord. It is worth noting that the stance which Dufrenne has

recommended for aesthetic appreciation is the one which is inherently present during the creative process.

Interestingly, this same disposition is exactly what the Buddhists advocated in order to achieve the mindful state, which ultimately frees the subject from the egotistical self. It is also of interest that during the creative process, and I can perhaps only speak for myself, there is no sense of egotistical self – because one is lost in, absorbed in, and one with the process. However, if the ego does enter the process, it causes a *craving* sensation, i.e. a critical attitude, a *wanting* to be better, a judgement, and then the work is ruined.

This is in direct opposition to the disinterested stance which has been discussed in relation to the viewer but in this case I am highlighting a point which is rarely emphasised: the artist also needs to adopt this stance in relation to his/her own self and creation *in order to create*. The non-judgmental stance is crucial to creativity. It is the egotistical self which is the critical voice, whether offering praise or criticism, it is an unwelcome interference. The artist must apply the disinterested attitude to the egotistical voice which judges both the work and the self.

In mindfulness practice, the practitioner is encouraged not to judge the self if the mind wanders rather than focusing. The practitioner must let it be what it is, keep practising and the desired state will come of its own accord – just like the zone that the artist enters when the egotistical voice is ignored.

6.5 Conclusion

My intention has been, in part, to answer the questions, what is the point of painting? Why has it enjoyed continued existence in an ever changing world? The argument is, that if we accept the benefits of mindfulness interventions in relation to self-consciousness in conjunction with Dufrenne's insights on aesthetics which have

been applied specifically to painting, our understanding of the intrinsic significance of painting will be enhanced. This is because we can see the many points in common between the two and Dufrenne's aesthetics can be expanded. We do not simply accept his arguments, we see that there is a bigger picture into which his theory fits - a foundation as it were - of which Dufrenne, himself was unaware. Furthermore, mindfulness theory completes Dufrenne's aesthetics and resolves issues that either lack clarity or that he chose not to develop. We have also identified that aesthetic and mindful experience maybe viewed as reciprocal in nature where they are different in section 6.3 above.

Does this elucidate anything new about painting? If we understand how it is a mindfulness-based intervention, we can see its value in a new light. In the present digital age, it is often thought that it is time to leave painting behind given the more exciting developments in aesthetic practice. I have attempted to show that, particularly because it is a gestural art, animated through the style of an embodied artist, painting occupies a special place, which is linked to the mindful attitude. As long as there are embodied artists emerging and willing to grace us with their style through their work, painting as an art will endure.[420]

The significant link to self-consciousness is inextricably bound up with consciousness in general terms. We have seen that Dufrenne touched on consciousness without elaborating and Crowther went further, clearly articulating painting as a self-consciousness-enhancing experience. But neither philosopher has

[420] It must be acknowledged that other art forms, of course, also have mindful aspects but in different ways, perhaps, than painting, and discussion of these other art forms is beyond the scope of this discussion.

actually remarked on how painting enhances self-consciousness through the benefits of mindfulness. Hence to go back to the original question, does this elucidate anything new about painting? The answer is yes, it shows us that the intrinsic significance of painting is due, in part, to the way in which is acts as a mindfulness-based intervention. There is a psychological significance to painting and it acts as an attentional control exercise. The creation and appreciation of painting can be seen as a practice in the fullest sense of the word, a somatic practice. But what can we do with this information?

Children are taught art history in school but not educated in the practice of appreciating paintings, and this is where the real joy and concomitant benefits of art lie, not in discovering which date what was painted. If students were introduced to the concept of total quiddity, it would have far reaching possibilities, instead of enriching the minority already converted. Often those who are motivated to appreciate the paintings of others paint themselves but approaching aesthetic experience as a practice and educating accordingly would have most benefit for those who will always only spectate, and of those, they are many. Dufrenne's point that aesthetic perception "goes against nature" serves to remind us that, just as being instructed in the art of painting improves and even gives birth to art works, being instructed on the appreciation of paintings gives birth to new and enriching experiences; this instruction, in practical terms, is in mindful perception.

Examination of the intrinsic value of painting has never been timelier. In the 1980s certain radical theorists took up the theme of death in painting and based their judgment on the claim that advanced painting had shown the signs of internal exhaustion or at least marked limits beyond which it could press.[421] Although it has

[421] Arthur Danto, *After the End of Art*, Princeton University Press,1997 p 4

been said that Danto pronounced that art died in the 1980s, Danto says that what *he* was talking about regarding shifts in the art world was not death but how one set of practices gives way to another and Danto stated, “Life really begins when the story comes to an end.”[422] He compares this to the German genre in Bildungsroman – the novel of formation and self-discovery - wherein the heroine arrives at full self-consciousness at the end of the story and this is “the first day to the rest of her life”.[423]

The problem with this comparison is that it infers that all those years of painting were simply a preparation for exciting new developments of the postmodern era. Painting becomes degraded as an entity in its own right of intrinsic significant value. That is not to take away from the compelling shifts in the art world, but painting enjoys a continued existence and even in the modern world of technological advances, which will develop art in innumerable ways, it is worth marking the value of painting. And so this basic question, “what is the value of painting?” is what I have attempted to answer. Dufrenne wrote in the 1950s and could not have imagined recent developments. Developing his ideas in the modern age has never been of more relevance.

For Danto in the 1980s contemporary developments marked the beginning of art and postmodern possibility including conceptual art. Nevertheless, concepts cannot replace painting. There is a rumour that Paul Delaroche proclaimed, on seeing the first daguerreotype, "From this day on painting is dead." However, this did not happen because a photograph cannot replace a painting. Painting enjoys an eternal ontology all of its own; new possibilities in the ‘art world’ can be welcomed into the

[422] Ibid p. 4
[423] Ibid p 5

tradition of art and become integrated with existing forms. There is room for many different types of art in the 21st century, old and new.

I contend that painting is, by nature, a mindfulness based intervention which when practiced through creation or appreciation sharpens perceptual skills and brings greater awareness of the environment, others and ultimately ourselves. Because it is experienced more consciously, *aesthetic space is a mindful space.* In both the contemplation of painting and mindfulness practice, reflection is made subject to the will. Things normally taken for granted are contemplated explicitly and deliberately. The subject is not simply experiencing an act of recognition but becomes absorbed in reflection. Although in both practices, conscious intention is involved, the experience brings about a new state of living that happens 'automatically.'

The concept of *otherness* is never far away from this. Mindfulness brings us into awareness of others and as Merleau-Ponty states, "culture allows us to dwell in the lives of others."[424] Dufrenne reminds us that this is our life also.[425]

As Crowther states:

> "Through making pictures, the visual imagination in general becomes autonomous, and invites both creator and viewer to inhabit the imaginative style – the artist's way of articulating the visible world. Pictures complete a striving to understand and inhabit the world that the generation of mental images tends towards."[426]

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[424] Merleau-Ponty, M. (1952) 'Indirect language and the Voice of Others' in Galen.A. Johnson, *Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993 p. 112
[425] See Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*
[426] Paul Crowther, 'How Images Complete Us, Imagination and the Unity of Self-Consciousness' *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 20(11-12) (2013) 101-123 p 123

In this thesis, then, the relation between mindfulness and painting has been clarified in depth by reference to Dufrenne's philosophy and aesthetics. His aesthetics is extremely rich and although it leaves room for further development, he has not received the recognition he deserves. He has humanised art in a distinctive way, highlighted its complicated psychological aspects and elucidated how this is a universal and collective phenomenon, not a private individual one. In effect, Dufrenne is the aesthetician who has most clarified the reciprocal involvement of subject and object of experience in painting as an act and as an art. Through all this, he gives us the most comprehensive philosophical means of understanding how mindfulness and painting relate - and does so with insights that allow mindfulness to be understood in much more concrete terms than is found in many of its theorists.

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