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AESTHETICS, PHILOSOPHY OF CULTURE AND "THE AESTHETIC TURN"

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> Zweifellos erleben wir gegenwärtig einen Ästhetik-Boom. Er reicht von der individuellen Stilisierung über die Stadtgestaltung und die Ökonomie bis zur Theorie . . . zunehmend gilt uns die Wirklichkeit im ganzen als ästhetisches Konstrukt.
>
> –Wolfgang Welsch

> Aesthetics should be . . . rethought in such a way that it becomes embedded in a broader context within philosophy of human culture.
>
> –Heinz Paetzold

> A book advocating philosophy as the reasoned pursuit of aesthetic living cannot harbor an essential dualism between reason and aesthetics, reflected in an unbridgeable divide between the modern and postmodern.
>
> –Richard Shusterman

I

"Aesthetics is a chaotic field of inquiry which has had unusual difficulty defining and organizing itself. It is also one of the most fascinating and challenging branches of philosophy", says Kendall Walton in his review of Michael Kelly's *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics.*[1] Walton evidently thinks of aesthetics as *philosophical* aesthetics, or, as *philosophy* of art, but aesthetics can be understood in a much wider context – as it often is nowadays– as a general theory of art and aesthetic experience, as the theory of specific art forms, and

[1] Kendall Walton, Review of *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Kelly, 4 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), *Times Literary Supplement*, September 29, 2000, p. 8.

as an integral part of the philosophy of culture. If philosophical aesthetics is a chaotic business, what then about aesthetics broadly conceived?

In this paper I propose to discuss some of the issues raised by Richard Shusterman and Wolfgang Welsch in their recent writings on the aims and purposes of aesthetics. Both philosophers advocate, with different emphasis and purpose, a reformation and transformation of aesthetics as an intellectual discipline, and they are both involved in the "aesthetic turn" in philosophy. I shall begin by sketching the background against which the current revival of interest in aesthetics occurs before discussing "the aesthetic turn" and in particular Shusterman's and Welsch's views.

II

Aesthetics as the systematic philosophy of art owes its existence, historically speaking, to the distinction between *aisthesis* sensory perception and experience) and *noesis* (reason and knowledge) in the classical philosophy of antiquity, the dichotomy between *aisthesis* and *noesis* dominating much subsequent Western philosophy and thought.

Aesthetics as a philosophical discipline, inaugurated by Alexander Baumgarten in the mid– 1750s but foreshadowed by Leibniz's reflections on the difference between clear and unclear ideas and sensations and their relationship to distinct (theoretical) ideas,[2] is paradoxically both a child of rationalism and the Enlightenment and at the same time a critique – albeit an implicit one – of an absolute, logistic rationalism, which does not grant cognitive value to *aisthesis*. Wolfgang Welsch rightly observes that Baumgarten conceived of aesthetics (i.e. philosophical aesthetics) as complementing and correcting a one-sided and arid rationalism.[3] Since the palmy days of the philosophy of art in the 19th century, when the philosophy of art was at the centre of the philosophical discussion and occupied such an important place in the philosophical systems of Hegel, Schelling and Schopenhauer,[4] aesthetics

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[2] Se Jeffrey Barnouw, "The Beginnings of 'Aesthetics' and the Leibnizian Conception of Sensation", *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of Art*, ed. Paul Mattick Jr. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 52-95.

[3] "Baumgarten hat die Ästhetik als Korrekturdisziplin des einseitigen Rationalismus konzipiert und begründet" (Wolfgang Welsch, *Unsere postmoderne Moderne*, 4e Aufl., Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993), p. 88.

[4] When aesthetics as the philosophy of art fell into disrepute during the last decades of the 19th century this was in large measure due to the overly speculative and "universalistic" character of Hegel's, Schelling's and Schopenhauer's metaphysics of art, which elicited

as the philosophy of art has been relegated to the outskirts of the philosophical landscape both in the phenomenological and the analytic traditions in philosophy during the first half of the 20th century.[5] During the 50s and the 60s, however, there is a renewed interest in the philosophy of art both in Continental philosophy ("continental" being an infelicitous geographical metaphor) and in analytic philosophy ("analytic" being an infelicitous chemical metaphor). Although ontology, epistemology, philosophy of science, philosophy of language and moral philosophy have dominated the philosophical scene, philosophical aesthetics conceived as the philosophy of art has gained a respected but subordinated position in general philosophy. This renewed interest in aesthetics is at least in part due to the "linguistic turn" in philosophy, which can be discerned both in phenomenological and hermeneutic traditions as well as in analytic ways of doing philosophy.

During the 1990s, however, aesthetics as the philosophy of art and as the reflection on aesthetic phenomena in general has become a major concern in many academic disciplines and interdisciplinary projects. A plethora of works in and on philosophical aesthetics published in recent years is a sign of the times, but also in several other disciplines such as cognitive science, the psychology of perception as well as in cultural studies the renewed interest in aesthetic questions is visible. In addition to Michael Kelly's *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* (1998), the first modern encyclopedia of its kind, six introductory books by Anglo-American philosophers on aesthetics have been published within no less than three years: Gordon Graham's *Philosophy of the Arts: An Introduction to Aesthetics* (1997), Dabney Townsend's *An Introduction to Aesthetics* (1997), George Dickie's *Introduction to Aesthetics: An Analytic Approach* (1997), Colin Lyas's *Aesthetics* (1997), James W. Mann's *Aesthetics* (1998), and Noël Carrolls *Philosophy of Art: A Contemporary Introduction* (1999). All these works are more or less firmly situated within the analytic tradition, and display both the characteristic virtues and vices of analytic aesthetics, the exception being Colin Lyas's book, which is by far the most original and engaging. The works

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an anti-philosophical bias in the emerging empirical discipines of art history and the history of literature.

[5] Important and influential works in the philosophy of art have been written during this period as well, in particular by idealistically inclined philosophers such as Benedetto Croce (*Estetica come scienza dell' espressione e linguistica generale*, 1902) and R. G. Collingwood (*The Principles of Art*, 1938) and by philosophers transforming and transcending the idealistic tradition, Ernst Cassirer's *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* (1923-9), John Dewey's *Art as Experience* (1925), Susanne K. Langer's *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study of Symbolism in Reason, Rite, and Art* (1942) and *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from "Philosophy in a New Key"* (1953) should be mentioned as well as Roman Ingarden's *Das literarische Kunstwerk* (1931) and *Untersuchungen zur Ontologie der Kunst* (1965).

by these Anglo-Saxon writers represent a more or less analytic and ahistorical approach to aesthetics and the philosophy of art, whereas Brigitte Scheer's introductory work, *Einführung in die philosophische Ästhetik* (1997),[6] is more a work in conceptual history ("Begriffsgeschichte") or the history of philosophy than a systematic introduction to the philosophy of art. Scheer claims that aesthetics has enjoyed a remarkable renaissance in the past fifteen years or so, not only in an institutional, academic context, but rather as a potent ferment, affecting many philosophical disciplines. In her view, philosophical aesthetics today has primarily a critical function, relativizing the claims of ahistorical reason, attacking the central paradigm of Western philosophy, the traditional, logocentric conception of reason. Philosophical aesthetics, in her view, is an inter– and transdisciplinary endeavour, and is together with epistemology one of the fundamental philosophical disciplines. [7]

There are, to be sure, aestheticians and philosophers of art, seeking to avoid the two extremes of a determined anti-historical approach and a resolutely historicist approach – both of which seem to me to occlude important aspects of art and aesthetics. Theoreticians such as Luc Ferry, Gérard Genette and Jean-Marie Schaeffer in France, Oto Marquard, Wolfgang Welsch, Heinz Paetzold and Martin Seel in Germany exemplify the attempt to combine an historical approach to the problems of art and aesthetics with a more or less systematic and constructive perspective.[8] How the historical and the systematic/analytic should be related to one another is a moot question; and we may well ask whether historical considerations are always relevant to

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[6] *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, 4 vols., ed. Michael Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), Colin Lyas, *Aesthetics* (London: UCL Press, 1997), George Dickie, *Introduction to Aesthetics: An Analytic Approach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), Dabney Townsend, *An Introduction to Aesthetics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), Gordon Graham, *Philosophy of the Arts: An Introduction to Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 1997), James W. Manns, *Aesthetics* (Armonk, USA, 1998), Noël Carroll, *Philosophy of Art: A Contemporary Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1999), Brigitte Scheer, *Einführung in die philosophische Ästhetik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997).

[7] Brigitte Scheer, *Einführung in die philosophische Ästhetik*, p. 1-5.

[8] See Luc Ferry, *Homo Aestheticus: The Invention of Taste in the Democratic Age*, trans. Robert de Loaiza (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), Gérard Genette, *The Aesthetic Relation*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *Art of the Modern Age: Philosophy of Art from Kant to Heidegger* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), Udo Marquard, *Aesthetica und Anaesthetica: Philosophische Überlegungen* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1989), Wolfgang Welsch, *Ästhetisches Denken* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1990) and *Grenzgänge der Ästhetik* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1996), Jörg Zimmermann, Hrsg., *Ästhetik und Naturerfarhrung* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1996), Heinz Paetzold, *Die Realität der symbolischen Formen: Die Kulturphilosophie Ernst Cassirers im Kontext* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1994), Martin Seel, *Ästhetik des Erscheinens* (München: Hanser, 2000).

philosophical analysis. In any case, there seems to be a growing awareness of the importance of historical and contextual approaches to philosophical problems, in particular to problems in the philosophy of culture and in aesthetics. When dealing with problems in aesthetics and the philosophy of culture a downright historicist approach dispensing with arguments, reducing philosophical questions to purely historical questions should be avoided, as should the other extreme, treating aesthetic and cultural concepts as if they possessed some internal ahistorical necessity thereby reducing philosophical questions to purely logical ones. Historical concepts have a logic and are amenable to conceptual analysis, logical concepts have a history and can be analysed from a historical perspective. Andrew Bowie's aspiration to avoid "the tendency towards merely 'monumental' history of ideas characteristic of some work in hermeneutics and the unconscious philosophical amnesia of much analytic philosophy" is certainly commendable.[9]

The revitalization and renewal of aesthetics is, however, not a purely academic matter, many theorists are convinced that contemporary aesthetics has, or, rather should, have a critical function in the larger culture as well; aesthetics is often conceived of as philosophy of culture and criticism of culture. As Michael Kelly says in the introduction to *The Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*: "[A]esthetics is uniquely situated to serve as a meeting place for numerous academic disciplines and *cultural traditions* [my italics]", aesthetics is "the critical reflection on art, culture and nature",[10] and Brigitte Scheer claims that "philosophical aesthetics has experienced an extraordinary renaissance during the past fifteen years, not primarily as an institution, which keeps itself within its own disciplinary boundaries, but as a ferment penetrating and transforming almost all philosophical areas".[11] Philosophical aesthetics has above all a critical potential because philosophical aesthetics in her opinion "repudiates the central paradigm of Western philosophy, the traditional logocentric conception of rationality and the absolutification of that conception".[12] Whereas "the linguistic turn" carried with it a heightened consciousness of the linguistic character and language-dependent character of our world views,[13] it is today appropriate to speak of an "aesthetic turn", she claims,

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[9] Andrew Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: The Philosophy of German Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1997), viii.

[10] Kelly, "Introduction", *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, xi.

[11] Scheer, *Einführung in die philosophische Ästhetik*, p. 1, my trans.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Scheer's characterization of the linguistic turn is somewhat inaccurate, for the linguistic turn involved above all a preoccupation with the structure of language, the relationship between word and world, and more generally the analysis of linguistic

because aesthetics takes the interpretative and constructive character of our sensations and perceptions of the world seriously.[14] In short, the aesthetic character of knowledge and experience in general is acknowledged in many quarters today, Scheer believes. Similar views are held by Wolfgang Welsch, who in his essay "Ästhetische Grundzüge im gegenwärtigen Denken" (1991), speaks of cognitive and epistemological aestheticization, the aestheticizing of knowledge and reality; in today's (post)modern world there is, he claims, a strong tendency, a tendency he apparently endorses, to view truth and reality as aesthetic phenomena – aesthetic in a wide sense of the term. In Welsch's view, constructivism is the dominant philosophy today, in stressing the constructedness of personal identity, of reality and of the world constructivism implies an aestheticization of truth, knowledge and reality.[15] Welsch argues in his essay "Ästhetik außerhalb der Ästhetik – Für eine neue Form der Disziplin" (1995) in favour of an "aesthetics outside of aesthetics", aesthetics as a multi-disciplinary "trans-aesthetics", which transcends the boundaries of traditional art centred philosophical aesthetics and occupies itself with the analysis and criticism of contemporary culture and theory. Since the aesthetic has invaded most, if not all, areas of life and culture in "our postmodern modern world", philosophy, and in particular philosophical aesthetics must follow suit, Welsch believes.

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meaning. See *The Linguistic Turn: Essays in Philosophical Method*, ed. Richard Rorty (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1967). The term "linguistic turn" was, contrary to a widespeard opinion, not invented by Rorty, the logical positivist Gustav Bergmann seems to be the inventor of the expression "linguistic turn", by which he meant something else than Rorty, who adopted the term for the collection of essays *The Linguistic Turn* (See R. Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism: Essays 1972-1980*, Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982, xxi). The different "turns" in philosophy and cultural theory seem to have replaced the adaption of Kuhnian "paradigms" to the humanities; after "the epistemological turn" we have "the linguistic turn", "the interpretive turn" (Cf. *The Interpretive Turn: Philosophy, Science, Culture*, eds. David R. Hiley, James F. Bohman, Richard Shusterman, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), and "the cultural turn" (Cf. *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, eds. Victoria E. Bonnell & Lynn Hunt, University of California Press, 1999).

[14] Scheer, *Einführung in die philosophische Ästhetik*, p. 3., my trans.

[15] Wolfgang Welsch, "Ästhetische Grundzüge im gegenwärtigen Denken", 1991, in W. Welsch, *Grenzgänge der Ästhetik* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1996), 62-105, trans. as *Undoing Aesthetics* (London: Sage, 1997). An important discussion of constructivism is found in John Searle's *The Construction of Social Reality* (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1995). Ian Hacking offers an interesting analysis of various forms of constructivism in his *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

III

What then does "aestheticization" mean, what are the implications of the "the aesthetic turn" for research in the cultural sciences, and what is the status of philosophical aesthetics after "the aesthetic turn"? Several answers suggest themselves, but before considering Richard Shusterman's and Wolfgang Welsch's views a few comments on the answers proposed by the Faculties of the Humanities and Social Sciences at Uppsala University in the "Joint Programme of Renewal for the Humanities". "The Aesthetic Turn", which forms part of the proposed programme in "Cultural Analysis and Contemporary Criticism", is described as follows:

> Within philosophical aesthetics today, a frequently used term is "the aesthetic turm", or in other words there is an increasing tendency to view the aesthetic dimension as primary and fundamental to the composition of our perceptions and experience of reality, a tendency that is for instance an outcome of the cultural upheaval in which we are living and which requires cultural analysis with a more aesthetically conditioned reflectiveness. This deepening and extension of the aesthetic dimension outside the traditional delimitations of art faces the aesthetic disciplines with new and vital research tasks.[16]

The main points can be summarized as follows: (1) the aesthetic dimension is often taken as primary as regards our perception and apprehension of reality, (2) this alleged tendency in contemporary thought is the result of recent cultural changes (the transition form modernity to postmodernity?), (3) the aesthetic disciplines including philosophical aesthetics should broaden their horizons so as to include aesthetic phenomena outside the arts in their purview. The first claim is certainly true, the aesthetic dimension is taken as primary by many leading philosophers and cultural analysts today, but whether they are justified in doing so is a moot question, therefore the second claim that "cultural analysis with a more aesthetically conditioned reflectiveness" is required in order to understand contemporary culture (and art?) seems to me more doubtful. The third claim is unexceptional if it is interpreted as an exhortation to analyse the diversity of aesthetic phenomena (and aesthetic aspects of diverse cultural phenomena) in contemporary society, which to my mind also includes a sharpened awareness of the complexity of the notion of the aesthetic, or, rather, of the different and heterogeneous notions of the aesthetic at play in the discourse of "the aesthetic turn".

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[16] Uppsala University, "Humanities and Social Sciences", Proposal 2000-12-15, p. 23.

The background of "the aesthetic turn" and the tasks lying ahead for aesthetics (broadly conceived) are clarified in the following passage:

> There has been a renewed interest in aesthetics during the past few decades, both philosophical aesthetics and aesthetic analysis in the wider sense, largely due to the critical discussions surrounding postmodern theory (philosophy, aesthetics, cultural analysis) and postmodern art, literature, and architecture. The aestheticization of morality and lifestyle is often said to be a characteristic feature of contemporary culture. While traditional aesthetic theory often displayed little or no interest in cultural spheres outside of high culture, and therewith limited its purview to fine art and belles lettre, contemporary aesthetics has broadened its scope to encompass everyday life and popular culture as well. This means that the very notion of the "aesthetic" is undergoing a transformation: from having been a relatively well-defined concept, it has become a more variegated and chaotic notion, reflecting the complex reality which is its object of study.[17]

Here "the aesthetic turn" is explicitly associated with postmodernism and postmodern theory. Whereas the observation that traditional aesthetic theory (probably philosophical aesthetics is meant) has paid little or no interest to aesthetic phenomena outside of high art and culture is certainly correct the claim that "contemporary aesthetics" nowadays includes into its purview "everyday life and popular culture as well" is almost as certainly an exaggeration. In the first place this characterization applies to some, perhaps many, contemporary aestheticians, (notably Shusterman and Welsch), but – for better or worse– not to all or even most philosophical aestheticians. In the second place we should note that "everyday life and popular culture" has for a long time caught the interest of researchers in various disciplines dealing with aesthetic phenomena (sociology of culture, sociology of art and literature). Therefore it is a moot question whether the notion of "the aesthetic" has undergone, or, is undergoing a transformation. In fact, one issue of fundamental importance is what is meant by "the aesthetic" and "aesthetics" by the champions of "the aesthetic turn", and last but not least , what could and what should be meant by these notions. Nor am I so sure that "the aesthetic", has been "a relatively well-defined concept" in the traditional discourse of philosophical aesthetics and the aesthetic disciplines; it seems to me that "the aesthetic turn" trades partly on the etymologically speaking original meaning of "the aesthetic" as "what pertains to sensations and perceptions and the sensuous enjoyment of sensuous and perceptual qualities".

[17] Ibid., pp. 24–5.

I am inclined to think that much of the impetus of "the aesthetic turn" derives from privileging one aspect of the traditional meaning of "the aesthetic", or, one use of the notion of "the aesthetic" at the expense of others, and granting "the aesthetic" in the sense of "sensuous qualities", "what pertains to (pleasurable) sensations and perceptions", pride of place. One aspect of "the aesthetic" has become dominant in "the aesthetic turn" at the expense of others, and in particular, at the expense of "the artistic". The claim that "the aesthetic turn" owes much to postmodern theory and postmodernism (as well as postmodernity) is, I believe correct, therefore many interesting and exciting tasks await the philosophical aesthetician and cultural analyst, for, postmodern theory and postmodernism in the arts and in the culture at large is a very mixed bag.[18] We need to ask ourselves which postmodern theories and ideas have influenced and determined the nature and shape of "the aesthetic turn". Needless to say, our attitude towards "the aesthetic turn" is conditioned by our views on postmodern theory and postmodernism in general.[19]

Lest my remarks concerning the proposal for the renewal of the humanities at Uppsala University be misunderstood, I hasten to add that the proposal to explore "the aesthetic turn" is, in my view, very timely and amply justified, but "the aesthetic turn" should not simply be taken for granted, nor, should the nature and extent of "the aesthetic turn" be taken as unproblematically given; in short "the aesthetic turn" should be subjected to a critical analysis from various points of views (philosophical, art historical, sociological), something that is certainly not excluded by the wording of the document. My own view is that there is indeed – for better or worse – a widespread aestheticization of many aspects of contemporary everyday life and mass culture (as well as of theory), but "hedonistic consumerism" is in many contexts perhaps a more appropriate label for what is called "aestheticization". I also believe that it is important for the cultural sciences including philosophical aesthetics and the philosophy and sociology of culture to confront "the state of culture" critically. When it comes to the

[18] We should also note that, according to some analysts, postmodernity and postmodernism are already passé. The architectural historian and critic Philip Jodidio, for example, asserts that "it is clear that the time of the Post-Modern is gone" (Philip Jodidio, *Contemporary European Architecture*, vol. IV, Köln: Taschen, 1996, p. 6).

[19] Who is the paradigmatic postmodern theorist? Foucault, Baudrillard, Derrida, Lyotard, or Rorty? Although only Lyotard and Rorty (at a time) accepted the label "postmodernist", all thinkers mentioned are habitually regarded as crown witnesses for postmodernism. But there are fundamental and irreducible differences between the "postmodernism" of a Foucault and a Derrida and a Baudrillard, consequently the implications for "the aesthetic turn" differ widely depending on which theorist we regard as typical of "the postmodern turn".

aestheticization of theory, and the claims that knowledge and reality have been "aestheticized" I am not so sure that this is what actually has happened across the board, moreover I part company with those who applaud the aestheticization of morals, theory, reality and what not. I shall offer some arguments for my position in the sequel, but now that the cat is out of the bag, I turn to the views of Richard Shusterman and Wolfgang Welsch, perhaps the most influential proponents of "the aesthetic turn".

IV

"The project of modernity (with its Enlightenment roots and rationalizing differentiation of cultural spheres) has been identified with reason", says Richard Shusterman in his recent work, *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life* (1997).[20] The postmodern, he continues, is "contrastingly characterized as dominantly aesthetic".[21] Now, both Shusterman and Welsch are prone to contrasting the modern and the postmodern in this rather cavalier way, but although there clearly is something in this contrasting characterization of the modern and the postmodern, I think we should be wary of such snappy and formulaic descriptions of something as vast, polymorphic and heterogeneous as modernity and postmodernity. In spite of the fact that Shusterman warns us against taking these terms ("the modern" and "the postmodern") "as denoting dichotomous, inimical essences",[22] he characterizes Habermas as "championing the claims of reason and modernity", and Rorty as "representing the aesthetic and postmodern".[23] Although I think Shusterman has the aestheticization of morals and life-styles in mind (perhaps world views and reality as well) when he speaks of the postmodern as largely aesthetic, he apparently also believes that postmodern theory is in some sense "aesthetic", or, more aesthetic than traditional, modern theory, since aesthetic aspects enter into all or most kinds of theorizing according to him. Postmodernism has taken an aesthetic turn, says Shusterman, thinking of the (aesthetically inspired?) critique of reason, and above all, of the "the postmodern implosion of aesthetics into ethics and politics".[24] What does the "implosion of aesthetics into ethics and politics" actually mean? One thing it

[20] Richard Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 113.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., p. 114.

[24] Ibid., p. 127.

doesn't mean, I suggest, is that "ethics and aesthetics are one", as Shusterman implies in quoting Wittgenstein.[25] Wittgenstein's "parenthetical phrase", he claims, is "today so meaningful", because it "gives pointed expression to important insights and problems of both aesthetic and ethical theorizing in our postmodern age".[26] According to Shusterman, Wittgenstein "denies modernism's aesthetic ideology of artistic purism" and "implies that such isolationist ideology is no longer viable now that the traditional compartmentalization of knowledge and culture threatens to disintegrate into manifold forms of interdisciplinary activity".[27] Shusterman is, of course, aware of the context in which Wittgenstein's remark (proposition 6.421 in *Tractatus*) occurs, a remark expressed "in that austere economy of pregnant minimalist expression so characteristic of the modernist style",[28] as he puts it. Shusterman knows that for the early Wittgenstein ethics as well as aesthetics (as expressions of value) involve seeing things *sub specie aeternitatis*, that ethics and aesthetics are transcendental and concern the realm of the mystical, a conviction that is – mildly put– uncongenial to a postmodernist.[29] Therefore Shusterman's claim that "Wittgenstein's ambiguous dictum that ethics and aesthetics are one by erecting the aesthetic as the proper ethical ideal"[30] supports the postmodern "aestheticization of the ethical" is surprising. It may be the case that the postmodern conviction "that aesthetic considerations are or should be crucial and ultimately perhaps paramount in determining how we choose to lead or shape our lives" is widespread,[31] but it is certainly not Wittgenstein's idea nor is it an idea we should accept lightheartedly.[32]

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[25] Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 236-7.

[26] Ibid., p. 237.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., p. 236. Wittgenstein's proposition 6.421 reads: "It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental. (Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same)" (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 1921, trans. D.F. Pears & B. F. McGuiness, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), the original German parenthetical sentence being: "(Ethik und Ästhetik sind Eins)".

[29] According to Hans-Johann Glock Wittgenstein's "sibylline pronouncement" involves the following points: (1) ethics and aesthetics are concerned with necessities, which by their very nature cannot be expressed in meaningful propositions, but only shown, (2) ethics and aesthetics constitute a higher, transcendetal realm of value, and (3) ethics and aesthetics are based on a mystical experience (Hans-Johann Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996, p. 31).

[30] Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, p. 237.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Cf. Joseph Margolis' remarks about Shusterman's use of Wittgenstein's dictum (J. Margolis, "All the Turns in 'Aestheticizing' Life", *Filozofski Vestnik* 1999:2, "Aesthetics as

But what exactly is involved in "the aestheticization of the ethical", and what does "aesthetic" mean here? Shusterman offers the following clues. The aestheticization of the ethical, he says, is "perhaps more evident in our everyday lives and the popular imagination of our culture than in academic philosophy",[33] this aestheticization being manifested "by our culture's preoccupation with glamour and gratification, with personal appearance and enrichment".[34] This, Shusterman says, is "the postmodernist ethics of taste", whose most influential philosophical advocate is Richard Rorty. Rorty favours "the aesthetic life", which among other things implies the ideal of private perfection, self creation and a life motivated by "the desire to embrace more and more possibilities",[35] and the "aesthetic search for novel experiences and for novel language" [novel languages being ways of defining oneself in novel ways].[36] The "ethics of taste", Shusterman argues, is a consequence (though not a logical consequence) of anti-essentialism regarding human nature. If the absence of a human essence, Shusterman says, implies no determinate ethic, it cannot imply an aestheticized ethic either, but "it still can lead to an ethics of taste, since in the absence of any intrinsic foundation to justify an ethic," Shusterman continues, "we may reasonably be encouraged to choose the one that most appeals to us".[37] The appeal of an ethic, he believes, is ultimately an aesthetic matter, "a question of what strikes us as most attractive or most perfect".[38] It is important to note that Shusterman, following Bernard Williams, makes a distinction between ethics and morality, ethics being mainly concerned with values and the good life and morality with obligation.[39] Bearing this distinction in mind Shusterman's view that the aestheticization of ethics is a good thing becomes perhaps less objectionable, but what about moral obligations? Can moral obligations also be "aestheticized" and conceived of in terms of taste, choice and appeal? Shusterman seems to think so, for, he

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Philosophy", Proceedings of the XIVth International Congress of Aesthetics 1998, Part I, Ljubljana 1999, p. 199).

[33] Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, p. 238.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Richard Rorty, "Freud and Moral Reflection", in *Freud: The Moral Disposition of Psychoanalysis*, eds. J. H. Smith & W. Kerrigan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) p. 11.

[36] Ibid., p. 15.

[37] Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, p. 243.

[38] Ibid.

[39] "Ethics, as distinguished from morality, recognizes that there is more to the good life than the fulfilment of obligations", says Shusterman (ibid., p. 245). According to Williams "morality [is] a special system, a particular variety of ethical thought" (Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, London: Fontana/Collins, 1985, p. 174).

argues that "[f]inding what is right becomes a matter of finding the most fitting and appealing gestalt, of perceiving the most attractive and harmonious constellation of various and weighted features in a given situation or life".[40] Finding what is right is, Shusterman claims, "no longer the deduction of one obligation from another more general obligation [. . .], nor is it the outcome of a logical calculation based on a clear hierarchical order of obligations".[41] Therefore, Shusterman concludes, "ethical justification comes to resemble aesthetic explanation in appealing not to syllogism or algorithm but to perceptually persuasive argument [. . .] in its attempt to convince".[42] Two comments are in order: first, Shusterman almost imperceptibly switches from "moral" (in moral obligation) to "ethical" (in ethical justification), but he presumably means that moral deliberation, finding out what our obligations are in a certain situation, is rather like aesthetic explanation and justification; second, he speaks of ethical justification, as resembling aesthetic explanation "in its attempt to convince". This seems to be a rather strange "disembodied" view of moral obligation, for even if it is the case that we sometimes are called upon to justify our actions from a moral point of view and although it is also true that we sometimes feel the need to justify our actions and the actions of others and that therefore the purpose of offering justifications is to convince (ourselves or others), this is by no means always the case when trying to find out what course of action to take and when asking ourselves (or others) what our moral obligations are. Moral obligations are invoked not only in order to justify a certain course of action, or to convince somebody of the right course of action. Finding out (by whatever means – deliberation, intuition, spontaneous feeling) what our moral obligations are in a given situation leads normally to action; moral obligations are action-guiding. The main purpose of finding out what our moral obligations are is not to justify an action or to attempt to convince somebody of the rightness of the action in question, but simply to do the right thing. Shusterman's view of moral obligations seems to me to be strangely contemplative and "intellectualised". When Shusterman says that "[f]inding what is right becomes a matter of finding the most fitting and appealing gestalt" he has, I think, either pronounced a tautology or actually left the universe of discourse of ethics and morality behind. For we may well ask about the most fitting and appealing gestalt, "fitting and appealing from what point of view"? Fitting or appealing from a moral point of view or from an aesthetic point of view? If the answer is "from a moral point of view"

[40] Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, p. 245.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.

we are dealing with a tautology, if the answer is "from an aesthetic point of view" we have, I suggest, not so much aestheticized ethics and morality, but abandoned ethics and morality altogether. Applying aesthetic considerations and standards of the kind envisaged by Shusterman (and Rorty) to ethics and morality means that questions of right and wrong, of justice and equality, should be answered by invoking "taste", "appeal" and "liking" instead of by appealing to norms and standards (however changeable, heterogeneous and flexible). Shusterman's view implies to my mind the denial of the rationality of ethics and morality and moral deliberation, and the dissolution of ethics and morality as guides to action. The aestheticization of ethics and morals is, in my view, not a new ethics or morality, but a new a-morality (I am not saying immorality). In spite of this, and somewhat paradoxically, Shusterman can be seen to advocate a new ethics and a new morality. For all his anti-essentialism and anti-foundationalism Shusterman seems to think that his anti-essentialism and anti-foundationalism provides some kind of justification for a new ethics and morality, for an aestheticized ethics and morality. Shusterman's views are therefore reminiscent of earlier endeavours to find a "justification" for ethics and morality. But "to propose a new justification [for morality] would be to inaugurate a new practice",[43] as Paul Johnston has argued convincingly to my mind. If the proposed practice ("the aestheticization of ethics") differs in fundamental respects from what has hitherto been considered to be ethics and morality we are justified in regarding the new practice as a new a-morality. Shusterman may be right in maintaining that in these postmodern times aesthetic consideration play a fundamental role in "choosing" life-styles and values and in deciding what the proper and right action is in given circumstances. But if we applaud this state of affairs, as Shusterman does, have we not discarded ethics and morality altogether, or, rather, accepted a playful hedonism – some would say nihilism – as the guiding principle of life and action?[44]

I have said that Shusterman's idea of the aestheticization of ethics is less objectionable than his analysis of morality, because it is obvious that there are many conflicting versions and visions of the good life in contemporary society, and it seems that we have no "neutral" criteria by which different versions of the good life could be judged. Nevertheless, something more can be said about the supposedly arbitrary and "aesthetic" choices people make regarding

[43] Paul Johnston, *Wittgenstein and Moral Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 69.

[44] Paul Johnston's remarks about Bernard William's "justification" of morality apply in this case too: "Central moral concepts such as justice, integrity, and guilt are marginalized or rendered opaque, while the very notion of obligation comes to seem highly problematic" (Johnston, *Wittgenstein and Moral Philosophy*, p. 73).

the good life in these postmodern times. In the first place, Shusterman like Rorty and Welsch exaggerates the extent to which we are able to choose a life-style and an ethic. Economic, social, cultural and psychological realities impose, I suggest, robust limitations to what life-styles, and which ethics are open to us. Nor should it be forgotten that the choices open to us and the choices we actually make may be – to a larger extent than we realize – conditioned by factors beyond our control. The aestheticization of ethics seems to appeal mainly to liberally minded postmodern philosophers and intellectuals and reflects perhaps also the predicament of many "ordinary" middle-class persons in affluent societies, but large sections of the population in affluent societies, not to mention poor societies, have a much more restricted range of "choices" of life-style and ethics. [45] I also believe that something more than just aesthetic appeal enters, and should enter our ethical deliberations, our thinking about the good life. Consider the following example. I suppose racist and sexist values and attitudes can be part of an ethic, i.e. of a conception of the good life. If we accept the aestheticization of ethics, it seems that the only thing that can be said about this ethic is that we dislike it, that it does not appeal to us. But racist and sexist values are not free-floating phenomena, they have a history and they fit into certain social, economic, cultural and psychological patterns. These values are, for those, who embrace them and live by them not something they just find appealing, many racists, perhaps most actually believe that it is a scientific truth that non-whites are mentally and morally inferior to whites. Since this view is a delusion, a racist ethic can be rejected, not just on aesthetic grounds, not just because we dislike it, but on rational grounds.[46] Even if aesthetic considerations may enter our deliberations about the good life, I think, Shusterman and company play down the role of reason and argument in ethics.

V

In the wake of "the aesthetic turn", Wolfgang Welsch envisages aesthetics as a new "prima philosophia". Modern epistemology, Welsch claims, has been continuously "aestheticized" since Kant. There is, he says, "a fundamental aestheticization of knowledge, truth and reality".[47] Aesthetic categories such

[45] See, for example, Zygmunt Bauman's *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998).

[46] Even if arguments are unlikely to convert racists to a more humane and tolerant ethic it remains true that racism is not only distasteful, but also irrational.

[47] Welsch, *Grenzgänge der Ästhetik*, p. 96, my trans.

as appearance or fictionality ("Schein"), mobility ("Beweglichkeit"), groundlessness ("Bodenlosigkeit") and uncertainty ("Schweben") have, according to Welsch, replaced "the classical ontological categories of being, reality, permanence".[48] But it is in the first place far from clear, whether the "classical" categories have in fact been replaced by the categories of appearance, mobility and uncertainty, and in the second place I fail to see what is specifically *aesthetic* about these latter categories. In any case Welsch's contention that "our 'first philosophy' has to a significant degree become aesthetic",[49] seems to me to be based on a confusion. Although aesthetics is regarded a new "first philosophy", it is a first philosophy of an entirely different kind from the "first philosophy" of, say, Descartes or Kant, that is to say, not a first philosophy at all, for aesthetics as a "first philosophy" implies, according to Welsch, that, in fact, there are no foundations, and aesthetics is not a new "foundational" philosophy or science: "Aesthetics [. . .] does not offer a foundation".[50] The very absence of a foundation, Welsch contends, characterizes the aesthetic turn, and constitutes a paradigm shift. Welsch's use of the Kuhnian term "paradigm" incidentally reveals the affinity between the discourse of "turns" and the discourse of "paradigms" – and the problems with both. Welsch's use of "paradigm" in this context, seems to me to be one among thousands of examples of misusing an vulgarizing the Kuhnian conception of paradigms and paradigm shifts.[51] Welsch detects the signs of aestheticization everywhere in contemporary theorizing, in philosophy as well as in the sciences: "The insight that reality is aesthetically constituted is not only shared by many aestheticians, but is a view held by all thinking theorists of science and reality in the 20th century".[52] In order to support this rather extraordinary claim (those who do not understand, let alone accept, the claim that reality is aesthetically constituted are apparently unthinking reactionaries) Welsch appeals to Nietzsche and refers to his influence on contemporary thinking. Even those, who are not Nietzscheans, he claims, are forced to argue

[48] Ibid., p. 71, my trans.

[49] Ibid., p. 96, my trans.

[50] Ibid., p. 97, my trans.

[51] In the postscript (1969) to *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* Kuhn says that there are "two very different usages of the term [paradigm]" in the original text, viz. paradigms as the constellation of group commitments, which means that there is a "disciplinary matrix", which is shared by "the practicioners of a particular discipline", and paradigms as shared examples (Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,*1962, 2nd. ed., University of Chicago Press, 1970, pp. 182, 187). No cultural analyst or social scientist has to my knowledge spoken of "disciplinary matrixes" or "shared examples", perhaps because there aren't any in the human and the social sciences.

[52] Ibid., p. 85, my trans.

like Nietzsche when the fundamental problems in the philosophy of science are discussed, and Welsch quotes Karl Popper's well-known view that all our knowledge is uncertain and changeable.[53] If Nietzsche said that all knowledge is uncertain and if Popper said that all knowledge is uncertain, that certainly does not mean that Popper argued in the same way as Nietzsche, nor that Popper implicitly admitted that the "fundaments" of knowledge and reality are in some sense aesthetic. We find a similar *non sequitur* in Welsch's discussion of Rorty's *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* and in his comments on the work of some prominent physicists. Rorty showed, in Welsch's opinion, that "all our 'fundaments' are aesthetically constituted, in that they are throughout cultural artefacts".[54] It is, according to Welsch, common knowledge that physicists such as Bohr, Dirac, Einstein and Heisenberg realized that their theories were not representations of reality, but rather productions. They were, moreover, aware, Welsch says, that imagination is indispensable for succesful scientific research. Now Rorty's conception of knowledge and reality as presented in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, is certainly non-foundational, constructivist and pragmatist. But why should we say that all our fundaments are aesthetically constituted because they are cultural artefacts? Most, perhaps all aesthetic phenomena are cultural artefacts and if knowledge and reality are cultural artefacts, they are also cultural artefacts, but from that fact (if it is a fact) it does not follow that knowledge and reality are aesthetically constituted. Welsch is here conflating the notions of "aesthetically constituted" and "culturally constituted". His case is equally weak in regard to the famous physicists he adduces as evidence for the importance of aesthetic consideration in scientific theorizing. For, even if imagination enters scienfic research (it does), and even if aesthetic considerations play a role in scientific theorizing (they do), there is no reason to conclude that Bohr and company used aesthetic arguments in solving crucial theoretical problems. Welsch's statement that the mathematician and philosopher Poincaré believed aesthetic skills to be more important than logical ones in matehmatics is equally misguided, for in the passage quoted by Welsch, Poincaré says no such thing; aesthetic consideration, says Poincaré, play a great role in mathematics, and he emphasizes that mathematicians need imagination, a special "mathematical imagination".[55] This, I suggest, has very little to do with the aesthetic turn and the aestheticization of knowledge and reality. The truth is that we can detect aesthetic aspects everywhere (even in art), we can view things *sub specie*

[53] Ibid., p. 85.
[54] Ibid., p. 87.
[55] Ibid., p. 92, footnote 72.

aestheticae, but that does not make everything aesthetic except by an illicit conceptual manoeuvre.

Welsch is on firmer ground (!) when he analyzes the aestheticization of life-styles, ethics and everyday life. Aesthetic processes, he contends, are not only of decisive importance in the new media, aesthetic (in the sense of "virtual") processes create a mediated reality, or, rather, an imaginary room, where the distinction between real and unreal seems to vanish. Welsch detects a different form of aestheticization in the stylization of subjects and life-styles, that may ultimately lead to the *homo aesteticus.* All life forms, all approaches to reality and to ethical norms, Welsch claims, have assumed "a peculiar aesthetic quality". Welsch is here referring to what I have earlier called "hedonistic consumerism". The criteria for choosing between different moralities, he thinks, cannot be but aesthetic. In discussing Shusterman I have argued that talk of choosing life styles and ethics is somewhat exaggerated; I quite fail to see how anyone actually chooses a life style or an ethic in the way one chooses a shirt or a cake (not that choosing a shirt or a cake is an entirely arbirtrary matter). There is, to be sure, an element of choice and arbritration in reflecting on ethics and morality, but I do not believe that we can choose a life style or a morality at will. There are, I think, profound psychologically, socially and culturally determined limits to what we can conceivable choose, believe and do.

I have argued that Welsch's aestheticization rests, at least in part, on conceptual confusion and conflation. Welsch, however, claims that those who find the aestheticization of everyday life etc. distasteful often avail themselves of a cheap conceptual trick and argue that aesthetics by definition deals only with art. The opponents of aestheticization theories are in Welsch's opinion therefore guilty of an illicit conceptual move. This attitude, Welsch continues, is escapistic, and does not enhance our philosophical understanding of contemporary reality.[56] In response to Welsch's charge I admit that I dislike some of the effects of the aestheticization of everyday life (as does Welsch). But that is surely beside the point. In arguing that most of the phenomena Welsch regards as the effects of aestheticization I am not saying that these aspects of contemporary life should be ignored, nor that they shouldn't be studied by philosophers. They fall, however, more naturally within the domain of a general philosophy and sociology of culture than within aesthetics. I see no point in broadening the concept of the aesthetic and aesthetics to such an extent that almost everything from science, philosophy, ethics, morals, life styles, the products of the entertainment industries, etc. are regarded as aesthetic phenomena to be studies in the new discipline of trans-aesthetics. It

[56] Ibid., p. 20.

is indeed remarkable that almost everything, except art, seems to be included in the aestheticization of reality, and thus a fit subject for the new "trans-aesthetics".

In his contribution to the International Congress of Aesthetics in Ljubljana in 1998 Wolfgang Welsch presents what he regards as a case study of the aestheticization of the everday. Contemporary sport, according to Welsch, "obviously represents a striking example of today's aestheticization of the everyday".[57] There is a shift Welsch maintains in todays's sport "from an ethical to an aesthetic perspective" on health.[58] Today's sport, he believes, has "turned into a celebration of the body",[59] the older "modern" practice of sport presumably being something else, mortifying the body, for example, or forcing the body to perform beyond all reasonable limits. "This novel type of training", Welsch maintains, "respects the body and does away with the old ideology of mastering the body",[60] and Welsch quotes the Finnish world champion in cross-country skiing Mika Myllylä as saying that "the greatest enjoyment comes from training, not from winning".[61] Had Welsch quoted Myllylä as an example of a new "aestheticized" attitude to sport if he had finished seventh or fifty-seventh in the world chamionships in Ramsau in 1999,[62] had he quoted him as an example of "a new care for the body" if he had known that Myllylä would be caught using perfomance enhancing drugs during the world championships in cross-country skiing in Lahti in February 2001? The fact that the Finnish skier, whom Welsch regards as a shining example of a new "postmodern" aestheticized approach to sport, was caught cheating, is not only ironic, but casts a rather lurid light on postmodern aestheticization processes. The distinction between reality and appearance is more important– both ontologically and morally than Welsch is prepared to admit.

VI

Although the discourse of "aestheticization" and the "aestheticization of theory, reality and ethics" is a relatively new (and contemporary) phenomenon, it is not without precedents. The concepts of the aesthetic, of

[57] Wolfgang Welsch, "Sport – Viewed Aesthetically, and Even as Art?", *Filozofski Vestnik* 1999:2, "Aesthetics as Philosophy", Proceedings of the XIVth International Congress of Aesthetics 1998, Part I, Ljubljana 1999, p. 213.

[58] Ibid., p. 217.

[59] Ibid. p. 215.

[60] Ibid. p. 218.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Myllylä won the 10, 30 and 50km cross-country races.

aesthetics, and of aestheticism are open to different and conflicting interpretations. The concept of aestheticism, as used by the historian of ideas Allan Megill in his book *Prophets of Extremity* (1985) shows some affinities to Shusterman's and Welsch's conceptions of aestheticization. By "aestheticism" Megill understands the tendency "to see 'art' or 'language' or 'discourse' or 'text' as constituting the primary realm of human experience",[63] a tendency he regards as characteristic of much recent avant-garde thought. This aestheticism, emphasizing the potential of language to create its own reality is, according to Megill, a counterpart to the post-Romantic notion of the work of art creating it own reality.[64] Megill's "aestheticism" shares with postmodern aestheticization the critique of Enlightenment thought in stressing the constructivist character of discourse and language, perhaps also in the attempt "to bring back into thought and into our lives that form of edification, that reawakening of *ekstasis*, which in the Enlightenment and the post-Enlightenment view has largely been confined to the realm of art".[65] The "aestheticism" of the Enlightenment critics such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault and Derrida, and the "aestheticization" discourse of Shusterman and Welsch can thus be seen to reformulate and to transform central themes in Romantic and post-Romantic aesthetics. Shusterman's and Welsch's reformulation of aesthetics and celebration of (certain aspects) of the aestheticization of contemporary life can be seen as a democratic and pragmatic version of the high-brow aestheticism Megill finds in Nietzsche and Heidegger.

In order to put the renewal of aesthetics envisaged by Shusterman and Welsch in sharper focus, it may be useful to contrast their views of the tasks of aesthetics with more traditional conceptions of the aims and purposes of philosophical aesthetics. The Polish philosopher and aesthetician, Bohdan Dziemidok, presents the following definition of aesthetics in *The Blackwell Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Social Thought* (1993):

> In its modern meaning aesthetics is most frequently understood as a philosophical discipline which is either a philosophy of aesthetic phenomena (objects, qualities, experiences and values), or a philosophy of art (of creativity, of artwork, and its perception) or a philosophy of art criticism taken broadly (metacriticism), or, finally, a discipline which is concerned philosophically with all three realms jointly.[66]

[63] Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 2.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid., p. 342.

[66] Bohdan Dziemidok, "Aesthetics", *The Blackwell Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Social Thought*, eds. William Outhwaite & Tom Bottomore (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p. 4.

Aesthetics is thus basically a philosophical discipline concerned with aesthetic phenomena in general and with works of art in particular as well as the philosophical analysis of art criticism (metacriticism). Although the philosophical study of aesthetic phenomena in general are said to form part of aesthetics, Dziemidok's definition is clearly art centred in a way that Shusterman's and Welsch's conceptions of aesthetics aren't.[67] The British philosopher and aesthetician Malcolm Budd presents a similar definition in another recent publication, *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1998), when he describes aesthetics as "consist[ing] of two parts: the philosophy of art, and the philosophy of aesthetic experience and character of objects or phenomena that are not art".[68] Whereas the problems of the philosophy of art are relatively well defined, "the philosophy of aesthetic experience" concerns a variety of heterogeneous phenomena, including not only aesthetic experiences of nature (environmental aesthetics), but it hardly includes "the aestheticization of ethics and everyday life".[69]

There is nothing wrong in studying the aestheticization of ethics and everyday life, on the contrary, it is important to study the manifold aestheticization processes at work in contemporary culture, but I doubt whether these concerns should be at centre of philosophical *aesthetics*. The arts and the experience of art raise many important and intriguing problems that should not be put into the mixed and rather ill-defined bag of "trans-aesthetics", nor should they be swallowed by a new "soma-aesthetics". Aleš Erjavec is right in saying that there is a "broadening of the notion of the *aesthetic*" at work here and that Welsch's trans-aesthetic implies a "collapsing of the *aesthetic* and of *aesthetics*".[70] I entirely agree with him that art should be

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[67] Cf. Susan Feagins definition of "aesthetics" in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (1995), where aesthetics is defined as " the branch of philosophy that examines the nature of art and the character of experience of art and the natural environment" (Susan Feagin, "Aesthetics", *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Robert Audi, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 10). Aesthetics is thus not identical with the philosophy of art, it includes environmental aesthetics, but hardly "the aestheticization of ethics and everyday life".

[68] Malcolm Budd, "Aesthetics", *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 1, ed. Edward Craig (London: Routledge, 1998), 59.

[69] *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* is intended to replace Paul Edwards large *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, published in 1967. The definition of "aesthetics" offered by John Hospers in that work reads: "[T]he philosophy of art covers a somewhat more narrow area than does aesthetics, since it is concerned with the concepts and problems that arise in connection with works of art and excludes, for example, the aesthetic experience of nature" (John Hospers, "Aesthetics, Problems of", *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol 1-2, ed. Paul Edwards, New York: Macmillan, 1967, p. 36).

[70] Aleš Erjavec, "Aesthetics as Philosophy", *Filozofski Vestnik* 1999:2, "Aesthetics as

viewed as "a relatively distinct phenomenon requiring its relatively distinct theoretical reflection".[71] The problems of representation in art, the value of art, the rationality of critical judgement etc., will not go away by simply ignoring them.[72] If we are not interested in such questions, we are not, I suggest, doing philosophical aesthetics (but, rather, undoing aesthetics). The questions concerning the aestheticization of theory, ethics and everyday life are best viewed as problems for the philosophy and sociology of culture and the criticism of culture. Art and aesthetics are too important to merge into an undifferentiated new discipline studying "the aestheticization of everything".[73]

Philosophy", Proceedings of the XIVth International Congress of Aesthetics 1998, Part I, Ljubljana 1999, p. 18.

[71] Ibid.

[72] See, for example, the excellent collection of essays *Art and Representation* which discusses the problem of representation in general and the problems of representation invarious art forms (*Art and Representation: Contributions to Contemporary Aesthetics*, ed. Ananta Ch. Sukla, Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2001).

[73] This article is partly based on a paper presented at the International Colloquium "Aesthetics as Philosophy of Culture", organized by the Slovenian Society of Aesthetics in Ljubljana, 29 June-1July 2000. A few passages in sections II and IV have appeared in my article, "Aesthetics between Philosophy and Art: Four Variations", in Swedish in *Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* 2000:20-1, pp. 55-77.