

WORK AND THE AESTHETIC

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ABSTRACT

Work and the Aesthetic argues for the priority of a work-centred account of aesthetic interest. This 'Work Theory' proposes an internal relation between good work as an activity and our aesthetic interest in made things. Each is conceptually related to the other so that to be good, work as an activity must engage aesthetic interest; and aesthetic interest in products, in making, viewing and using them, is an interest in different aspects of good work. Good work is characterised around three elements, the technical, functional, and authentic, which essentially relate to work that is skilful, responsive to design problems, and freely chosen. Work Theory has important antecedents in the Arts and Crafts Movement, modern conceptions of the work of designers, and in existentialist accounts of free choice. Work Theory's core tenet of an internal relation between good work and aesthetic interest throws light on some problematic areas in philosophical aesthetics, including the nature of aesthetic interest, the relations of craft to art, aesthetic education, and what is meant by 'everyday aesthetics'. Work Theory also provides a framework for understanding what it is for lives to be aesthetic.

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PREFACE

The origin of this thesis is a philosophical interest in made things – everyday objects as well as artworks – and their relations to aesthetic interest. There is an historical interest too of course in made things. In 2010 the British Museum told the 'history of the world in 100 objects'¹. In that context, the naturalist and broadcaster Sir David Attenborough speculated about the work of the maker of the oldest of the 100 objects, an Olduvai stone chopping tool, made 2 million year ago: the object is made to fulfil a function but the maker also gets “some satisfaction from the knowing that he was going to do it very effectively, very economically and very neatly. In time, you would say he'd done it beautifully...”². Now there are design awards for such good work: the winner of the 2011 British Design Award was Plumen 001, a low-energy light bulb, described as “a masterclass in using imaginative design to transform something of bland utility into a thing of coveted beauty, which then becomes more usable and more enjoyable”³. I believe these examples illustrate an *internal relation* between good work and aesthetic interest; and that this relation has philosophical significance, particularly in explaining the sources of aesthetic interest and the idea of ‘everyday aesthetics’.

Part 1 sets out the principle tenet of Work Theory that good work is good because its features necessarily engage aesthetic interest; and that aesthetic interest in made things is properly aesthetic when attending to – in making, viewing and using – work that is skilful, functional in the broadest sense, and authentically done. The internal relation between good work and aesthetic interest, then, comprises three elements, the technical, the functional and

¹ Neil MacGregor, *A History of the World in 100 Objects* (Allen Lane, 2010)

² Ibid, p.13

³ *Brit Insurance Designs of the Year* (Design Museum, 2011), p.176

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the authentic. The 'technical' relation is further characterised in Part 1 in terms of good workmanship, both by hand and machine-made. The 'functional' relation is characterised by successful unions of form with function, and I examine this in the context of the professional work of design. Work also involves choices of what to make or at least, and more commonly, how to make. Work Theory contends that work is good – alongside it being necessarily skilful and functional – when chosen or done on 'authentic' grounds. Authentic choice involves original ideation in the special cases of art making. But authenticity in Work Theory extends to imaginative plans and creative execution in making, and is evident in the decisions about finish made by craftsmen and in decisions about form and functionality by designers.

Part 1 concludes with an examination of Work Theory's philosophical and non-philosophical antecedents. These are identified as the arts and crafts debate – especially around the use of machines and workmanship, a debate initiated by John Ruskin's account of the 'Gothic worker'; modernist ideas about design – captured in modernist slogans about the best architecture (Louis Sullivan's 'form follows function' being the best-known); and ideas of existential choice – particularly Jean-Paul Sartre's suggestion that art making is exemplary free choice.

Part 2 of *Work and the Aesthetic* is organised around four issues in philosophical aesthetics examined from the perspective of Work Theory, namely aesthetic interest, the relations between art and craft, aesthetic education and ideas of everyday aesthetics. In the section on aesthetic interest (Part 2, Section 1) I argue that Work Theory improves on Roger Scruton's development of Ludwig Wittgenstein's account of everyday aesthetic interest by introducing and properly differentiating between aesthetic interest and its internal relations to different aspects of good work (namely the technical, functional and authentic aspects of good work and their relations to finish, form and artistic choice). I argue that Work Theory captures and explains the aesthetic interests of good workers, and our aesthetic interest in made things

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as users, in features of good work and aesthetic interest that are omitted from Scruton's account. Their inclusion means it is not necessary to introduce a separate faculty of 'taste' to explain 'the real point and value' of aesthetic interest.

In the section on art and craft (Part 2, Section 2) I argue that the aesthetic interests of craftsman as designers and skilled workers does not indicate their 'art', but aesthetic interests specific to good design and workmanship. As such, craft, so conceived, is a significant contributor to our aesthetic lives without it being art (and without any theoretic requirement that craftsmen be properly called artists). Craft functions to support made things of authentic design and workmanship, where authenticity is revealed by creative choices of *how* to make something.

In Part 2, Section 3, I argue that Work Theory supports the view that aesthetic education is a broad church embracing aspects of both art appreciation and the wider goals of moral and political improvement and change through political artworks. It concludes that neither of these available goals of aesthetic education are determined by ideas extrinsic to the idea of good work and its relation to aesthetic interest. In other words, the idea of aesthetic education is not explained in terms of education to establish and enhance a separate faculty of artistic taste; nor of any pre-established moral-political commitment that should determine an artwork's style and content. Work Theory then suggests a divided idea of aesthetic education corresponding to good work's internal relations to aesthetic interest. Firstly, artistic creativity is unteachable in any reasonable sense that accords with everyday ideas of imaginative originality, but makers and viewers assess the authenticity of artistic choices (including overtly moral-political ones) and in so doing accrue and accumulate art-appreciative resources. Also, design elements and principles can be taught and related to the problems that particular functional objects necessarily present to designers. And particular crafts can be taught according to the skills they

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demand of qualified practitioners. Aesthetic education is internal to these art, design and workmanship aspects of good work, directing us only to their best practice.

Part 2, Section 4, critically examines the 'Everyday Aesthetics' programme, and its specific examinations of different instances of supposed everyday aesthetic experience, arguing that it wrongly concludes an essential difference between the aesthetics of artworks and that of other made things and activities. A significant consequence is a falsely divided philosophical aesthetics. While Work Theory argues the idea of a divided aesthetic interest between different aspects of good work (recognising in the process an aesthetics of the 'everyday'), that divided aesthetic interest – between authentic artistic choices, good design and skilled workmanship – does not support the 'Everyday Aesthetics' conclusion of theoretically discrete realms of everyday and art-centred aesthetics.

I conclude *Work and the Aesthetic* with a 'Postscript' which argues that the idea of 'aesthetic lives' can be explained in terms of the different internal relations that apply between good work and aesthetic interest: each relation directs us to varying types and degrees of choice in what humans make as good workers. Aesthetic lives – lives guided by aesthetic interest – are led primarily by artists, designers and skilled workers, and by those with an understanding of their good work. And aesthetic lives are important because they produce things societies value: works of art and objects of function that allow us to flourish. In coming to these conclusions, I show how Work Theory contrasts with similar claims made by Richard Sennett for 'the craftsman' (in its relation too to Hannah Arendt's idea of '*homo faber*') and by Ellen Dissanayake for '*homo aestheticus*'.

Author's declaration: I hereby declare that this thesis is my work and has not been previously submitted, either in this or a different form, to this or any other University for a degree.

PART 1

WORK THEORY

1 The internal relations between good work and aesthetic interest

The idea of a relation between work and the aesthetic

The general idea of a relation between work and the aesthetic is suggested by our intuitions and experiences of *good work*. From examples of the earliest made things to contemporary design awards, an interest in the beauty or aesthetic value of all made things – including objects of everyday use as well as artworks – evidently refers to (at least in some significant measure) the work that has gone into their production. We have in mind then a fundamental idea of ‘good work’ when, for example, we sense a maker’s ‘attention to neatness and economy’ in producing an effective stone chopping tool, or the ‘imaginative design’ of a low-energy light bulb. We have an idea that work as an activity determines the aesthetic value of a product; and when that value is positive, we think the work that went into it ‘good’ – I will refer to ‘good work’ throughout in that general sense of good *working* or *making*. The idea of good work then rests on some basic and familiar experiences and intuitions about work as an activity, about its relation to the aesthetic value of products, *and* about its relation to products that function well (the neatness of the work supports the effectiveness of the chopping; the design of the light-bulb makes low-energy use appealing, and so forth) – in what follows I add and examine many more examples from the work of artists, designers and craftsmen to support this general idea.

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But why is this of philosophical interest? And what kind of relation is proposed? The two questions are linked because I will argue that the work-aesthetic relation is an internal relation between good work and aesthetic interest; and that so understood, philosophical issues, particularly around the sources of aesthetic interest and its relation to 'taste', and around the formulation of an 'everyday aesthetics' distinct from an 'artworld aesthetics', are seen in a new light. I call the whole account of the internal relations between different elements of good work and aesthetic interest 'Work Theory'. Before beginning to detail those relations and then their philosophical significance, however, a note on the concept of an 'internal relation' is required.

Internal relations and the work-aesthetic internal relation

Following James Bogen's definition, an *internal* relation between x and y exists "if x could not be the same item, or an item of the same kind, without standing in relation R to y "⁴. By extension then an external relation exists if one item, x , stands in some relation R , to another item, y , but neither its identity nor its nature depends upon this being the case - x then is *externally* related to y . For example: the number 2 is internally related to 1, since no number can be identical to 2 without being greater than 1. By contrast, a relation between two people, one of whom is taller than the other, is external given that both individuals remain the same individual of the same kind regardless of their relative heights.

To argue then that good work is internally related to aesthetic interest is to argue that its identity and nature depend on its relation to the aesthetic – it is what it is because of that relation. Good work, in other words, cannot exist if aesthetic interest does not exist. This relation is at the core of Work Theory, but its significance in terms of issues around the sources of

⁴ James Bogen, 'Relations, internal and external', *Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Ed. Ted Honderich (OUP, 1995)

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aesthetic interest and the idea of 'everyday aesthetics' is revealed by analysis of the 'moments' or 'elements' of good work. I identify these elements as internal relations between skill, function and authenticity and different aspects of aesthetic interest.

So, in summary, I will argue that a maker's exercise of a skill necessarily engages aesthetic interest in the product's finish in its users; a designer's drawings and prototypes necessarily marry an interest in form with an object's function; and the maker's own ideas start the process of making artworks, generate designs for functional products, and guide workmanship, thus creating new objects of aesthetic interest. Likewise then, aesthetic interest in makers is explained by their attention to their particular named craft skills; by their grasp of the purpose of the work at hand, by a full comprehension of the design problem being addressed; and by their thoughtful choices of what and how to make. By extension, users' aesthetic interest in made things is properly a recognition of these features of good work, so that their sense of the 'felt rightness' of something is a recognition of its workmanship, design and creativity.

As characterised, Work Theory's fundamental internal relation between good work and aesthetic interest is not a *strong* one – that is, while good work cannot exist without aesthetic interest, the relation does not operate in reverse⁵. In other words, we can conceive, at least, the existence of aesthetic interest in our lives without the existence of good work – such a conception can rest simply on the existence of our aesthetic interest in the natural world. There are two preliminary points to be made here then in respect of Work Theory: one about the reasonableness of a theoretical prioritisation of aesthetic interest in made things; the other about how Work Theory deals with the aesthetics of nature.

⁵ Francois Clementz, 'Internal, formal and thin relations' in A.Reboul (ed.) *Philosophical Papers Dedicated to Kevin Mulligan*, Geneve, 2011, URL <http://www.philosophie.ch/kevin/festschrift> - Clementz calls a relation that is "vice versa" a "strong" internal relation.

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Giving philosophical priority to the aesthetics of made things seems a reasonable move given the pervasiveness of the made in our lives: we exist – if not all of us, then surely the vast majority – primarily as workers in a built environment. Furthermore, if there is an *essential* connection between that kind of life and aesthetic interest, then the priority is surely warranted. The development of Work Theory in what follows aims to justify this focus on good work. There remains an issue though about how the integrity of the idea of the aesthetic generally is maintained, if a made/natural dichotomy of aesthetic interest is assumed.

A note on the aesthetics of nature

I justify prioritising philosophical enquiry in aesthetics on the made rather than on our aesthetic experience of nature in terms of: 1) the pervasiveness of the made in our everyday lives; and 2) the promise of philosophical insights into the nature of good work that also resolve problems about the sources of aesthetic interest and about ‘everyday aesthetics’. This prioritisation does not commit Work Theory to repeating the error of neglecting the aesthetics of nature by supposing it can be explained in terms of the aesthetics of art – a neglect and error identified by R.W. Hepburn⁶. R.W. Hepburn noted a range of ‘aesthetic possibilities’ between our aesthetic interest in natural objects like a leaf (delighting in its vein patterns perhaps) to ‘losing oneself’ in the grandeur and wilderness of a mountain range⁷. The experiences are unlike those appreciating art objects because, on Hepburn’s account, the aesthetic appreciation of nature is distinctively intimate and engaged, and, unlike art appreciation, is unframed.

⁶ R.W. Hepburn, ‘Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty’, in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*, Eds. Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen (Blackwell, 2004), pp.521-534

⁷ Hepburn, p.525

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Similarly, Malcolm Budd argues that the aesthetics of nature is distinct from that of art, especially in the case of natural objects, which are 'subject to change' so lack "an optimal condition, according to their creator's intention, in which their aesthetic properties are manifest"⁸. So relatedly the "vital difference between art and nature...[is that] works of art are our own creations. But nature is not our creation"⁹.

But Work Theory proposes an aesthetic theory across all made things, not just artworks; and does not argue that this account extends to nature. *Ex hypothesi* the internal relation between good work and aesthetic interest is one-way, conceivably allowing then an aesthetics of nature characterised in Hepburn's and Budd's terms to be argued independently. However, it is important to note two points about the relation between Work Theory and any aesthetics of nature – one about the scope of Work Theory, the other about the unity of aesthetic theory generally. First, for Work Theory the internal relation between good work and aesthetic interest extends across all made things and so explains many areas that have occupied the attention of 'everyday' and 'environmental' aesthetics. These two related theoretical approaches share the Hepburn-Budd view of a distinct non-art aesthetics but – I will argue below – falsely divide aesthetic theory between art and non-art¹⁰. In short, much of the aesthetics of the everyday environment are explicable in terms of Work Theory, that is, in terms of a general theory of the aesthetics of the made; and this narrows the range of an aesthetics of nature *qua* 'environment' to the aesthetics of 'wilderness' or other purely natural products and processes. The examples used to illustrate Work Theory in what follows seek to establish a boundary there that does not also falsely conflate all non-art aesthetic interest. Second, I believe that the idea of a

⁸ Malcolm Budd, 'Aesthetics of Nature', in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Ed. Jerrold Levinson (OUP, 2003) p.133

⁹ Budd, p.128

¹⁰ See Part 2, Section 4 'Everyday Aesthetics'

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comprehensive aesthetic theory across both made things and the natural world is a virtue and consistent with Work Theory. In this regard, Work Theory does not challenge the idea of a singular notion of aesthetic experience (and its development in what follows sets down, I believe, a challenge to theories that would). So, for example, in examining the 'Everyday Aesthetics' thesis I will argue that its division between art and the everyday is falsely premised on the supposed disjunctive character of aesthetic experience, as either 'disinterested' (for art appreciation) or 'engaged' (for everything else)¹¹. Work Theory supports the idea of aesthetic experience as phenomenologically and axiologically distinct from everyday experiences (for example, from merely personal, pleasurable responses then) across all things. Our sense of something being 'just right' (the characteristic phenomenology of aesthetic experience) combined with it having some explicable general value might indicate that the aesthetics of nature too is a matter of good *working* (appealing perhaps to biological or evolutionary function, albeit clearly distinct from the working of things made by us) – but I do not pursue that notion here, only note that Work Theory is, at the very least, not necessarily divisive of the idea of the aesthetic generally¹². To reiterate, my focus is on the made within an overarching, singular notion of aesthetic experience.

¹¹ Again, see Part 2, Section 4 'Everyday Aesthetics'

¹² In this vein though see, for example, Parsons and Carlson – they develop a notion of 'Functional Beauty', the idea that a thing's function is integral to its aesthetic character, which suggests perhaps a strong internal relation between work (albeit in an extended sense beyond good work as I characterise it for made things) and the aesthetic. Glenn Parsons and Allen Carlson, *Functional Beauty* (Oxford University Press, 2008), p.2

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Skill and aesthetic interest

Skill, defined as practical knowledge combined with ability, is one essential characteristic of good work. It also establishes a link to the internal relation between good work and aesthetic interest. Good work *qua* skill involves an interest in the finish of made things; in turn aesthetic interest in the finish of products – both in making and use – is explained by the demands of particular skills that deliver it. By 'finish' is meant the visible detail of a product emergent on its making. It contrasts with the prosaic, non-qualitative meaning of 'finish' as merely the final piece of work, the 'last coat of paint', that completes a product. Similarly, this meaning contrasts with ideas of decorative or ornamental work that might be said to provide 'finish' to products, but which are effectively – for Work Theory – separate products. Ornamentation has its own full-blown aesthetic, in other words, comprising its own (doubtless various) standards of finish, design and creativity, which in turn can be judged good or bad.

There are, it goes without saying, a huge number and variety of human skills. Typically we think of *craft* skills in the context of good work. These are sets of skills associated with named crafts – like potting and furniture making, extending as new technologies emerge to include programming in the 21st century – that produce particular kinds of utilitarian products – like pots and vases, chairs and tables, and computer software. Craft skills are techniques and their application reveals good or bad workmanship. Techniques obviously vary from craft to craft – the potter's being different from the carpenter's and so on – and guides and manuals explain techniques for every craft. In short, they can be taught. A technique that is learnt and applied well in making something is marked by an attention to detail, to that product's finish, and is evidence of good workmanship. Correspondingly, a product looks well-made when makers apply techniques with an eye for a product's finish. A well-made product may serve any function

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(there is no moral dimension to good workmanship): in other words, the craftsman's skill simply delivers a design.

Work Theory does not *a priori* limit skills or techniques to handicrafts. Different technologies present different opportunities for their skilled use and therefore for an aesthetic interest in the kinds of finish they produce, be it a potter's wheel or a programming language. Aesthetic interest in the well-made is explained craft by craft, object by object, in terms of good workmanship, that is in terms of the attention to detail or finish in the application of a technique or techniques. It is not, in itself, however, merely an aesthetic interest in a product's form, which comes from its overall design.

Function and aesthetic interest

Good work is also characterised by successful unions of form with function. A successful product depends on its designer(s) being fully cognisant of the functional requirements that a project to make something sets. Tall office buildings and housing estates present different functional requirements (and sets of requirements) and so generate different kinds of design problems. Different design problems create the conditions for different formal design solutions. Correspondingly, aesthetic interest (realised in aesthetic pleasure in use) in the overall form of made things is generated by design work's necessary attention to a product's function(s).

A product's function is its designed use; and in good design that function is necessarily fully conceived as the product's 'design problem'. It includes the core or simple function(s) of a product (scissors that cut, for example), but also specific or complex functions that meet particular needs (cutting cloth and being safe to use), and cultural or normative functions (made of wholly recyclable materials, to complete the example). Paradigmatically, living and working spaces (homes, factories and offices) generate a multiplicity of functional demands from the

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simple to the normative, from core functions associated with shelter to complex normative functions about the types of houses and workplaces that support 'the good life'. Functional demands set the parameters of design problems; good designs function well as products in so far as products are experienced as 'just right' in use. Aesthetic interest then in made things resides in our experience of their functioning well, as well as in their finish and associated sense of being well-made.

In coming to this conclusion about our experience of objects in use, Work Theory thus endorses some version of aesthetic functionalism – that aesthetic interest is determined by practical use – for everyday objects of use. It correspondingly opposes a view of aesthetic independence that states aesthetic interest (in made things) can be accounted for in its entirety independently of the function a made thing fulfils. Neither does Work Theory endorse an aspectual aesthetic appreciation of made things, aesthetic interest switching between finish and use, where each has its own discrete appreciative grounds. In Work Theory the grounds of both the aesthetic appreciation of finish or appearance and of an object in use are good work. Aesthetic interest in finish is accounted for by reference to skills and these skills are applied appropriately or not in terms of delivering a design; and designs deliver a made thing's functional requirements. In other words, an aesthetic interest in a product's finish is related to the product *qua* functional product (rather than anything else) through the necessity of good workmanship delivering a design. An aesthetic functionalism/independence dualism – where some aspect at least of aesthetic interest is accounted for independently of a product's function, usually its 'appearance' – is therefore not endorsed by Work Theory.

Work Theory's version of aesthetic functionalism extends to artworks if they fulfil functions *qua* art which then account wholly for their aesthetic value. Otherwise, aesthetic independence – or a combination of independence and functionalism – would hold for this class of made things. The dualism between aesthetic functionalism for made things of use and

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aesthetic independence (or a mix of independence and functionalism) for art depends then on anti-functional accounts of art. These oppose the idea both that art is descriptively functional and that it is normatively functional¹³. Descriptive functionalists argue that all artworks – good bad or indifferent, and regardless of artistic intention – necessarily fulfil certain functions, be they psychological, social and so on. Alternatively, normative functionalists argue different cases for how artworks ought to function, and so artworks succeed or fail as art against standards set by their proposed function. Work Theory has nothing to say about normative functionalism, making no claims about what properly constitutes art's function(s). There are no grounds there then for Work Theory to extend aesthetic functionalism to artworks. Similarly, in characterising one feature of good work as explicitly functional – that is as a broad understanding in makers and users of the design problem set by making a particular thing – Work Theory assumes that the functions of made things of utility can be empirically and culturally explained with relative ease (and in most cases there is no explanation required for the simple or core functions at least of objects of utility). But such a descriptive function – one that at least hangs on a simple or core function – has proved problematic for art; and so again there are no grounds yet established for a general aesthetic functionalism across utilitarian artefacts and artworks.

However, Work Theory contends that the difference – the relative ease of identifying descriptive functions in objects of utility contrasted with an unresolved equivalent artistic function – lies in the kind of making involved rather than in a fundamental functional/non-functional dichotomy. Art making is descriptively functional in the following sense. A to-be-made object of utility presents a functionally conditioned challenge – that is to say a specific challenge

¹³ The distinction between two functional views of art, descriptive and normative, is taken from David Novitz's article 'Function of art' in *A Companion to Aesthetics*, Ed. David Cooper (Blackwell, 1992)

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to perform a named function, to cut, or hold, or provide a safe and educational place to play, and so on – to a maker's skill, design and authenticity. These challenges present functional demands that can be met *and* the product can be meritorious or not in aesthetic terms. In other words, the challenge set for makers by a design problem is fundamentally different from that of simply carrying out a spec. The work can be *good*, that is, well-made and designed. Also the to-be-made artwork presents similar challenges of design and delivery to the maker(s). Ordinarily understood, making an artwork involves a special authenticity or freedom of choice. Artistic ideation includes the formation of an idea to make something in addition to questions that necessarily follow about how the thing will be made. In short, the maker as artist, in choosing to make something at all, effectively chooses a work's function – creates a new function – by setting out a design problem and raising questions about appropriate workmanship. In contrast, the maker of everyday objects of utility – as skilled worker and good designer – enhances and improves the existing stock functionality in the world (through good workmanship and imaginative designs).

If these claims of differentiated authenticity in making are correct, then the claim of a general aesthetic functionalism in terms of good work – across all made things – is sustained while still maintaining reasonable intuitions about the real differences in making objects of utility and artworks (essentially centred on ideas of self- and problem-generated creativity). *Ex hypothesi*, art making is shown to be functional, albeit in peculiarly authentic ways, because each case of making an artwork necessarily involves practical problems of delivering an idea. The inclusion of artworks in Work Theory's account of an internal relation around functionality between good work and aesthetic interest also affirms Work Theory as a general theory of making.

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Authenticity and aesthetic interest

Work involves choices of what to make or at least, and more commonly, how to make. Work Theory contends that work is good – as well as it being necessarily skilful and functional – when chosen or done on 'authentic' grounds. In ordinary language, the term is broadly synonymous with a person's choices being genuine, honest and in character. It naturally extends then to its more common use when referring to the authenticity of artworks – that an artwork is not a copy – and also more technically to authenticity in musical performance – that a piece is performed using the style and instruments contemporary with its date of composition. Philosophically, although related still to the ordinary usages, 'authenticity' has a more specific meaning relating human choices to the necessary structures of human existence. In summary, existential philosophies propose a fundamental clash between an individual's ability to freely choose actions and the structured situations – the organisation of family, economic and cultural life, for example – in which this putative freedom finds itself. Characteristically in existentialist philosophy, this essential paradox of harnessed freedom is then argued to be realised as feelings of psychological anguish within the individual. At that point the individual can choose their actions authentically, their identity or role in life, freeing themselves from predetermined courses of action, or – acting in bad faith – deny themselves that existential choice and revert to an unreflective, conformist life. This existential meaning of authenticity also relates to a further sense – distinct from ideas about fakes and originals, and authentic performance – of authentic making in the arts, 'expressive authenticity', which rates artistic making in terms of originality and sincerity¹⁴.

¹⁴ The idea of 'expressive authenticity' is taken from Denis Dutton as "having to do with an object's character as a true expression of an individual's or a society's values and beliefs".

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In Work Theory this expressive authenticity – within the overarching concept of existential authenticity – is more broadly conceived beyond the arts: it has a specific meaning in characterising and understanding good work generally. It relates firstly to the choices makers necessarily make about techniques and materials, and about conceiving a design problem. And it relates – once these decisions are made – to their practical delivery in terms of actual workmanship and design. All these considerations confront a maker as moments of choice. In the first instance, these are choices about whether or not to skimp on materials, for example, or uncritically deliver a poor design that will only poorly fulfil a product's function, and so on. And also as choices during making itself, while a thing is being crafted or a design drawn. A maker choosing authentically acts aesthetically, both in choosing how to make something and in choices made during, and completing, the production process itself. Choices of materials, techniques, and designs – and corresponding good workmanship and design work – are guided by an aesthetic interest in the final product as 'just right' in terms of its finish and design, and finish and design that deliver the product's function. Certain choices of materials and so on are known, in other words, to compromise the quality of a made thing; and good workmanship and design are not closed shops of copyists. In Work Theory then authenticity is not limited to creativity in choosing to make things called artworks. The possibility at least for authentic choices of materials, techniques and designs confront every maker, even when the simple or core function of the thing is already established (when there is no scope for artistry as such). Choices necessarily present themselves, in other words, in establishing how something will be made – which materials do the job best? which techniques deliver the best finish? how is design problem properly conceived? More significantly for Work Theory – because it identifies authentic work choices with the exercise of a craft skill and the completing of a design, as well as with

'Authenticity in art' in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* (Oxford University Press, 2005), p.259

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artistic creativity – the maker as craftsman or designer must also decide the point at which their work, on the product before them, is the best it can be.

In making things, existential angst is experienced as choices of what, but more often of how to make; and how something is made extends from planning to execution. Authentic choice involves original ideation in the special cases of art making – which is typically understood as at least exemplifying expressively authentic work. But authenticity in Work Theory extends to imaginative plans and creative execution in making, art or not. It is particularly evident in the decisions about finish made by craftsmen and in decisions about form and functionality by designers. Their good work – in making authentic choices based on wanting to make the best – is guided by aesthetic interest; and that aesthetic interest is internally related to good work, in this aspect, as necessarily an interest in users in authentically chosen and applied skill and design.

2 Philosophical and other antecedents of Work Theory

Work Theory contends that good work is good because its features necessarily engage aesthetic interest; and aesthetic interest in made things is properly aesthetic when attending to – in making, viewing and using – work that is skilful, functional in the broadest sense, and authentically done (or by observing their absence). The internal relation between good work and aesthetic interest comprises then three elements, the technical, the functional and the authentic. Work Theory has some important philosophical and non-philosophical antecedents that – while not explicitly proposing Work Theory's internal relations between work and the aesthetic – contribute to characterisations of good work around these three elements. These are the arts and crafts debate, especially around the use of machines and workmanship; modernist ideas

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about design, captured in modernist slogans about the best architecture; and ideas of existential choice, particularly those exploring the idea that art making is exemplary free choice.

In short, there are a 'skills argument', a 'function argument' and an 'authenticity argument' supporting the notion of good work and its relation to aesthetic interest.

The 'skills argument'

The 'skills argument' supporting the technical characterisation of good work begins with John Ruskin's account of the 'Gothic worker'. Ruskin's Gothic worker is an idealised medieval craftsman whose craft skill is evidenced by, and only by, Gothic architecture's ornamentation and diversity. Unfettered craft skill necessarily produces – because the Gothic worker 'loves change' and is 'generous' in displaying his skill – ornamentation and sundry design. And this architecture, so the argument goes, is visibly more interesting, both to make and to view and live with. So for Ruskin “the Gothic ornament stands out in prickly independence, and frosty fortitude, jutting into crockets, and freezing into pinnacles; here starting up into a monster, there germinating into a blossom; anon knitting itself into a branch, alternatively thorny, bossy and bristly, or writhed into every form of nervous entanglement; but, even when most graceful, never for an instant languid, always quickset”¹⁵. Ruskin's account, perhaps unsurprisingly, links skill to good work. But additionally – which is significant to Work Theory – it links that work to an aesthetic interest in makers to produce decoratively and variously. And likewise it relates our aesthetic interest in decoration and diversity to its maker's good work.

Ruskin limits good work to the handicrafts and to a particular kind of effect of skilled work. (That effect does go beyond an interest in ornamentation *per se*, but Ruskin's argument is

¹⁵ John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice* Edited and abridged by J.G. Links (Penguin Books, 2001), p.174

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still fundamentally about the necessary superfluity of workmanship and design for good work and aesthetic interest.) Antithetically, the argument of the 'industrial arts' onwards is that machine-made goods are products of applied technology which do not involve handicraft skills but nevertheless are aesthetically pleasing. Indeed their aesthetic interest hangs on economy of workmanship (that there is in fact no visible human workmanship involved) and design (think of the demand for 'streamlined' products in the 1930s, for example, up to 21st century appreciation of the 'clean' finish of personal technology products). Synthetically, the 'skills argument' in Work Theory holds that the opposition of handicraft and machine-made work – while clearly indicating a real difference in making – also reveals an idea of good workmanship that encompasses both kinds of making. The skilful application, in both cases, of a handicraft technique or a machine in making, aim at improving a product's finish. Even automated production processes must be set in motion with an idea, good or bad, of what the finish of the product – created once and produced identically in large numbers – should be. (Of course this is not a matter for the 'operative' of an automated process.) In all cases, decisions about technologies – from hand tools to automated processes – involve some considerations of finish. But Work Theory acknowledges – what is obvious after all – that good workmanship is bifurcated by traditional ideas of craft and by machine production. The craftsman is constantly engaged in improving finish until his work is done. And there is another type of maker, typically the designer, one who has chosen a production process thought best-suited to achieve a pre-conceived finish, who must wait-and-see, and experiment and change the machine process if necessary to achieve a desired finish.

In acknowledging the claims of aesthetic interest – in making and in use – in the finish of products of both handcrafted and machine-made production, Work Theory extends the idea of skill beyond traditional craft ideas, and of workmanship beyond Ruskinian notions of ornamentation. Ruskin's account is flawed about the full relationship between skill and finish

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because its characterisation of skill is limited by a socio-psychological account of the 'Gothic worker' or craftsman. Paradoxically, Ruskin's account limits the idea of skill because it includes facets of work beyond ideas of the skilful application of a technology. So he famously lists the mental characteristics of the good worker (a list of seven, including 'generosity', 'love of change' and 'sacrifice'). Engaged thus, the worker necessarily produces ornamental work, while its absence in a product surely indicates that the worker is 'enslaved' in his making, unable therefore to express his skill in visually exciting decorative work, so the argument goes. Ruskin's extended notion of the Gothic worker as 'artist' (accepting the characterisation includes features of work normally associated with original ideation and thus 'artistry') therefore neglects the specifiable effects of skilfully applied technology *per se*.

In Work Theory, in terms of craft skills, good workmanship in making centres on a particular skill used to meet a design intention, but critically with care too for its close-range visual (and by extension, tactile) effects. This good work entails knowledge of the visual (and tactile) effects of techniques on different materials and so using appropriate techniques and materials in meeting a functional requirement with care for its close-range aesthetic appeal in use¹⁶. There is no necessary requirement here for Ruskinian 'ornamentation'. Furthermore, the idea of skill as delivering a design with care for finish extends and applies to the right choices and use of non-hand technologies. In Work Theory, there is no *a posteriori* reasoning – after Ruskin – from the 'clean' finish of some machine-made products to the absence of skill in making. Rather, this is evidence of different kinds of workmanship, supporting then David Pye's analysis of workmanship that is essentially 'risky' – the kind associated with a craftsman's constant attention during making to a product's finish, and essentially down to that individual

¹⁶ Ruskin's account of 'honesty' in production (particularly in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*) – as a characteristic of the Gothic worker – does however accord with this idea of appropriate use of materials.

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craftsman – and workmanship that is 'certain' – the kind where 'certainty' is established by the set technology of the machines used in making¹⁷. In Work Theory, both can be good because it is possible to be skilful in any technology, either craft or machine based. Moreover, an internal relation applies so that a skill worker uses a technology with an aesthetic interest in its impact on a product's finish; and an aesthetic interest in a product's finish recognises a maker's skill. An example compares the use of traditional potting technologies with using 3-D printers to produce cups and plates and so on. For each technology, becoming skilful as a maker means gaining an understanding of the material effects, in terms of finish, of the technology through its use – by examining the effects, for example, of a potter's wheel and firing in a kiln, and of the digital construction of things. And getting the best effects means having an aesthetic interest in what the technology produces when used in different ways and for different products. The results of digital production depend on the instructions makers give to 3-D printers, and those can be given with more or less aesthetic interest. And aesthetic interest in skilful making, by makers, extends then beyond the interest individual craftsmen show in exercising their craft – traditionally understood as handicraft – to the control and understanding of any technology by a maker that affects finish. Reciprocally, as users, aesthetic interest in good work includes an interest in the finish of machine-made products as products of good workmanship of that kind.

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Work Theory's 'skills argument' synthesises craft and machine workmanship around a technical characterisation of good work, linking them both to aesthetic interest in the finish of products by makers and users. The traditional 'arts and crafts' debate, then, about the aesthetic merits of 'handmade versus machine-made' products, recast in terms of good workmanship, does not reveal one category of making as exclusively aesthetic. An 'arts and crafts' conclusion

¹⁷ David Pye, *The Nature and Art of Workmanship* (Cambridge, at the University Press, 1968), especially pages 4-8.

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about the exclusively aesthetic character of craft – and the impossibility of machine-made aesthetic value – is not supported by Work Theory. That said, recognising this synthesis also reveals proper divisions in the aesthetic interest in finish between the 'workmanship of risk' associated with craft and the 'workmanship of certainty' of automated making¹⁸. That distinction is one familiar to – if not stated and theorised in those terms – by industrial artists. By the early 20th century artist-craftsmen like the potter Bernard Leach were noting the relation between their aesthetic aims and ways of working and the separate aesthetics of industrial production. “The work of the individual potter or potter-artist, who performs all or nearly all the processes of production with his own hands, belongs to one aesthetic category, and the finished result of the operations of industrialised manufacture, or mass production, to another and quite different category”¹⁹. Leach's work is a practical exemplification of the idea that at every stage of production, and every moment within, the application of a craft skill is affecting or 'risking' the quality of the product being made in terms of it delivering a design. It clearly contrasts with the 'workmanship of certainty' then, where production after an initial idea is fully automated and if the process has been correctly calibrated then the industrial design is delivered. Still, Work Theory duly notes that automated processes like 3-D printing have to be programmed and skilful use of the technology means an aesthetic interest in the results. Leach correctly alludes to the idea that the increased risk of his working methods – that the pot that is delivered is subject to his potting and firing skills – has an aesthetic effect different from the certainties of automated production. The potter's traditional craft creates one set of aesthetic possibilities – including so-called gifts of the fire – and an automated process of pottery production another. And so on for every craft and automated process, and production processes between. In Work Theory the technical aspect of good work is the ability to control a product's finish and to

¹⁸ Ibid, p.4

¹⁹ Bernard Leach, *A Potter's Book* (Faber and Faber Ltd, 1940), p.1

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exercise that control with aesthetic interest. The broad categories of risky and certain workmanship differ then in terms of aesthetic interest only in so far as makers' interests vary as they control finish either through all parts of a production, or in testing different materials, trying different programmes, and so on before a production run. Correspondingly, viewers and users of made things recognise good work appropriate to handmade and to mass-produced products, appreciating signs of handwork, striations and flecked surfaces, asymmetries, in craft works like pots and vases but not in MacBooks, for example²⁰.

While Leach's craft skill exemplifies one kind of aesthetic interest in finish, the 'workmanship of certainty' is consistent with the tradition of 'industrial art' and the idea of the 'abstract art' of beautifully designed but mass produced products²¹. Work Theory notes from this – from the idea of finish associated with industrial art – one further consequence of the 'skills argument' for the relation between good work and aesthetic interest. It draws on Ruskin's thesis about the aesthetic interest engendered by good craft work. Ruskin argues that good craft work necessarily generates visual diversity on an environmental level – that is, beyond makers' interest in finish of individual products. The unintended impact of good craft workmanship is an aesthetically diverse rather than visually monotonous built environment. Contrastingly, well-made but mass produced products must, *en masse*, have an opposite effect. For Work Theory then there is an aesthetic paradox of well-made and mass produced goods. As individual items,

²⁰ Pye provides examples: the 'workmanship of certainty' evident in a mass produced ceramic insulator for an electrical power line is set against a potter's workmanship of risk producing a lid for an earthenware crock. Pye compares the two as both use a similar material, colour and glaze, and "because aesthetically they are quite different in quality, and each in its own way is good" (p.85).

²¹ Herbert Read, *Art and Industry*, (Faber and Faber Limited, 1934) for the idea of the 'abstract art' of machine-made products. Rightly, Read notes that he was 'propagating the ideals of Gropius' and the Bauhaus (p.40).

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part of our aesthetic interest in making and using mass produced goods is explained in terms of good workmanship and therefore their finish, but collectively their 'finish' is, after Ruskin, unaesthetic. The point has some empirical validity. So, for example, we find particular models of car or types of building or styles of laptop computer aesthetically pleasing in terms of individual finish but their visual effects *en masse* (streets full of similar cars; characterless housing estates; offices all using the same branded computer) tend to aesthetic disvalue.

For Work Theory, our aesthetic experience of cars, buildings and products is always an active one, from using made things ourselves to living amongst them. Our aesthetic interest in personal, practical use tends to an interest in workmanship. Good workmanship is evident at the level of use, from things in the hand, to furniture, to the immediate environment of buildings and vehicles, in our ordinary, functional interactions with them. Our aesthetic interest in made things as part of the built environment in which we live tends to an interest in design, as we look at blocks of flats or shelves of goods or rows of shops in a mall. For Work Theory the aesthetic paradox of well-made products but mass-produced visual monotony is explicable then in terms of an inevitable but perhaps resolvable (Work Theory is agnostic on this point) tension between their design and workmanship. It is not a theoretic break at least in the internal relation between good workmanship and aesthetic interest in finish. Designs for made things are responses to design problems and if a design problem does not include regard for the aesthetic effects of mass production – of finish *en masse* – then (good or bad) workmanship is effectively disregarded, in its environmental aspect, by the designer. Workmanship then simply delivers a design, having as it were only a single item, rather than millions, in mind, and the workmanship of certainty – of mass production – delivers the individual item effectively ignorant of global aesthetic effects. The internal relation around the idea of skill between good work and aesthetic interest holds on the grounds of good workmanship in terms of an individual maker's and user's aesthetic interest in the finish of an individual product. But the relation – between good work and

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aesthetic interest – fails functionally, rather than skilfully (qua Work Theory), when the environmental idea of finish – that is, finish *en masse* – is neglected.

In summary, Work Theory's 'skills argument' (drawing on philosophical and other antecedents) contends that all technologies for making things can be applied skilfully and skilful application is a function of an aesthetic interest in an individual product's finish. This good workmanship is however bifurcated between craft skills that engage makers throughout a production process, and machine production where skill relates to setting in motion the right automated processes to deliver a pre-conceived finish. Work Theory's 'skills argument' also notes that the precision and regularity of good machine workmanship tends to produce an unaesthetic built environment, and explains the aesthetic paradox of well-made but collectively monotonous products. The paradox is explained as being a general consequence of a limited notion – on any particular occasion – of the design problem for products, one that disregards or underplays their overall environmental effect in mass production. In other words, in Work Theory's characterisation of good work, built environmental aesthetic disvalue is a failure of work's functional rather than technical aspect. I now turn to that aspect of good work, and its philosophical and other antecedents.

The 'function argument'

The 'function argument' supporting Work Theory's characterisation of good work is archetypically Modernist. Work Theory posits an internal relation between a maker's proper understanding of a product's function and their, and users, aesthetic interest in its design. Functional requirements for made things generate design problems and a necessary interest – if the work is good – in a product's right form to meet those requirements. And users' aesthetic interest in good design is, correspondingly, an interest in how successfully a design meets a

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functional requirement. A clutch of Modernist slogans, in architecture at least, allude more or less to an essential work-aesthetic nexus around functionality too, albeit without a single supporting theory – 'ornament is crime', 'a house is a machine for living', 'form follows function'²². But Modernism in design and architecture also became associated with particular, related styles, culminating in a *MOMA* exhibition celebrating the 'International Style'²³. Functionality, it could be said, took a back seat in design: 'form followed form' and was appreciated accordingly. Mies van der Rohe-like buildings, for instance, have an appreciable look, a style – geometric, minimalist – but one that differentiates little between their different functions as offices, homes, schools and so on. Relatedly, Modernism became associated with an absence of regard for the full impact of its style on the functions its buildings, housing in particular, were designed to serve, when 'functioning' was understood to include the experience of living and working in such buildings. Most people did not like the look of, nor like living in, large-scale modernist housing estates; the demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe housing estate in St. Louis in 1974 was announced as the 'death of modern architecture'²⁴.

Work Theory proposes an account of the functional aspect of good work centred exclusively on the aesthetic interest inherent in good design work *per se*. It recognises then the rhetorical contribution of Modernism in relating a product's form with the fulfilment of its function, but argues this to be an aesthetic interest by maker's in solving a design problem, so that a product 'looks right' for what it is *qua* product. Work Theory, then, rejects the idea that there is a (Modernist or any other) *style* best suited to delivering products' functional requirements, which

²² Slogans by (or versions of) Adolf Loos, Le Corbusier, and Louis H. Sullivan respectively.

²³ The term was coined by Alfred H. Barr Jnr. for an exhibition of modernist architecture at the New York Museum of Modern Art in 1932. See Peter Gay's *Modernism: the Lure of Heresy* (Heinemann, 2007), p.312 for an account.

²⁴ The quote was made by the architectural theorist Charles Jencks at the time of the demolition – see, for example, the wikipedia entry for 'Pruitt-Igoe'.

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can be simply applied to any design problem successfully. Rather, the good work of design starts with a proper conception and understanding of a design problem – from recognising a product's core or descriptively functional aspects (what a product must do to be a product of its type) to its normatively functional possibilities (to deliver putative social and environmental goals). In short, Work Theory understands good design functionally rather than stylistically. And this design functionalism is aesthetic because good designs deliver products' functions – in the fullest sense established by their respective design problems – in ways that are, yet, *stylish*, the best 'look and feel' for the function they serve. For Work Theory then the idea of 'the art of design' has a particular meaning, referring properly to the creativity of design solutions to functionally described design problems. It contrasts with the idea that the 'art of design' exclusively refers to an individual designer's 'artistic vision', a vision that is independent of any particular design problem that is being confronted. The 'style' or 'art' of a product's design is internally related to its good design work in making because that work, if it is good, progresses from a full sense of a product's function to its best design. Work Theory does consider visionary design work theoretically but in the context of authentically good work, to which I return later.

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Louis H. Sullivan's famous Modernist slogan 'form follows function' is the conclusion of an analysis of the architectural practice associated with designing an office building²⁵. Examining that analysis reveals similarities and differences with Work Theory's account of the functional aspect of good work, especially around the idea of 'artistry' in design. Sullivan called the first stage of a design problem its "social basis", so that for example, "architects are challenged by social conditions to design tall office buildings"²⁶. Social conditions are a matter of

²⁵ Louis H. Sullivan, 'The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered', 1896
<http://academics.triton.edu/faculty/fheitzman/tallofficebuilding.html>

²⁶ Ibid (online, no page nos. available)

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fact and Sullivan noted in this case the need for offices, the economics of high speed elevators and steel manufacture, population growth and congestion as factors characterising the design problem. Other parameters of the design problem are established by “practical conditions” (in this case, those for plant below ground for power, heating and lighting, and so on)²⁷. For Work Theory, Sullivan's social and practical considerations comprise a product's descriptive function. We could add normative functions too, depending on cultural values associated with working in offices (that they be open-planned, for example, to encourage democratic and collaborative organisational working practices). In good design work, both descriptive and normative functions establish the full functionality of a product and are a necessary element of the design problem for a particular product.

If an essential element of a design problem is establishing social and practical considerations (in Work Theory extending to establishing a product's full functionality) and then materially satisfying them, Sullivan notes the design problem still has an ‘artistic consideration’: “how shall we impart to this sterile pile [the tall office building]... the graciousness of ... higher forms of sensibility and culture”²⁸. For Sullivan, the answer is argued to lie in further stages of the design problem, in short in the way it is addressed creatively by the designer. So, if ‘design constraints’ are properly considered “in the simplest possible way, following natural instincts, without thought of books, rules” then the design will follow ‘inevitably’²⁹. Sullivan further portrays the designer’s work as an “innocent path from his problem to its solution” so that if a designer has “some gift for form in detail, some feeling for form purely and simply as form, some love for that, the result ... will have something of the charm of sentiment”³⁰. The analysis here, of a

²⁷ Ibid (online, no page nos. available)

²⁸ Ibid (online, no page nos. available)

²⁹ Ibid (online, no page nos. available)

³⁰ Ibid (online, no page nos. available)

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functionally-defined design problem reconstituted as the designer's own problem, which is then resolved formally, reveals subtleties, perhaps contradictions, in Modernism's 'form follows function' account. 'Form' in this account is associated with artistry, rather than functionality, in both its reference to the vision of the designer in generating 'his' design problem and to its potentially 'charming' solution. In Sullivan's account then, a product's aesthetic interest – its 'charm' – is not internally related to design work that delivers function, but to its 'artistic work'. And what is to say that that interest in form should not be a Ruskinian interest in ornament (rather than the International Style)?

Sullivan's response is that there is a "finer sanction" for a design, namely that a good design is dependent on the designer successfully comprehending and expressing the chief characteristic of the building or product (in the example, the 'sanction' of being a 'tall office building')³¹. That sanction says Sullivan, famously expressing Modernism's putative commitment to functionally-driven design, "brings to the solution of the [design] problem a final, comprehensive formula. All things in nature have a shape, that is to say, a form, an outward semblance, that tells us what they are, that distinguishes them from ourselves and from each other... so that form ever follows function"³². This is a puzzling claim – if it is that the right form for a product is one that makes its function visible – in so far as 'nature's shapes' would seem to hide as much functioning as they reveal. Work Theory maintains, contrastingly, that rightness of form is about successful functioning, about function in use. This contrasts then with the idea – after Sullivan – that an artistic form, if it is good, simply reveals a function. It contends that the good designer's aesthetic interest in form is properly an interest in how a product functions in use not merely on inspection. And a user's aesthetic interest in a product's form is properly an interest in 'look and feel' in use and so relates internally to the product's function and design,

³¹ Ibid (online, no page nos. available)

³² Ibid (online, no page nos. available)

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and to the designer *qua* designer by extension (rather than involving formal comparisons of artistic style, extending to relating design work to individual artistry).

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Work Theory's view of the designer *qua* designer as essentially interested in function accords with a standard model of professional design work; and with its differentiation from the work of artists. 'Artistry' in design is properly regarded as an aspect of responding to design problems, dealing with them imaginatively in short. Originating design problems identifies the artist rather than the designer. Norman Potter's account of 'art and design', for example, acknowledges this basic dichotomy³³. He notes that a designer's outputs, like models and drawings, are neither ends in themselves (they are not the finished product of course, and indeed might end with nothing more tangible than a model) nor are they the sole output of the designer's vision but rather the outcome of many discussions with clients and other stakeholders. These might be procedures familiar to artists – especially artists working on public or other commissions of course – but still the origins of artistic work are more inward, so that “a painter's first responsibility is to the truth of his own vision”³⁴. There is a different 'order of freedom' then in design and art. Reiterating the point, Kees Dorst argues that while a designer's goals are essentially set by others, because stakeholders in the end product require a practical need to be met, artists set their own goals³⁵. He notes too that one aspect of the artist's work can be characterised as design work, namely that the artist behaves as his own client, as it were, by setting himself a design problem which must then be solved. Work Theory notes this

³³ Norman Potter, 'Is a designer an artist?' in *Design and Art* Ed. Alex Coles (Whitechapel Gallery, 2007)

³⁴ Ibid, p.32

³⁵ Kees Dorst, 'But, is it art?' in *Design and Art* Ed. Alex Coles (Whitechapel Gallery, 2007)

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observation as supporting an aesthetic functionalism across all types of making, utilitarian and art-making.

Work Theory's extended idea of 'form follows function' – based on a conception of descriptive and normative function that includes users' experience of products' functioning – also accords with professional design practice. The design ethos of applying skill and artistry to meet to 'improve' people's lives is evident throughout design's history from the 1850s at least, when design established itself as an independent profession. This was not simply a moral reevaluation of design work's role in certain situations, but a conceptualisation of the generic design problem as one that necessarily engages problems of need in a society. It is exemplified perhaps in social housing schemes from Hampstead Garden Suburb at the beginning of the 20th century to current schemes like Staiths South Bank³⁶. Henrietta Barnett's vision for Hampstead Garden Suburb was a community showing "how thousands of people, of all classes of society, of all sorts of opinions, and all standards of income, can live in helpful neighbourliness", and that against a design problem of doing "something to meet the housing problem by putting within the reach of the working people the opportunity of taking a cottage with a garden within a 2d. fare of Central London"³⁷. Hemingway Design states that the Staiths project "marries contemporary design with a nostalgic nod to community values... It will be a development where everyone can recognise their own home from the way it looks, where children can play safely free of cars and where private gardens open out into communal gardens where residents can get to know each other"³⁸. It is at least implicit in such ventures that to successfully deliver a design requires

³⁶ A 'History of Hampstead Garden Suburb (HGS)' is available at <http://www.hgs.org.uk/history/index.html>; and of Staiths Estate at <http://www.hemingwaydesign.co.uk/html/staiths.htm>

³⁷ HGS website (no page nos. available)

³⁸ Hemingway Design website (no page nos. available)

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sensitivity to a wide range of functional considerations that comprise a design problem; and that these include a full comprehension of the psychological and social impact of the product being designed (of course in large-scale housing projects, social considerations take on an added significance, absent in, say, designing a chair). The argument is premised on the idea that products alter the aesthetic fabric of the world in ways that necessarily impact the quality of life: that a housing estate design impacts on neighbourliness, allows, for example, children to play outside their homes, and so on, for example. In short, good design reflects an extended notion of functionality; and the aesthetic experience of good design extends beyond an interest in form to forms that function well.

The 'authenticity argument'

In Work Theory, authentically good work refers to expressive authenticity in creating new artworks, to imaginative designs for products of utility, and to creatively skilful use of technology to deliver the finish of designs for artworks and other products. In each case – for the work to be authentically good – the maker exercises free choice in, respectively, deciding to make an artwork, designing a product, and applying a skill. Work Theory then does not limit the idea of authentic work to an existential choice 'to create', that is to conceiving artworks. Authentically good work extends to free choices in making that are structured by design problems and particular crafts. Makers' aesthetic interest in authentic work varies then: it is an interest in originality and sincerity of artistic expression; in visionary design; in highly skilled workmanship. And correspondingly, our aesthetic interest in authentic work is an interest in art that 'looks and feels' truly expressive and in products that are 'cutting edge'.

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In *Existentialism* Jean-Paul Sartre considers how an existential moral choice – a choice about a right course of action made without recourse to established moral laws or norms – might be modelled on making a work of art. An artist, argues Sartre, makes a painting without a *priori* considerations of what to make, without appealing to 'pre-existing aesthetic values'. The artist then is supposed exemplary in choosing *freely*³⁹. A straightforward appeal is being made by Sartre to the idea of the artist as being both a maker *and* a free originator (rather than being a skilled copyist for example), someone whose choices (to make works of art) reflect their cognitive and emotional responses to the specific situations they experience. Artistic making then is identified with a free, self-generated and situated originating act to make this or that work of art. It is this idea of art that Sartre thinks exemplifies, or at least most closely approximates to, authentic choice more generally. Sartre's fictionalised account of art making in *Nausea* pursues this theme of art making as exemplary free choice⁴⁰. Towards the end of the novel its central character, Antoine Roquentin, is passing the time in a cafe before his train to Paris. He listens to a record of some jazz music – and imagines the composer in a New York skyscraper in a baking hot room, sweat rolling down his cheeks, the taste of cigarette smoke in his mouth, sitting before his piano with a ghost of a tune in his head, and how the tune gets noted down 'like that', in those circumstances. Roquentin listens again to the record and finds himself moved by this reflection on the composer. But he understands his feeling is not a response to the composer's circumstances as such (that include money and relationship problems that he

³⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Existentialism' in *Existentialism and Human Emotions* (Castle, undated), pp.42-43. This 1946 essay has been published in English under different titles, including 'Existentialism is a Humanism'.

⁴⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea* Translated by Robert Baldich (Penguin Books, 1965)

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imagines the composer also has), but to the composer making the music, to his *composing*. Roquentin is moved, listening to the music, “because he [the composer] made that”⁴¹.

For Work Theory, Sartre's comparisons of moral and artistic choice reveal then an idea of good work (as an unintended consequence of investigating existential moral choice). Good work is necessarily authentic in so far as it is work that is freely chosen. Roquentin listening to the piece of jazz music is intellectually and emotionally struck by the idea of it having been composed at all. He recognises the piece as an original work. But Work Theory contends that the existential insight into the nature of creative choice is limited to special cases of creating unique artworks, although the possibility of authentically good work – of freely chosen work – also extends to design and craft (perhaps Sartre inadvertently realises this when he has Roquentin recognise the jazz singer's, as well as composer's, contribution to making the piece he is listening to). Furthermore, no internal relation between authentic choices and aesthetic interest is argued by Sartre. For Work Theory, that internal relation between good work and aesthetic interest explains Roquentin's further liking of his favourite record on realising its composer's (and its singer's) authenticity.

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Authenticity in design differs from artistic authenticity because designers do not create their own design problems. Their design problems are elaborated around the functional requirements of a product, rather than being self-generated by artists. Design creativity involves conceptualising new products in response to design problems. This design creativity has often been seen – in literature theorising the practice of design – as indicating design's status as an art. So, for example, Dorst associates design creativity with artistry, arguing that where designers develop their own goals, and build these into projects, they “are something of

⁴¹ Ibid p.250

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artists⁴². Dorst thus suggests that design's art status resides in the 'artfulness' of self-generated goals, rather than in some shared, transferable practical skills or professional standards between designers and artists. So for Dorst the point at which designers are artists is that at which they develop an individual 'style', albeit one that is only enacted through the possibilities for creativity set by design problems. Similarly, Norman Potter characterises design's artistry in a "shared visual sensibility" rather than in specifiable skills or procedures⁴³. For Work Theory conceiving design as art in respect of self-generated goals is problematic because it blurs a fundamental distinction between art's self-generated expressive goals and design's functionally structured problems. Still, imaginative design does contrast with design work that simply meets the functional demands of a social and practical problem by referencing pre-existing design solutions. But Work Theory conceives this as a matter of design authenticity rather than design artistry. Design is authentic in so far as a designer understands every design problem as presenting a unique set of circumstances, and therefore the necessity of choosing new design solutions. Writers on 'design as art' rightly allude to this in terms of the possibilities for original and visionary design solutions, but thereafter tend to mistakenly conflate the problems artists and designers are set (by themselves and by problems of functionality) in making artworks and products. A designer's aesthetic interest in form is properly an interest in how a product functions in use, and it is guided by the knowledge that every design problem presents the challenge of an authentic (rather than an unthinking, procedural) response. As users of products our aesthetic interest in form is, likewise, an interest in a product's form that functions as a creative response to a design problem – to experience a product in use as 'well-designed' is to reference creative design, authenticity, in other words, but not artistry.

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⁴² Dorst, p.88

⁴³ Potter, p.32

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The possibilities for authentic skilled workmanship hinge on a maker's control over the exercise of his skill or craft. In a similar vein to 'design as art' arguments, this control over production is argued to support a 'craft as art' argument, associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement. In that movement 'control over production' naturally became associated with political ideas about the best organisation of labour and productive forces – authentic work seemed to entail at least a workshop economy that would allow craft skills to flourish without the lethal competition of factory and mass production. Notably, William Morris appeals to a golden age of workmanship identified with the craftsmen of medieval Northern Europe in arguing for the idea of 'craft as art' and a revival of handicraft-based production: the craftsman “had full control over his time, his material, and his tools – of his work, in short – that is, he was a free workman, an artist”⁴⁴. Continuing, the true craftsman's work is not mere habit or toil but involves “daily creative skill”; this work “exercising the energies of mind, soul and body” is helped by memory and imagination and the worker's own thoughts; all other work is conceived as slaves' work by Morris⁴⁵. The ability to freely apply skill in making as defining of 'art in general' is retained in later writers in the same tradition such as Eric Gill, who only differentiates between the skills required to make paintings and engines, for example, rather than between art and non-art⁴⁶.

According to Work Theory, the 'craft as art' argument repeats the fundamental error of the 'design as art' argument – namely not acknowledging that an artist's authentically good work is fundamentally different in kind from that of the craftsman. The craftsman's aesthetic interest in

⁴⁴ William Morris, *The Relations of Art to Labour* Edited by Alan Bacon and Lionel C. Young (William Morris Society, 2004), p.29

⁴⁵ William Morris, 'Useful Work versus Useless Toil' in *Collected Works*, Volume 23 (Russell and Russell, 1966) p.100

⁴⁶ Eric Gill, *Art* (John Lane The Bodley Head, 1934), p.13 for a summary of Gill's argument that “art is skill” and that there are only “arts of ...” painting, poetry, cooking, building, and so on. In passing, of course Gill's workshop notions were Catholic rather than Morris's communistic.

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making something is an interest in the finish of a product and does not extend back to a self-generated choice to make the product. Authenticity in workmanship, in delivering a design, then relates to the scope for choices in determining the finish of a product. 'Control over production' in terms of workmanship is limited to that 'delivery' aspect of the production, and therefore does not warrant the designation 'art' after Arts and Crafts. Work Theory's notion of authentic workmanship does however involve the recognition of choices by a maker in delivering a design and is an aesthetic interest in delivering it to the best possible standard. It is, then, necessarily a feature of the 'risky' workmanship associated with craftsmanship, where choices about materials and about their crafting during the making of a product is a constant feature affecting the final finish of a product. Likewise, as users of products our aesthetic interest in their finish is an interest in the choices by makers, authentic or otherwise, made to affect finish.

PART 2

SECTION 1 WORK THEORY AND THE SOURCES OF AESTHETIC INTEREST

1 Everyday and pre-theoretic ideas of aesthetic interest

In proposing an internal relation between good work and aesthetic interest, Work Theory starts with some everyday, ordinary language or pre-theoretic ideas of the aesthetic. The most general and least critical use of 'aesthetic', for English language speakers, refers us to the appearance of things, particularly to their being pleasing to viewers. In this usage, the quality of being pleasing to the eye is called 'aesthetic' and 'aesthetic interest' refers us to an interest in the 'look and feel' of something. By extension, sensitivity to, rather than simple aesthetic interest in, the visually pleasing aspects of things is commonly regarded as an 'aesthetic' aptitude or 'taste' for the 'beautiful' (and its related terms). The pre-reflective 'look and feel' conception of the aesthetic typically extends from aesthetic interest in objects' visual appearance to an aesthetic interest in the taste, touch, sound, and smell of things. Natural sounds like birdsong and waves breaking on a shore, interludes of silence, as well as musical works, have an indisputably 'aesthetic' status also accorded them. It follows from the ordinary 'look and feel' conception of the aesthetic that the products of the visual arts, like paintings and sculptures, and artefacts like cars and buildings, along with music and natural sights and sounds, are taken to greater and lesser degrees as objects of aesthetic interest. But it is questionable to what extent and in what manner makers of art and functional objects are then understood – in everyday discourse, pre-theoretically – to be contributing, by their work as artists, designers and craftsmen, to our aesthetic experiences of made things.

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On one prosaic pre-theoretic understanding, aesthetic interest is confined to the product, so that even where there is recognition of a 'job well done', aesthetic interest is not attributed to the maker in making the product. Alternatively in ordinary language, a maker's contribution to a made thing's aesthetic quality can be accorded a mysterious character, most notably when artistic aesthetic interest – in Work Theory specifically the artist's decision to make a particular work of art – is made a function of 'genius' or the proverbial 'muse'. Related to this understanding of artistic genius – in so far as no internal relation between the work of a maker and an object's aesthetic interest is implied – ordinary language 'look and feel' understanding of the aesthetic includes a contrast with the idea of 'functionality'. On this extension of the ordinary understanding of the term 'aesthetic', it is used explicitly to mark those aspects of a functional object that supposedly do not bear on its functioning in any way. So the 'aesthetic' on this use and understanding is typically a matter of a product's supposed superfluous, decorative (possibly 'artistic' or 'stylistic') aspects.

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In terms of the everyday, ordinary language or pre-reflective ideas of the aesthetic outlined here, Work Theory critically rejects features that challenge the account of the internal relations between good work and aesthetic interest. Those rejected features are, firstly, the prosaic understanding of good work in terms of a 'job well done'; secondly, the ordinary or pre-reflective idea of artistic genius and its supposed relation to aesthetic interest; and thirdly, the pejorative and ultimately misleading conception of 'aesthetic' in relation to functional objects (where it is equated, for example, with fashion).

In the first everyday, ordinary language case, the idea of 'a job well done' reveals only a superficial link – in our everyday use of the phrase – to the maker's own aesthetic interest in their work. The interest expressed by saying 'job well done' is limited, in other words, to an interest in the product's functionality. In fact this usage cannot distinguish between genuinely

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good work and a job that has merely satisfied an immediate functional requirement (of course there are circumstances where this latter kind of work is acceptable, for example when making emergency shelter). As such, this ordinary language use also fails to recognise an important conceptual difference between a maker doing work the best he can (and therefore the internal relation between good work and aesthetic interest), and a worker with simply a 'knack' (or 'trick of the trade') for getting a particular prescribed job done so that a product he makes delivers its core function, but with no knowledge of how. Likewise appreciating a 'job well done' would then be to acknowledge that a product meets its immediate, core functional requirements, without any sense of it being as right as it can be. Work Theory, then, explains the difference between good work and having a 'knack' in terms of the aesthetic interest of the good worker and its absence in cases of 'knack'. Good work (in making objects of utility) is driven by an aesthetic interest in a product's form and finish in use, and is responsive to the design problem a product sets (for good design) and to the need to deliver a design well (for good workmanship). Neither of these requirements are necessary to delivering a product by 'knack'.

In the second rejected case of everyday, ordinary language use and understanding, the idea of 'genius' (and of creativity more generally) is taken as essentially inexplicable, and certainly not connected to ideas about authentic choices in workmanship and design. There is no explanatory role for a concept of 'genius' in Work Theory's account of aesthetic interest. The choice to make something at all, a 'work of art', is understood as a special case of making – that is, an individual artist's choice to create a design problem from his own situation and expressive demands. Design problems and consequent demands on workmanship to deliver designs are more commonly set by utilitarian considerations. But in each case – of individually chosen creative projects, and of utilitarian design and workmanship problems – there is scope for authenticity in choosing to make the best. For Work Theory this aesthetic interest in making

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things 'just right' across artistic choice, design and skilful work – rather than an idea of 'genius' – explains our aesthetic experience of, and aesthetic interest in, made things.

In the third rejected everyday ordinary language case, an 'aesthetic interest' in products is understood as entirely unrelated to considerations of their function and not as connected therefore to how design problems are conceived. Work Theory argues that our everyday aesthetic interest in functional objects is properly an interest in their forms as they function, that is in use. Otherwise, the object is experienced as 'pure form' rather than as designed to fulfill a functional requirement. Where 'forms' deliver functions our aesthetic interest is properly in that idea of form, that is in forms that function well.

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Some everyday ordinary language ideas about the relations between work and the aesthetic have a theoretic counterpart in Roger Scruton's development of Ludwig Wittgenstein's reflections on the aesthetic interest of a carpenter at work⁴⁷. Here too, aesthetic interest is not internally related to good work but, rather, requires a separate exercise of 'taste' by makers and users – in this case, theorised of course. Scruton argues that Wittgenstein's description of a carpenter asking of his work 'does that look right?' reveals a typical everyday aesthetic interest. Examples from everyday life, like this, tell us “that there are choices remaining when utility is satisfied”⁴⁸. These are choices about appearance, about the way things look. But examples like Wittgenstein's, continues Scruton, do not tell us “the real point or value” of making choices about appearance, about aesthetic interest in other words⁴⁹. Scruton's additional theoretic

⁴⁷ Roger Scruton, 'In Search of the Aesthetic', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, July 2007, pp.232-250. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, Ed. C. Barrett (Blackwell, 1966).

⁴⁸ Scruton, p.240

⁴⁹ Ibid, p.240

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contribution is to argue that something like 'taste' is exercised by the carpenter in deciding whether his work 'looks right'. 'Taste' is explained as a distinct human faculty for judging appearances – separate from the carpenter's (or any) working practices. I argue that Work Theory improves on Scruton's development of Wittgenstein on everyday aesthetic interest by introducing and properly differentiating between aesthetic interest and its internal relations to different aspects of good work (namely the technical, functional and authentic aspects of good work and their relations to finish, form and artistic choice). Work Theory then captures and explains the aesthetic interests of good workers (like Wittgenstein-Scruton's 'carpenter'), and our aesthetic interest in made things as users, in features of good work and aesthetic interest that are omitted from Scruton's account. And their inclusion – I will argue – means it is not necessary to introduce a separate faculty of 'taste' to explain 'the real point and value' of aesthetic interest.

2 The Wittgenstein-Scruton account of aesthetic interest

Theorising the 'carpenter's' aesthetic interest

In 'In Search of the Aesthetic' Roger Scruton argues that Wittgenstein's observations and explanations of the behaviour of craftsmen at work (particularly examples of how a carpenter finishes a job) reveal something essential to all aesthetic interest⁵⁰. In a word, that essence is the idea of 'fit'; and that things fit together because they 'look right'. In the Scruton-Wittgenstein model too, a maker's 'sense of fit' determines the final 'look and feel' of a product strictly *after* its functional requirements have been met. A 'sense of fit' or 'taste' is argued to

⁵⁰ In case there is any doubt, I use Wittgenstein's 'carpenter' to refer to any maker, and so to making in the digital age.

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direct choice about the way things look. 'Senses of fit' reflect cultural norms that set stylistic standards for appropriate 'look and fit' solutions to design problems. In this model then 'look and fit' decisions become extrinsic to the process of making itself and are essentially matters of the disinterested exercise of 'taste' while, for example, designing and fitting a door frame (and by extension in appreciating them aesthetically in use).

Work Theory proposes that there are internal relations between the necessary 'skill', 'function' and 'authenticity' features of good work and makers' and users' aesthetic interest in made things. Makers and users are interested in made things 'looking right' and this interest is explicable in terms of makers' exercise of skills, conception of design problems, and authentic choices about how to make (and of what to make in the rarer cases of artistic choice). Work Theory relates workmanship to an interest in made things 'looking right' in terms of their finish; and designs look right as formal solutions to design problems. It contrasts then with the Wittgenstein-Scruton model, where a maker's behaviour in relation to aesthetic interest amounts to a separate exercise of 'taste' after a product's functional requirement has been met. On this Wittgenstein-Scruton account, a door can be designed and delivered to function as a door, but its 'good' design and workmanship in terms of aesthetic interest are explained outside any characterisation of good design and good workmanship *per se*. Work Theory argues then that the Wittgenstein-Scruton model fails to recognise essential differences between the good work of craftsmen and designers and artists; and how each engages, without the separate exercise of 'taste', aesthetic interest in their own way⁵¹.

Scruton's idea of 'fit' and aesthetic interest draws on Wittgenstein's observation that in designing a door its designer (the 'carpenter') will "look at it and say: Higher, higher, higher...oh,

⁵¹ It also fails then to differentiate artistic aesthetic interest – but the focus here is on what can be rightly explained from insights about everyday aesthetic interest like that of a carpenter at work.

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all right"⁵². Alternatively, the phrase could be '*there*: thank God', or 'yes, that's right'.

Wittgenstein has other examples from tailoring and from musical appreciation, to which I will return, that are also suggestive of a notion of aesthetic interest that centres on 'correctness' and feelings of 'contentment' with products – the core idea that Scruton develops. But closer analysis of these examples reveals that developed notions of both design and workmanship are necessary to satisfactorily explain aesthetic interest; and these are absent in Scruton's development of Wittgenstein's basic account. Only with such notions (Work Theory's 'good work' summarily) do we understand the content of the carpenter's satisfaction with his doorway, for example, and how its design and workmanship inform his appraisal and provide reasons for liking that support his (and by extension other people's) aesthetic judgement.

In that respect, it is significant that Wittgenstein's examples are principally in support of a general claim about the language of aesthetic judgement, rather than about the work that has gone into the products that are judged 'right'. So he notes that "when aesthetic judgements are made, aesthetic adjectives such as 'beautiful', 'fine', etc, play hardly any role at all; rather "the words you use are more akin to 'right' and 'correct'"⁵³. This language registers satisfaction with a product that is then evidenced by its use. So a bespoke suit is judged, in this example somewhat literally, by its final fit (so it's cut to the point at which the wearer can say 'leave it as it is'); and the cutter simply marks and alters the cloth accordingly and the wearer likes being seen in the suit⁵⁴. Wittgenstein rightly quashes any suggestion that such judgements – if properly aesthetic – are mere exclamations of delight: "when we make an aesthetic judgement about a thing, we do not just gape at it and say: 'Oh! How marvellous!' We distinguish between a person

⁵² Wittgenstein, p.13

⁵³ Ibid, p.3

⁵⁴ Ibid, p.5

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who knows what he is talking about and a person who doesn't"⁵⁵. We properly talk then about 'appreciation' and need to understand in what that consists. Again Wittgenstein notes the appreciation of the man at the tailors, this time in choosing material, saying things like 'it is slightly too dark' and so on, and of the listener to a piece of music saying, "'does this harmonise? No. The bass is not quite loud enough"⁵⁶. Reasons for liking are given and these people can be rightly called appreciators of suits and music – we observe their reasons as being appreciative advances on merely providing 'yes' and 'no' responses.

But what are good reasons? It is a step forward to recognise an appreciator as one who gives reasons for liking (with appropriate physical gestures perhaps) – that there is something in 'what he says and how he acts' as Wittgenstein puts it – but what happens when there is dispute? Wittgenstein warns that there are an extraordinary number of different cases of appreciation; and that there is always more to know about any particular case: in short, that to describe what appreciation consists in would be to "describe the whole environment"⁵⁷. Wittgenstein's move out of this apparent dilemma is to introduce the idea of culture and the related idea of taste (a move Scruton also makes, as will be noted later). So: "to describe a set of aesthetic rules fully means really to describe the culture of a period"⁵⁸. Wittgenstein does not add much to this statement, but what he does note is exclusively about the behaviours of consumers rather than any indication that aesthetics pursue examination of makers' art, design and craft. Wittgenstein's person of taste is a spectator, or a collector, or a user, of a thing. They are also embedded in ways of watching, curating, dressing and so on in their time and place. The 'whole environment', in other words, is posited as a set of appreciative norms and related

⁵⁵ Ibid, p.6

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.7

⁵⁷ Ibid, p.7

⁵⁸ Ibid, p.8

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social arrangements (that could conceivably be exhaustively described and be the 'taste' of any one period). However, such neglect of the work of artists, designers and craftsmen and emphasis on personal but cultured taste in aesthetic theory is premature: in all cases of appreciation there is an appreciated product with a history of making and associated intrinsic standards of correctness (both general and to that kind of making) about it; although from here too, of course, cultures of appreciation are possible and develop⁵⁹.

Work Theory agrees, after Scruton, with Wittgenstein's insight into everyday aesthetic interest as essentially an interest in something made looking correct. But for Work Theory that observation primarily reveals something significant about the aesthetic import of design and workmanship, and correctness (or good work) there, prior to any considerations of 'taste' – indeed the idea of 'taste' is redundant in Work Theory as a separate explanatory category of our aesthetic interest in made things, as I will now argue⁶⁰. So a designer's aesthetic interest in form is intrinsic to the design problem at hand; and a craftsman's in finish to the skilful exercise of a craft (where finish is handmade).

The 'carpenter' as designer

In arguing the redundancy of 'taste' in explaining a maker's aesthetic interest in their work, take again Scruton's 'carpenter' (Scruton adopts a generous view of carpentry to include

⁵⁹ For Work Theory's account of the development of appreciative skills at large, see Part 2, Section 3 on aesthetic education. Note too that some footnoted transcriptions of Wittgenstein's lectures on aesthetics give some indication that a theory of taste is work-rather than culture-bound, but that kind of speculative interpretation is not my aim here.

⁶⁰ 'Taste' may be conceived as acquired through good work, and therefore as having a 'secondary' or rather derived importance. As noted above, the idea of aesthetic education is examined in Part 2, Section 3.

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aspects of architectural design, that is, the carpenter as both designer and craftsman). In what sense is his consummatory response to a doorway that he has designed and constructed (following Wittgenstein's text and Scruton's interpretation) – that it is 'just right' – one of aesthetic interest conceived as 'taste'? Or are we better to think of this aesthetic interest being related to his carpentry, his work? As a carpenter (on Scruton's characterisation), ideas of correctness will gel around many design and workmanship factors. Specifically, a carpenter *qua* designer will produce specifications and drawings that meet sets of requirements for the doorway – from obvious core functions to normative concerns. There is also the situation (albeit exceptional) where the designer is his own client. Furthermore, the carpenter as skilled craftsman is interested in the finish of a preconceived design. So at what point or points in the working life of Scruton's carpenter does he step back and ask, 'does this look right'? Work Theory's characterisation of good work distinguishes between the creative choices of artists to make at all, design creativity around preset design problems, and the delivery of designs by skilled workmanship. Properly, the aesthetic interest of Scruton's carpenter breaks down into two distinct kinds of aesthetic interest, around conceiving and solving a design problem and the workmanship required to deliver the final design.

Scruton mistakenly conflates these interests in arguing that we think – as makers and users – about a completed design in terms solely of a final disinterested contemplation of the thing that is made, such that we are content to say, after Wittgenstein, 'that's right' and so on. Consider the aesthetic interest of the designer. The designer *qua* designer (a professional designer ordinarily understood) does not reach this stage of disinterested contemplation, yet his interest in a product does have a necessary aesthetic dimension. His product is not the finished doorframe – following Wittgenstein's example – but the drawing of the doorframe (indeed Scruton provides an example of a Georgian spec for a doorframe in one presentation of his

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argument⁶¹). The look of a final product depends in part on factors (strictly) outside of the designer's control, namely the workmanship that completes the design. Still, we would want to say of course that design – carried through – influences the final look of a product, its form in short, so some amendment at least is required to Scruton's account. Doorframes are designed in the context of design problems about access to and through buildings. Core and normative functional requirements vary across different building projects, and so different design solutions are possible. Doorframes are designed within that context, of providing suitable forms for particular building design problems. Good designers are interested in forms that deliver functional requirements in use. Furthermore, they choose authentically when they exercise the relative freedom to solve a design problem creatively, rather than by simply appealing to prescribed forms. This creativity may extend into the development over time of a designer's personal style, but risks inauthenticity if it is applied without reference to the uniqueness of every design problem. This style or personal vision is therefore incorrectly understood as 'artistry', where (for artistry) a personal vision extends back to creating the whole parameters of a design problem (to produce a work of art). A designer's aesthetic interest in their work is an interest in producing a drawing or model, for example, that fully represents and solves a design problem.

In summary, a 'carpenter's' aesthetic interest in their work, *qua* designer, is not an interest in a product during its production. Rather, it is an aesthetic interest in a drawing or such like, in the context of a design problem, and therefore an interest in how a form will successfully fulfil functional requirements set by a design problem. It is a 'closure' – a consummatory sense

⁶¹ Roger Scruton, *Beauty* (Oxford University Press, 2009), p.83

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of 'that's right' – that is both partial (the final look is still open to the effects of workmanship) and contextual, necessarily sensitive to the initiating design problem⁶².

The 'carpenter' as craftsman

To complete the picture of the aesthetic interest of Wittgenstein's 'carpenter' we also need to understand the carpenter as craftsman (rather than as designer) or how workmanship relates to aesthetic interest. Wittgenstein's aesthetically interested carpenter is properly understood as a designer-craftsman, a maker who has both designed a doorframe with some licence to introduce his ideas about how to best solve the particular 'doorframe design problem', and who will complete the job himself too. That latter work though has its own distinct demands and effects on how something will look (and of course is usually not carried out by the designer). In David Pye's dictum, while 'design proposes, workmanship disposes' – what is aesthetically significant though is how workmanship delivers deliberate visual effects irreducible to the work of designers⁶³.

The work of the carpenter completing a design puts the quality of the end product at risk. Following Pye, the risk is that the designer's intention will not be met by workmanship in two regards: that the product won't be 'sound' and/or that it won't be 'comely'⁶⁴. In terms of 'look'

⁶² The latter is evidently a required modification to Scruton when we reflect on his somewhat shocking assertion that a door fit for 'invalids' cannot be beautiful – if we think about doors and disabled access as a typical design problem setting up initial client needs, in turn perhaps limiting the choice of materials and so on, but still with choices about appearance open to designers, then such statements are rightly understood as ungrounded in aesthetic theory.

⁶³ Pye, p.1

⁶⁴ Ibid, p.23

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then, we are interested in how 'comeliness' is risked. Still it is worth briefly differentiating 'soundness' in work. In that former category, we can easily think of examples of a design being met in terms of basic patterns and dimensions, but a carpenter, for example, using poor quality materials and glueing and nailing joins rather than dovetailing, and so on. If we think of work in terms of soundness, then we are challenging whether the product – so made – will perform its intended function (will the doorframe be strong enough, will it last, for example). Of course the conditions for good workmanship are not limited to the kind of craft skills associated with carpentry. Mass production methods can deliver precision and soundness in line with design intentions no less than the soundness dependent on craft skills. Such automated machine work entails no risk though (the choice of look has been made, or using Scruton's phrase, the 'redundancies have been closed off'). Consequently there is no opportunity for the look of the end product to differ from that established by the design (thus terms such as Pye's 'workmanship of certainty' and Herbert Read's 'abstract art' in referring to industrial design). Any aesthetic value in such machine-made products is therefore a function of the aesthetic interest inherent in the design.

In contrast, the carpenter is making choices during the process of making that do influence the 'comeliness', as well as the soundness, of the product. If this evokes notions of the aesthetic appeal of handicraft, still an explanation is missing as to why such a claim is warranted. Seminally, R.G. Collingwood challenged the view that a carpenter following a design could do any more than meet the requirements of the specification he was working to, and that there is no 'art' in such work but merely technical ability⁶⁵. Any risk, on this account, associated with workmanship is entirely based on criteria related to soundness – the failure of the worker to

⁶⁵ R.G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford University Press, 1958). Work Theory argues there is indeed no 'art' in workmanship but that there is an aesthetic interest in crafts that affect the finish of products.

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simply deliver a doorframe eight feet by three, and such like, the risk in other words associated with mistakes and shoddiness. On this account there are no Wittgensteinian 'higher, higher, there just right!' interventions – no attention to comeliness, no aesthetic interest. It is right that the carpenter completing a design will not ordinarily stand back and alter fundamental aspects of a design like basic measurements – indeed to do so changes his persona (to designer-craftsman). But this is to ignore at least one aesthetic element of workmanship that is neither design proper (cannot be entirely controlled by a design) nor some decorative flourish (ornamentation) beyond a design intention. This element Pye calls 'surface quality' and it is related to the care in making taken by a 'craftsman' (for want of a better word). If we think of the craftsman with an intimate knowledge of the visual effect of working with different methods, tools and materials, then we begin to mark that out as an interest in the appearance of things that bears the stamp of the aesthetic – of standing back from one's work, but at close hand, examining its effect on a product's surface (so thinking in terms of 'finish') and closing redundancies accordingly. Such work does not simply reference a specification (after Collingwood's model of the craftsman, for example), but nor does it challenge a design (in which case it reverts to a design aesthetic).

For Work Theory, the claim is that good workmanship, as individual skill and care in making a finished product, represents a genuine and distinctive aesthetic interest. Collingwood's characterisation of craft is wrongly deflationary in ignoring this aesthetic interest in finish⁶⁶. The kind of 'technical' aspect of craft that he describes is a matter of either poor workmanship; or of applying a skill unthinkingly; or is a certainty in workmanship that is proper to automated production methods. The latter category of technical work is, definitionally, not craft work, but

⁶⁶ Of course Collingwood's aim is to argue against any 'technical theory of art'. Work Theory does not argue a technical theory of art either – but neither is craft strictly technical along Collingwood's lines.

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work to a finished product that is set in motion by a design and associated instructions to machines. Work Theory argues that a craftsman working in such a manner (to the 'workmanship of certainty'), after Collingwood's characterisation, is not exercising craft skills at all, which necessarily involve choices about a product's finish left open by a design. Closed designs, that dictate all aspects of delivery, preclude craftsmanship. Still, it is right to acknowledge that where a craft skill is exercised without any knowledge of how particular finishes are achieved, then something like a 'technical' (on Collingwood's definition) exercise is performed. For Work Theory though, this is not craft proper but the exercise of a 'knack' and corresponds roughly with the ordinary use of 'mechanical' to describe work that is done without care and attention and understanding, but 'gets the job done'. The conceptual difference between craft and knack reflects a real difference then between the evident aesthetic interest in work that is done with the best finish in mind, and work that only does (indeed can only do) what is required to deliver a product's core function.

The 'carpenter's' taste

Aesthetic interest in design and workmanship share a Wittgensteinian sense of perceived correctness then, but it is an interest in the 'ways things look' that is intimately associated with making, and can be further discriminated by referencing the task the maker – either as designer or craftsman – is engaged in. A sense of aesthetic correctness stops work, but when we come to examine work as design and workmanship, we understand that a sense of 'that's right!' is a permanent feature of good work (in other words, of repeatedly checking the look of things in the process of designing or constructing) rather than a contingent, final extrinsic judgement. It is not a 'Eureka!' moment in the sense of being sudden and unexpected. There is a felt sense of consummation (something that marks out aesthetic experiences

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phenomenologically) but it is one that is worked towards. It is the consummation of an existing aesthetic interest in form and finish. It is an interest that is intrinsic to good design work and to care in making a product. On this basis, the question of why something looks right becomes a set of questions about good and bad design and good and bad workmanship, about properly conceiving and creatively solving a design problem and about applying craft skills (and by extension, about recognising them as a spectator)⁶⁷.

Contrasts with Scruton's development of Wittgenstein elaborate further Work Theory's arguments for the redundancy of 'taste' in explaining aesthetic interest in made things. For Scruton, the 'carpenter' faced with deciding when to stop his work and "justify *this* frame" does so by comparisons with other doorframes and the surrounding architecture⁶⁸. His aesthetic interest is accounted for by these acts of 'fitting' and 'matching'⁶⁹. Fitting and matching, Scruton continues, has two consequences. Firstly, it necessarily engages the 'carpenter' with other viewers of the doorframe and so in conversations with them; secondly, it follows that from these dialogues products acquire shared meanings. So, in other words, from fitting and matching comes a "socially engendered sense of the right and wrong appearance" or, in a word, 'taste'⁷⁰. The carpenter is applying taste to close redundancies, so it goes⁷¹. He will justify a doorframe

⁶⁷ The word 'craft' can be problematic – no limitation to handicraft is meant here and I follow Pye in preferring 'workmanship' to 'craft' because it excludes design and includes industrial manufacturing. However, when referring to skills associated with workmanship that affects 'look' beyond that set by prior design, craft remains the best term.

⁶⁸ Scruton, 'In Search of the Aesthetic', p.243

⁶⁹ Ibid, p.243

⁷⁰ Ibid, p.244

⁷¹ 'Taste' here is Scruton's view of it as the human faculty for sensing order or form in the arrangement of things, and attaching meanings to these that become the lexicon of aesthetic response (so that an order or form can induce a shared sense of 'it's serene' for example).

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then 'formally' – focusing on the appropriateness of size and shape – and in terms of social and moral 'meaning' – that a doorframe is 'serene' or 'homely' and so on⁷².

The 'carpenter' (after Wittgenstein-Scruton, but really a designer-craftsman) does indeed necessarily engage with other people who also see his work, but deconstructing his work we see that as a designer that engagement is essentially structured around a design problem, and as a craftsman around issues about appropriate care in workmanship. For Work Theory, the fitting and matching that goes on here represents something other than an exercise of taste in Scruton's sense – and that is an account of the separate characteristics of the aesthetic interest evident in the good work of craftsmen and designers.

The basic anatomy of a typical design project includes initial meetings with clients from which ideas are worked up from their requirements to a 'drawing' (that might include sketches, plans, 3-D images, layouts, models and so on) that is finally handed over to executants (unless the designer is also the designer-craftsman) to deliver a final product. The designer's 'fitting and matching' are conditional on demands set by the client's brief and emerge from this context: they are a series of 'if...then' solutions to a design problem that culminate in the right looking drawing. The designer of a door faces requirements about the building's use (domestic, commercial and so on), that extend to considerations of location (urban, rural?), and perhaps to interior design too. The requirements entail decisions about dimensions and proportion of the overall frame, about panelling, about doorsteps, lights, jambs, stiles and door furniture. Fitting and matching solutions occur in respect of each element of the door in its larger design context – 'this will look right for this use; and this will work well with this'. To what extent do these represent an aesthetic interest in work? Fitting and matching could simply be a matter of recognising that one is working on replacing modern doors in a client's Georgian house and that

⁷² Scruton, 'In Search of the Aesthetic', p.246

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there are Georgian pattern books to copy. This hardly seems a matter of taste (under any conception) and is no more than a proper understanding of the design problem (assuming it is the client's wish to restore their house to its original integrated design). Aesthetic interest, then, must involve more than simply knowledgeable responses to design problems.

In the example of fitting Georgian doors, the designer's simply 'knowledgeable' work indicates something about the design problem rather than any lack of aesthetic interest, however, on his part. That absence of aesthetic interest reveals that the design problem is prescribed or closed such that the designer cannot reference his preferred solutions. For fitting and matching to be properly aesthetic we require then the designer to refer to something other than existing design solutions – but this of course requires that his design brief allows him to. Say the client wants a contemporary take on Georgian doors – now the design problem is set up in such a way that an aesthetic interest in the project is possible, so that the designer can communicate his ideas, with his drawings, about panelling and door furniture, for example, to his client. The designer is behaving aesthetically but does not need to introduce taste as something extrinsic to the design problem he confronts. Indeed as noted if he was simply referencing a 'standard of taste', this does not necessarily engage any commitment to the 'standing back' adaptive behaviours Wittgenstein calls aesthetic. This capacity for aesthetic response in design is occasioned by a relatively open design problem that allows the designer (and the client depending on their involvement) innovation in their work, in their final design drawings. And design problems are inherently 'open' if the situations they confront are properly conceived as necessarily unique. If innovative drawings, then, are the 'art of design', their essential reference is the terms of the design problem and its scope for a designer to create new adaptive responses (so that clients are contented with a product too) to the problems of 'doors', 'ceilings', 'floors', and so on (following the examples above).

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If a design project ends with a handover of drawings to craftsmen (rather than to automated manufacture), then the craftsman's aesthetic interest is delivered through, broadly, attention to detail in the element of production that is his responsibility. Similarly to design, there is no necessary reference to taste extrinsically engendered (from outside particular issues of finish) in understanding the aesthetic character of workmanship. It is sufficient for accounting for the aesthetic interest of good workmanship to refer to the way, for example, a door's finish fits its surrounding brickwork, whether there is apparent matching of roughness in the finish and such like, visual considerations still independent of whether the doorway will last for years to come or not. The craftsman as a skilled worker does not alter the form of a product (which is set by design drawings). A designer-craftsman might alter form in crafting something – one thinks of potters perhaps where a design might just be a sketch and where throwing itself changes the eventual form of a pot somewhat from its rough design. But this is another, albeit hybrid, case where taste is not an explanatory factor in the aesthetic interest that effectively completes the work.

Work Theory acknowledges that there are sets of standards that develop in each and every kind of making, with all the sub divisions associated with particular types of design problem and craft skill that inevitably follow. But these standards are still better conceived as skills and good design practice *per se* (in the latter case, perhaps including a greater range of environmental factors, for example). They are not 'knowing-how' knacks or tricks of the trade then; but nor are they standard design styles reflecting a society's 'taste', like Georgian doorframe templates or dogmatic minimalism.

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Summary and conclusions

Work Theory acknowledges certain features of the Wittgenstein-Scruton approach to aesthetic interest. It is right to characterise aesthetic interest in a sense of things looking right; and to locate theoretically significant aesthetic interest in everyday activities, especially in craft-like working methods. But design and workmanship, extending to authentic creative artistic choices, 'good work' in short, comprises the complete discourse of aesthetic understanding. Work Theory offers an alternative explanation of aesthetic interest, acknowledging the Wittgenstein-Scruton insights about the everyday craft-like aesthetic interest of things 'looking right', but arguing that aesthetic interest is differentiated between different aspects of good work's interest in a consummating sense of a product being 'just right'. Good work necessarily involves an interest in form's relation to function for each design problem, and an interest in a product's suitable finish.

Concluding, Scruton's account of aesthetic interest fails to discriminate between its different sources. A designer's aesthetic interest in a product's 'form' is explained by his interest in it fulfilling the functional requirements set by its specific design problem. Additionally, the account omits the aesthetic interest that comes with workmanship's attention to the detail or finish of things. For Work Theory, therefore, 'taste' is properly understood – for users of made things – as a matter of recognising innovation in design and care and skill in workmanship (as well as artistic authenticity in the special cases of creating artworks). And for makers, it is really not a matter of 'taste' at all, but of the aesthetic interest that comes (or not) with doing their work as designers, craftsmen and artists – their necessary interest if the work is good in the best functional form, in products being well-made and finished, and in authentically chosen work.

PART 2

SECTION 2 WORK THEORY, ART AND CRAFT

1. Aestheticism and art's function

Work Theory's internal relations between good work and aesthetic interest confirm that works of art – narrowly conceived – are not the unique focus of our aesthetic interest in made things. Aesthetic interest extends to interests in good design and workmanship in functional objects. In distinguishing between art, design and workmanship, Work Theory differentiates art's good work from that of design and workmanship in terms of the aesthetic interest that artists have in making something at all – in making an authentic choice to make something – rather than in dealing with a given design problem and with decisions about the best delivery of a design solution⁷³. The artist who also makes his artwork solves the design problem his artistic conception has set and completes the work with appropriate skills and workmanship. As such, the theory understands conceptual artists as, strictly speaking, concerned solely with the initiating idea to make something at all. It also understands works of art as artefacts. Traditional painters and sculptors, for example, are artists in the fuller artefactual sense, a sense that is also ordinarily understood, in that they initiate projects by authentic choices to make unique works of art but are also designers and skilled workers in delivering their works as finished made things. Our aesthetic interest in artworks therefore extends from an interest in authentically chosen artistic projects and ideas through to their delivery through appropriate design and workmanship.

⁷³ By 'art' as 'making something at all' I refer to the existentialist insight into authentically chosen projects – experienced as a realisation that '*he made that*'. It contrasts with 'art' as the set of artworks.

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This might suggest that Work Theory is still committed to a kind of philosophical aestheticism about art's function. But Work Theory rejects philosophical aestheticism's functional thesis (in its traditional and new variants) – that art functions to afford aesthetic experiences – on three broad grounds. First, Work Theory argues that aesthetic interest, generally and in artworks, is not reducible to a psychological state of mind called 'disinterest', to a traditional account of 'aesthetic experience' in other words. Second, artworks do not function solely to deliver aesthetic experiences. Third, Work Theory's account of aesthetic interest and of art's function suggest a more complex set of relations between art, other made things and aesthetic interest that is not reducible to aestheticism's functional thesis.

Work Theory's rejection of traditional and new aestheticism's key tenet – of an *exclusive* art-aesthetic internal relation and art's aesthetic function – does *not* therefore also imply that our aesthetic interest is a trivial or marginal activity. Noel Carroll, for example, draws this conclusion on the grounds that aesthetic interest *is* properly limited to an aestheticist view of art⁷⁴. But Work Theory's rejection of philosophical aestheticism's functional thesis is based on arguments for the full set of internal relations that exist between aesthetic interest and good work. These relations extend the idea of aesthetic interest beyond those argued by aestheticism's art-bound account, while still retaining a coherent account of aesthetic interest and its relations to art and beyond.

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Work Theory rejects philosophical aestheticism's functional thesis, and arguments employed here also help resolve outstanding theoretic issues about art and craft as activities and what functions they fulfill. For Work Theory, all aspects of good work – its art, design and skill – relate to a made thing's function: firstly, artists create new functional requirements by their

⁷⁴ Noel Carroll *Beyond Aesthetics* (Cambridge University Press, 2001) argues a 'deflationary' view of aesthetic experience that excludes any aesthetic interest in artworks beyond their 'design aspects.'

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authentic choices to make unique works; and secondly, designer-craftsmen deliver functional requirements (both set by artists but also by everyday demands). For Work Theory then, art's function (the important end it serves, distinct from the particular aim of individual artists) is to sustain authentically chosen projects to make unique things, and what works of art share as a class of objects is their distinct origination. The design and workmanship of works of art are initiated by the functional requirements set by an individual's authentic choice to make something at all. A further theoretic consequence is that art's function is not prescribed but distributed among the various functions artists generate for their artworks. So artists can be 'political', for example, and remain true to the idea of art. I will argue then that Work Theory's functionalism about art – as summarised here – is not a commitment to 'Aesthetic Functionalism' (AF) where art, and art alone, functions to deliver a limited set of aesthetic properties⁷⁵. AF states that “works of art have the function of embodying or sustaining aesthetic properties, such as beauty, elegance, delicacy, daintiness, and dumpiness”⁷⁶. For Work Theory, artists set all kinds of functional requirements by their authentic choices to make unique works of art, including but not limited to works that are intended to be 'aesthetically engaging'.

Work Theory understands craft as a related functional kind, but where its function is to make everyday functional objects the best they can be (that is, in terms of fulfilling their intended function). Craft activities for Work Theory are properly understood as design and workmanship. Design and workmanship are activities associated with all made things, including non-

⁷⁵ 'Aesthetic Functionalism' after Nick Zangwill (see full reference in footnote below) makes no claim to be a version of aestheticism but its functional thesis is similarly art-centred. I have also used 'aesthetic functionalism' (lower case) to indicate Work Theory's argument that good work's internal relations to aesthetic interest apply across all made things (see Part 1). I examine both in more detail below in relation to art and craft as functional kinds.

⁷⁶ Nick Zangwill, 'Aesthetic Functionalism' in *Aesthetic Concepts* Eds. Emily Brady and Jerrold Levinson (Clarendon Press, 2001) p.125

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conceptual artworks. Craft as a class of objects differs from art then not in those respects, but in terms of their origin – craft objects share a functionally-generated origin. Craftsmen, in short, do not generate new functional requirements for made things, but deliver – through designs and workmanship – pre-established functional requirements for things like chairs, houses, personal computers, and salt-cellars. Work Theory's account of craft as a functional kind still recognises, however, that craft objects are properly objects of aesthetic interest without their designs and workmanship indicating 'artistry'.

In arguing art and craft as different but related functional kinds, Work Theory answers a fundamental question about why artworks themselves are important to us. Their importance is two-fold. We value them as part of our lives because they introduce new affective responses to questions of how to live that are authentically chosen by individuals in situations that we recognise ('*he made that*'). Also, we value them because their art – that is the authentic choice of an artist – is materialised and delivered by good design and skilled workmanship ('*he made that*'). I will also argue that Work Theory's explanation of the importance of artworks explains their content-rich expressiveness, the ordinary sense still of them being 'non-functional', and their necessary relative rarity in the set of all made things, and within the set too of all well-made things.

2. Traditional and new aestheticism

Aestheticism is variously understood as an artistic movement, a morality and as a theory in philosophical aesthetics. Those differences are evident when we consider works attributed to aestheticism in an art exhibition, or as a lifestyle, or as arguments about the proper relations that hold between art, everyday life and the aesthetic. In this latter vein, Gary Iseminger identifies a central tenet of traditional philosophical aestheticism as its "functional thesis, F" that

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“a work of art is so by intending to function to afford aesthetic experience”⁷⁷. He also proposes a new aestheticism with a new functional thesis: “F’: the function of the artworld and practice of art is to promote aesthetic communication”⁷⁸. The following discussion is focused on these versions of aestheticism's functional thesis.

Arguments against traditional aestheticism

Monroe Beardsley defines an artwork as something that is produced “with the intention of giving it the capacity to satisfy the aesthetic interest”. And he accepts that the concept of aesthetic interest is satisfactorily defined in terms of aesthetic experience⁷⁹. Beardsley's account of aesthetic experience represents a traditional philosophical aestheticism then. He characterises the aesthetic as a 'reception' of some thing that involves an experience that is "lifted in a certain way", "takes on a sense of freedom from concerns about matters outside the thing received, an intense affect that is nonetheless detached from practical ends, the exhilarating sense of exercising powers of discovery, [and] integration of the self"⁸⁰. Beardsley adds that artists uniquely intend to satisfy the aesthetic interest of spectators, who in turn only take that interest to their reception of artworks. So on this account art functions to produce aesthetically interesting artworks. And aesthetic interest is explained psychologically as essentially a particular kind of experience: as 'lifted', 'exhilarating', 'integrating'.

⁷⁷ Gary Iseminger, *The Aesthetic Function of Art* (Cornell University Press, 2004), p.8

⁷⁸ Ibid, p.23

⁷⁹ Monroe C. Beardsley, 'An Aesthetic Definition of Art' in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* Edited by Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen (Blackwell, 2004), p.59

⁸⁰ Ibid, p.58

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Work Theory's objections to Beardsleyan or traditional philosophical aestheticism are two-fold: first about the nature of aesthetic interest, and relatedly about the activities of artists and spectators. Our aesthetic interest in made things, as makers and users or spectators, is an interest in their looking right in terms of their function (whether artistically conceived or everyday), and that interest extends through to an aesthetic interest in their design and skilful execution as meeting functional requirements. Aesthetic interest then is internally related to the good work that goes into conceiving and making something and so is necessarily an interest engaged, contra Beardsley, with the practical ends a made thing is intended for. Relatedly then, made things fulfill many kinds of artistic and everyday functions aesthetically (they are made to look right) but – again contra Beardsley – without their function being to satisfy aesthetic interest. So as users and spectators our aesthetic interest is in a made thing functioning well, not in a detached sense of 'exhilaration'. Furthermore, Beardsley fails to examine how aesthetic interest's internal relations to good work indicate different aesthetic interests in authentically chosen projects to make, good designs, and skilful workmanship.

Iseminger acknowledges the narrowness that follows from the Beardsleyan version of aestheticism both in terms of the account of aesthetic interest as a disengaged state of mind and of the type of activities in which makers actually engage. But he characterises these objections as antipsychological and antiessentialist, and as related solely to art and related intuitions about art's relation to the aesthetic, rather than to making generally. I turn now to Iseminger's aestheticism, and begin to engage those objections and intuitions.

Arguments against new aestheticism

Iseminger's new aestheticism is designed to meet “antiessentialist and antipsychological objections” to traditional accounts while retaining what he takes as some incontrovertible

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intuitions about art and the aesthetic and their relation that warrant, indeed demand, some kind of philosophical aestheticism. By antiessentialism Iseminger refers us to the idea of the supposed open-endedness of art as a concept reflecting art's novelty in practice. And by antipsychological objections he refers broadly to arguments denying a separate state of mind called aesthetic. The intuitions are about the special link between art and the aesthetic, and about the necessity of experience for appreciation. Iseminger's aims to "explain and defend a new version of aestheticism that aims to honor the intuitions and avoid the objections"⁸¹.

Iseminger's new aestheticism states: 'F': the function of the artworld and practice of art is to promote aesthetic communication'. He argues this meets the overarching objection to traditional aestheticism that it does not explain the facts of artistic making and aesthetic interest. This divides into two objections: antiessentialist about art and antipsychologism about aesthetic experience. The fundamental antiessentialist objection to aestheticism is that, traditionally, it defines art aesthetically, but that no necessary and sufficient conditions can be given for something to be a work of art (aesthetic conditions or otherwise) since art by its very nature is 'expansive, adventurous and novel'⁸². More specifically, antiessentialism (following Iseminger's characterisation of it) claims support from the existence of: 1) supposedly non-aesthetic works of art, like Duchamp's *Fountain*, and 2) from 'hyperaesthetic' art, namely art with religious or political aims⁸³. Iseminger supports this antiessentialist objection against traditional aestheticism but claims his functional thesis F' makes no essentialist claim about art. He also argues F' embraces the historicism and institutionalism that lies behind the objection by incorporating the social institution or practice called the artworld.

⁸¹ Iseminger, p.22

⁸² See Robert Stecker for a brief summary of antiessentialism in 'Definitions of Art' in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* (Oxford University Press, 2003) pp.144-145

⁸³ Iseminger, p.22

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Work Theory challenges F' firstly on the grounds that it is not implied by antiessentialist arguments about certain types of artwork. It is a negative argument then, in so far as it does not tackle Iseminger's use of the notions of 'artworld' and 'aesthetic communication'. Work Theory reveals that these terms are simply redundant in the context of making (artworks) and aesthetic interest. Work Theory challenges the existence of a category of non-aesthetic art on the grounds that artworks are made with a necessary aesthetic interest in their conception, design and execution that follows if they are made well. Relatedly, our interest in a work of art is necessarily aesthetic in so far as we attend to its originating idea and how well that takes shape and is delivered as a made thing. Similarly, the category of hyperaesthetic art is redundant in so far as it fails to capture any unique aesthetic interest that makers or spectators have in artworks that is not already accounted for by their aesthetic interest in the appropriateness of a chosen work in a given situation (and then in its design and skilful execution). For Work Theory, placing a urinal in an art gallery and calling it *Fountain* or painting a picture with a political or religious motivation and/or content are examples of creative choices to make something and are good work *qua* art in so far as those choices are authentic. Still, it is true that works like *Fountain* engage very little, if any, extra aesthetic interest than in the 'rightness' of their artistic conception, since their design and workmanship *by the artist* amounts to no more than making the right placement. A painting with political or religious inspiration and content will have the additional aesthetic interest necessarily involved in designing and executing the painting to deliver effectively the originating idea.

In both cases then, of 'non-aesthetic', conceptual art and religious or politically inspired art, antiessentialism correctly counters narrow conceptions of making artworks such as, for example, ones centred on an aesthetic interest in the formal properties of works of art. But this insight does not necessarily imply F' (and its concession to institutionalism in aesthetic theory).

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Nor, perhaps more importantly, does it imply antiessentialism about art, but I return to that when discussing art as a functional kind that sustains all kinds of artworks.

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I turn now to the antipsychological objection to traditional aestheticism. Again, my argument is a negative one against F' that its explanatory terms – 'artworld' and 'aesthetic communication' – are redundant because the antipsychological insight against F can be explained in terms of our aesthetic interest in good work. The antipsychological objection to aestheticism expresses scepticism about the existence of a distinctive aesthetic emotion or experience or state of mind, or at least doubts it is an experience exclusive to art. It centres on the apparent lack of distinctiveness of characterisations of the aesthetic, concluding that aesthetic experience is a myth and/or that it must fail to do the art definitional work aestheticism demands of it. George Dickie has famously criticised attempts to isolate a special aesthetic attitude of 'distancing' or 'disinterest', arguing that appropriate responses to artworks are cases of 'paying attention' to them rather than indicative of a special attitude of putting aside or distancing oneself from private and practical concerns⁸⁴.

Work Theory does not argue an exclusive relation between art and the aesthetic. It does acknowledge a distinctive phenomenology of aesthetic experience, however, that accompanies an aesthetic interest in a made thing as 'just right'. So there is a *felt sense* of some made things being 'just right', one that is commonly recorded in our everyday experiences. But that felt sense is not one requiring a distinctive act of 'distancing' from objects' use. Work Theory's account of aesthetic interest in made things argues that our sense of 'rightness', elemental to accounts of the aesthetic, is still an 'interested' encounter. Our aesthetic experience can be articulated in terms of the rightness of conception, design and workmanship of a made thing. There is a felt

⁸⁴ George Dickie, 'The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 1 (1964), pp.65-66

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sense of rightness in the look and feel of made things that can be explained in terms other than the mere phenomenology of aesthetic experience, the moment of 'that's right!'. So Work Theory meets the anti-psychological objection without abandoning the idea of a consummatory aesthetic experience.

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Work Theory's account of aesthetic interest then challenges Iseminger's 'aestheticist intuitions' as the supposed aesthetic bulwark against both anti-essentialist and anti-psychologist objections to aesthetic accounts of art. He lists them as: 1) a close connection between art and the aesthetic; 2) that experiencing an artwork is necessary for appreciating it; 3) that there is a distinction between artistically relevant and irrelevant properties; and 4) that the criterion of artistic value follows from the nature of art⁸⁵. Work Theory acknowledges a 'close relation' between art and the aesthetic, but it does so non-vaguely around our aesthetic interest in authentically chosen projects, and also in the formal and technical excellence of completed artworks. The internal relations between good work and aesthetic interest do not imply traditional aestheticism's essentialism about art. Nor do these relations support an essentially phenomenological account of our aesthetic interest in made things. Additionally, if we think about the aesthetics of making generally, then Work Theory acknowledges our aesthetic interest in the design and workmanship of everyday objects of use, thus meeting a broader range of intuitions about what makes a situation aesthetic than those presented by the 'new aestheticist', leaving them effectively redundant⁸⁶.

⁸⁵ Iseminger, p.10

⁸⁶ In this regard then Work Theory supports J.O. Urmson's broad characterisation of an aesthetic situation in terms of 'simple' and 'more sophisticated' cases of looks and sounds of things related to the kind of thing in question, for example, rather than Beardsley's (although I do not analyse it further here). J.O. Urmson, 'What Makes a Situation Aesthetic?' in

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3. Art and craft as functional kinds

Art as a functional kind

Zangwill's aesthetic functionalism AF states that: "1. being a work of art consists in having an aesthetic function; and 2. each work of art has some specific aesthetic function that is essential to it being the particular work of art that it is."⁸⁷ So for example Mondrian's later geometric works fulfil an aesthetic function by being 'elegant and bold because of their particular colours and forms'. To have an aesthetic function is to sustain one or more aesthetic properties like elegance and boldness then, according to AF.

AF's claim that artworks each fulfil an 'aesthetic function' contrasts with Work Theory's view that as makers and users our aesthetic interest in made things, including artworks, is a complex set of interests in origination, design and workmanship. For Work Theory, *if* art fulfils an aesthetic function after AF in 'sustaining aesthetic properties', it would be an interest in one, a combination, or all of these interests – origination, design and technique – in respect of any non-conceptual artwork. Examining a little more closely Zangwill's example of Mondrian's later work reveals how that complexity of aesthetic interest properly reflects the richness of artistic making and appreciation. Looking at *Composition with Red, Black, Blue and Yellow* we are interested in how Mondrian came to his particular ideas about abstraction. And about their delivery as 'black, white, and primary coloured rectilinear shapes' in this work. Finally, we experience the work's arrangement of colour and shape, perhaps as 'elegant and bold'. For AF,

Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art Edited by Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olson
(Blackwell, 2004), p.25

⁸⁷ Zangwill, p.125

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if 'elegance and boldness' were Mondrian's intentions for the work, then he has succeeded in delivering them; and has fulfilled art's aesthetic function. Work Theory modifies AF in two important ways. First, the artist does not need an aesthetic conception or intention – 'I intend this work to be elegant and bold', for example – to be interested in a work's aesthetic properties. Let us say Mondrian's artistic project was determined by a theosophic viewpoint influenced by his father's strict Calvinism⁸⁸. Then he has set himself the problem of designing and painting spiritual works of an ascetic kind, and his aesthetic interest is in what abstract forms and techniques work best to that end. Second, relatedly, the spectator's interest in a work's aesthetic properties *qua* art relate to the artist's choice. Is the 'elegance and boldness' right for delivering Mondrian's artistic ideas? And ideas about spirituality and abstraction, are they being conceived with originality and intelligence? In other words, aesthetic properties sustain (or not) artistic functions, and these functions are not necessarily aesthetic *per se*. These functions comprise choices by artists that are subject to our aesthetic interest in their authenticity as self-chosen projects, in their being right choices in the circumstances.

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Work Theory's functionalism in respect of art differs from AF in that aesthetic interest in makers and appreciators is an interest in authentic artistic choices and their delivery, rather than only in the successful delivery of an aesthetic function like being 'elegant and bold'. An objection to this stance is that art properly excludes the possibility of certain kinds of made things fulfilling practical ends, even where aesthetic interest is evident in their making and finish. So R.G. Collingwood argues that some 'artworks' – called 'magical' – are not art proper because their primary function is to evoke:

⁸⁸ This is not my view – but the suggestion is in Peter Gay's *Modernism*, for example, p.136

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'of set purpose some emotions rather than others in order to discharge them into the affairs of practical life. Such an art may be good or bad when judged by aesthetic standards, but that kind of goodness or badness has little, if any, connexion with its efficacy in its own proper work'⁸⁹.

The magical functions of art are various according to Collingwood's account: it can be that associated with the 'ceremonies of social life' like marriages, funerals, dinner parties and dances. But it can be associated too with recognisable arts like literature and painting where their 'proper work' has become propagandist or nationalistic and so on. In all such cases the primary function of the ceremony or artwork is called 'non-aesthetic' by Collingwood because it serves some emotion demanded by the specific ritual or political or other goal.

Collingwood has a special sense of 'aesthetic', but it is not necessary to explore it in detail here. The point at issue is whether Work Theory's functional account of art wrongly includes a category of 'artworks' made to deliver a range of political, religious and cultural emotions and ideas. The answer lies in Work Theory's differentiation between our aesthetic interests in authentic choices to make something at all and aesthetic interests in design and workmanship. Where a primary function for a made thing is to meet an everyday need, from basic requirements to live to complex cultural rituals, then Work Theory argues these are objects setting design problems rather than artistic choices for makers. As such they do not enter into consideration as artworks at all, and so are outside the scope of Work Theory's account of art's function. Where there is the opportunity for an authentic self-chosen project to make a unique work of art, then there is the opportunity to create a function for an artwork. Here artistry is a matter solely of an authentic choice to make a unique work. Indeed Collingwood rightly points out that there is a significant difference between the artist genuinely exploring and

⁸⁹ R.G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford University Press, 1958), p.69

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expressing political emotions and the artist slavishly following the party line⁹⁰. But while for Collingwood this is explained as an 'aesthetic' difference, Work Theory accounts for it more finely in terms of our aesthetic interest in an artist's authentic choice of project. So, for example, take the difference between a work of the Soviet avant-garde in the 1920s and a work of socialist realism dictated by the Zhdanov Doctrine from a decade or so later (*Symphony of Sirens* versus *Roses for Stalin*, say). We recognise a change in style, with experimental forms and ideas replaced by a conventional representational style in painting and prescribed content. More fundamentally what is revealed is the internal relation between authentically good work and aesthetic interest. There is a difference in the type of choice an artist can make then, between responding to a political idea or motivation or situation their way, authentically, or not. So continuing the example, our aesthetic interest in political works of art differentiates between the avant-garde artist, still with political emotions and ideas to express, and the technically good, politically motivated, but unoriginal artist producing to State guidelines. In short, Work Theory points to our aesthetic interest in authenticity and inauthenticity in artistic choices to account for Collingwoodian misuses of art. And so there is no proscription on art functioning politically.

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Conversely, having tackled Collingwood's arguments against 'magical art', Work Theory's functionalism about art is also potentially challenged by his objections to 'aesthetic individualism' – characterised as the idea that artistic projects are *merely* self-expressive. Again, Work Theory's counter to this objection centres on the internal relation between authentic artistic choices and aesthetic interest. An artistic project can be assessed in terms of its authenticity, that it is freely chosen by an artists and an original conception. There is an

⁹⁰ Ibid, p.280

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aesthetic interest too in an artwork's 'rightness' in terms of whether it realises its desired function. Going beyond Collingwood's art-centred account of aesthetic individualism, Work Theory also explains how good designers and skilled workers make things the best they can to meet everyday functional requirements. In summary, Work Theory rejects aesthetic individualism as an account of artistic projects to make unique artworks; and the rejection extends beyond art, given the internal relations that exist between aesthetic interest and good work making everyday functional objects.

For Collingwood aesthetic individualism wrongly conceives an artist as the “sole author of everything he does”, and as therefore expressing in his art only something of himself. It is, Collingwood thinks, a product of holding to an individualistic psychology, one that fails to grasp that we are what we are because of our relations with others. In short, Collingwood embeds art in the life of a culture: an artist is not “God, a self-contained and self-sufficient creative power”, but necessarily works in the context of his relations to the art and techniques of his time, to the experiences and expectations of the society that must be his audience. If this were not the case, then the artist’s relation with his audience is a “mere by-product” of their creative aesthetic experience⁹¹. Audiences would be left to grope towards the artist’s own imaginative experience in their appreciative efforts and would necessarily fail in their endeavour since an exact reconstruction is an ‘endless quest’ for, at best, ‘partial understanding’⁹². But, reiterating the artists' cultural embeddedness, “artists...become poets or painters or musicians not by some process of development within...but by living in a society where these languages are current”⁹³. Audiences are therefore “present as an aesthetic factor in artistic labour – defining what the problem is which as an artist he is solving, and what the solution is”, and so do not simply

⁹¹ Ibid, p.312

⁹² Ibid, p.311

⁹³ Ibid, p.317

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'overhear' private artistic expressions but are effectively encountering themselves through the expressions of artists⁹⁴. Collingwood then contrasts aesthetic individualism with the notion of 'collaboration'. He characterises the artist as a spokesman articulating through media like words and pictures and sounds the otherwise inarticulate and ill-expressed experiences of people in a community. They are both, artists and audiences, equally a part of a community through sharing broadly the same (non-artistic) encounters, and also general understanding of the 'languages' of art. So Collingwood states that:

'the artist...tells his audience, at risk of their displeasure, the secrets of their own hearts. His business as an artist is to speak out, to make a clean breast. But what he has to offer is not, as the individualistic theory of art would have us think, his own secrets. As a spokesman of his community, the secrets he must utter are theirs'⁹⁵.

While correctly indicating problems with an individualistic account of artistic work, Collingwood's account is vague on the grounds of real, practical collaboration between artists and audiences. The vagueness stems from a failure to distinguish between artists making authentic choices to create works of art and other kinds of aesthetic interest shown by makers and users more generally. This failure is encapsulated in Collingwood's statements about the collaborative role of audiences in relation to artist's work, so that audiences effectively 'define artistic problems and solutions' *and* are also 'told by artists the secrets of their own hearts'. Without interpreting Collingwood specifically, Work Theory understands two distinct kinds of aesthetic interest here, susceptible to different kinds of aesthetic collaboration, distinguishing between problem-setting and solving, on the one hand, and artistic expression on the other. The kind of aesthetic 'problem-setting and solving' collaboration that Collingwood alludes to is properly and concretely ascribed to the aesthetic interest that designers and users have in

⁹⁴ Ibid, p.315

⁹⁵ Ibid, p.336

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everyday made things of utility. Their aesthetic collaboration is a function of our shared human needs for everyday made things that function well for us. It can be tied-down then to the practicalities of designing and making everything from chairs to computer apps. It is evidently an aesthetic collaboration not confined to artists and audiences. Indeed it contrasts with the aesthetic 'expressive' collaboration that Collingwood describes in terms of artists delivering through their art previously inchoate and unexpressed ideas and feelings present in a community. Here, the nexus of aesthetic collaboration between artists and audiences is found in an account of authentic artistic choice (rather than in, following Collingwood, developing the metaphor of 'community medicine').

Aesthetic collaboration in Collingwoodian terms is not a viable philosophic notion then because it is falsely limited to that between artists and audiences; and because aesthetic collaboration is a divided notion reflecting different internal relations between artistic and design's good work and aesthetic interest. Concluding, Work Theory's functional thesis for art does not support aesthetic individualism; but its account of aesthetic collaboration extends beyond art, and for art that collaboration is best understood in terms of our aesthetic interest in the authenticity of artist's choices to make particular works of art.

Craft as a functional kind

Typically, pro-craft theorists account for its function on a 'craft is art' basis; or at least that craft marks out a special kind of making with close connections to art. But theories and expressions of this view are various and do not comprise a coherent 'craft theory'. So any 'craft theory' is a construction from a variety of sources: I construct such a theory from sources that are broadly related around the argument that the idea of craft has been diminished by erroneous contrasts with art. These sources have historical as well as conceptual connections

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from John Ruskin's characterisation of the 'Gothic worker' and its influence on the Arts and Crafts Movement, through to Walter Gropius's *Bauhaus Manifesto*. More recently, ideas about craft as a special kind of creative as well as skilled making have reasserted themselves in anthologies like *The Culture of Craft* and in exhibitions of craft work like *The Power of Making*⁹⁶. Always prompting its historical development, craft theory supplies its own historical narrative of the supposed progressive diminution of the craftsman with the dual rise of the idea of art and of industrial production. But whatever the merits of this narrative, craft theory focuses its attention on craft's relations to art. I will argue that Work Theory establishes these relations by relating both art and craft to the idea of good work generally. In so doing, Work Theory is not dependent on any particular historical narrative about art and craft; it elucidates a clear distinction between art and craft as types of making; and it retains the intuition that both art and craft are 'creative' while explaining the different kinds of work and relation to aesthetic interest each represents. I conclude that craft as a functional kind supports a different function than art, although both are related to good work's internal relation to aesthetic interest.

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Craft theorist Peter Dormer notes Bauhaus as the highpoint of the idea of 'craft as art and art as craft'⁹⁷. Walter Gropius's *Bauhaus Manifesto and Programme* declared that the visual arts should be directed to architecture rather than the 'isolation of the salon'; and that artists should return to learning craft skills and that these skills are a necessary condition of the exercise of creative artistry⁹⁸. Architecture for Bauhaus unified the arts of design, painting and

⁹⁶ Peter Dormer (editor) *The Culture of Craft* (Manchester University Press, 1997). Daniel Charny (Editor), *Power of Making* (V&A Publishing, 2011)

⁹⁷ Peter Dormer, 'Introduction' to the *The Culture of Craft*

⁹⁸ Walter Gropius, *The Bauhaus Manifesto*, reprinted in *Bauhaus: Art as Life* exhibition catalogue (Koenig Books, 2012), pp.15-17

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sculpture in the creation of buildings; and the artist then is properly an “exalted craftsman”, his proficiency in a craft “the prime source of creative imagination”⁹⁹. There are a number of different claims here that on examination reveal theoretic and practical *differences* between art and craft, rather than support the 'craft theory' thesis of an equivalence or at least close relation between art and craft. First, about the privileging of making everyday objects of utility ('architecture') over works of art ('works for the salon'); second, about the relation between specific craft skills and creativity; and third about the artist as exemplary craftsman.

First, while acknowledging the typically assertive tone and style of a 20th century 'art manifesto', the aesthetic privileging of a category of quotidian made things related to buildings over works of art has no obvious theoretic grounding. Work Theory argues that aesthetic interest is divided between different aspects of good work, but there is no implication that the aesthetic interest of skilled craftsmen in the finish of products, for example, or of designers solving everyday design problems, is superior to that of artists conceiving new artworks. All products that are made well are made with aesthetic interest. It is true that the range of work associated with the 'building' – as conceived by Gropius – allows a whole range of interests to flourish, from the building itself to its interior design and the made things that function within it. But again for Work Theory, these are best analysed in terms of artistic creation, good design and skilled workmanship. Perhaps an 'exalted Bauhausian craftsman' would have all these aesthetic interests. But we can say the same about non-conceptual artists who complete the making of their works. In any case, an all-round interest in the 'building' would seem to suggest an exceptional individual who, on analysis, is both artist and craftsman – I look at the example of Le Corbusier in this context shortly. Second, claims about the necessity of 'craft for art' are reasonable on Work Theory's analysis of craft as involving both design and workmanship. If

⁹⁹ Ibid, p.15

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craft is conceived as such, then it is right that craft is necessary to deliver an artistic idea as an artefactual work of art. But craft skills are not necessary for the generation of artistic choices to make this or that work; and craft skills of course deliver more than artistic conceptions. Third, and relatedly, for Work Theory the 'exemplary craftsman' is either a good designer or skilled worker (or both). 'Craft theory' is essentially wrong then in contending that the artist fulfils this role, since his art (in terms of good work) consists in the choice to make a work of art rather than in the design and skill in making it (of course in practice non-conceptual artists at least are also designers and skilled craftsmen).

These differences between art and craft can be illustrated by the work of Le Corbusier. Alongside his seventy-five buildings and forty-two city-planning projects, for which he is best known, he also left behind 8,000 drawings, more than 400 paintings and pictures, and forty-four sculptures¹⁰⁰. Together with this range of work, his specifically architectural work reveals his inventiveness with forms and functions, creating new shapes for existing design problems, extending their use to deal with other functional requirements, and also using existing shapes to meet other previously unconsidered uses¹⁰¹. Work Theory explains these facets of Le Corbusier's architectural work as signs of authenticity in design, rather than as evidence of the 'art of design'. We can examine a little more closely his famous dictum that a 'house is a machine for living in'. Le Corbusier starts with an age-old design problem, the house, but states "the problem of the house has not been stated"¹⁰². Less rhetorically, he is stating that the design

¹⁰⁰ Jean-Louis Cohen, *Le Corbusier* (Taschen, 2006), p.7

¹⁰¹ Charles Jencks notes, for example, that Le Corbusier's inclined linear building designed to shield a stadium finds other functions; and the hyperbolic shape of industrial cooling towers is transposed to the design of a church. *Le Corbusier and the Tragic View of Architecture* (Penguin Books, 1987), p.160

¹⁰² Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* Translated by Frederick Etchells (The Architectural Press 1948), p.100

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problem for housing needs to be reconceived in the light of the modern needs of people and the opportunities that new technologies bring. If a house is conceived as “a shelter against heat, cold, rain, thieves and the inquisitive... a receptacle for light and sun... [with] cells appropriated to cooking, work and personal life”, then why, he continues, are houses designed the way they are, with 'enormous, useless roofs, scanty windows', and so on¹⁰³. And to keep building in the old way is to build with 'eyes which do not see' the possibilities for dealing with the problem of housing in new ways. Le Corbusier often photographed his buildings with his latest motor car in the foreground; and *Towards a New Architecture* illustrates the text on the problem and solution of housing with photographs of airplanes. The bad designer's eyes do not see these new forms (still of course radically new in the early 1920s when Le Corbusier was writing) in the sense that they do not see the possibilities they suggest for new forms too in building houses to meet the requirements of modern domestic living. The 'new architecture' then remains about the essential functional requirements of buildings (housing especially) then, for all its creativity both in conceiving modern domestic living and the best forms to meet those needs; remains design rather than art in short¹⁰⁴. It confirms too the internal relation between good design and the designer's aesthetic interest. Good design conceives a design problem fully, does not settle unthinkingly on existing design solutions, and works to create forms that are right to meet the design's functional requirements. And correspondingly, our aesthetic interest in those right forms is an interest in those forms working in practice, being forms that are right for houses and so on. Of course whether Le Corbusier's forms are right for houses is a matter of critical practice, and so outside the scope of Work Theory.

¹⁰³ Ibid p.106

¹⁰⁴ Le Corbusier is an artist (in terms of Work Theory at least) when he refuses to design a facade at the 1958 Brussels World Fair and contributes an *Electronic Poem* instead – what would now be called 'an installation' piece.

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The differences between art and craft that Le Corbusier's architecture illustrates refers to craft conceived as creative design work. There is another category of cases, where craft's 'art' is again seemingly evidenced: this time in workmanship, alongside design, of outstanding quality. Here again Work Theory argues that craft – as workmanship 'shown off' by design – indicates a specific kind of aesthetic interest in a maker distinguishable from that of the artist. Take an example like Benvenuto Cellini's salt-cellar of 1543. This extraordinary piece of tableware is hardly recognisable as a salt-cellar. It is made of gold enriched with enamel, the design dominated by two principal figures and with many subsidiary figures and decorative forms around its ebony base. For all intents and purposes, it is not a salt-cellar but a piece showing off (leaving the design aside) its makers extraordinary goldsmithing skills¹⁰⁵. The salt-cellar is originally commissioned by Cardinal Ippolito d'Este in 1539 and two of his advisors suggest designs for Cellini to choose between. But Cellini wants to make something that gives free rein to his 'art'. So he rejects the design choices offered him, saying "I cherish the children born of my own art"¹⁰⁶. For Work Theory, Cellini's 'art' properly refers to his creativity in choosing, in this case, a design that allows the mastery of his craft skills to be exhibited. Cellini, like Le Corbusier, designs creatively when free from 'eyes that do not see' the possibilities for design solutions other than the conventional. But whereas Le Corbusier's design solutions reflect his conceptions of the functional requirements of housing, for example, Cellini's design creativity serves his aesthetic interest in the possibilities of his technical skill. The salt-cellar is a masterpiece in the old craft sense of the word. And our aesthetic interest in it is an interest in its maker's extraordinary execution of his craft skills, in workmanship that is the best of its kind. So

¹⁰⁵ Of course 'masterpiece' originally referred to a one-off work exhibiting and proving a craftsman's skill, their attainment of 'master' status in a craft guild.

¹⁰⁶ Benvenuto Cellini, *Autobiography* (Penguin Books, 1998), p.237

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our aesthetic interest in the salt-cellar then, like Cellini's in making it, is effectively liberated from its function, but it nevertheless remains a craft object rather than 'craft as art'¹⁰⁷.

Concluding, Work Theory argues that the aesthetic interests of craftsmen as designers and skilled workers does not indicate their 'art', but aesthetic interests specific to good design and workmanship. As such, craft, so conceived, is a significant contributor to our aesthetic lives without it being art (and without any theoretic requirement that craftsmen be properly called artists). Craft functions then to support made things of authentic design and workmanship, where authenticity is revealed by creative choices of *how* to make something. As a functional kind it differs from art, which supports authentic choices to make unique works.

¹⁰⁷ A similar set of cases relates to objects of everyday use but made for ceremonial use of some kind, never to be used for their function, for example, the Canterbury Jade Axe and many similar objects in the British Museum.

PART 2

SECTION 3 WORK THEORY AND AESTHETIC EDUCATION

1. Art-appreciative and moral-political aims

In philosophical aesthetics the idea of aesthetic education has traditionally been elaborated in two distinct, although not mutually exclusive, ways. I term them the 'art-appreciative' and 'moral-political' (distinctions within these two categories soon become evident too). Alongside these – under the broad term 'art education' – are various practical approaches either to training artists, designers and craftsmen, or to teaching the appreciation of artworks. My focus here is on the idea of aesthetic education in philosophical aesthetics as elaborated in art-appreciative and moral-political ways, although in formulating an idea of aesthetic education appropriate art educative practices naturally come into consideration.

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One set of ideas of aesthetic education centres on the appreciation of works of art and the cultivation of a special sensibility to them (I call this '*art-appreciative*'). Within this concept of aesthetic education, formalist and expressionist approaches to learning to appreciate works of art, after Paul Hirst's categorisation, are identifiable¹⁰⁸. Summarily, the formalist approach educates the spectator of works of art by directing him to the formal properties of works –

¹⁰⁸ Paul Hirst in 'Aesthetic Education' in *A Companion to Aesthetics* Edited by David Cooper (Blackwell, 1992) identifies formalist and expressionist approaches to categorise *all* aesthetic education: I am arguing then that his division is properly a *sub*-division of the 'art-appreciative' and fails to distinguish a separate primary categorisation of 'moral-political' aesthetic educational ideas.

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including their patterns of colour and line and spatial relations – that supposedly exclusively support aesthetic experience of them in those terms. Expressionists direct spectators to formal properties but extend the relevant features of works of art for aesthetic appreciation beyond formal aesthetic properties to, for example, representational features of a work. But both approaches typically adopt a 'see it as I see it' educative technique. The educator points out features in a work that induce us to experience it aesthetically in particular ways. Education then is persuasive and iterative, aiming at producing spectators who can aesthetically experience works in a discriminating way (with 'taste' in some descriptions). So, following Frank Sibley's example (in the expressionist educative mode), we are capable of a fuller aesthetic appreciation of Breughel's *Fall of Icarus* when the small splash indicating Icarus' plunge into the sea is made aware to us and contrasted with the large foreground figure, a ploughman, going about his everyday business¹⁰⁹. Then we experience, like W.H. Auden, how human suffering takes place amidst ordinary, everyday events and that we are able to turn away because it is not important to us directly – “the ploughman may/Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,/But for him it was not an important failure”¹¹⁰. This type of aesthetic education, in Arnold Isenberg's characterisation of art criticism, is a 'retrial of experience', education to a 'second aesthetic moment' more discriminating than the preceding¹¹¹.

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¹⁰⁹ Frank Sibley, 'Aesthetic Concepts' in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* Edited by Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom (Blackwell, 2004), p.136

¹¹⁰ Extract from W.H. Auden's poem 'Musee des Beaux Arts'

¹¹¹ Arnold Isenberg, 'Critical Communication' in *Aesthetics and the Theory of Criticism* (University of Chicago Press, 1973), p.168

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The second broad conceptualisation of aesthetic education is premised on the supposed developmental possibilities of aesthetic experience for all of one's life, beyond the cultivation of a discriminating taste in works of art (I call this the '*moral-political*'). While Hirst's general expressionist categorisation links art appreciation to the cultivation of a range of sensibilities in individuals that are employed beyond the arts, the moral-political category indicates aesthetic education that also educates people in new forms of personal and societal life. Friedrich Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* remains the seminal work in this tradition. Paul Guyer places Schiller alongside William Morris, John Ruskin and John Dewey in arguing that aesthetic experience allows a distinctive "freedom to develop our imaginative and cognitive capacities, to gain knowledge of ourselves and others, and to imagine new ways of life, a freedom that is valued not simply for its own sake but also because of the benefits the developments of these capacities can bring to the rest of our lives". Guyer could reasonably have added Karl Marx to the list of names, and with him related ideas about the supposed aesthetic character of free or disalienated labour. In any case, there are a number of claims here, but in terms of the idea of aesthetic education there is a distinctive claim implied about its purpose, namely that it is an education in, or that results in, improving one's and society's general life. The moral and political aims of aesthetic education based on a developmental conception of aesthetic experience outlined by Guyer have been variously expounded. So by way of introduction – I investigate the moral-political idea of aesthetic education in detail below – Herbert Read argues in this tradition for an aesthetic education that both cultivates sensibility to aesthetic experience and expands the realm of that experience beyond the art gallery to every worker's experience of their everyday labour. For Read, the aesthetically unsophisticated worker in an art gallery (the 'strayed riveter') does not need the art-critical education of 'see what

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I see' but the chance to be an artist himself ("every man is a special kind of artist"). Then, so the argument goes, workers create their own culture – in short, the aim of aesthetic education is to create a democratic society of makers out of 'strayed riveters', not to get them to appreciate existing works of art. And that is achieved, in addition to using broadly 'art education' methods, by reorganising general production methods in ways that encourage aesthetic interest, even to making 'pots and pans' aesthetically.

The moral-political idea of aesthetic education then shares with the art-appreciative view an idea of cultivating aesthetic experience but extends its scope for moral-political ends. Of course the experience of art too can be put straightforwardly to political use when used as propaganda (Soviet Socialist Realism, for example) but *ex hypothesi*, for Work Theory, it is therefore excluded from the category of the aesthetic. However, I return to the case of *Lehrstucke* or learning-plays (and of 21st century participative theatre) in the context of Work Theory later, where the idea of the experience of making a political artwork does have relevance for the idea of aesthetic education conceived in moral-political terms.

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Concluding these introductory remarks, given Work Theory's internal relations between good work and aesthetic interest, is the idea of aesthetic education correct in the terms set out by theorists of the 'art-appreciative' or 'moral-political' view? I will argue that the art-appreciative idea of aesthetic education rightly characterises the essentially persuasive character of aesthetic education in appreciating individual works of art – and that this persuasion properly draws on a spectator's everyday experience outside that of artworks, after Sibley. But this extra-artistic source of aesthetic interest is not a 'blessing' (a pre-existing special sensibility – of general 'good taste' – that can then be attuned to appreciating works of art), but is cultivated

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itself by an individual's experience of good work in making and using generally. And this good work is divided between experiences of artistic originality, and of the design and workmanship that delivers unique works of art and everyday functional objects. I will also argue that the moral-political view rightly suggests an educative aspect of aesthetic experience beyond the appreciation of artworks to enriched ways of living, and one that is gained through aesthetic activities – broadly through making and performing. But for Work Theory these activities, as good work, necessarily engage aesthetic interest in the maker and spectator, and are not in need of extrinsic justification in moral-political terms.

I conclude therefore that the idea of aesthetic education is properly viewed as simply a summary term including just those educational arrangements that relate to the idea of good work, namely that support its creative choice, design and workmanship aspects. It does not essentially serve any specifiable appreciative, moral or political aims – even though some such goals may be served by it.

Art-appreciative aims

Nick McAdoo notes that Sibley's theoretic connection of aesthetic concepts to non-aesthetic features of artworks “opens the door to the educability of taste”¹¹². Sibley's account of the logic of aesthetic discourse argues that recognising non-aesthetic features require only normal sense detection and some understanding of artistic terms relevant to the medium under inspection; but attributing aesthetic qualities to artworks require something more. Still, and

¹¹² Nick McAdoo, 'Sibley and the Art of Persuasion' in *Aesthetic Concepts* (Edited by Emily Brady and Jerrold Levinson, 2001), p.46

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critically in terms of aesthetic education, non-aesthetic and aesthetic are linked by the fact that “aesthetic concepts all carry with them attachments and in one way or another are tethered to or parasitic upon non-aesthetic features”¹¹³. Sibley counters then Stuart Hampshire's speculation that a perfect group of aesthetes would be 'disengaged from practical needs and manipulations', arguing Hampshire's understanding of aesthetic experience would effectively blind us to many aesthetic qualities we can appreciate by association with non-aesthetic features¹¹⁴. Still Sibley acknowledges that the 'puzzling feature' remains of how a critic can justify or support his aesthetic judgements by “pointing out the features , including easily discernible non-aesthetic ones, upon which the aesthetic qualities depend”¹¹⁵. Sibley's answer is to describe what the critic does, how he gets his audience to 'see what he sees' through the power of persuasion. Sibley's description of the critic's persuasive work falls under seven broad headings: pointing out the non-aesthetic; pointing out the aesthetic; pointing out the links in instances of both; using similes and metaphors; using contrasts and comparisons; repeating and reiterating points; and using non-verbal communication like gesturing.

In short then, Sibley argues that aesthetic education is always, and can only ever be, a matter of getting someone to read again or look again and so on. He states, “this is what succeeds if anything does; indeed it is all that can be done”¹¹⁶. Sibley grounds our aesthetic sensibility towards artworks in our supposed pre-existing sensibility to aesthetic concepts and our upbringing. So, for example, given our natural potentialities and tendencies for aesthetic experience, we further learn about grace and delicacy and other aesthetic concepts as children

¹¹³ Sibley p.136

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p.136 Sibley quotes Hampshire here.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p.134

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p.137

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taught by parents and teachers in the presence of graceful and delicate objects and behaviours. These methods are, according to Sibley, of a piece with those of the professional art critic, who effectively broadens out that same method of acquaintance and persuasion to greater levels of subtlety and autonomy¹¹⁷. Sibley argues then in effect for an aesthetic realism about judgements of aesthetic (dis)value. There are, in other words, aesthetic reasons that justify aesthetic experiences. Work Theory supports some such version of aesthetic realism, but argues that aesthetic experiences are justified by reasons that explain aesthetic (dis)pleasure in terms of a made thing's 'fit' or 'rightness' for its function. And by extension then, aesthetic education is possible in so far as we are educable in fitness and function. This aesthetic education is not an education in taste *per se* – building only on a supposed natural propensity to find a disinterested (dis)pleasure in the perception of things – but specifiable around activities that are necessarily involved in making things¹¹⁸.

Work Theory suggests that practical needs and manipulations, rather than being antithetical to aesthetic experience, necessarily engage our aesthetic interest in so far as that

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p.138

¹¹⁸ Note should be made then that the point of contention is, broadly, the requirement for, and education of, taste. Sibley extends the critic's repertoire beyond Clive Bell, for example, who famously limits aesthetic appreciation to a work's formal elements of colour, line, mass and so on. So "to appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing but a sense of form and colour and a knowledge of three-dimensional space" combinations of which are 'significant form' (Clive Bell, *Art* (Oxford University Press, 1987) p.27). In other words, all people must have is an emotion for pure form (and this is the unique aesthetic emotion); the role of the critic is to make the appreciator feel the emotion for himself by continually 'pointing [significant form] out' (Bell, p.9). Soon after Bell, art critics like Roger Fry sympathetic to Bell still pointed out that an interest in form does not eliminate an interest in representation nor references back to life. Sibley no doubt follows Fry in that regard but is still committed to an aesthetic education *of taste*.

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work is good. It connects art appreciation in particular to an artwork's creation, formulation and technique. Our aesthetic experience of an artwork then can be justified in terms of its creative authenticity, its right form and skilled workmanship. Aesthetic concepts relate to these aspects of a work. To say a work of art is 'delicate' may mean an artistic idea is delicately handled or that workmanship delivering an idea (however indelicate in itself) is delicate. In other words, what justifies the use of an aesthetic concept is its appropriateness to aspects of good work, that in turn are explicable independently of appeals to taste, being appeals to a felt sense of the authenticity of *that* idea and to *its* delivery. Of course the persuasive techniques that Sibley describes may well be used to encourage our aesthetic appreciation of a work; but for Work Theory they properly have a specifiable content in terms of good work to which appeal is being made ('see how that works as an artistic idea in this medium so that you feel...'). Appeals to taste are redundant. And this marks a significant difference from a Sibleyan idea of aesthetic education (for art appreciation). The Sibleyan idea trusts to our natural propensities to aesthetic judgement or taste built up over time by educators using their rhetorical force to 'see it like I see it'. Contrastingly, Work Theory explains aesthetic interest in terms of good work, implying the possibility of aesthetic education for art appreciation through knowledge of artistic ideas, the use of form, and skilful applications of artistic techniques of production. It therefore breaks the possible, non-virtuous circle of taste (where my taste depends on your critical taste). This circle is evident in McAdoo's argument, after Sibley, that "we cannot force ourselves to feel... on such occasions then [appreciating artworks], we have only the critic's expressive and empathetic powers to fall back on"¹¹⁹. Rather, Work Theory connects aesthetic experiences of artworks (and beyond) to our experiences of fit and function generally, and therefore in essence to

¹¹⁹ McAdoo, p.38

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educable information and skills about artistic ideas and making things well. And these in turn necessarily engage our aesthetic interest. So although aesthetic appreciation, at least the consummatory aesthetic experience at least, may indeed be involuntary, still our aesthetic interest is 'forced' by the demands made on us by attending to a work's artistic ideas and its materialisation. As spectators and users of works (art and beyond) – least of all as makers – we are not then dependent on the 'rhetorical force' of aesthetic discourse for aesthetic experience but on the more clearly educable grounds of good work. Work Theory then supplies a different material of aesthetic appreciation of artworks than the Sibleyan model: that material is our interest in form and skilful workmanship delivering an artistic idea rather than a passive aesthetic sensibility awakened by the persuasive art lover.

The idea of aesthetic education reaching deeply into our interest in form and workmanship, beyond non-utilitarian delight in perceptual richness, and beyond artworks too, is central to its moral-political conception.

Moral-political aims

It is an elementary categorisation to distinguish the moral-political aims of individual artworks from any aims attributed to art as an activity in general. An artist may want his work to change our view on a range of social and political issues, from poverty to women's rights¹²⁰. Or

¹²⁰ So, for example, a recent anthology of political art includes artists commenting on poverty and rights, but also using artworks to criticize transnational oil companies, to express their powerlessness in the face of totalitarian governments in Latin America, to comment on the radical changes taking place in China and artworks calling for an end to cronyism and

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it may be that art generally, as an activity of making or appreciating or both, is regarded as necessary for the development of certain moral-political goals like the development of the 'whole man'. Unsurprisingly then, moral-political ideas of education through art (as yet still theoretically distinct from *aesthetic* education) range from the moral-politically expedient use of artworks to essentialist views that there is something of moral-political significance about all art as an activity. I examine these moral-political variants of 'education through art' in the light of their contributions to an idea of aesthetic education.

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Politically expedient 'education through art' is perhaps most easily characterised and explained given its 20th century apotheosis in the Zhdanov Doctrine of socialist realism. The Zhdanov Doctrine was the highpoint of Soviet socialist realism, explicitly demanding that art 'remoulded and educated people in the spirit of socialism'¹²¹. The doctrine committed artists to exclusively realist artworks and censored non-realist works. The non-realist experimentation with art forms of the Russian Avant-Garde in the 1920s in the Soviet Union (including Komfut, the communist futurists, and the Constructivists) gave way then to the artistic conservatism of socialist realism in the 1930s. Marxist humanists like Ernst Fischer commented on the "bureaucratic dictatorship of amateurishness over the creative imagination [in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries at the time] ... That is why a socialist can only speak with sorrow and anger of the boots and hooves which, again and again, trample upon the green wheat [of

environmental destruction. See Robert Klanten, *Art and Agenda: Political Art and Activism* (Die Gestalten Verlag, 2011)

¹²¹ Andrei Zhdanov, 'Soviet Literature: the Richest in Ideas, The Most Advanced Literature' in *Soviet Writers' Congress 1934: The Debate on Socialist Realism and Modernism* (Lawrence and Wishart, 1977)

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artistic creation]”¹²². Fischer argues a core Marxist aesthetics that art in some way fulfils a didactic political function, at least under capitalism, but he also views art as a universal 'creative' human activity¹²³. The 'prevention of literature', as George Orwell called it, under Soviet arts policy meant putting the arts solely in the service of political ends: what was produced was propaganda in other words¹²⁴. And like Fischer, Orwell's distinction between didactic works and propaganda rests on the absence of artistic spontaneity in choosing to make an artwork. In other words and in terms of Work Theory, artworks can fulfil didactic aims but those aims must be authentically chosen. So, for example, Orwell argues that Jonathan Swift's political satire *Gulliver's Travels* is a 'great work of art', rather than mere propaganda, because of the author's own 'intensity of vision'¹²⁵.

The idea of non-realist didacticism is perhaps most famously associated with Bertold Brecht's *Lehrstucke* or learning-plays and related ideas of political art including 21st century

¹²² Ernst Fischer quoted by Granville Williams, 'Review of Fischer's *Art Against Ideology*' (1970) available at <http://www.marxists.org/history>

¹²³ In Fischer, and Marxism generally, this 'creativity' is universal but suppressed under non-communist conditions of production. I do not pursue that theory here, but in short: the dual aspect in Fischer's Marxist aesthetics (the social criticism of art and its universal character) can be broadly explained in terms of a simple distinction between art under capitalism and socialist art, and art conceived as paradigmatic at least of the aesthetic lives of makers that will be led under communist conditions of production. The latter appeals to Karl Marx's account of human labour under capitalist and communist conditions of production in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (Progress Publishers, 1977): work becomes a mere means to existence, but in a de-alienated state of affairs, so the argument goes, control and creative scope in production are returned to the worker, and 'in place of the wealth and poverty of political economy come the rich human being and rich human need'.

¹²⁴ George Orwell, 'The Prevention of Literature', in *Essays* (Penguin Books, 1994)

¹²⁵ George Orwell, 'Politics vs Literature: An Examination of Gulliver's Travels', in *Essays*, p.386

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'Social Practice'. Non-realism was variously argued and practiced by Marxist aestheticians outside the Soviet orthodoxy, notably by Walter Benjamin and Brecht, and later by Theodor Adorno. Benjamin and Adorno, among many others, became associated with the Frankfurt School's aesthetic modernism, which included a view of the revolutionary and emancipatory value of experimental art. The supposed 'emancipatory' value of the arts has since been thematic in politically didactic art. What form that moral-political 'education through art' takes changes; but what remains at its core is an, albeit diffuse and sometimes contested, idea of 'participation'¹²⁶. For Brecht, 'learning plays' contrast with 'Aristotelian plays': the latter show the world as it is, while the former show how it can be changed¹²⁷. Theatrical techniques were developed with the intention of 'making the stage didactic', forcing individual audience members to participate in a work by critically responding to ideas expressed in plays rather than by responding emotionally as a 'mob' – the theatre becomes 'a place for philosophers'¹²⁸. Brechtian participative didacticism extends into a variety of artistic forms beyond both the theatre and the idea of changing minds. Perhaps its apotheosis is 'Social Practice' art, where participation involves members of the public both 'making' and 'performing' artworks, so that audience participation goes beyond a Brechtian intellectual engagement to an active creation of works and new social situations, so the argument goes¹²⁹. Before examining Brechtian and Social

¹²⁶ It is significant to note that this idea of 'participation' also figures in government funding for arts projects, where (in some form or another) it is a requirement. I do not comment on the various ends this 'participation' is supposed to achieve.

¹²⁷ Bertold Brecht, 'Introductory Note' to *The Measures Taken and other Lehrstucke* (Methuen, 1977)

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, p.6

¹²⁹ Claire Bishop rightly notes this moral-political idea of 'participation' is distinct from what I have termed the 'art-appreciative' which might extend to an individual spectator using new

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Practice didacticism in the light of Work Theory, some examples give a flavour of this artistic movement's moral-political idea of 'education through art'.

Shannon Jackson cites examples where the public 'play roles' in artists' works: "Ann Carson's scripted scenarios for 'Real People'.. Jeremy Deller who staged a re-enactment of a 1984 miners' strike in working-class England, and many other artists..."¹³⁰. And two of those others are described in a little more detail: "in a modest kiosk installed in New York's Times Square, Paul Ramirez Jonas distributes thousands of custom-based 'keys to the city' of New York. Re-defining a ritual that is usually reserved for visiting luminaries, Jonas democratizes this civic honour, granting to everyday citizens special access to cultural landmarks throughout the city". And: "in a commissioned art piece in Zurich, the artist collective WochenKlauser invite sex-workers, politicians, journalists and activists to take a boat ride on Lake Zurich; gathered around the table of a main cabin, they are instructed to 'have a conversation' in an 'Intervention to Aid Drug-Addicted Women' that is both an art piece and a social process"¹³¹. The didacticism of Social Practice artworks like these is described as creating "forms of living that activate communities and advance public awareness of pressing social issues"¹³². Concluding this summary of Social Practice art, it is worth noting too that debate within its advocates and

interactive technologies to engage with existing artworks, for example, Claire Bishop, 'Introduction' to *Participation* (Whitechapel Books Ltd, 2006), p.10

¹³⁰ Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics*, (Routledge, 2011), p.1

¹³¹ Both examples from Jackson, p.12

¹³² Anne Pasternak, 'Preface' to *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991 to 2011* (MIT Press, 2012)

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practitioners has resulted in a 'manual' of techniques and materials, an education in its educative aims¹³³.

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The distinction between political art and propaganda was made vivid by 20th century totalitarianism. The artist motivated by social conditions to write or paint scenes that evoke emotional and intellectual responses in audiences stands in marked contrast to the party hack producing to political instruction (and to the persecuted artist unwilling to follow the party line)¹³⁴. Work Theory only confirms that distinction in terms of the necessary authenticity of truly artistic work. However, a significant point is thus reinforced: that political art does not necessarily fall on the propagandist side of an art-propaganda division because it (too) can be authentically created. This is significant because it supports an idea of *aesthetic* education with a moral-political dimension in addition to the 'art-appreciative'; and so also an idea that is distinct from moral-political 'education through art'.

But what then is an authentic choice in making when the choice is premised on the intended work functioning politically? Returning critically to the examples of Social Practice art, the participative roles of the public in these artworks are intended to deliver political goals. Receiving keys to the city or an invite to converse on a social issue from a political artist suggests, in terms of Work Theory, that our aesthetic interest as a participant still be one in the artist's creation of those situations. Are they recognisably *his* (so that I may participate in a

¹³³ Pablo Helquera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, (Jorge Pinto Books, 2011)

¹³⁴ Of many accurate descriptions of the difference, I merely offer Collingwood's: propaganda aims only to arouse a political emotion or prejudice that is "canalized into the activities of everyday life ... modifying those activities in the interest of the social or political unit concerned" (p.73 *Principles of Art*).

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genuine political work rather than a 'party rally')? (And then, of course, our aesthetic interest extends to how the situation has been designed and delivered.) In other words, Work Theory concludes that any moral-political function of an artwork – that supports then a moral-political dimension to the idea of aesthetic education – is explicable within Work Theory's account of good work's internal relations to aesthetic interest. There is no theoretic requirement for an external set of moral-political ideals that would justify this or that political work nor a singular idea of aesthetic education: rather, our aesthetic interest in good work establishes an interest in the authenticity *per se* of individual political works. And that is something like Orwell's conclusion to his examination of *Gulliver's Travels* as revealing the proper relations between politics and literature: of the political artist, “the most one can ask of him is that he shall genuinely believe in what he is saying, and that it shall not be something blazingly silly”¹³⁵.

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Individual political artworks can be authentically created; and support that characterisation at least of a moral-political idea of aesthetic education. Still, it remains to be seen whether the view is correct that there is something of moral-political significance about all art as an activity; and indeed whether the idea of a moral-political aesthetic education properly extends beyond considerations of political art and of art-making to the significance of making generally. I turn to that now.

¹³⁵ Orwell, 'Politics vs Literature', p.386

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2. Function and flourishing

To summarise the arguments for an idea of aesthetic education so far, Work Theory concludes that aesthetic education is a broad church embracing aspects of both art appreciation and the wider goals of moral and political improvement and change through political artworks. But neither of these available goals of aesthetic education are determined by ideas extrinsic to the idea of good work and its relation to aesthetic interest. In other words, the idea of aesthetic education is not best explained in terms of education to establish and enhance a separate faculty of artistic taste; nor of any pre-established moral-political commitment that should determine an artwork's style and content.

These conclusions are developed by examining again the Arts and Crafts Movement's political and educational position on art and making more generally; and subsequent similar statements about art and design education epitomised by the Bauhaus School, up to present-day aspirations for the 'power of making'. Using these illustratively, I will argue there are grounds for an idea of aesthetic education that enlarges upon the 'art-appreciative' and overtly 'moral-political' elements discussed above to also include the moral and social benefits intrinsic to creating, designing and delivering functional objects, including artworks, well.

'Arts and Crafts'

William Morris's lectures on the arts in the late 19th century were exhortations for working methods based on individual workers having control over their working time, tools and

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products¹³⁶. The Arts and Crafts Movement that Morris (along with John Ruskin) inspired codified and publicised its practices through various societies and organizations like the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society and Charles Ashbee's Guild and School of Handicraft, each producing its own literature, which ranged from practical handbooks to political exhortations¹³⁷. Later, William Lethaby's lectures, often to organizations that were part of the movement, were published as *Form in Civilisation*, and all can be read as texts in aesthetic education¹³⁸. Lethaby founded London's School of Arts and Crafts in 1896, now Saint Martins School of Art and Design. Like Morris, he advised government of the need for education in the arts for reasons that extended beyond appreciation of the fine arts. In summary, 'Arts and Crafts' promotes aesthetics as a "philosophy of right labour" and aesthetic education as "education in fine forms of production"¹³⁹. The moral-political dimension of the 'arts' extends then to the supposed benefits that accrue to individuals and society because work itself is, broadly speaking, skilled, pleasurable and for use. The following quotes illustrate the key features of this 'philosophy' and the related idea of 'aesthetic education'. These features are broadly a general view of 'art' as all kinds of handicraft making, including making objects of use; and a view of the negative effect of the division of labour on the possibility of art so construed.

Thomas Cobden-Sanderson, artist and bookbinder: "art, as a manifestation of the artistic spirit, has its origin, or, to speak more correctly perhaps, its opportunity in Craft, and Craft in the

¹³⁶ See for example, William Morris, *Hopes and Fears for Art: Five Lectures Delivered in Birmingham, London and Nottingham* (Ellis and White, 1883)

¹³⁷ For a comprehensive list of key figures in the Arts and Crafts Movement see *An Anthology of the Arts and Crafts Movement* Edited by Mary Greensted (Lund Humphries, 2005)

¹³⁸ William Lethaby, *Form in Civilisation* (Oxford University Press, 1922)

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, p.167

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needs of life". Walter Crane, artist and designer, similarly stated: "make a man responsible, and give him the credit of his own skill in his work: his self-respect at once increases, and he is stimulated to do his best; he will take a pride and pleasure in his work; it becomes personal and therefore interesting." Lethaby therefore held that "if we gathered the children who now dance at street corners into some better dancing-grounds, might we not hope for a new music, a new drama and a new architecture?"¹⁴⁰. But this 'Craft' does not place proscriptions on artistic vehicles and styles: "as the needs of life vary from generation to generation, and from age to age, so must vary the objects [aims] of Craft, and with them the modes of manifestation of the artistic spirit"; so, "work, incessant work, with Beauty for our everlasting aim," urges Thomas Cobden-Sanderson, and with it "the extension of the conception of art"¹⁴¹.

Returning to Morris, he stresses the importance of an idea of 'undivided labour' for art and aesthetic education: "So far from his [the handicraftsman's] labour being "divided," which is the technical phrase for his always doing one minute piece of work... he must know all about the ware he is making and its relation to similar wares... He must be allowed to think of what he is doing, and to vary his work as the circumstances of it vary, and his own moods... He must have a voice... Such a man I should call, not an operative, but a workman. You may call him an artist if you will, for I have been describing the qualities of artists as I know them"¹⁴². And "all works of craftsmanship were once beautiful, unwittingly or not" (in an age before the capitalistic division of labor), and so there was no category of "Art" as such. The very act of making in de-alienated

¹⁴⁰ Lethaby quoted in Greensted, p.42

¹⁴¹ Thomas Cobden-Sanderson (19th century artist and bookbinder) quoted in Greensted, p.41

¹⁴² William Morris, *Hopes and Fears for Art*, pp.164-165

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conditions is to “share in art”¹⁴³. Finally, it is worth noting the influence of Karl Marx (explicitly acknowledged by Morris at least). In *The German Ideology* Marx writes: “the exclusive concentration of artistic talent in particular individuals and its related suppression among the mass of people is a consequence of the division of labour”; and “in a communist society there are no painters, but at most people who among other things also paint”¹⁴⁴.

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Both of the two key features determining the 'Arts and Crafts' idea of aesthetic education – the general ideas of 'art' and 'undivided labour' – are flawed. First, the general idea of 'art' as a kind of making fails to properly distinguish good work's divided aesthetic interest between art, design and workmanship. Art is falsely characterised as 'craft proper', drawing the false conclusion that education and training in craft skills comprises a complete art and aesthetic education. Work Theory notes that training in a craft skill engages aesthetic interest when the skill is properly exercised: rightly then 'Arts and Crafts' makes no appeal to some aesthetic sensibility supposedly outside of the exercise of any skill (as Crane's quote illustrates). But our aesthetic interest extends back to designing objects of everyday function and to authentic choices to make artworks. The latter also reveals that the 'Arts and Crafts' identification of artistic imagination with human needs met by craft – the kind of identity Cobden-Sanderson posits – simply omits a separate aesthetic interest in making and appreciating original works of art. Similarly, Lethaby's hope for 'new art' from the new skills-based art schools neglects the

¹⁴³ William Morris, 'The Beauty of Life' in *Collected Works*, Volume 22, (Russell and Russell, 1966), p.58

¹⁴⁴ Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* Edited and Introduced by C.J. Arthur (Lawrence and Wishart, 1977), p.109

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uneducable act of artistic origination that is separate from the educable aspects of design and technique.

Second, and relatedly, the 'Arts and Crafts' idea of 'undivided labour' fails to properly argue a reasonable level of division of tasks in making things, and in the different kinds of aesthetic interest that can be shown at different stages in the process of making something. Adam Smith observed that “the division of labour occasions, in every art, a proportionable increase of the productive powers of labour” and famously gave the example of pin production divided between workers so that “one draws out the wire, another straightens it, a third cuts it, a fourth points it,” and so on¹⁴⁵. He additionally asserted that the division of labour is “carried furthest in those countries which enjoy the highest degree of industry and improvement”, thus suggesting its moral advantage, too. Ruskin denied any such moral advantage to the division of labour; indeed, “we give it a false name. It is not, truly speaking, the labour that is divided, but the men; —Divided into mere segments of men . . . so that all the little piece of intelligence that is left in a man is not enough to make a pin. . . . we manufacture everything there except men”¹⁴⁶. It is reasonable to doubt a literal take on this scenario of a radically 'undivided labour' (one in which there are no specialist artists at all), but it expresses an important conception of the nature of all human beings as potential artists, and therefore a moral-political dimension to making generally. G. A. Cohen develops these themes: “why should a man or woman not find fulfilment in his or her work as a [specialized] painter . . . what is so bad about a person dedicating himself to one or a small number of lines of activity only?” But then Cohen answers his own doubt: “there is nothing wrong with a division of labour in which each type of work has

¹⁴⁵ Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (New York Modern Library, 2000) p.4

¹⁴⁶ John Ruskin, *The Lamp of Beauty: Writings on Art* Edited by Joan Evans (Phaidon, 1995), p.261

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value"¹⁴⁷. Work Theory suggests that such a virtuous division of labour could not extend to the extremes of Smith's pin production: how can someone employed solely in 'straightening a piece of wire' have an aesthetic interest in this work? But Work Theory's distinction between individual workmanship of risk (which engages the worker's aesthetic interest in getting the finish right) and good design does suggest that an aesthetic interest in 'perfectly straight pins' can be part of the production process. The aesthetic interest in the pin is at the design stage. And that sets up a requirement for precision in production that is best met by mechanised production. 'Arts and Crafts' traditionally fails to recognise this distinction and the possibility therefore of a workmanship of certainty (non-handicraft delivery of designs) that also delivers products of aesthetic interest to makers as designers and to users, thus extending the idea of aesthetic education beyond the application of traditional craft skills. It was essentially on this point that Herbert Read, for example, concluded that the Arts and Crafts argument of Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* was lost: (some) machine art is 'abstractedly' beautiful – beautiful, that is, without any dependence on the work of a human hand. Read is arguing for the aesthetic interest proper to the workmanship of certainty, in other words, workmanship whose aesthetic value is determined by the work of an 'abstract artist' or designer. And in doing so, he indicates the limitation of the 'Arts and Crafts' idea of good work as strictly handicraft. In terms of Work Theory, the kind of control over production processes that 'Arts and Crafts' identifies with handicraft – recalling especially Morris's views as quoted above – properly extends to the control exercised by designers working with automated production processes, still with an aesthetic interest in the finish of products.

¹⁴⁷ G.A. Cohen, 'Reconsidering Historical Materialism' in *Marxist Theory* Edited by Alex Callinicos (Oxford University Press, 1989), p.159

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Bauhaus and 'art-craft' today

Read properly conceded his debt to Walter Gropius and the Bauhaus school of architecture and design in these regards¹⁴⁸. The Bauhaus's first director, Walter Gropius, acknowledged and developed 'Arts and Crafts' principles without their qualms about the use of machine production. Still, for Work Theory the first Bauhaus Manifesto repeats some of the 'Arts and Crafts' flaws of loosely identifying art with craft. It is worth a brief detour to Bauhaus given its influence or at least similarity with later ideas of 'art-craft' – like those represented at the Victoria and Albert Museum's 2011 *Power of Making* exhibition – and the idea of appropriate aesthetic education that follows¹⁴⁹. The Manifesto states that the school aimed “to unify the visual arts around architecture” based on idea that there is “no essential difference between art and craft but art is exalted or inspirational craft”¹⁵⁰. A workshop-based education thus seemed most appropriate, focusing on different craft skills with the idea that, while 'art' could not be taught, artistry might be inspired in exercising these skills. In terms of aesthetic education (rather than education in a particular skill, which is not the concern here) Work Theory again argues that our aesthetic interest in different aspects of good work suggests its education is properly similarly divided. Education in craft skills engages an aesthetic interest in the delivery and finish of pre-designed products. It is not a sufficient condition of 'artistry', unless 'artistry' is misleadingly equated with that aesthetic interest. It also confuses the idea of our aesthetic

¹⁴⁸ Herbert Read, *Art and Industry* (Faber and Faber Limited, 1934), p.39

¹⁴⁹ See the exhibition catalogue: Daniel Charny (Editor), *Power of Making* (V&A Publishing, 2011)

¹⁵⁰ Walter Gropius, 'Bauhaus Manifesto', from *Bauhaus: Art as Life*, p.15. (Directors after Gropius changed the school's focus, but I do not discuss here.)

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interest in art as artists and appreciators of art: for Work Theory that interest is not sufficiently explained in terms of 'exalted craft' but is indicated by the authenticity of an artist's expressive ideas, ideas which relate to his personal, rather than exclusively workshop, experiences.

Additionally, the Bauhaus conception of the artist as a 'master of form' directing the craftsman's workmanship confuses the aesthetic interest of design with that of authentic expression. As a matter of fact too, it led Bauhaus to quickly develop a distinctive formal style, famously around primary colours and basic geometry, which inevitably falsely excluded other potentially authentic stylistic expressions. These conflations of aesthetic interest around a hybrid notion of 'art-craft' also beset contemporary ideas of aesthetic education based on the so-called 'power of making', stated less rhetorically as the importance of craft skills¹⁵¹. But Work Theory finally notes in all these considerations of 'craft-based' education – from handicrafts to the new crafts of digital production – a legitimate moral-political idea of aesthetic education as concerned with improving the pleasures of work and the value of its products in the lives of others, a moral-political idea distinct then from that of political art¹⁵².

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To conclude and summarise, Work Theory suggests a divided idea of aesthetic education corresponding to good work's internal relations to aesthetic interest. First, artistic creativity is unteachable in any reasonable sense that accords with everyday ideas of

¹⁵¹ See the *Power of Making* V&A exhibition catalogue for examples.

¹⁵² I also note recent 'craftism' – which purports to use craft activities to generate political activism – as either a form of political art, if the work involves some artistic creativity around a political aim, or as a version of the general moral-political aim of aesthetic education associated with good work. See, for example, the Craftivist Collective statement of aims at <http://craftivist-collective.com/about/>

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imaginative originality, but makers and viewers assess the authenticity of artistic choices (including overtly moral-political ones) and in so doing accrue and accumulate art-appreciative resources. Also, design elements and principles can be taught and related to the problems that particular functional objects necessarily present to designers. And particular crafts can be taught according to the skills they demand of qualified practitioners. Aesthetic education is internal to these art, design and workmanship aspects of good work, directing us only to their best practice. In other words, our capacity for aesthetic experience is not taught but is engaged by our good work as makers and users of all made objects that function well and allow us to flourish in our lives. Thus engaged as makers and users, Work Theory concludes a moral-political dimension to the idea of aesthetic education additional to and independent of that connected to authentically political art.

PART 2

SECTION 4 WORK THEORY AND EVERYDAY AESTHETICS

1. Everyday (and Art-centred) Aesthetics

The idea that philosophical aesthetics has neglected aesthetic experiences and objects outside of Western fine arts and their appreciation has coalesced around the idea of 'Everyday Aesthetics'. The key tenets of 'Everyday Aesthetics' have been set out by Yuriko Saito and Tom Leddy (hereafter 'EA' will refer to their account of everyday aesthetics), concluding a theoretically discrete aesthetics of the 'everyday'¹⁵³. For Saito and Leddy EA challenges conventional ideas of philosophical aesthetics (and warrants a separate discrete aesthetics of the everyday) in two broad areas: first, it challenges what it perceives as the art-centred bias of aesthetics and argues for an aesthetics of non-art objects that sits alongside that of art; second, it disputes the idea of aesthetic experience as essentially a disinterested encounter with artworks, arguing too for accounts of aesthetic experience that at least acknowledge its active and practical nature. Other writers have detailed the aesthetics of non-art objects like sport and the weather, eating and drinking, the home and civic environment, and so on, supporting the overall EA programme to extend the scope of philosophical aesthetics to recognise that "nothing

¹⁵³ Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford University Press, 2007). Tom Leddy, 'The Nature of Everyday Aesthetics' in *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, Edited by Andrew Light and Jonathan M. Smith (Columbia University Press, 2005).

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in the everyday world (or at least very little) can be supposed devoid of the power to excite and aesthetic response”¹⁵⁴.

EA's programme to attend theoretically to the aesthetics of the everyday argues that there is an essential difference between the aesthetics of artworks and that of other made things and activities. I will argue that a significant consequence is a falsely divided philosophical aesthetics. Work Theory does argue for the idea of a divided aesthetic interest between different aspects of good work (it recognises then evidence for EA's premise of an aesthetics of the 'everyday'). But that divided aesthetic interest – between authentic artistic choices, good design and skilled workmanship – does not support the EA conclusion of theoretically discrete realms of everyday and art-centred aesthetics.

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The idea of the 'everyday' in aesthetics requires some preliminary clarification before examining EA's use of the term. Firstly, there is a use in art theory and practice. Here the 'everyday' refers loosely to an 'understanding of art and visual culture... no longer grounded in traditional aesthetics' and expanding 'the boundaries of art to everyday themes'¹⁵⁵. Stephen Johnstone makes a further four-fold characterisation within this understanding of the everyday in art¹⁵⁶. So the 'everyday' is conceptualised in art theory and practice as 'unnoticed', as an 'authentic non-art experience', as a kind of artistic 'immersion' in the world, and as a 'bringing together of art and life'. Each are vague and disputable in terms of relating the everyday and art,

¹⁵⁴ Jonathan Smith, 'Introduction' to *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, p.xv

¹⁵⁵ Stephen Johnstone, 'Introduction: Recent Art and the Everyday' in *The Everyday: Documents of Contemporary Art* Edited by Stephen Johnstone (Whitechapel Ventures Limited, 2008)

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p.13

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and none is compelling for an 'everyday aesthetics' distinct from the 'traditional'. Johnstone cites 'staging barely noticeable events' as an example of an art of the everyday, but the idea of 'staging an event' contradicts an ordinary sense of 'everyday' as essentially unstaged. Similarly, experiencing 'everyday art' in 'non-art' ways seems contradictory unless some bifurcated aesthetic experience is assumed. But no argument is proposed for this being the case, and it is counter-intuitive in any case that something presented as an artwork – albeit utilising everyday materials and quotidian ideas and narratives – should not still engage us differently from our everyday experiences of life. Again, the idea of artistic immersion in the world hardly seems to establish a unique aesthetics centred on 'everyday art': we might reasonably think that every work of art properly involves some profound engagement with the business of living. Finally on Johnstone's summary characterisation of the everyday and art, the idea of bringing art and life closer together can be conceived in many ways, and again does not preclude – indeed it might be argued it supports – a singular account of the aesthetic.

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I make one further set of preliminary clarifications about the idea of the 'everyday' in aesthetics. This is not in response to an existing use of 'everyday' in art theory and aesthetics, noted above, but to pre-theoretic conceptions. Pre-theoretically, 'everyday' can mean both 'daily' and 'ordinary', and while the two definitions often coincide in practice, there is no necessary connection: we can conceive the 'daily' as remarkable, and the 'ordinary' may not be a regular occurrence. If we focus on the aesthetics of the 'daily', we might wonder which particular daily occurrences we can be properly said to experience aesthetically, and if this means some reassessment of the category of 'aesthetic objects' is required, given that 'daily' is so often associated with the banal and mundane, the nonaesthetic. Alternatively, if we conceive

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an aesthetics of the 'ordinary' (with agreement on this classification of certain events and objects), then the notion of the 'aesthetic' itself now seems vulnerable on either of two counts. First, it is vulnerable to claims of incoherence, given any agreement that exemplary aesthetic experience, at least, is fundamentally not of the 'ordinary' (and never of the 'ugly', of the stained, damp, cracked, and so on, in our domestic lives) but of an extraordinary class of events and objects called 'art', extending to good work associated with design and craft skills. Second, the idea of the 'aesthetic' is vulnerable to claims of cognitive and moral triviality (to amorality too, perhaps, if it is possible, after Thomas de Quincey, to appreciate the way a murder is done), so that the aesthetic response is understood as merely a subjective, noncritical 'look and feel' response to (almost) everything¹⁵⁷.

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It is evident, then, that EA cannot uncritically draw on either existing art theoretical considerations of art and the everyday, nor on intuitions about the everyday and the aesthetic, in arguing for an aesthetics of the everyday different in essentials from an aesthetics of artworks.

Art and non-art aesthetics

With these preliminaries about art theoretic and pre-theoretic conceptions of the 'everyday' done, I now return to EA and firstly the idea that there is an aesthetics of non-art *objects* that is radically separate from that of artworks (the second and other key idea, of a phenomenologically distinct non-art aesthetic *experience*, is examined later in this section). For

¹⁵⁷ Thomas de Quincey, *On Murder* (Oxford World's Classics, 2006)

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Leddy, this is a fruitful way to understand the concept of 'everyday aesthetics': he argues that there is a language of everyday aesthetic experience indicating a realm different from that marked by the language of art criticism and the appreciation of nature¹⁵⁸. This aesthetic lexicon has its own aesthetic objects – everyday objects like the daily commute, the workplace, the shopping centre, and places of amusement. This is also a realm traditionally viewed, so Leddy argues, as outside the scope of philosophical aesthetics. The terms used in everyday aesthetic discourse are terms like 'neat', 'clean', 'messy', 'right', 'nice', and 'big'; and experiences of this kind are daily and ordinary (dis)pleasures. Extraordinary experiences do, Leddy acknowledges, exist and as such simply leave the everyday domain and the aesthetics thereof¹⁵⁹.

Two key problems are left unanswered by Leddy: what is correct everyday appreciation, and what marks high/extraordinary from low/ordinary aesthetic value and experience? No answer is forthcoming because no account is supplied of what makes an experience aesthetic; all that is supplied, in addition to the terms stipulated as indicating everyday aesthetic responses, are the author's references to personal 'aesthetic experiences' (the sight of a pile of grass cuttings, for example) and, by extension, all our own equivalent experiences. This leaves the account open to the 'trivialization' claim (further evidenced, by the way, by claims that kitsch products exploit everyday aesthetic qualities like 'cuteness' and 'cuddliness')¹⁶⁰. And when a class of extraordinary aesthetic experiences is admitted to the account by Leddy but left unexplained (except that they have their own terms and objects), the problem of incoherence noted above is raised.

¹⁵⁸ Tom Leddy, 'The Nature of Everyday Aesthetics' in *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, pp.3-22

¹⁵⁹ Ibid p.15

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p.14

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Saito's overarching thesis for EA shares analyses with Leddy's. EA is argued to redress the 'neglect' of non-art aesthetic experiences that refer us to events and objects in our everyday life; these experiences too are not 'aesthetically inferior' versions of art experiences but aesthetic in their own right, as evidenced by their unique language of appreciation¹⁶¹. Saito's analysis, however, is more closely tied to a particular theory of art and the aesthetic – a more or less standardised institutional account embedded in a fine art lexicon of artistic appreciation – that is then contrasted with EA. This 'art-centred aesthetics' is argued to falsely limit the scope of the aesthetic to the fine arts, and if non-art objects do evoke aesthetic interest, Saito continues, art-centred theory argues this as still an aspiration to full art status (in George Dickie's institutional terms then, everything is a 'candidate for arthood')¹⁶². If, with Saito, it is agreed that there are aesthetic objects that are not art in the institutional sense, nor aspire to that status, still I would argue there are alternative strategies for the realignment of philosophical aesthetics. Broadly, Saito (and Leddy et al) chooses to accept institutional and related accounts of art and to establish a complementary 'new field for aesthetics' (EA). But institutionalism could be understood as a legitimate sociology of art, while art making is still understood aesthetically. Work Theory does not engage with institutional accounts of art directly, but its account of separate aspects of making in terms of art, design and workmanship around an integrated idea of aesthetic interest at least provides an alternative to the EA strategy. Saito ignores such options, satisfied that 'art-centred aesthetics' is essentially institutional in its account of art status conferral and limited to the fine arts in its range of aesthetic descriptions of objects.

¹⁶¹ Saito, p.9

¹⁶² Ibid p.13

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Like Leddy then, Saito argues that a theoretically discrete non-art aesthetics is indicated by terms of aesthetic discourse excluded from the fine arts or 'paradigmatic art', terms like 'neat' and 'tidy'. She lists associated non-art aesthetic and everyday experiences such as cleaning and tidying. The non-art aesthetic experience is correspondingly characterised as 'frameless' to evoke a contrast with fine art painting and by extension the 'exhibition' of artworks in galleries and so on¹⁶³. Similarly, the non-art aesthetic experience is vaguely characterised as always a 'free engagement' in contrast to the historically and institutionally conditioned engagements of artistic appreciation. But it is disputable that there are points of fundamental contrast here in terms of the aesthetic – the aesthetic experience of art and non-art objects may share something more fundamental than is supposedly revealed by these points of difference. So for Work Theory, acts of 'framing and appreciating' artworks and 'tidying up' reveal a common notion of aesthetic interest in terms of 'felt rightness', while our aesthetic interest is still properly divided by our interest in an object's art, design and workmanship. But again Saito does not explore this alternative.

Similarly, for EA everyday aesthetics is said to fall outside of one of the characteristics of 'paradigmatic art' because it is "characteristic of many everyday objects and practices that they lack any particular authorship"¹⁶⁴. Our 'townscapes' for example, argues Saito, might offer some evidence of intentional human activity "but other aspects of the townscape occurred quite by happenstance, such as the weather-beaten appearance of some buildings, the color pattern created by individual houses' painted walls" and so on¹⁶⁵. But the lack of identifiable authorship in aesthetic experiences of non-art objects does not necessarily require the radically disjunctive

¹⁶³ Ibid p.19

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p.23

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p.23

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account of the aesthetic that Saito postulates. For Work Theory, our aesthetic interest in the appearance of buildings, in colours and patterns, is fundamentally one based on a sense of aesthetic 'fit', of things 'looking right', and therefore is an interest common across art and non-art. Saito is right to point out that our experiences of our built environment are 'everyday' and 'aesthetic' in at least some important sense, but it does not follow that our aesthetic interest in prosaic landscapes – the world of eyesores included – is not properly one of aesthetic (dis)valuation. Such aesthetic evaluation of our built environment is an interest in things looking right for the purpose they are made. So making an aesthetic judgement necessarily invokes thinking about the relations between needs and design, about how different materials weather, about the visual effects on a street of painting one's house, and so on. Work Theory accounts for our aesthetic interest in the built environment in terms of our interest in work that successfully delivers – in terms of forms and finish – the functional requirements of whatever is made or built. Saito does sometimes characterise everyday aesthetics as activity-based, but never as an aesthetic interest in making and everyday products of utility. One consequence, a connection of an everyday aesthetics to art-making, is not even contemplated. So while activities like mending, organising and arranging are mentioned by her – activities that are noted even in the story of art, for example, as evidence of an aesthetic interest that is shared by artists and non-artists alike – they are not understood as aspects of good work¹⁶⁶. Continuing in this vein, EA uncritically understands pleasurable experiences as *de facto* aesthetic ones, when analysis here might reveal aesthetic interests that connect art and non-art

¹⁶⁶ See, for example, E.H. Gombrich's introduction to his *The Story of Art* (Phaidon, 1966) where he speculates on the similarities between an artist 'worrying about whether he has got it right' and our everyday concerns with 'getting it right' when we arrange flowers, match clothes, proportion food on a plate and so on (p.14).

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around different and/or shared aspects of good work and exclude the merely pleasurable from the idea of the aesthetic. Many of Saito's examples (and this is common to EA theorists) are inescapably personal too, seemingly requiring no explanation of why they are even pleasurable apart from their obvious 'biological' aspect (so experiences that are associated with and exhausted by the satisfaction of a basic need like taking lunch).

The character of EA's argument about art's predominance in aesthetic theory is also evident in Saito's argument that the art-centred view unduly favours sight and sound experiences over tastes and smells – there is little by way of argument as to why this is not a warranted privilege, and the *prima facie* case at least seems strong for music over perfume for instance¹⁶⁷. But I turn to these specific instances of everyday aesthetics now.

The everyday aesthetics of...

The general idea of a distinctive non-art aesthetics is explored in a number of different situations by EA theorists, including the aesthetics of A) building, B) the weather, C) food, tastes and smells, and D) sport¹⁶⁸. Examining each of these accounts in turn reveals in more detail the problems of false or misleading contrasts between art and non-art that besets EA, and the absence therefore of any requirement for a fundamentally disjunctive account of the aesthetic.

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A) Pauline von Bonsdorff argues for architecture that allows natural elements to affect the built environment in an unplanned fashion; our aesthetic lives are improved if we “allow

¹⁶⁷ Saito, p.21

¹⁶⁸ The examples that follow are all taken from the EA anthology *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*

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things to be”¹⁶⁹. Practically, this means using materials such as wood and stone that react well in the everyday wear and tear of local climate, weather, and topography rather than processed materials like concrete that “clash and crack”¹⁷⁰. As well as the aesthetic impact of using materials that properly integrate with their climate, there is an existential significance noted by von Bonsdorff: by allowing nature to appear in our built environments, we are facilitated as “temporal, aspiring and finite” beings¹⁷¹. Underlying these claims is the theoretic claim that aesthetic experience proper is a specific and sensuous experience. If we accept this account, then von Bonsdorff’s particular claims for the aesthetic appeal of buildings that are environmentally sensitive seem reasonable; however, as a general claim against, for example, ‘industrialized’ buildings, the claim is weaker and not compelling against the many cases made since the early twentieth century for industrial art. Still, it is without doubt central to the development of an everyday aesthetics that the kind of environment in which we live is understood to either facilitate or impede aesthetic lives; but this does not hinge on a radical theoretic separation of the aesthetics of the everyday from that of art, as EA argues. Rather, Work Theory supports the idea that design problems set by human needs in particular circumstances determine appropriate technologies, materials and styles – von Bonsdorff’s ‘unplanned’, everyday aesthetic is in fact a straightforward proposal for a type of architecture (where ‘unplanned’ wear and tear is built into building design) and therefore does not suggest a ‘new field of aesthetics’ called EA.

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¹⁶⁹ Pauline von Bonsdorff, 'Building and the Naturally Unplanned', *ibid*, p.86

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p.84

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.74

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B) In 'The Aesthetics of Weather', Saito argues that good and bad weather can be appreciated aesthetically and involves a special kind of appreciation unlike that involved in the appreciation of art¹⁷². Saito's model of art appreciation, noted in her general account of EA above, is what she calls here the 'disinterest theory'. But if we set aside 'disinterest theory', then Saito's description of the physical intimacy and interactivity of our engagement with weather is broadly compatible with a general theory of aesthetic engagement that could be applied across the piece to include appreciating art. There is also something more fundamental at stake: even if our experience of the weather shares some of the phenomenology of our aesthetic engagement with art, what of the value attached to such experiences that make them truly aesthetic and not merely pleasurable? Thematically in critically analysing EA, the aesthetic is trivialized without a proper account of aesthetic value (and not just 'pleasure'), and the theory is potentially incoherent if art and the everyday are radically differentiated.

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C) In 'Sniffing and Savoring: The Aesthetics of Smells and Tastes', Emily Brady encourages the development of an aesthetics of taste and smell, arguing that tastes and smells are sufficiently structured and meaningful to warrant our critical attention¹⁷³. She cites the evidence of critical discourses around wine and food tasting and perfumery in support of the case, and also notes Immanuel Kant and Frank Sibley's philosophical attention to the matter. It is right, of course, that a developed sensitivity to tastes and smells marks a wider sensory engagement with our environment; but this in itself is not sufficient grounds for an aesthetic interest since it might only indicate a fully functioning biology. Brady is correct that evidence of

¹⁷² Yuriko Saito, 'The Aesthetics of Weather' in *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*

¹⁷³ Emily Brady, 'Sniffing and Savoring: the Aesthetics of Smells and Tastes' in *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*

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genuine aesthetic evaluation is provided by the presence of critical discourse. But it is here, contra Brady, that I question whether tastes and smells can ever support discussions of any general, lasting interest and value (apart, for example, from being simply personally evocative). Glenn Kuehn argues that food is art but that we need a Deweyan approach to art to get what's meant by "food as art"¹⁷⁴. Does this answer the doubt? Kuehn's Deweyan defence is that making and eating food follow the broad outline pattern of 'an experience' as defined by John Dewey. Certainly, there is a superficial resemblance between making food (which might equate with Dewey's idea of the 'movement' of an experience) and eating (the Deweyan 'consummation')¹⁷⁵. As with questions about the aesthetic status of experiencing weather, such an outline similarity – asserting that there is 'engagement' in making food (or a 'movement and consummation') – is insufficient to warrant food's artistic or even aesthetic character, and by extension to support the EA argument for a theoretically discrete aesthetics of the everyday. However, Work Theory notes that in making food there are clearly aspects of good work, and therefore an aesthetic interest, in designing the look of a completed dish and in the skill of preparation – but, reiterating, this does not support EA's 'aesthetics of the everyday' .

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D) Wolfgang Iser argues that sport is now art because of the way sport and art have evolved: sport is less moral and more aesthetic; art is low as well as high. But there is still an "Art-Art" distinct from "Sport-Art", he concludes¹⁷⁶. Iser's arguments in favour of sport's

¹⁷⁴ Glenn Kuehn, 'How Can Food Be Art?' in *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*

¹⁷⁵ John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (Perigee, 1980). See pp.172-173 for the ideas of 'movement and consummation'.

¹⁷⁶ Wolfgang Iser, 'Sport Viewed Aesthetically, and Even as Art' in *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*

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increasingly aesthetic over moral appeal are not wholly convincing. The physical and mental health aspects, and by extension the moral and social benefits, of sports generally are still asserted; if this is not the case in professional sport, perhaps, then one still wonders whether the concern with bodily form and fashion that Welsch witnesses there is evidence of genuinely aesthetic concerns. To rest the argument for “Sport-Art” on the changing character of art and theorizing about it is problematic as well, creating a dependency on the very area of philosophical aesthetics that requires argument, namely the ‘everydayness’ or otherwise of art. The argument has credibility at least when Welsch shifts to considering sport as ‘performance’, but this is too narrowly construed around, as noted, physical/bodily achievement, rather than around an idea of the aesthetic interest inherent in fully applying a (sporting) skill. And the problem of sport’s essential competitive and partisan nature is not adequately dealt with; only minimal anecdotal evidence of professional sportsmen and women shifting their goal from ‘winning’ to ‘performing’ is provided. Welsch’s final assertion that something called “Art-Art” should be “difficult, elitist and experimental” only adds to the confusion about art, sport, and their relation to the aesthetic, reinforcing perhaps the theoretical instability of the EA programme¹⁷⁷.

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The problems of incoherence and trivialisation for an idea of the aesthetic are then brought to light in investigating cases supposedly supporting EA's account of ‘everyday aesthetics’. So, from A) above, Work Theory argues that understanding that our aesthetic interest in the built environment and the fine arts engages different and overlapping aspects of that interest – in terms of artistic intention, design and workmanship – does not imply a divided aesthetics generally. From B), Work Theory concedes that engaged encounters with our

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, p.149

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physical environment have a global aesthetic characteristic rooted in adaptation to a situation but, with C), it is still problematic to characterise as 'aesthetic' features of our lives that are merely biological adaptations or strictly personal felt responses. From D), Work Theory concludes that the idea of extending the notion of the aesthetic by recognising the supposed artistry or art status of commonly understood non-art activities begs questions about 'art' itself that EA does not properly engage.

EA fails to properly recognise then that though we might all be alive to our environment, and find pleasures there in watching sport, the changing weather, and food and smells, our aesthetic experiences properly entail values that these activities, on the whole, cannot sustain (even if we get some insights into the nature of the aesthetic from them). And where EA does properly examine the aesthetics of our everyday built environment – its houses, shops, offices, factories, and all their furniture – EA fails to provide any persuasive counter-argument to their being properly accounted for in terms of an aesthetics of authentic choice, design and workmanship, where each engages our aesthetic interest in different ways.

Everyday Aesthetics and aesthetic experience

The second major theme of EA – alongside the arguments against art-centred aesthetics and the supposed supporting case studies – is the claim that aesthetic experience is not limited to, or exemplified by, so-called 'disinterested' experiences of artworks. Additionally, so the argument goes, we are said to experience the everyday aesthetically and actively in ways that are entirely distinct from our aesthetic experience of art. Saito argues that 'everyday aesthetics' represents a range of 'moments that do not especially stand out' but are about how things look

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and feel in our everyday life. She notes three features of a moment that is conventionally thought outside the scope of aesthetics, but is aesthetic: something is a) experienced as 'unpleasant', perhaps 'untidy', and this b) is an 'automatic' aesthetic response that then prompts c) an action to 'tidy up'. Such an example, argues Saito, counters the general claim of all 'aesthetic experience theory' that the experience is essentially 'special'. Saito claims all aesthetic experience theories, which she categorises as either of the 'disinterest' or 'engagement' variety, share a fundamental idea that the experience is 'exceptional' and that this falsely neglects everyday mundane aesthetic experience (of the kind that prompts tidying, for example)¹⁷⁸. But this exceptional character is understood by Saito purely in terms of a phenomenology of 'stand out' art experiences that neglects other outstanding features of aesthetic experience. It fails then to acknowledge the general aesthetic sense of things 'looking and feeling right' that informs the Wittgenstein-Scruton view of aesthetic interest, and that Work Theory argues extends across different aspects of good work from artistic creation to skilled workmanship¹⁷⁹. Saito argues that 'special' aesthetic experience is obviously rare (the kind associated with experiencing artworks) and yet everyday we engage in aesthetic lives. The argument neglects three key aspects of aesthetic experience. First, in suggesting the aesthetic is an everyday occurrence, it mistakes some experiences that are simply personally pleasurable for aesthetic ones. Second, it neglects that aesthetic experience is not a quotidian feature of many lives that are circumstantially, evidently and essentially non-aesthetic. Third, there is an

¹⁷⁸ Saito's argument is contained in the section, 'Special experience-based aesthetics' (pp.43-53) of *Everyday Aesthetics*. She takes Edward Bullough's 'disinterest' and John Dewey's 'engagement' accounts of aesthetic experience as representative of different versions of aesthetic experience as necessarily 'special'.

¹⁷⁹ See Work Theory's account above at Part 2, Section 1.

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alternative view of everyday aesthetic experience – provided by Work Theory – that explains both its ‘special’ characteristics in terms of our aesthetic interest in good work and the opportunities for richer aesthetic lives that are not dependent on engagement with fine art (and are in that sense then ‘everyday’). For Work Theory, these everyday aesthetic experiences depend on the character of our work – whether it involves opportunities for considered design and good workmanship – and on the everyday made things we use.

In other words, Saito’s account of aesthetic experience, both her account supposedly including the non-special and her understanding of other accounts, fails to recognise an account of aesthetic experience as an experience marking a felt sense of things being right and of value, where there is then a distinctive phenomenology marking success. An account of aesthetic experience that characterises it as ‘special’ by virtue of its association with value (with a felt sense of rightness that is communicable) does not, contra Saito, mean that everyday aesthetic experiences of the kind she then lists are neglected by aesthetic theory: the designs of everyday objects, street furniture, town planning, architecture, graffiti, and so on, that Saito lists are properly things of aesthetic interest¹⁸⁰. Our interest in these being ‘right’ is a special kind of interest properly called aesthetic, and that interest is affirmed as properly aesthetic by our ability to communicate why things look right (or wrong), about the words and gestures that make one conclude, after Wittgenstein, ‘now that’s right’¹⁸¹. Saito wonders why such examples are neglected in aesthetic theory, but evidently they are not: they have been noted here theoretically in Wittgenstein, and in philosophically-minded practitioners in the Arts and Crafts Movement and Modernism, and in contemporary designers. So there is a tradition of everyday aesthetics –

¹⁸⁰ Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p.47

¹⁸¹ Again, I refer back to the arguments for Work Theory’s account of aesthetic interest in Part 2, Section 1.

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concern with beauty in the home and town and country planning, with the industrial arts, and so on – from John Ruskin at least in British philosophically-minded aesthetics. Saito contends that non-art objects lack the 'lofty intellectual enlightenment' supposedly offered by Western art and are therefore neglected in aesthetic theory – again, that neglect may be the case in some accounts but it is not generalisable across philosophical aesthetics and is perhaps credible only as a critique of institutional theory (which it could be argued is in any case a theory that acknowledges itself to be a theory limited to Western fine art in the last few centuries)¹⁸².

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Saito's position also seems to reflect a reluctance to accept that much of everyday life is, at the time of writing at least, non-aesthetic, and this marks another important distinction with the kind of everyday aesthetics proposed by Work Theory. Work Theory's account of good work implies that everyday life is as mundane or aesthetic as social conditions allow – that is to argue, for one thing, that there can be no transformation of the everyday by an act of 'EA aesthetic reappraisal' alone, a kind of appraisal of the aesthetic value of things that I now examine. Accordingly, for Work Theory 'mundane' means just that and reflects the absence of real work or engagement in an object or situation. Work Theory then acknowledges the possibilities for beauty in the home, in the things we use everyday, and in our built environment, and for an aestheticised life then, but these possibilities are activated by good work, not by theoretical shifts prompting new outlooks on life. Saito cites Aarto Haapala's 'strange/familiar' strategy, which is similar to Andrew Light's approach of 'making the thin thick': it is worth examining these accounts in turn as they reveal further weaknesses in the EA programme

¹⁸² Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p.22. Work Theory is, in any case, agnostic on the history and sociology of art.

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through their respective failures to properly account for the factors necessary for aesthetic engagement, and highlight important contrasts with Work Theory.

In 'On the Aesthetics of the Everyday: Familiarity, Strangeness, and the Meaning of Place', Haapala, like Leddy, is interested in claiming a new subject matter for aesthetic enquiry to complement art-centred aesthetics, a central tenet of EA – in this case it is, he claims, the aesthetics of “what does not stand out”¹⁸³. It is proposed on the grounds that there is an aesthetic response in our experiences of the 'familiar', 'safe', 'comfortable' and 'normal' – something indicated, for example, in the fact that “houses have a substantial function: these are places in which we live, homes”¹⁸⁴. Haapala is reacting, he acknowledges, to a perceived overemphasis on the aesthetics of the 'strange' prevalent in twentieth-century art. But this contrast in Haapala's account – between experiences of the strange and of the familiar – fails to support a conclusion that the difference is theoretically significant in signalling a new subject matter for aesthetics. A feeling for the familiar may be as powerful and significant an experience as that of the strange depending on the thing being experienced (a familiar functional object extraordinarily redesigned for example), but the essence of aesthetic interest remains unchallenged. Haapala effectively notes only that ideas of 'fit' and 'looking right' apply across a range of descriptions of made things, including 'strange' and 'familiar'. Both experiences of the 'strange' and 'familiar' may engage our aesthetic interest, to repeat.

¹⁸³ Aarto Haapala, 'On the Aesthetics of the Everyday: Familiarity, Strangeness, and the Meaning of Place' in *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, p.40

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, p.49

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In a similar vein, engagement with both the built and natural environments is explored by Andrew Light¹⁸⁵. He deploys the notions of 'thick and thin' spaces (terms borrowed from the philosophy of technology) through an examination of Wim Wenders's 1973 film *Alice in the Cities*. Light argues that the film illustrates and offers 'arguments' why individual actions and attitudes can 'thicken' 'thin' spaces, meaning make "thin" spaces richer sources of aesthetic experience. 'Thick' spaces are supposed to offer one 'things' rather than 'devices' with which to engage. The central character in *Alice in the Cities* encounters his environment as one full of banal 'devices', but a chance encounter with a child, Alice, transforms his view of the world. Her playful encounters with the world about her generally contrast with his, which had consisted of merely recording his world through photography – her engaged encounters give purpose to otherwise 'thin' spaces, in Light's terminology. Learning this, the main character is able to 'subvert' or 'thicken the thin'. Whether an account of the psychological and aesthetic significance of playful and purposeful engagement with one's environment requires either the jargon of 'spaces' or Wenders's insights is very doubtful (given all that has been philosophically argued on related subjects, from Friedrich Schiller's *Aesthetic Education*, at least). That aside, the account fails to grasp that some environments might be essentially and inescapably 'thin'. Are hard cases of 'thin spaces' (for example, sweated labour in a factory or life in a violent, poor, broken-down neighbourhood) really open to 'subversion' (capable, in other words, of being experienced aesthetically)? And what kind of person must one be to be able to 'subvert'? Work Theory simply observes that not everything in the world (at least up to now) is potentially

¹⁸⁵ Andrew Light, 'Wim Wenders's Everyday Aesthetics' in *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, pp.109-133

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aesthetic, and not everyone is in a position to exploit their potential to lead aesthetic lives if their lives do not involve any elements of good work¹⁸⁶.

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Haapala's and Light's theorising of everyday aesthetics are perhaps best regarded as the EA programme *in extremis* in so far as the idea of an everyday aesthetics is argued on the basis of an aesthetics of everything, of every human experience, an argument that is strongly countered by appeals to the evidence of lives across the world. Saito's more reasoned EA approach argues an aesthetics beyond that of the fine arts, but does so at the cost of a divided philosophical aesthetics. Where both EA approaches fail is in not accounting for or acknowledging the singular character of aesthetic experience – as a felt and explicable sense of something being 'right' – across art and non-art objects¹⁸⁷. So Saito notes our aesthetic interest in an eyesore as evidence of the 'ordinariness' of some (but not all) aesthetic experience – but this fails to recognise it is as a special kind of interest in something 'looking right' that is more than a simply personal record of momentary distaste of a non-art object. And nor does such an aesthetic interest in an eyesore imply or generate an 'artwork' out of it (in the manner of Light's account of Wenders)¹⁸⁸. Saito's notion of 'ordinary experiences' confuses the everydayness or commonness of merely witnessing eyesores with the specialness of taking an aesthetic interest in them, an interest that thereby introduces notions of 'fit' and 'rightness' into one's life and

¹⁸⁶ The idea of 'aesthetic lives' is one I have introduced in the course of exploring Work Theory in relation to aesthetic education and, here, to everyday aesthetics – I provide a more detailed examination of the idea in the Postscript that follows.

¹⁸⁷ Of course there are no doubt non-aesthetic experiences of art that do warrant separate theory and practice. But Work Theory is essentially an aesthetic theory.

¹⁸⁸ Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p.52

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engages one in matters of design and workmanship. Saito concludes the social significance of aesthetic interest and rightly so – that our aesthetic interest in our built environment indicates ‘moral-aesthetic judgement of artefacts’ and contributes to the good life, as she puts it – but ignores the broader grounds of that interest in the requirement that we understand what makes something ‘look right’ in any given circumstance, be it our understanding of what makes for good street furniture or for effective theatre, appreciation, in short, of its good work. Saito’s strategic error is to conflate the idea of ‘special’ aesthetic experience with art-centred aesthetics, so that aesthetic interest in our built environment, for example, appears to require a new category of ‘ordinary’ aesthetic experience to explain it.

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In arguing against the EA programme I have implied that a conceptually integrated aesthetics encompassing both the arts and our everyday aesthetic experiences is available in terms of Work Theory’s internal relations between different aspects of good work and our aesthetic interest in them. The idea of an undivided philosophical aesthetics still retaining a notion of ‘everyday aesthetics’ is worthy of some further explanation, and that follows.

2. Aesthetics undivided

Thus far I have rejected EA’s analysis of supposed discrete aesthetic realms of art and the everyday, arguing against both EA’s conceptualisation of the everyday and its examples. However, Work Theory’s account of aesthetic interest clearly extends that interest beyond artworks to some idea at least of the everyday. And that is straightforward enough: our aesthetic interest in design and workmanship of everyday objects of function indicates an ‘aesthetics of

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the everyday', if that is what we wish to call it. But design and workmanship are aspects of making artworks too. So if there is an 'aesthetics of the everyday' it is properly a shorthand for our aesthetic interest in the design and workmanship aspects of things of everyday function, where the functional requirement to make does not have an artistic origin.

Work Theory's antecedents in this area have already been noted, but it is worth repeating two positions and arguments that support an integrated idea of the aesthetic, and their differences from Work Theory's integrated but divided notion of aesthetic interest around different aspects of good work¹⁸⁹.

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Roger Scruton recognises (like EA) the neglect of “the aesthetics of everyday life”: all those everyday actions motivated by a “desire for things to look right”, the kinds of example Wittgenstein uses too, which indicate an aesthetic interest in things¹⁹⁰. But unlike EA the Wittgenstein-Scruton model connects this aesthetics of non-art to art by a singular account of aesthetic interest across both sets of activities and objects. The Wittgenstein-Scruton model, however, makes that connection by accounting for aesthetic interest as a cultivated ‘taste’ or aesthetic interest extrinsic to the design and workmanship problems set by having to make an everyday functional object (like a carpenter designing a doorframe) – whereas Work Theory argues that aesthetic interest is intrinsic to the proper resolution of design and workmanship problems. That argument effectively established a work-centred everyday aesthetics, in so far as it explained genuine aesthetic interest in non-art and its significance around a notion of ‘good work’ (and so acknowledging at least the ‘neglect’ point made by both EA and Scruton). That

¹⁸⁹ I am referring particularly to antecedents examined in Part 1 above.

¹⁹⁰ Scruton, 'In Search of the Aesthetic', p.240

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argument also retained the integrity of aesthetic interest across art and non-art – in other words its coherence and significance as a notion.

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In dismissing art theorising as, on the whole, 'nonsense', William Morris, William Lethaby and Eric Gill felt vindicated by what they regarded as the neglected 'art' of the everyday, predating EA by a century or more in that regard¹⁹¹. Eric Gill's conclusion that art theory was 'nonsense' was the culmination of similarly overblown statements by Arts and Crafts theorists – so Morris for example described art criticism as “sham technical twaddle” – but still it reflected a more reasoned judgement that 'art' is simply “the well-doing of what needs doing” and that once this is brought to light there are implications for any aesthetic theory focused exclusively on the fine arts¹⁹². Distinctions between different kinds of making were still acknowledged too: Lethaby argues, for example, that fine art is 'freer' than other arts, and represents their apex¹⁹³. So the rhetoric does not diminish from the philosophic significance of the core Arts and Crafts idea (in terms of 'art' at least) that some conception of 'making well' applies across works of fine art and the making of domestic wares. For Gill then “the activity called art embraces all making and the ability and enthusiasm to make things is common to man”¹⁹⁴. Of course for Arts and Crafts

¹⁹¹ As previously noted the Arts and Crafts theorists were practitioners first and theorists second, and theory was put to the service of describing and advocating craft practices, rather than regarded as contributing to aesthetic theory as such. This accounts for the sometimes inflated language of 'nonsense' and such like (thus Eric Gill's collection of essays 'Art-Nonsense').

¹⁹² Lethaby, *Form and Civilisation*, p.209 for the idea of 'well-doing'. William Morris quote from 'At a Picture Exhibition' in *Art and Society* Edited by Gary Zabel, (George's Hill, 1993), P.103

¹⁹³ Lethaby, p.156

¹⁹⁴ Gill, *Art-Nonsense and Other Essays*, p.316

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theorists, 'making' meant handicraft. But it is not necessary to revisit the 'handicraft debate'; it is good enough in the context of 'art and everyday aesthetics' to understand the Arts and Crafts view of making as essentially one about makers controlling key elements of their work sufficient to influence the look and feel in use of their products. The point to make here is simply that a singular conception – 'making well' – is argued to support both an aesthetics of the fine arts and an everyday aesthetics of non-art objects. Work Theory supports this Arts and Crafts view as far as it goes. But additionally, Work Theory suggests how a divided notion of aesthetic interest can account for its art critical dimension (in relation to the authenticity of artistic choices to make an artwork at any rate) – that is summarily dismissed by Arts and Crafts – as well as its everydayness in terms of well-made goods and so on. If Gill's and Arts and Crafts' rhetoric of 'art nonsense' has a value for philosophical aesthetics, it is that reminder of an everyday aesthetics sharing an idea of the aesthetic with making works of art. Concluding then, the Arts and Crafts theorists' idea of 'everyday aesthetics' tended to a singular view of aesthetic interest, typically around an idea of "thoughtful workmanship" (like Lethaby's)¹⁹⁵. This is an inadequate account of human aesthetic interest, falsely restricting the theoretic and practical scope of aesthetic lives. It is on the subject of aesthetic lives that I conclude Work Theory.

¹⁹⁵ Lethaby, p.213

POSTSCRIPT

AESTHETIC LIVES

Work Theory implies that aesthetic lives – lives guided by aesthetic interest – are led primarily by artists, designers and skilled workers, and by those with an understanding of their good work¹⁹⁶. And aesthetic lives are important because they produce things societies value: works of art and objects of function that allow us to flourish. I want to test these related conclusions against similar claims made by Richard Sennett for 'the craftsman' (in its relation too to Hannah Arendt's idea of '*homo faber*') and by Ellen Dissanayake for '*homo aestheticus*'¹⁹⁷. These claims address the different aspects of aesthetic interest argued by Work Theory, albeit without a precise correspondence – so, for example, Sennett's conception of the aesthetic (and socially valuable) life of 'the craftsman' maps directly to the idea of skilled workmanship, but also to aspects of artistic vision and good design.

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Arguing for a positive and socially significant idea of 'craftsmanship', Richard Sennett concludes “we can achieve a more humane material life, if only we better understand the

¹⁹⁶ We aesthetically experience nature too, but I refer back to Part 1, Section 1.1 for reasons to prioritise philosophical interest in the aesthetics of the made (and so by extension in the aesthetic lives of makers).

¹⁹⁷ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (University of Chicago Press, 1998); Ellen Dissanayake, *Homo Aestheticus: Where Art Comes From and Why* (University of Washington Press, 1992); Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (Penguin Books, 2009)

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making of things”¹⁹⁸. Sennett aims to counter Hannah Arendt's concern about the 'human condition' under the control of technologically-driven work. Arendt refers to differences between the work of *animal laborens* and *homo faber*, so some preliminary definitions are required before examining her and Sennett's argument.

Arendt distinguishes *animal laborens* and *homo faber* as the labour of the body and work of the hands¹⁹⁹. She also refers to *homo faber* as 'work' or 'making' more generally, further characterising it as having “definite and predictable beginnings and ends”; “this characteristic alone distinguishes it from all other human activities”²⁰⁰. There is an immediate point of dispute for Work Theory concerning good work having such 'beginnings and ends'. In terms of the self-originating work of artists, it is characteristic at least of that work that it is not generally understood, either by artists or historians of art, as either definite or predictable in either its beginnings or ends. Rather, the reverse is considered true, that an artistic idea (an idea to produce a work of art) may come to mind unexpectedly, and that its delivery as a finished work introduces factors of design and workmanship that might alter the original artistic conception along the way. Perhaps it is reasonable to state design problems are effectively pre-set for designers, so that their work has an initial predictability, but again there is indefiniteness in how exactly a designer conceives the problem he has been broadly set. Only workmanship can be reasonably characterised along Arendt's lines, since the skilled worker does begin working with

¹⁹⁸ Sennett p.8 Sennett does talk explicitly of 'aesthetic lives' but there is a clear notion of 'the craftsman' producing with the best in mind that has affinities with Work Theory.

¹⁹⁹ Arendt, p.79

²⁰⁰ Ibid, p.144. Arendt makes a tripartite distinction within all human life between 'labour' and 'work', being discussed here, and also 'action', but this latter categorisation is not important at this juncture of the analysis.

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a definite design to produce, but here too Arendt fails to acknowledge the uncertainty of workmanship which involves the human hand rather than automated machine production. That last point Work Theory recognises as the aesthetic interest of craftsmen in the finish of products. Similarly, Work Theory rejects Arendt's characterisation of 'work' or *homo faber* on that general ground that different aspects of good work necessarily engage aesthetic interest, which importantly introduces choice about what and how to make. This is a critical conclusion since amending the idea of *homo faber* in these terms has a direct bearing on Arendt's key conclusion about the moral consequences of 'work'.

It is Arendt's moral conclusion of the inherently 'destructive' character of *homo faber* that Work Theory's account of good work challenges. Given her characterisation of *homo faber's* 'definiteness and predictability', Arendt goes on: "this great reliability of work is reflected in that the fabrication process, unlike action, is not irreversible: every thing produced by human hands can be destroyed by them, and no use object is so urgently needed in the life process that its maker cannot survive and afford its destruction"²⁰¹. Work Theory's account of good work's internal relations to aesthetic interest challenges the idea of 'reliability', as noted above; additionally, the account challenges the notion that human making is not essentially motivated by needs but is 'destructive' (or at least offers no protection from the possibility of destructive acts). Arendt's argument is based on *homo faber's* supposed relationship to nature and to other people. So "homo faber is indeed lord and master .. because he has set himself up to master all of nature and because he is master of himself"²⁰². The latter quality marks a difference with

²⁰¹ Ibid, p.144

²⁰² Ibid, p.144

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the so-called 'man of action' who “remains in dependence upon his fellow men”²⁰³. Work Theory disputes the idea that good work necessarily embraces a 'mastery of nature'. In terms of making objects of everyday function, their design problems can be conceived in ways that take into account environmental effects, for example. The theoretic point then is that good work involves no *a priori* claim 'against nature' in terms of how we conceive artistic origination, design and workmanship. Indeed the good work of design and craft is premised on meeting live human needs to flourish in the world. This also suggests that the good worker too (not only Arendt's 'man of action') remains aware of dependencies and relations between himself and others, especially as a designer giving full regard for all the human (as well as natural) factors that are proper to the conception of a design problem to make something of everyday functional value. This idea of the designer's good work challenges Arendt's idea of *homo faber* as simply the 'master of himself'. For Work Theory, if this characterisation has some validity it is only as a part characterisation of the creative artist; for even here, Work Theory argues that authentic choices to make works of art connect artists to their times, to the world as it is and the people in it. In other words, artists and spectators have an aesthetic interest in the 'rightness' of artistic choices which, different and complex in each case, cannot be reduced to an interest in the mere 'rightness' to choose to make anything.

Arendt's final telling characterisation of *homo faber* extends the idea of work's uncontrolled 'mastery' over nature and people to the point of its capacity to destroy: “alone with his image of the future product, *homo faber* is free to produce, and again facing alone the work of his hands, he is free to destroy”. It is at this point that Sennett argues that Arendt has failed to recognise the controlling aspects of *animal laborens* or the 'craftsman': *animal laborans*,

²⁰³ Ibid, p.144

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reconstructed as the 'craftsman', "might serve as *homo faber's* guide", saving us from technological armageddons²⁰⁴. Sennett argues that there is something in the 'know-how' of making things of *animal laborens* – which he calls 'craftsmanship' – that guides technologies in positive life-affirming ways. For Work Theory Sennett's argument is both falsely constructed – the good work of the craftsman does not determine what is made nor conceive whole design problems in advance of applying a craft skill – and is unnecessary given that Arendt's *homo faber* falsely characterises 'work'. The second point related to Arendt's view of the 'freedom to destroy' has already been challenged here, particularly in terms of the good work of designers, which embraces the productive aim of creating products of use for people in their everyday lives²⁰⁵.

Turning to Sennett's reconstruction of the 'craftsman', Work Theory contends that the craftsman's good work comprises delivering designs where there is scope for the application of his skill to effect the finish of a product. On this understanding, the craftsman (that is, in terms of Work Theory), is the least likely 'good worker' to counter the destructive possibilities of *homo faber*, since it is a matter of indifference to him in delivering a design what is being made. Indeed then, Work Theory argues that it is only craftsmen that can deliver 'destructive products'. So Sennett appears to highlight precisely that aspect of good work – that he does after all call 'know-how' rather than any knowledge challenging 'what' should be made – that *supports* rather

²⁰⁴ Sennett, p.8

²⁰⁵ Of course Arendt, writing at the height of the Cold War, was primarily concerned with the new destructive power of the atomic bomb. For Work Theory, this is a special case: a designer faced with brief to make a product that will kill clearly faces an overriding moral choice; it is not a moral element of a design problem then – like building in concerns about 'environmental damage and sustainability' – that affects other designs.

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than challenges Arendt's characterisation of *homo faber's* tendency to fabricated self-destruction. For Work Theory, the kind of authentic choice of what to make belongs to the good work of artists and designers. To reiterate then: Sennett's reconstruction of the needs-based labour of *animal laborans* as 'craft' is not credible on two related grounds. First, the idea of craft as skilled workmanship is an aspect of good work, and does not resonate with any intuition about or idea of subsistence, needs-based labour like Arendt's *animal laborans*. Second, the good work of the craftsman does not supply any control over choices to make this or that, which are made by artists and designers; those 'workers' are most significant in contributing to 'a humane material life'²⁰⁶.

Work Theory concludes then that the idea of aesthetic lives can be explained in terms of the different internal relations that apply between good work and aesthetic interest: each relation directs us to varying types and degrees of choice in what humans make as good workers. Understanding the types of control over production these choices allow – to produce new works of art, to design functional objects that meet the needs of human flourishing, and delivering them in appealing ways – also counters an Arendtian conception of work. That counter-argument and positive account of good work also makes an inflated general claim for the good work of 'craftsmanship', like Sennett's, redundant.

Given that Work Theory argues aesthetic lives are led across all aspects of good work, I now turn briefly to a possibly related universal notion linking work and the aesthetic, namely Ellen Dissanayake's '*homo aestheticus*', before a final conclusion.

²⁰⁶ It is worth noting too that Sennett's idea of 'craft' therefore follows a familiar problematic line – noted above in terms of 'craft theory' – of conflating aspects of design, art and workmanship under 'craftsmanship' so that important theoretic and practical distinctions in terms of aesthetic interest are lost.

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Dissanayake argues that there is a basic behaviour, unique to humans, called 'making special', evidenced in all human playful and ritualistic behaviour that is “bracketed off from ordinary life”, including the “modern day arts acted out in demarcated areas such as galleries, theatres, concert halls” and so on²⁰⁷. The idea of an aesthetic interest across a range of human activities has a superficial resemblance with Work Theory. But equally, on quick examination, there are two key differences. Firstly, even if the idea of 'making special' indicates an aesthetic interest in work, it is not itself characterised by any divisions between different interests in the 'rightness' of an artistic choice, or of a design solution, or of the finish of products. Secondly, relatedly, that singular aesthetic interest is also falsely limited to a certain kind of activity that is 'bracketed off' from other making, excluding then making, for example, products of everyday use. If Work Theory is correct about the aesthetic interests that can be variously shown by makers and users in the design and delivery of everyday objects of function, then Dissanayake's 'bracketing' is not warranted. Of course, there may be a category of making indicated by 'making special'. But if this type of work engages aesthetic interest, it can still be explained in terms of design and workmanship. This seems evident in any case from Dissanayake's speculation that 'making special' began when “humans deliberately set out to make things special or extra-ordinary, perhaps for the purpose of influencing the outcome of important events that were perceived as uncertain and troubling, requiring action beyond simple

²⁰⁷ Dissanayake, p.48

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fight or flight, approach or avoidance"²⁰⁸. Work Theory simply explains this in terms of the aesthetic interest shown in designing and crafting ritualistic objects²⁰⁹.

Work Theory then recognises that 'making special' conveys an idea of making in certain circumstances, but still it can be explained in terms of good work and aesthetic interest. That is to say, 'making special' can be analysed in terms of the different aspects of good work. One significant consequence is that, unlike Dissanayake's account, Work Theory therefore makes no appeal to *art's* universality as a human activity. Humans may have a universal capacity for aesthetic experience, but it is an experience made live by good work, either as makers or users, not necessarily by art's 'bracketed' 'making special'²¹⁰.

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In summary, Work Theory's idea of the aesthetic lives of good workers – artists, designers and skilled craftsmen – is not seriously challenged by some related but alternative ideas examined here. Arendt's conception of *homo faber* as essentially indifferent to what he makes omits the notion that aesthetic interests in the 'rightness' and 'fit' of products introduces non-destructive considerations as the norm in good work. But it was noted that craftsmanship, strictly speaking, only delivers products, and its sense of 'rightness' and 'fit' only challenges the 'how' rather than the 'what' of making. Noting that, Sennett's reconstruction of craft work as offering an explanation of good work is not well-founded.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, p.51

²⁰⁹ Incidentally, it also supports a Collingwoodian argument that such activity is not proto-art but a form of 'magic'. In other words, for Work Theory this kind of 'making special' is not self-originating art but a pre-conceived design problem of dealing with a 'troubling situation'.

²¹⁰ Of course there are other views of art, including Work Theory's in terms of self-originating choices to make works of art – my general point is aesthetic experiences can be engaged by design and workmanship problems.

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Work Theory concludes then that aesthetic lives require good work. Since aesthetic interest is engaged in good work by artists, designers and skilled craftsmen, aesthetic lives are not simply artistic ones. This seemingly simple and innocent conclusion does present one further significant set of consequences of Work Theory, suggesting firstly that the social organisation of making determines a society's scope for aesthetic experience among its population, so that, secondly, exactly what is produced and how is also affected. But this is where a theory of aesthetics encounters political and ethical considerations – a point to end on then.

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