**Chapter 1 Behavior and expression**

**1.** We *express* ourselves in speech and non-linguistic behavior: our beliefs, attitudes, moods, intentions, and emotions, from hope, hostility, anger, pity, doubt, and elation.

However, not everything that belongs to us as persons can *expressed* in speech or non-linguistically. For example: my blood pressure, temperature, weight, age are not expressible states of my person.

**Hence, we must distinguish between expressible states and non-expressible states of a person.**

(i) Mental versus physical criterion

We can begin with the obvious: mental or psychological states can be expressed whereas physical state cannot be expressed. But then sensations and perceptions are usually deemed to be psychological and yet it is not clear we express our sensations and perceptions. Hence, the mental-physical distinction will not serve to distinguish between expressible and non-expressible states of a person.

But this also suggests that the differences between say perception/sensation and expressible states such as attitudes and emotions may reveal the difference we are seeking.

If language is any indication then it seems we do not express sensations. Perhaps the expression of pain is an exception –and I will deal with it later. (I assume that itches, throbs, warmth, pressure, bitter tastes, and acrid smells are sensations, and later I will also deal with perception and argue that perception follows sensation, and are not expressible.

**So we may ask: what do expressions have in common such that it will exclude sensation (and perception) from the list of normally expressed behavior?**

First, there is no clear paradigmatic linguistic reference for an expression of sensation. It would be a linguistic oddity, for example, to seek an expression for the sensation of heat. How would be express the sensation of heat? Do we open a window? Complain about the weather? These are expressions of *discomfort* but they are not expressions of the sensation of heat.

We could argue that sensations, like beliefs or emotions, can be expressed simply in saying “I am hot” or “I feel hot”. But the latter is merely a description/report and not an expressing of the sensation of heat. If someone where to exclaim “I have a peculiar throbbing I my leg” this might be a *description* of a sensation, or he might be expressing surprise, concern, discomfort, asking for help, pleading for sympathy but we would not say he was *expressing* his throbbing sensation.

Generally, I think it can be argued that there are no natural or appropriate linguistic expressions of sensations as there are natural expressions of belief, attitudes, and emotions. Of course, there are *responses* to sensations that are appropriate, and there are also natural *consequences* of sensations, but it would surely be perverse to call scratching an *expression* of an itch, or laughter an *expression* of a tickle.

Of course, this does not deny that there are expressions intimately *associated* with particular sensations. The odor of perfume may well evoke desire, the taste of wine nostalgia. But these are not expressions of the sensations. They are expressions of attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and emotions which are *occasioned* by sensations. Laughter on hearing a joke is an *expression* of amusement. But the laughter occasioned by a tickle is not an expression at all.

(ii) Distinction between cause and expression as a criterion

Now it would be very convenient if we could simply make this distinction as one between *expression* and *cause*, so that laughter occasioned by a tickle is the *effect* of a *cause* (tickle) whereas an expression of an attitude is never so caused, say by an inner attitude. But to pull this off we need to show that expressions are never caused, and I think that is very difficult to do.

In fact, I think the introduction of the concept of cause does little to distinguish between sensations on the one hand and attitude and beliefs on the other for we are still faced with the omission of sensations from the catalogue of mental/psychological states that are commonly expressed.

(iii) Contribution of the person as a criterion (passive-active)

It could be that the difference between expressible and non-expressible states consists in the *degree to which a person contributes to them*. Sensations just happen. We are passive neurological receiving mechanisms for stimuli that register particular atomic impressions, whereas we are far more active in forming or structuring our beliefs, attitudes, and even emotions. In other words we can say less about sensations than we can about expressible states.

The trouble is that this distinction proves too little and moreover it is psychological suspect. It is simply doubtful that sensations are merely passively registered impressions by a neutral organism. On the other side, it is not clear just what active role we play in coming to a belief or attitude. **Finally, even if some such distinction actually held up, why are passively registered states not expressible whereas actively formed states are expressible?**

(iv) Temporality as a criterion

Other distinctions may also be invoked. It has been suggested that expressible states are present as dispositions as well as being present as constitutive states of consciousness, while sensations must exist only as immediate constituents of consciousness. Or we could say that expressible states are temporal extensive states while sensations are passing and momentary.

But here again the distinction is suspect. It is not clear that beliefs or emotions are always present as dispositions. There are after all ephemeral feelings, fugitive beliefs and emotions that flourish and then do not occur again. Then there are enduring sensations (think of the smells of childhood). A passing fancy is no less real than an interminable flutter.

Moreover, duration and disposition are not a guarantee of or the death of expression. A passing belief or a sudden joy may find expression but even a lasting or recurrent sensation cannot be expressed.

(v) Intentionality (about-ness) as criterion

A more promising distinction is the *phenomenological* one which claims that expressible states have *objects* but sensations do not have objects. That is, expressible states have intentional objects, sensations do not. Without concern for the ontological status of these intentional objects, I will suggest that *intentional objects* are whatever objects are designated by the *prepositional object* of a particular mental act/state. That is, an intentional object is designated by a *prepositional object* occurring in a sentence used to ascribe some state/act to a person.

If I am fascinated *by* death metal, apprehensive *over* my first violin performance, angry *with* my inability to write, or afraid *of* giving a lecture, then death metal, violin performance, inability to write, and giving a lecture are intentional objects. We must appreciate that there may be nothing in the physical world that corresponds to an intentional object. If I am fascinated by unicorns this does mean that there are creatures called unicorns. More generally the truth of an intentional ascription such as “A is interested in witches” does not entail the truth of another statement asserting the existence of witches (failure of existential generalization) as, for example, the truth of the non-intentional statement “A is walking in the garden” entails that there a be a garden for A to walk in (existential generalization). Second, the description of an intentional object is a function of what the person himself/herself takes to be the attributes of whatever he/she admires, wishes, fears, or is angry with (first-person claims demonstrate failure of substitution of identical linguistic expressions). If I am angered by your insolence and deceit, it does not follow that you were insolent or deceitful but only that I believe/feel that you were.

Now it may appear that specifying intentional objects by way of prepositions is unduly restrictive since it is not the case that all psychological states have this sort of prepositional form. If “A greatly admires surgeons” and “B distrusts musicians” clearly these lack grammatical prepositions. However this is not a serious objection since we can always reformulate the sentence such that it has a prepositional structure: “A has great admiration *for* surgeons” or “B is distrustful *of* musicians” without altering the meaning of the sentences.

The most apparent threat to the plausibility of prepositional analysis of intentionality is posed by statements such as “A believes that p,” for example, “Macbeth believes that ghosts exist.” But we can rewrite such belief statements as follows:

Macbeth believes *in* the existence *of* ghosts

Macbeth believes in the truth *of* the sentence “ghost exist”

Macbeth agrees or is disposed to agree *to* the proposition that “ghosts exist”.

Obviously these three rewrites differ in their degree of naturalness but all three preserve the normal truth conditions for what Macbeth believes, and at the same time clearly indicate the intentionality of the ascription.

We may now introduce an ancillary definition: to say of a person that s/he is in an intentional state is to say that some sentence radical of the above kind may be predicated of him/her. Thus, if “Macbeth fears the knife” then Macbeth is in a particular intentional state (the state of fearing the knife).

At the very least then there is some point in speaking of expressible states (beliefs, attitudes, emotions) as having intentional objects, and no point in speaking at all about the objects of sensations. My admiration *of* Bartok, my approval *of* socialism, my affection *for* van Gogh, and my interest *in* biblical archeology are intentional states that are, truly or falsely, predicated *of* me. But sensations are not about, for, over, or towards anything, and consequently they are not intentional. (Sometimes it is thought that not all emotions and feeling states are intentional, that, for example, anxiety of objectless fear and I will come back to this).

Now evidently sensations are of something and “of” is a preposition. We speak of the sensation of dizziness, but note that the “of” is here *systematically ambiguous*. Thus anger is not the object of my feeling and hostility is the not the object of my attitude, and neither is dizziness the object of my sensation.

In each case we could omit the preposition and rephrase the expression. We could speak of a “dizzy sensation,” and “angry feeling”, and a “hostile attitude.” But while, hostile attitudes and angry feelings are directed towards objects from which they are distinguishable, a sensation cannot be directed towards anything. In case of dizziness, the sensation is *not distinguishable* from dizziness – it is a sensation-of-dizziness, or a dizziness sensation. A sensation has its terminus in the mere awareness of its presence – we simply have it, or are it. Compare, for example, (1) sensation of heat with (2) fear of darkness. The “of” is transitive in (2) but it is intransitive in (1). Heat is not an object in the way that darkness is an object of fear. [The transitive-intransitive distinction corresponds closely to the subjective and objective genitive case in grammar.]

We can now explain why sensations are non-intentional in spite of sometimes having prepositions as in the “sensation of cold” or the “sensation of dizziness.” Sensation functions at the same level as “emotion” or “attitude” and not at the level of “fear” or “hostility.” Thus, the “sensation of cold”, “emotion of fear”, and “attitude of hostility” are all similar constructions in that the “of” is intransitive in all three cases and hence these expressions have no intentional objects. But note that in the latter two cases we can go on and ask, “Fear of what?”, and “Hostility towards what?” Here the prepositions are transitive and the answers to these questions will invoke (designate) an intentional object, of fear or hostility. In contrast we cannot go on to ask “cold of what” or “dizziness of what”.

**What is at stake here?**

The locution “sensation of…” is used to specify the *kind* of sensation that is meant, just as “feeling of anger” is used to say what sort of feeling it is and not to name the object of the feeling. *What we cannot seem to do in case of a particular sensation and what we can do in case of a particular feeling, belief, or attitude is ask about its object.* Sensations admit of no transitive prepositions and hence no possibility of intentional objects.

Now it is true that we do not express our perceptions either and my argument for sensation also holds for perception, although sensation and perception do differ in important ways as is only to evident in Anglo-American philosophy and psychology. Of course there is a difference between feeling hot and feeling the paint go on the canvas, or seeing spots and seeing the piano. Perception normally implies an object *seen* – and perception verbs like see, hear, feel do require *direct objects*. But this does not qualify perception as *intentional* in the same way as attitudes, emotions, beliefs are intentional.

My perceptions are not *about, over, from, in, or toward* anything in the way I have beliefs about centaurs, hostility towards hypocrites, admiration of Bartok, misgivings over politics. Perceptions cannot be granted or withheld (like beliefs) or fulfilled and frustrated (like desires), cannot be justified, renounced, adopted, cultivated, misguided, and, like sensations, perceptions cannot be expressed. I will qualify this claim later.

Finally, we can distinguish between the *causes* and the *objects* of such states as hatred, fear, and faith (e.g., the face [object] which inspires delight is not on that account also the cause of inspiration). The child believes *in* Santa Claus *because* her father has assured her he exists. *Sensations have causes but no objects*. Thus, if I choose to call the tickle in my arm “sensing a feather”, I am assigning a cause to a sensation, I am not mentioning the object towards which the sensation tickle is directed. But if I speak of my hatred as hatred of the Yemenites, I am not revealing a cause of my hatred but I am referring to its target/object.

**Hence, I *tentatively* conclude that intentionality is characteristic of those states of persons that are expressible and that states of persons not so expressible are not intentional.**

**2.** I have argued that we do not and cannot *express* sensations and perceptions and I have maintained that intentionality is a *necessary* condition for *expression*.

If correct, this claim should contribute significantly to a deeper understanding of the concept of “expression” and we can now support this with some further theoretical scaffolding.

(i) Intentionality of expression and action toward an object

First let us consider *actions* (**as a class of expressions**). Actions are typically undertaken in accord with beliefs, attitudes, and desires. The expression of a desire may be undertaken *in* order to satisfy or fulfill that desire, an expression of belief may be an action undertaken *in* the belief that something is the case, and an expression of an attitude may be undertaken *in* accord with that attitude. We can also speak of actions undertaken in accord with relevant conditions. In each case the action bears a specifiable relation to the objects of the belief, attitude or desire. There is no comparable sense in which we act in accord with objectless sensations.

One way in which we commonly identify actions *as* actions *under a given description* is to observe the relation between the behavior and the objects at, against, towards, or from which the behavior is directed. Thus, we have an *essential* link between states expressed in actions and the objects of those states. I cannot express tenderness, pity, or respect without directing my behavior in some appropriate way to their respective objects, and conversely, the objects of my feelings are disclosed in my actions (this is even more evident in verbal than non-verbal behavior since verbal behavior frequently necessitates explicit reference to an object).

That we can *act in accord* with our desires and beliefs provides us with a means of identifying the objects of those states. Of course, we can be misled here unless the notion of an object is clarified. There are at least three important senses in which the term “object” may be used in the following.

(ii) Nature of the object of expressions

Suppose I am angry with my friend and strike out at him and then in the next moment apologize and tell him that I was angry at my instructor for the low grade he granted my paper. But after the next session with my analyst, I discover that I was neither angry with my friend, nor with my instructor, but with my father. We can distinguish here

1. the object of my expressive behavior (object of my anger), [**immediate**]
2. the object I take or believe to be the target of my feeling [**virtual**], and
3. the object which is offered as the real or ultimate, if not the immediate object of my anger (**latent**].

Of course it is possible that all three objects coincide, but where they do not, we are open to error both in our behavior and in our belief/feeling. Thus, if the intentional (instructor) and immediate (friend) object of my anger fail to coincide, I am guilty of *misplaced expression*. If the intentional (instructor) and latent object (father) fail to coincide, I am guilty of a *mistaken belief.*

It is sometimes argued that being mistaken about an object of my desires/feelings (mistaken about what I really want or feel) is a question of being self-deceived as to the intentional object of my desire/feeling. But I cannot see how it is possible to be deceived about what I believe or take to be the object of my feelings; in any case the distinction between intentional (or virtual) and latent objects should cover this possibility without requiring that we use the notion of *intentional object* in an equivocal manner.

Since the intentional and immediate object need not coincide*, mere observation of an action* will not always reveal the identity of the intentional object. You would be misled in believing I was expressing anger with my friend even though it is apparent that I was directing my anger at him. What is significant is that we assume the existence of some intentional object whenever some condition of a person is expressed in action. **It is appropriate, that is, that a person should be able to provide an account of his action which includes a description of whatever he takes to be the object of his desire, frustration or anger.**

In theory then it is always possible to locate the intentional object of a state or condition of the person expressed in action, even when the observation of the action does not disclose the object, or where the action indicates the wrong object because of misplaced expression.

Again the possibility of *acting in accord with our desires and beliefs* suggests that there are observable links between states expressed in action and their intentional objects. And wherever the intentional and immediate objects are identical, **we have a paradigm case of *behavioral expression*.**

(iii) Involuntary and voluntary action and the nature of expression

Expression is not exhausted in action, of course, and we must also take account of *involuntary* behavior which counts as expressions. We need to consider the role of intentional objects in involuntary expressions if I am to sustain the thesis that intentionality is a necessary condition for expression.

If voluntary expressions are exemplified in *actions* directed in various ways toward their objects, involuntary expressions occur characteristically as *reactions* to intentional objects. My stammer and blush of embarrassment over my inept teaching is an expression, and involuntary reaction to a situation in which I am ashamed of my failure to teach properly. That my performance, or rather bad performance, is the intentional object of my embarrassment is evident if we consider that I will be embarrassed so long as I continue to believe that my performance is inadequate. And this belief may persist independently of whether my performance is in fact inadequate, or what other may think of it.

Corresponding intentional objects can be found wherever there is an occurrence of involuntary expressive behavior. An involuntary expression of fear, shame, anger, disgust is a *reaction* to the intentional object of the expressed state.

Thus, there is some parity between voluntary and involuntary expressions. Both entail the presence of intentional objects, although the relation of expression to the object is an action *towards* in one case and a reaction *to* in the other case.

(iv) The grammar of intentional expression

Another issue of importance hinges on a grammatical possibility. Consider a situation in which a child is crying over a lost doll because it was one given to her by her father. Here the situation is one in which a child is crying (state or act of grieving) over the intentional object of grief (lost doll), and the “cause” of the grief (is the complex relation between child and father and doll). Whether my analysis holds up here or not, my immediate concern is the possibility of raising two importantly distinct questions about the expressive behavior.

1. We can ask what the behavior is expressive *of* (is the crying an expression of grief, joy, sorrow, hunger, etc.?).
2. We can ask what the expressive behavior is *about* (seeing the child crying we can ask what the child is crying about?).

**Clearly, an answer to the first is not necessarily an answer to the second question. The questions belong to different categories.**

The child’s crying is an expression *of* grief but she is crying *about* her lost doll.

Thus, the first question is a request for a description of the state of the child expressed in her behavior (crying). The child’s crying behavior is *of* a state best described as “grieving”.

The second question is a request for a description of the intentional object of the expressed state (grief) of the child. The child crying behavior is *about* an intentional object, her lost doll.

Both questions may be asked of any instance of expressive behavior (what state of the person is expressed in his/her behavior? and what is the expressive behavior about?)

Thus it is possible, even if somewhat awkwardly, to talk of the “*aboutness*” of expressive behavior in referring to its intentional character. It might be objected that we can ask what the expressive behavior is *of* but we cannot ask what the expressive behavior is *about.*

But this objection misses the point, for it is the behavior *under its description* (grieving) as *behavior* (crying, shouting, etc.) and not under its description as an expression (aboutness) that constitutes the referent of crying in both “what is the crying expressive of?” and “what is the crying about?” Both questions refer to the *behavior* under the same description, and consequently no equivocation is involved. Hence the *aboutness* character of expressive behavior further supports my argument that intentionality is inseparable from its expression. Here it is evident that the answer to the first question implies and answer to the second, at least if the description of the behavior is to be *expressive*.

(v) Interlude on the expression of pain

**3.** I have argued that we do not, and cannot express sensations. But one objection that seems obvious is the sensation of pain. Pain is a sensation and we express pain. This would seem to constitute a counter example to my contention that sensations are not expressible, and therefore fatal to the argument that *intentionality* is a requisite condition for the occurrence of an expression.

But the counter example is not decisive but merely equivocal. Let me indicate just briefly.

Apparently, there are two general theories of pain. In one pain is not a special sensory mode but an effect of over-stimulation of receptors for heat, cold, or pressure. In the other theory, pain is a sensory mode with special peripheral nerve fibers and conduction pathways in the spinal cord. Each theory has it difficulties and also something to recommend them. It is also thought that if one theory is right the other must be wrong.

Against the over-stimulation theory, it has been found that there are special pain spots on the skin which even when slightly stimulated will result in pain. Against the specific sensory mode theory, it is known that its receptors must be free nerve endings and these are also known to mediate pressure, and it is also known that brief or weak stimulation of pain spots on the skin produces no pain. There is also the consideration that there would appear to be no specialized cortical area for pain as there is for example for touch.

The evidence from introspective literature also appears to bear out the contention that pain is not a coherent and discriminable sensory mode. Thus subjective evidence does not establish a separate modality for pain, internally unified and distinct from other modalities.

Now it has been contended that the two theories are not incompatible even as the neurological evidence is inconclusive. Whatever turns out to be the case (and I leave this battle to the neurologists and psychologists) it is clear that pain is very different from emotion, attitudes, and beliefs. It is more like a sensation than any other discernable part of experience. Since Aristotle, it has been noted that pain is a “passion of the soul”, a feeling state, not a specific sensation. Generally until the end of the 19th c. pain was considered a feeling state. Later when anatomically mechanisms were discovered interest focused on the perception of pain, and it became clear that pain is a specific sensation. And yet there is an intimate linkage between the sensation of pain and the feeling of pain – one suffers pain and it is this suffering is perhaps its most prominent experience.

In conclusion, we may well admit that there is a specific class of (anatomically) sensations called pain and also that there are natural and recognizable expressions of pain, and at the same time, deny that when we “express pain” we are expressing a sensation. If the most relevant aspect of pain as experienced is a feeling state, then it should not be difficult to maintain that which is expressed, is this feeling state and not the sensations of pain. Expressions of pain are like expressions of distress, discomfort, dislike, distaste, namely expressions of feeling states and hence are intentional.

The object of an expression of pain is the *sensation* itself, but what is expressed is an *attitude* or *feeling having the* *sensation of pain as its object*.

[If you reject this argument, then you must show that the expression of pain is simply an expression of a sensation, and then you must also show that why this and not other sensations can be expressed, and to show the relevant difference between pain, pressure, or heat sensations. Admittedly, pain is phenomenologically a complex experience, unlike sensing heat, pressure, of throbs or tickles, and pulsings and that pain encompasses an irreducible dimension of feeling or emotion which is then articulated in expression.]

**4.** **My argument has been thus far that intentionality is at least a necessary condition for expression. What are some consequences of this position?**

The concept of expression is associated with the image of “pressing out” (etymologically, L. ex(out)-pressare (to press), or, to make manifest, to reveal by external tokens, to make appear, almost exclusively with respect to feelings or personal qualities (inner). But the meaning is revealing in a dual sense. If we hear someone burst out in nervous laughter as an expression of embarrassment, we are ware of something *inside* and that there is some *situation/occasion*, real or imagined which is embarrassing. Thus expression simultaneously points in two directions**: *backward to the person* and *forward to the object*** (even as the object need not be immediately present in consciousness or physically exists).

It is characteristic of the concept of expression to make implicit allusion to both these features of the total situation. Hence, it is incomplete to simply talk of the expression of fear or the expression of desire and until the object of fear and desire is disclosed the description is vague or vacuous. The expression of fear of communism and the expression of fear of failure may have little in common and the expression of a desire for recognition little in common with the expression of desire for oblivion.

Consequently, it is misleading to analyze expressions as a simple two-place relation such as X expresses Y, where X is some pattern of behavior and Y some mental state manifested in the behavior of the type of which X is a member. For this suggests that the analysis is complete when we show that the expressive behavior reveals or refers back to the person. But this assumes that all expressions of say fear have something in common… or that we can identify fear as what is being expressed simply on the basis of the (fear) behavior.

Rather we cannot make sense of the notion of an expression unless we are willing to fuse this reflexive revelation with an indication of the *intentional object* in our analysis of the meaning of an expressive behavior. A complete analysis of “expression” must include a reference to the *intentional (aboutness) character* of the expressed condition.

(vi) Expressions and signs/symptoms

**5.** An adequate analysis of the concept of expression should also allow us to distinguish between expressions and other *indicative relations* such as signs and symptoms. For example can we distinguish between nervous laughter as a sign and as an expression of embarrassment? Obviously breaking out in a rash is a sign of measles but the rash is not an expression of measles. *Generally, non-intentional states may have signs but not expressions.* So that measles can be signified but not expressed because measles are not an intentional state of a person. Of course we can be aware of measles but they do not attain expression. Spots are a sign of measles because they are symptomatic of a non-intentional state of the person.

If sign and expression are both applicable, we may be confronted by signs of intentional states. This explains why some behavioral manifestation of our fears (sweating), loves (blushing), envies (sarcasm) are sometime referred to as signs or expressions. But usually revelations of intentional states cannot be adequately described as signs of those states. Voluntary and object directed actions are naturally thought of as expressions and not signs, for example we prefer to speak of tenderness and gentleness as expressions and not signs of love. Conversely, involuntary and reactive expressions of intentional states are frequently referred to as signs of those states, as for example blushing as a sign of guilt.

Note that if we were to speak of *signs* of such states as desire/intention we would imply that we were aware only of something *contingently* connected to the antecedent conditions of behavior. But clearly our desires and intentions are *non-contingently* connected with the behavioral patters associated with them. That is, we cannot describe our intentions in such a way that they identifiably *independently* of the action that is undertaken to implement them. The fact that intentions are non-contingently related to behavior explains why we chose to speak of their *expressions* rather than their *signs (which are contingently related to their states)*.

If the relation between action and intention was merely the conjectured correlation between two *independent* events, then the pairing of *sign and significandum* could be invoked, indicating that certain observable features of the action signified the presence of an (unobservable) intention. But as we have seen the description of an intention is parasitic of the description of the action – *hence these are* ***not independent*** *events*. The same holds good for desire, although there may be exceptions as we do speak of signs of sexual desire…but these exceptions occur only where we are not concerned to characterize the aboutness of the behavior but only to indicate that a person is in a certain state (of desire). Even in the latter however, the fact say, of restlessness may be a sign of sexual desire can only be ascertained because such restlessness, in the past, is stilled say in masturbation.

So unlike the relation between sign and significandum, the relation between expression and what is expressed may be non-contingent (e.g., not all states of anger result in expressions of anger, indeed the state of anger may be expressed by excessive kindness). It is important to emphasize however that this is not a necessary condition for all expressions, though it is what is implied by talking of the “natural” expressions of certain states. In any case, wherever the relation is non-contingent, description of behavior as an expression **cannot** be given independently of the description of the condition that is expressed. Part of what mean by “desire” is the disposition to act in certain ways and such actions are the expression of desire. *Hence, part of what we mean by “desire” is the disposition to initiate appropriate expressive behavior*. If this is the case, then clearly the relation between desire and behavioral expression is *non-contingent*, and any description of the behavior which presents it as an expression is, to that extent, a function of the description of the desire. Thus, the description of behavior *as expressive* of a particular desire is also a partial description of the desire.

Now this should help to explain why actions *express*, rather than *signify* intentions and desires. The concept of a sign is inadequate to describe a relation (such as between intention and action or desire and action) in which the terms are non-contingently connected. **“Expression”** is the only logically adequate word we have for indicating a *complex in which both object-directed actions and non-contingently related conditions of the agent are present.*

**In summary, then, the *concept of intentionality*, conjoined with those of *action* and *contingency*, should enable us to map significant areas of coincidence and divergence between signs and expressions, and this strengthens the case for choosing intentionality as a foal point in my analysis of expression.**

(vii) States without objects

**6**. I want consider one further objection to the claim that intentionality is a necessary condition for expression. It runs as follows. We do speak of the expression of such states as anxiety and depression and yet these states lack objects in the sense that hope, fear, and affection have objects. Thus it is said that say depression remains much the same whether it has an object (objective) or whether it is caused by obscure unconscious physiological causes. (It is said that many feelings, moods, emotions just happen spontaneously out of the unconscious workings of the body/soul. Just as alcohol consumption may generate enthusiasm.)

But this claim is unclear about whether we could still ask about the objects of such states. The manner in which a feeling or emotional state is generated tells us nothing about the existence of an object of that state. Alcohol induced elation may still be elation *over* something, something trivial perhaps or something that in a sober state would hardly generate elation, but which nevertheless is an intentional object. Narcotically induced euphoria is not objectless just because its origin is organic and not “psychological”. The psychedelic person is still fascinated by the color of the room or absorbed in the sound of rain.

In fact, emotions that are often described as objectless are in fact not so. Just because in a state of depression everything seems pointless does not mean that the depression is objectless. It is just that all the objects of depression seem black. Even Freud adopted the view that anxiety (angst) is not the fear of nothing but rather the fear of “*Je ne sais quoi*” which is not the absence of an object but an object which is unknown.

It is at least plausible to maintain that objects of anxiety are elusive not because they are non-existent, but because anxiety describes a condition of being afraid where the object of fear is unknown, unrecognized, or repressed, or where it is simply too diffuse to be easily located or precisely described. Pervasive moods and all-encompassing attitudes (*Weltanschauungen*) also suffer from this form of imprecision, and yet we say that such states have diffuse or indeterminate object, but we do not say they have none. That my mood casts a shadow over everything I encounter does not mean my moods cast no shadow at all.

It does seem inappropriate to ask about the objects of moods, depression, and anxieties

But this is no because we are asking for a description of a non-existent object, rather because it is difficult to describe an object which is either unknown, vague discerned, indeterminate or diffuse. A person may be paralyzed by a conviction of impending doom even as he can give no account of what it is he dreads, but this does not permit us to infer that because he can give no such account this is proof there is no object of his dread.

Of course, one could argue that neither is it proof that there is an object of dread but to speak of objects which are undetected, unrecognized, indeterminate or diffuse is at least a reasonable alternative to “there are no objects of these feelings”. Moreover this alternative is at least consistent with the analysis of intentionality I have given for expressive behaviors and, moreover, there surely is no conclusive reason that seemingly objectless states are a decisive counter-example to my thesis that intentionality is necessary to expression.

**Chapter 2 Inference and expression**

**Now that I have established a criterion for determining which states of a person are expressible in behavior, we may ask about the link between (1) behavioral expressions and (2) those states of person that are said to be expressed.**

Before trying on a discussion of this link, I would like first to note an important distinction marked by a difference in syntactic form.

**Consider the following.**

*A sad expression is a mark of a thoroughbred beagle.*

*An expression of sadness crossed her face as she watched him close the gate.*

Now note that a “sad expression” does not mean “expression of sadness” and we see this when we attempt to substitute in sentences whose grammatical subjects denote insensate objects.

Thus, cypress trees may have *sad expressions* but their expressions are not *expressions of sadness*.

Sad expressions are to expressions of sadness as anger-like behavior is to the expression of anger.

Thus, anger expressions may occur without anger, but the expression of anger cannot occur without anger. Hence, *sad expressions* may occur without sadness (e.g., the beagle has a sad expression but it is not for that reason sad) but *the expression of sadness* cannot occur without being sad.

Moreover, the syntactic arrangements cannot in many cases be shuffled at all. There are sneering expressions but there are no expressions of sneer. A sneering expression may well be expressive of something- say of contempt or disdain – but we cannot discover what it expresses by a simple syntactic maneuver translating a sneering expression into an expression of sneering. Even where there are symmetrical syntactic possibilities – where a sneering expression and an expression of sneer are both available, a particular occurrence of a sneering expression need not be an expression of sneer. The two syntactic constructions are logically independent.

**What is the nature of this logical independence?**

Whenever the qualifier appears before the noun (“…. expression”) it is a description of certain observational features of the situation, but whenever the “expression of …..” occurs it warrants aninference *relating* some intentional state of a person to particular aspects of his behavior. Now my concern is with the latter and we can lessen the possibility of confusion if we keep this distinction in mind. The first locution “…. expression” presents no problem apart from any problem pertaining to descriptive discourse, and I will return to it later.

Still there must be some connection between *sad expressions* and *expressions of sadness*, even if sneering expressions are not so related to expressions of sneer(ing). It cannot be a coincidence that some objectively discernable features of the world (“…… expressions”) also happen to be connected with the “expression of….” certain states of mind or character.

The thing is that I think this connection is genetic (psychological/historical) not logical (the relation is not between sadness and the expression of sadness which is a logical relation in the sense of being non-contingent, but rather the relation is between *sad expressions* and the *expressions of sadness.*

Innumerable expressions of human sadness have deposited a calcified and conventional image of sadness (the human figure bend over, the slackened mouth, the downcast eyes, etc.). It is around this calcified image that the descriptive content of “sad expression” has crystallized. Without such conventions no consistent descriptive meaning could be attached to any instance of a *“.... expression*” and it is conventions of this sort that explains, in part our capacity to “project” sadness, anger, despair into the non-human world. But we must be careful to notice the dissociation between the two syntactic forms.

The convention enables us to describe a set of features as a “…… expression” without any implication as to the state expressed. A malformed face may bear an unmistakably cruel expression but this perception alone allows us to say nothing about the inclination to cruelty of its owner. In contrast, when we speak of an *expressions of cruelty* in a face this does license an implication that its owner is inclined to cruelty.

Conventional expectations for *expressions of cruelty* are not as binding as *“…. expressions”* and we may develop *novel and bizarre* ways of expressing our intentional states. The very possibility of novel expressions depends on their **not** being conventional, rather on their having an **open texture**. “Sad expressions” are conventions are relatively fixed within a particular language/cultural setting, on risk that otherwise they would have not useful function. Hence, there is no logically binding link between cruelty expressions and expressions of cruelty, the latter is not inferable from the former *(just because a person manifests a cruel expression does not mean they are expressing cruelty, and similarly just because a person is expressing cruelty does not mean they manifest a cruel expression*), and indeed the former may not be typical or conventional as “cruelty expressions” must be so conventional.

Before turning to the link between behavioral expression and the state of the person said to be expressed, I should emphasize that I am not first of all concerned with the psychological/practical difficulties involved in recognizing and expression, rather I am concerned with the logical/inferential relation that is implied in calling something an “expression”. Accordingly we may outline the logic of “expression of….” as follows.

If A’s behavior B is an expression of X, then there is a warrantable inference from B to an intentional state of A, such that it would be true to say that A has (or is in state) S, where S and X are identical.

**I want to defend this scheme, and then I want to indicate how we can distinguish expressing from imitating, acting, and pretending.**

**2.** Behavior is expressive if it discloses something about the person exhibiting the behavior. A mincing walk, a timorous voice, a seductive gesture are expressive when these behaviors reveal something of the person, and if what I have said so far is right, then what these behaviors reveal are intentional states.

It is clear that our intentional states are not always voluntarily displayed; in fact, the most familiar human expressions are often involuntarily engendered. For example, loss of muscular control and vocal constriction in fear and blushing in embarrassment are largely involuntary. In fact, their involuntariness guarantees their consistency and hence their recognition. Hence, we have the following grammatical form to mark this distinction:

(voluntary)

“**A** expressed his **f** for **x** by **phi-ing**”: a person expressed his abhorrence of goat cheese by grimacing, differs from

(involuntary)

“**A**’s **phi-ing** expressed his **f** for **x**”: a person’s grimacing at the sight of goat cheese was an expression of his abhorrence.

Note that in both cases the behavior reveals the same intentional state but in the first case the implication is that the behavior is voluntary or deliberate, whereas in the second case it is not. It is important to keep this distinction in mind since the relation of a person’s expressive behavior to the intentional state it reveals will vary from one grammatical form to another.

Let’s now go on to explore the relation between expressive behavior and those intentional states that are revealed, displayed, or manifested in the behavior.

**First,** I will argue that there is *no distinctively descriptive class* of performances or bodily movements that constitute expressive behavior. The concept of expression implies that certain inferences are warranted, and it *cannot* be located by scrutiny of the descriptions of the *behavior* alone. Explosive laughter, facial grimaces, a shudder, or a periodic tic are neither expressive nor non-expressive, and only if we have reason to connect these inferentially to some desire, intent, or conflict are we entitled to treat it as an expression.

What sorts of logical features of inferential relations are warranted by (the phrase) behavioral expressions?

If a friend who is afflicted with a spasmodic tic is a victim of no organic failure but is despondent and chronically repressed and whose emotional difficulties are directly related to the appearance of his tic, then we have good reason to believe that his tic is an expression of an emotional state. Here the relation between the tic and the emotional state is direct, cause and effect, each is independently describable and conjoined. All we need do is to add that the cause is psychological (i.e., intentional) not physical.

But it is clear that the tic (behavior) by itself is *not* sufficient to indicate whether it is an expression. But there are cases where our description of the behavior already indicates the kind of inferential move that is warranted.

Let’s take an example,

A has a red face

A’s face is flushed

A is blushing

Obviously to describe a thing as having a red face does not imply any relation between the color of the face and a correlated psychological state. Having a red face is a little like having an arm; it ascribes/describes a property to a person.

If A’s face is flushed however this implies a *change* in the person’s complexion but it still does not imply a psychological state – it is in a sense neutral with respect to its cause.

When A blushes we could admit of the inference that the behavioral expression of blushing has some connection to a psychological state of say embarrassment or shame.

Note here that the truth conditions (what makes the ascription true) for saying “A is blushing” are logical related to the truth conditions for saying that A’s appearance of blushing is an expression of his embarrassment or shame. For example, consider how this description or ascription may be falsified. If we discover that A has been eating very hot chili peppers or drinking heavily we might be led to retract the ascription and replace it with something more neutral like A’s face looks blushed, or A’s face is red. An ascription/description like “A is blushing” carries with it an intentional implication – conceptually linking the observable features of the face with the intentional state of the person.

That there may be conceptual and causal linkages between the behavior and the inner state brings us to another significant point. Psychological predicates, as is well-known, occupy a crucial position in our speech practices. That is, *psychological predicates* cover both public and private domains: *both outer manifestation and inner agitation*. Anger, jealousy, depression acquire their meaning from a coalescence of the public/outer and inner/private. Thus, jealous behavior is not only evidence for jealousy but is importantly a constituent element a complex referent, named jealousy. Thus, P. F. Strawson *Individuals*, 1963) claims that depression is one and the same thing felt/experienced by the depressed person and observed by others. Or as J. L. Austin (*How to do things with words*, 1965) claims, being angry is a little like having the mumps…it describes patterns of events like symptoms, occasions, feelings and other manifestations.

Of course, in my example above, the jealous spouse may conceal his/her jealousy but doing so usually requires considerable effort involving suppression or else disguising his inclinations to act jealously which would accompany the feelings of jealousy. On the other hand we could accuse someone of jealousy if, in spite of his/her protestation, his/her behavior makes it sufficiently obvious (such as preventing his/her spouse from associating with others) that we are entitled to say of him/her that s/he is jealous (even if the person disavows any feelings of jealousy). **As with most psychological predicates their meaning is never just scandalously public or surreptitiously private.**

We might conclude by saying that behavior which is expressive of anger, jealousy, etc. is a *constituent part* of a psychological state, and *hence it is not a causal inference* (from behavior to the expressed state) and in fact it is *not an inference* at all but a part of a complex to another part or the whole. This is what the grammarian calls a **synecdoche.** A mast is not merely evidence of an approaching ship, rather the mast stand for the whole ship approaching – here the mast is not an effect (mast) of a cause (ship), nor is the mast a sign related to, designating, a significandum. Expressive behavior of jealousy is not merely evidence is the presence of jealousy; rather it is part of a complex pattern which comprises the full meaning and significance of jealousy. Of course there may be jealousy without jealous behavior (expression) just as there are ships without masts but this does not mean that when the mast or the jealous behavior is present these are not *proper* *constituents* of ships and jealousy.

When we use psychological predicates we employ and imprecisely extended range of criteria, none of which are strictly speaking necessary but many of which are sufficient to use the predicate. Hence, we do use psychological predicates on the basis of the behavior alone and in the absence of introspective awareness. Similarly, we use these predicates on the basis of feeling alone in the absence of the behavior.

It could be argued that that we no need no inferences from the expressive behavior at all. *But this is a mistake since the ascription of expressive behavior always implies an associated set of attitudes, beliefs, feelings, emotions, and motives.* Here we need to remind ourselves that the meaning of a term (jealousy) and its criteria of use need not be identical (or may be very different).

This kind of analysis suggests a resolution of the apparent antinomy that (1) we can see anger, etc. in a gesture, bodily movement, face, and (2) it is impossible to see anger etc. directly (their presence can only be inferred from the expression). But if the relation between states and their expression is analogous to the rhetorical relation of synecdoche, it should be possible to avoid the antinomy….there is no inference is required, it is all part of a larger *complex* of jealousy (inner, outer, and object).

The appearance of a mast on the horizon usually justifies that a ship has been sighted and the objection that the ship is not yet visible and hence inferred from its mast is misguided since a part of the ship has been sighted (its mast). **Here the part is a part of the whole**. Similarly, we make a mistake if we regard expressive behavior of intentional states as external indices of inner happenings, as public events contingently related to private inner states, rather than both as constituent parts of a complex occurrence. We see the jealousy in a person’s behavior if that behavior is itself a constituent part of the referent of jealousy, and just as readily we cannot directly observe a person’s jealousy if by jealousy we now mean the whole of the referential complex including a private feelings/sensations. The antinomy is generated only when we attempt to restrict the reference of psychological predicates to either wholly private (inner) or wholly public (outer) occurrences.

Note that my analysis of expressive behavior avoids the Cartesian model that casts doubt on all inferences about mind as inner causes having outward effects. On a Cartesian model expressive behavior is merely an instance of a physical event signaling an unobservable mental event, but this is just not how we use psychological predicates, namely as “expressions” and not as signs. Hence, to speak of an “expression” is not to refer to a special class of observable discriminable movements, but to imply a particular inferential pattern (of part to whole).

**3.** I have said (1) that there is nothing intrinsic to behavior which marks it as expressive….nothing that is, that identifies the behavior as an “expression of ….” (2) I suggested that reference to behavioral expressions implies a relation between the behavior and the intentional state of a person who behaves. However, there is a **surface** to expressive behavior that may become **detached**. The child who pretends, the actor who portrays, the mime who imitates, the hypocrite who feigns, all these attempt in different ways to strip the surface of expressive behavior from the intentional state of character it normally reveals, thereby suggesting behavior can be expressive even though there is no intentional state which it expresses. Note that if pretending children, portraying actors, imitating mimes, and feigning hypocrites were engaged in expressive behavior then my claim that expressive behavior warrants an inference to the whole would not be valid. But I will claim that in fact these modes of expression are *parasitic* on *genuine* expressions, and that we must distinguish between genuine expression and behavior that is merely an expressive *mask*.

The actor who portrays King Lear’s despair on the heath, I will argue, is not expressing his own despair but merely portrays despair, namely the despair of the character he plays. Rather it is King Lear who *expresses* despair and the actor who plays him merely *portrays/represents* the despair Lear expresses. *Method acting* advocates insist that ideally the emotions of the actor and the character he portrays should be identical and qualitatively similar. If that were the case, then the actor’s expression of despair is his/her own as well as that of the character he portrays. But even so if both actor and the character portrayed are grief-stricken, it is not the case that the actor is expressing King Lear’s grief. Rather the actor is expressing his own grief which then *represents* King Lear expressing King Lear’s grief. We may say that Lawrence Olivier is expressing Lear’s grief but only because there is only one sequence of actions in sight (on stage). But this single sequence of (grief-expressing) actions requires two distinct descriptions (the actor’s and Lear’s) just *because it is a theatrical performance.*

In a sense there are histories of two lives before us (one of which is fictional – Lear). These histories are presented in the actions of a single person (actor) but this should not obscure the recognition that a single action may *both* *express* and *represent* an expression (Lear’s and the actor respectively). The actor may express himself through the roles he plays but s/he cannot, while expressing him/herself, simultaneously represent his own expression – just as one cannot both act and simultaneously imitate his actions, though the actor may act in imitation of others or in imitation of himself at other times.

Here the parallel with *imitation* is instructive! The imitation of an action requires another action, and the *gap* between the actions cannot be closed. Imitation is inflexibly relational and to conflate the imitated from the imitating actions would dissolve the relation. Self-imitations are possible only over time. Imitating is the same as copying or forging, and nothing can be an imitation, forgery, or copy of itself.

Similarly, there is gap between the represented and the representing which cannot be bridged. Even self-portraits are not portraits of themselves. The actor cannot both express himself and represent his/her *own* expressions since there is no requisite relational space, and since to act is to represent, if s/he is merely expressing him/herself, s/he cannot also be acting. Where a single action is both an expression and a representation of an expression we should expect to find distinct logical subjects/persons for the expressions (in this case the actor and the character s/he is acting).

Even though the expressions of the actor and the character art contingently identical, it does not follow that they are equally and indifferently objects of dramatic interest, just as it does not follow that the contingent identity of the morning star and the evening star (planet Venus) means that what we admire in the morning star is the brilliance of the evening star. Contingent identity is not a license for *substitution* in all predicative contexts (failure of substitution of identicals).

Understanding the semantic restrictions on “expression” and “representation” explains the necessity for separate though parallel descriptions of theatrical performances. If we collapse or mix the descriptions of separate life histories we get hybridized statements which are ok for morning newspapers but profoundly misleading where we are trying to understand the complex relations among expression and portrayal, actor and character. [We can say that the actor’s expression of despair (as the portrayal/representation of Lear’s despair) is superb while we doubt the appropriateness of Lear’s despair in Shakespeare’s drama King Lear.]

Note that if expression were the standard of successful acting, theatrical performances would be judged by determining whether the actor succeeded in expressing him/herself through the role s/he plays on stage. But theatrical performance no matter how satisfying as an expression from the perspective of the actor, remains to be judged by its adequacy as a representation of the expressive behavior of Lear, Iago, or Willy Loman the actor portrays. Method acting may well be a powerful technique for generating effective representations of expressive behavior but it is no crutch for the theorist who wants to argue that successful expression is the object of our deepest theatrical interests. If you are only moved by Olivier’s grief you have lost sight of Lear. [Which is why film which so forefronts the person of the actor often loses the character of the story, and we get Jack Nicolson in every film.]

In fact, if expression were indeed the key to successful theatrical performance, then it is hard to understand why an actor should study his/her craft, or why acting is a craft at all. An actor studies his/her gestures, intonations, etc. NOT because s/he needs to infer what feelings he is expressing, but because s/he has to determine whether her/his actions, whatever they express, also effectively and appropriately represent the expressions of the character he portrays.

Finally, these kinds of considerations suggest that acting is best thought of NOT as a species of expressive behavior but rather as an activity which appropriates the *surface* of expressive behavior for *representational* purposes. Where genuine expression does occur in the theatre or on film it is a **means** and not an **end**.

The relation of the actor to the expressive surface of behavior is then reasonably clear but what can we say of the child who pretends to be afraid? Is the child also pretending to express fear? Or does the child accomplish the pretense by actually (really) expressing fear? Either alternative is distressing for my analysis.

“Pretending to express fear” has no paradigmatic role in language (when contrasted with “pretending to be afraid”) and hence it is difficulty to see what would count as “pretending to express fear”. Similarly, accomplishing to express fear is also an unhappy alternative. If we say that the pretender is actually expressing fear we have no way of distinguishing between “really expressing” fear and merely going through the motions of being afraid. The second alternative commits us to identifying really expressing fear and going through the motions of expressing fear, but this is strange “he is really expressing fear” but “he is not really afraid”.

Consider the following parallel. A sentence which is asserted when uttered on one occasion may be uttered non-assertorically on another occasion. ‘I am English” may be assertoric when uttered be uttered by Bertrand Russell, and non-assertoric when uttered by a Tahitian language student rehearsing his grammar exercise. We can speak of the same sentence occurring on both occasions. Analogously, a behavioral pattern which expresses fear on one occasion may occur in another occasion non-expressively. But perhaps this parallel is misleading.

For consider that we began by asking whether the behavior in pretense was expressive behavior, and it might be objected that the analogy has been distorted. Thus, the same sentence may be used to inform or deceive, depending on context but in both cases it is used assertorically. Lying depends on this: *I lie by asserting something I believe to be false.* The analogy then would appear to be this: the same behavioral pattern may occur on separate occasions to reveal or dissimulate character, but in both cases it is expressive behavior. Accepting this analogy would lead us to say that a person who pretends to be afraid is using behavior to express an emotion which he knows he does not have, and more generally, to say that expression, like assertion, is compatible with intentional dissemblance. But for a number of reasons this is a misleading analogy. For one thing it suggests that there is an identity between expression and a discrete class of behavioral patterns isolated from whatever inferential structures they may imply. We would then be committed to, say, give a description of certain gestures or facial configuration that these patterns either were or were not expressions of a certain state and we would be committed to do so without further effort. It would then be sufficient to know a particular look had crossed the human face to claim incorrigibly that an “expression of x” had occurred, and this claim would then also be immune from correction in terms of a person’s further feelings or thoughts. Rather, the fact is that we are prepared to modify or retract our ascription of an expression whenever we discover that the gesture or look was accompanied by thoughts or feeling or intentions different from those had supposed (or in fact by none). All distinctions among imitating, pretending, acting, and expressing would then dissolve.

Remember our problem was to determine whether the child *who pretends to be afraid is also pretending to express fear,* or whether the child is actually expressing fear as a means of accomplishing his/her pretense, and I think both alternatives are risky. “The child is only pretending to express fear” and “s/he is really expressing fear” leaves us to choose between the meaningless and paradoxical.

The way out is apparent if we only recognize the oddness of the question: “is the child who pretends to be fearful also expressing fear?” The logic of pretending and expressing are incompatible activities. “A is expressing fear” implies that “A is fearful or has fear”, whereas “A is pretending to be afraid” implies that “A is not fearful or fears. If I pretend then I cannot express, and if I express I cannot pretend. The child is neither pretending to express fear, nor really expressing fear. The child is pretending to be afraid and this description (pretending) bars expression. Pretending and expressing are rivals concepts.

Now it may be objected that pretense does not exclude expression (e.g., my pretense to be annoyed may be an expression of my desire for attention). But remember the logic of “expression”, above, that

If A’s behavior B is an expression of X, then there is an warrantable inference from B to an intentional state of A, such that it would be true to say that A has, or is in state, S, where S and X are identical.

And hence if I am expressing annoyance, I am annoyed, and it is this identity that pretending precludes. No doubt I am expressing something when I pretend to “phi” but I cannot, if I am pretending to “phi”, also be expressing “phi”. Pretense differs from expression just in that it rules out the identity of S (state) and X (expression of…).

Acting and imitating, along with pretending, feigning, and simulating, etc., are to be clearly distinguished from **expressing**. The surface of expressive behavior is easily detached and reproduced and much of our time is taken up with such pursuits both in play and in earnest. But we gain nothing by identifying such activities with expression. Rather the relation of these activities to expression is parasitical, exploiting the surface of expressive behaviors for purposes of deceit or diversion (social reasons for the sake of impact, conformity, and status etc., which are never genuinely expressive).

We might briefly consider this claim in the context of **ritual or ceremonial**. There are ritual displays of emotional behavior, often as rites of passage. For example the practice of keening at an Irish wake does not require that those who wail and moan are genuinely grief-stricken and hence, on my account, does not require the expression of grief. But neither is keening a case of pretense since there is no attempt to mislead or to deceive. Keening comes closer to acting than to expressing, pretending or imitating. But acting is not an entirely accurate description either. So there are behaviors somewhere in between.

**4.** I have now established that both intentionality and certain forms of inference are critical to the correct use of the term “expression” (as given above). The truth conditions of “A’s behavior B is an expression of X” are such that a particular statement of this form is always false when it can be shown that (a) there is no relation between B and some intentional state S of the person, or (b) S and X are not identical.

If acting and pretending were also forms of expression, these criteria would fail as logical parameters of expression, but as I tried to show they do not fail and hence that the relation of these activities to “expression” is parasitic or derivative.

**Chapter III Language and expression**

Since at least the 18th c. a distinction has been made between two functions of language: the *representative* (or designative) and the *expressive* function.

Almost all the conscious and unconscious *movements* (behavior) of a person express something of his/her feelings, mood, dispositions to reaction, and the like. Therefore we take all movements including speech movements as *symptoms* from which we may infer something of the person’s feelings or his/her character. That is the *expressive* function of movements and words.

Besides the expressive function, there are a portion of linguistic utterances (e.g., “this book is black”) that also have a designative function, these utterances tell us something about a certain state of affairs, and these utterance assert something, predicate something, they judge something – these are represent some*thing*.

In the Anglo-Saxon philosophical tradition, these two functions of language are carefully distinguished, the expressive being symptomatic (of mental or physical states) and the representative being theoretical – that is, containing knowledge about some state of affairs.

Many linguistic utterances are analogous to laughing in that they have an expressive function but no representative function. For example, crying and lyrical poems express the feelings of the poet and are intended to incite similar feelings in us. Thus a lyrical poem has no assertional sense, no *theoretical* sense, it contains no *knowledge*…

I have paraphrased the above from Rudolf Carnap’s “*Philosophy and Logical Syntax*” (1935, pp. 26-29), perhaps the most articulate spokesman of a *philosophy of science* called Logical Empiricism in the 20th c. Carnap held to the view that there are utterances which both express and represent (both express states of persons and make theoretical claims to knowledge) but words/sentences which are not used to represent have no sense, no theoretical content/knowledge and are purely expressive.

But this hard and fast distinction, which has been characteristic of middle to late 20th c “positivism” and what is sometimes called “analytical philosophy”, cannot bear the weight of reflection (for example, sentences in the sciences belong to representative class and sentences in the arts to the expressive class) even as the distinction itself may well be a useful starting point for discussion.

First of all we should note that Carnap maintains that there are two kinds of *functions* of language, and not two kinds of *languages*. This is important because sometimes, many thinkers, including Carnap himself, have written as if there are certain words, phrases, and syntax of language which are inherently expressive or inherently representative (for example, “Humbug” is expressive whereas “the barn is red” is representative or descriptive).

Ludwig Wittgenstein (*Philosophical Investigations*, 1953, paragraph 244) suggested that sentences such as “I am in pain” are forms of learned pain behavior, a linguistically sophisticated substitute for the more primitive “ouch”. So that the indicative syntactical form namely the statement “I am in pain” is *functionally equivalent* to the more primitive expression of pain “ouch”. Hence, we infer that the indicative statement “I am in pain” may be expressive (of pain) in that it replaces the naturally occurring expression “ouch”.

There is a similar and converse argument. Consider, this case: you are asked “How was DeGaulle received in Algiers?” and you answer “Boo!” conveying “He was greeted with audible hostility”. Clearly, we may react to “Boo” not necessarily as an expression of personal antagonism, but rather the outburst is an exclamation give in response to a request for information much like we might spontaneously react to a bad performance of Arnold Schoenberg’s *Verklarte nacht* (Transfigured night).

It is often argued in support of the expressive-representative (or descriptive) dichotomy that descriptions are cognitively significant and hence bearers of truth, whereas purely expressive constructions cannot meet such conditions of truth. But surely, we can ask whether such exclamations “Boo” or “Hurrah” is true or false, for exclamations do imply even as they do not explicitly assert propositions whose truth is in question. It is often pointed out that exclamations like “Hurrah” and “Bravo” neither name nor describe nor refer to anything. Hence it is argued that such exclamations are purely expressive or effusions of feelings (i.e., contain nothing cognitive). But surely these are not the only alternatives. Suppose that, following the duet from *Traviata*, Act IV, I shout out loud not “Bravo” but “Brava”. “Brava” refers not to the soprano, as say Renata” (Renata Tibaldi, 1922-2004) does, but it clearly has reference to her, and distinguishes her from the tenor as the object of my enthusiasm. If such expressions were merely effusions of feeling, the grammatical distinction between “Bravo” and “Brava” would be irrelevant, and obviously it is not.

If we take seriously fashionable imperative to abandon hypostatized meanings in favor of the concepts of “use” and “function” it becomes increasingly evident that there are no descriptive, expressive, or performative words or sentences; *there are only the employment of these words and sentences*. But, we can ask, is “red” not a descriptive term and is “hurrah” not an exclamation? Perhaps, usually for the grammarian, but the trouble comes when these grammatical categories are invariantly concretized in distinct forms of *discourse*. We expect to find that predicables/nominals are used to represent, to describe, to predi*cate,* hence it is the case that some words and expressions are assigned the property of being descriptive.

However there are contexts where exclamations can be given a descriptive or informative role in discourse. Similarly, predicables may be used to express. Moreover, usually these functions are not exclusive but can be used to both describe and express.

Two points emerge here: (1) exclamations may function in certain contexts to convey information, or describe some state of affairs, and these exclamations may be replaced by a syntactically indicative expression without altering the force of its descriptive content. (2) The test of truth functional equivalence can be successfully applied, wherever an exclamation can be substituted for an indicative utterance without altering the descriptive or informative content, the truth value of both will be identical.

Whatever distinction Carnap was trying for, I think that the distinction can only be applied to **functions** (of language), expressive and descriptive (or representative), performative and prescriptive, and not to lexical or grammatical components of language per se.

**I now want to consider the *expressive* function of language in relation to non-linguistic expressions, and to related, but distinguishable, linguistic acts/expressions.**

**2.** Let’s first consider the linguistic expression of *belief*. I will consider how these expressions-in-language differ from other linguistic acts such as *assertions*, and from non-verbal behavioral expressions.

It follows from my previous conclusions (above) that “if A expresses the belief that p”, A must necessarily have that belief and, assuming that “A is expressing the belief that p” is true, then we are entitled to the inference that A is in some psychological state, or is *disposed to act or respond* in certain ways. Now G. T. Geach (*Philosophical Review* 1965, LXXIV, 499-465) maintains that *assertions* are like *expressions*, and that a *syntactically indicative utterance* may be either an assertion or an expression. That is, to claim that an assertion or an expression has occurred is to claim more than that certain words have been uttered; it is in fact to claim that a particular kind of *inference* is warranted.

Hence, Geach claims that assertion and expression are thus closely linked, and it might appear as if every instance of the linguistic *expression* of belief must also be an *assertion* of the belief. “The Hittites were morally inferior to the Maccabees” when uttered *assertorically* would also be an expression of the *belief* that the Hittites were morally inferior to the Maccabees. But note that this kind of symmetry breaks down in cases where it is possible to express a belief without directly asserting it. If I utter “There will be no ball game today” this *may* express my belief that it will rain today but it does not say so. Or if I should say “The whole concert tonight will certainly be boring”, and if it happens that I am bored only by Mozart, then the statement may be an expression of my *belief* that the program of tonight’s concert will consist entirely of works of Mozart. This potential for **indirection** that is *characteristic of expression* should help to distinguish *expressions of belief* from the *assertion, profession, and affirmation of belief* none of which can be accomplished through a similar kind of **indirection as expression**.

Thus, to talk of expression of belief authorizes an inference about the one who expresses that belief, and the nature of that inference will depend on whatever significance is assigned to the word ”belief”.

For example (1) if we analyze “belief” as a *disposition* then we might infer certain tendencies or dispositions to *act or react* in certain ways when one has a belief. (2) We might also analyze “belief” as allowing inferences relating the *expression* to a certain class of *neurological or psychological states* (of belief). (3) A third analysis of “belief” might have us see in direct linguistic expressions of belief, e.g., “I believe that p”, a *performative* act, that is, the giving of an unqualified assurance of its truth expressed, say, by “I know that p”. None of these three analyses are incompatible, and it is possible that a single expression of belief would entitle us to inferences of all these types: that is, (1) tendencies to act/react, (2) the expressions of some neurological/psychological state, and (3) as a performative or the claim to know.

[However, it is not clear whether a *performative* analysis of belief expressions does allow us to make inferences of the speaker (after all, in a sense, there is nothing behind the *performative*) as, for example, when someone makes a promise, it is entirely in the public domain (and no inference required). I see no reason that there are any expressions of belief which are merely performances. After all, we *express* beliefs but we *make/give* promises. There may however be expressions other than those of belief which are purely performative. See below.]

To bring out more clearly some distinguishing features of the linguistic expression of belief, I want to explore the dissimilarity of the conditions for the application of the terms “belief” and “opinion” – a look at the conditions will reveal the importance of distinguishing between linguistic and non-linguistic expressions.

It seems to make little difference whether we express beliefs or opinions – opinions being a kind of belief. Perhaps opinions are beliefs of a kind. Like beliefs, opinions advance a weaker claim than “knowledge” although we are often prepared to give reasons for opinions. It is interesting that we withhold opinions from animals whereas we often say, for example, that when the dog barks, she believes (anticipating) that there is someone at the door. But we would never say that the dog’s opinion is that that there is someone at the door.

**What is at issue here is language.**

Representational language theorists often maintain that animals, infants, or Robinson Crusoe are all capable of beliefs (that is, possess cognitive states) but none of these express opinions. We can ask whether opinions are then merely beliefs formulated or formulable in language. And we can also ask whether there are beliefs that are *resistant* to articulation in language? If not, is it senseless to talk about animals having/expressing beliefs? But perhaps it is merely arbitrary to suggest that animals have no beliefs. Or should we say that there are (non-verbal) expressions of belief other than those expressed in language?

My cat believes that there is someone at the door (or his expression on hearing the doorbell, and running towards the door indicates his belief that there is someone at the door) but can he formulate his belief (that there is someone at the door)? Obviously my cat that does not believe the proposition which asserts that there is someone at the door, rather his behavior of running towards the door when hearing the bell is ***as it were*** an expression of that belief.

In principle, we can formulate *all* beliefs in language but this does not mean that a belief must be or can be formulated in language by the one who expresses it (say on a dispositional analysis of belief, above). On the other hand, an opinion, though it may be a belief, must be a belief that is *consciously* entertained and expressible as propositions to which the believer gives or withholds assent. An opinion *unformulated* in language is no opinion at all. This is why we speak of *forming* an opinion but usually *not* of forming a belief. Opinion has part of its meaning that we attempt (in some cognitive process) to articulate a belief.

Yet not every expression of an opinion is an expression of belief. For example, value judgments, and of likes/dislikes are expressible as opinions. Compare, “What is your opinion of Bartok’s quartets?” and “What is your belief about Bartok’s quartets?” But here too, when we speak of values and preferences as opinions, we imply that these are expressible in language rather than say as dispositions or tendencies to act or react. I may *express* my preference for Bartok over Stravinsky but this is not the same as having an opinion about them. Language is a *requisite condition* for the possession of opinions but not, perhaps, for the possession of beliefs. Opinions too are intentional.

It is sometimes suggested that language is also a requisite for having/expressing beliefs. **[I will talk about this in class with an extended example.]**That is, if creatures have no language we would not know what could be meant by attributing to them opinions. But here opinion and belief are used interchangeable and I suggested that while we may not be able to attribute opinions to non-linguistic creatures, we might well attribute to them beliefs (on say a dispositional analysis of “belief”). If there are those who claim that beliefs require language (as indeed I would so argue, later) we might protest that it seems possible to express beliefs non-linguistically (without demanding that the believer is ready to express the belief in language).

It has also been argued that the relation between belief and language is *not merely* contingent matter of fact – but then what are we to make of the notion of an unexpressed belief which is clearly not an absurdity? Also, if a belief which is expressed in words is “a belief in this *statement* rather than that” we should have to conclude that a belief expressed in words is always equivalent to an *assertion* of “this statement rather than that”, and that any statement that expressed a belief would necessarily *assert* that belief as well. But here again we see how language may express beliefs **indirectly** yet not precisely. *Expression* and *assertion* may coincide but they are not interchangeable. [Assertion may be a species of expression.]

It is important for the study of *expression* that we insist on the distinction between belief and opinion. Language is the ability to perform a set of actions which are expressions of states of oneself for which there are *no* *equivalent* behavioral expressions. In contrast, it is claimed that the belief that it is about to rain is equally expressible by a linguistic utterance (“I think it is going to rain”) and, simply, by raising an umbrella (here the behavior and the belief is inferentially warranted). Notice here that in raising the umbrella, this action might express my belief that it will rain but it could also indicate/express many other beliefs….it seems that non-verbal expression of belief is always *interpretatively ambiguous* in a way, say, that saying “it will rain” is not.

A belief that is expressible in language alone is also an opinion, and the capacity to have opinions (which is *identical* with the ability to express them) is evidence of the greater ***wealth of states*** attributable to language users than to creatures whose behavioral are limited to non-verbal displays. But we should not discount the possibility that there are intentional states *best* expressed non-verbally such as, say, sexual desire, or hatred (where their linguistic expression is a mere “substitute”/sublimation).

In any case, the ability to *express* an opinion in language is a necessary condition for *having* the opinion. This does not imply that an opinion need always be expressed in language, of course. But the non-verbal expression of an opinion is justified only if we already believe that the opinion could be expressed in language. In this way opinions are perhaps different from beliefs. [I am hesitant at this point for it seems to me that beliefs are necessarily expressed in language on risk that non linguistic expressions of belief remain ambiguous…For example, one may love someone *completely* yet unless the phrase “I love you” is spoken of none or any of the actions expressing love can we unequivocally say that they indicate “love”.]

Now opinions are not the only intentional states attributable *solely* to language users. Wishing, regretting, hoping are also only predicable of language users. What does it mean to say that *only* language users can wish, hope, etc? Just this: for it to be true that “A hopes that p”, A must be able *to use and understand* the expression “I hope that p”. And, if A does not understand or cannot use language then no sense can be given to “A hopes that p”. **Moreover, unlike non-verbal behavior, language can allude to what is *absent, non-existent or possible, conceivable, etc.* – that is, language can be *appropriate and inappropriate* to that which is not both particular and present.**

It is characteristic of hoping that we hope only for those outcomes or events which we cannot or believe we cannot bring about or ensure through our efforts alone. “To hope that p” is among other things to believe that there is some condition for the occurrence of *p* that I cannot control. *Hoping* here differs from *intending* that *p* just insofar as I believe that there are requisite conditions necessary for the occurrence of p which are somehow under my control. My non-linguistic behavior may express my intent to do what I can to secure some object/event/etc. but there is an additional dimension to hoping that cannot be adequately expressed non-verbally. There is nothing I can do to express the residual difference between *intending* to bring about a state of affairs and hoping for its occurrence without employing the linguistic expression “I hope that p”.

“To hope that p” is then to be able to say or inscribe sincerely a sentence of the form “I hope that p”. And to be in a state of hoping is *minimally* to be able to **use and understand** such expressions. The requisite expressive potential for being in a state of hope is to possess natural language containing the equivalent of “I hope….”, “I wish….” etc. **We may conclude that natural language *extends* the intentional states that are predicable of persons.**

**3.** In order to sharpen our view of the distinctive features of linguistic expression it will be useful to explore in greater detail the domain where expression shades over through *parenthetical* to *performative uses* of language (functions).

If I assert that tonight’s concert has been cancelled, it is clear that in addition to *expressing* my belief that the concert has been cancelled I may also be *expressing* my disappointment (usually carried by intonation contours of tone of voice). Now something similar though more complex occurs when I say “I admire the way you insulted the host”. Here we have in this sentence a propositional element (manner of insulting host) and a non-propositional element (I admire). In uttering this sentence sincerely I imply that you did *in fact* insult the host (propositional content) and I also express my attitude (of admiration) towards your actions. That is, in this sentence the propositional content is modified by the *propositional attitude* (feeling/value) of admiration for what you did. We might call such propositional attitudes “modal operators” (propositional attitudes change or operate on the ‘modality’ of the propositional content – say from assertion to admiration).

Modal operators may precede the propositional content of a sentence in different ways. Thus, the messenger who must inform a mother that her son has died in battle might say “Madam, I regret to inform you that your son has been killed in action”. Note the word regret here is *neither* used *expressively* nor *hypocritically*; rather it serves to indicate that the news is of a certain, regrettable, nature. We have such ***parenthetical*** uses of modal operators in the ceremonial uses of language as when the Chancellor of the University addresses his audience at graduation and says “I am very pleased to inform you of the Senate’s decision to award you your decrees”. In fact, the verb “express” may itself be used *parenthetically* (“Allow me to express my deepest sympathy”) is a formality not a necessarily genuine expression of how the speaker feels, what he believes, etc.

What distinguishes the *parenthetical* use of a modal operator from its *expressive* use as propositional attitudes (qualifiers), is that it is pointless to ask whether the statement *as a whole* were true or false. No one asks whether the messenger sincerely regrets or whether the Chancellor is truly pleased (since regret and being pleased are used *parenthetically*). In contrast the expressive use of modal operators requires us to ask whether the utterance as a whole is true or sincere, as in when I say “I hope you get better” (do I really hope?). [Insofar as we can always ask about the *implicit* mode of “having” a propositional content (in speaking or writing it), we can attribute to the person a expression, not necessarily of sincerity or genuine hope but in discharging his responsibility of “office” (say, as an officer charged with bringing bad news), say, of informing the family of the death of their son in battle.]

We can distinguish a further difference between linguistic expressions utilizing modal operators in the way they undergo different fates in the process of tense transformation. Propositional attitudes and parenthetical utterances are limited to the *present* tense. When their tense is changed (“I regretted” or “I will regret”) these no longer characterize or express the speaker’s (present) regret but merely *report* on (past) or predict some occurrence (future). There are no comparable past or future uses for *parenthetical* expressions. Thus, it makes no sense for the messenger to say “I *regretted* informing you that your son has been killed in battle” since to say so would *transform the parenthetical into an* ***actual*** *expression* modifying the manner in which the propositional content is entertained. But actual expression defeats the formality of the ceremonial use of modal operators. We can also bring out the parenthetical character of modal operators by the fact that we can predict or report their occurrence. If I am to describe what the messenger had done, I cannot say simply “He regretted informing her that her son was dead”, rather we can avoid the implication of (the expression of) regret by simply saying “he said, ‘I regret to inform you that your son has been killed in battle’” (direct quotation) or just, omitting the parenthetical phrase, “he told her son had unfortunately died”.

It is admittedly often difficult to decide whether a particular sentence element is intended as ***genuinely expressive*** (modifying the propositional content) or merely as ***parenthetical***…”I regret I cannot attend the wedding”. Here context is necessary to discern the nuances of language (is the regret genuine expression or mere convention/formality?).

**4.** If it is important to distinguish between the *expressive and parenthetical* uses of language, it is even more important to distinguish between expressive and ***performative***uses of language. The reason is that both the criteria of intentionality and inference warranting nature expressions are threatened by failing to distinguish expressions from performatives (usually by reducing expressions to performatives).

Thus, if Mayor Mandel gives notice that he approves of the Rapid Transit extension, I would not hire a detective to observe the signs of emotion (whether Mandel really ‘approves’). The notice Mandel announces/writes ***is*** the approval. That is, such linguistic expressions of approval are **performatives** (or performative uses of language) which may be said *to do* something rather than *to say or express* something. It would absurd to regard performatives such as promises, warnings, apologies, christenings etc. as expressing something done; rather in saying them what we do***is*** we perform them. When christening a ship and I say “I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth”, I am not describing the christening ceremony or expressing anything, I am *performing* the christening. Or when I say “I do” (to this person who is to be my wedded partner), I am not reporting on a marriage in which I did or expressed something, I am acting (speaking) such as to consolidate the marriage….

When J. L. Austin proposed the distinction between performatives and other uses of language, he was attacking the *descriptive fallacy*, to the effect that all language is a form of naming (representing or designating), in particular of inner happenings which could then be evaluated as true or false (either describing or expressing some inner state accurately). But how could we describe inner states at all (before we expressed them in the context of intentional objects)?

Performatives are neither true nor false (or it is difficult, if possible, to make sense of their truth and falsity) but neither are they straightforwardly descriptive of what occurred or is occurring. Where they are explicit they are first person, present tense, utterances, and their being uttered *under appropriate conditions and in appropriate circumstances* is sufficient for the truth of a descriptive statement attributing the corresponding *action* to a speaker. Thus, if A says “I promise”, or “I bet”, or “I do” in an appropriate setting, then the corresponding description (“A promises” or “A bets”) is fully an automatically warranted. *That is, no further behavior by A or disclosure of what is in A’s mind is required.* Breaking the promise or reneging on the bet may be *evidence* of savory character but that is no reason for cancelling the description (after all, A did promise and he did bet).

In my example of Mayor Mandel, his linguistic expression of approval is equivalent to a *performative* use of language (that is, the bestowal of his approval). Any report of the Mayor’s approval could then be analyzed as follows:

(i) That the Mayor expressed approval of the plan

(ii) That his doing so was a performative bestowing approval on the plan, and

(iii) That both (a) and (b) are interchangeable and equivalent descriptions of the Mayor’s actions.

But I think that we must distinguish (a) and (b) because, while the Mayor “approved” the plan of extending Rapid Transit, he did not necessarily *express* his approval. The Mayor might well have private doubts about the plan and does not approve of its going ahead, but as a *performative* (say, city council approved by majority vote) we know that the plan will go ahead. We can say that the under the rules of local democratic government, all those including the Mayor who do not approve of the plan nevertheless “approve” of it once the majority of council approved it. We must distinguish here between the *expressive and the performative* uses of language. *Expressions unlike performatives carry with them inferential implications about the intentional state of speakers.* The Mayor may sanction the plan and hence also approve of it without being favorably disposed towards it. To say, “I approve” is not necessarily an *expression* of approval. According to Austin, we can make or give promises but we need not express them; we do not *express* bets, christenings, warnings, threats, or commands (as these are performatives) even as we may in betting, christening, warning, threatening or commanding express something else (such as recklessness, belief, fear, hatred, or authority, respectively).

In fact, we could use what is obviously expressive language but in a performative manner. “I promise to love, honor, and obey” (expressive of devotion/love) spoken at an enforced (“shotgun”) marriage ceremony is a performative that may not be expressive at all of the partner’s feelings at all.

Of course, a performative can be uttered *sincerely*. One can make a promise such that it is *both* a performative and an expression of an intention (to keep the promise). Apologies, regret, contrition, and sorrow can be sincere (expressive) even as these are also performative. In fact, if regret, sorrow and love and their performatives may suggest insincerity if they are also not expressed. They must be spoken and meant….yet in uttering the words I do not do two things, perform them and express them. I do *one* thing: I utter them. In uttering them I might only perform them or I might also express and perform them or I might just perform them or just express them. What is important is that the question of sincerity which may be raised with respect to an expression is not raised with respect to performatives. Whether your expression genuine is not a concern when at a marriage ceremony one utter “I do”, it is sufficient to say “I do” (even if uttered insincerely) to validate the ceremony of marriage (that is, the marriage remains judicially valid (even if I was insincere in uttering “I do”).

Consider that judges do not sentence criminals sincerely or insincerely; judges’ feelings, etc. are irrelevant to the exercise of their judicial office. Of course, judges may feel contempt or pity in passing sentence but this plays no role in the binding nature of their judicial decision. A surgeon may well feel he really wants to heal you, but whether he does or not, makes little difference to his professional procedure of surgery. In fact, the less he knows of you or feels for you, the more likely we hold his skills in high regard. The surgeon performs the surgery (well) quite apart from his feelings for you or his desire to heal you.

Even the question of sincerity varies considerably. For example, to apologize without contrition is less devious than to promise without intent. *What is at stake here is the social and cultural expectations elicited by performatives*. An apology offered publicly is itself a climatic ceremony, there is nothing further expected (such as you really feel sorry or contrite). [Love means never having to say “I am sorry”. That is genuine love, expressed, never requires the formality of an apology since whatever damage in incurred is overshadowed by genuine love. Trite, but it makes the point.] The apology (as performative) ends the tension and repairs the damage (in circumstances where love is not an issue). To ask whether it was offered sincerely makes little difference to its public consequences. [Something like this is what, I suspect, we mean by “courtesy”. Acts of courtesy even when insincere are acts of courtesy. Hence, courtesy is important in circumstances where there is no intimacy.] In contrast a promise excites expectation of future behavior – namely behavior that would demonstrate that the promise is in fact kept. Thus, the relation between promise and intending to keep the promise is more intimate than the relation between apology and being sorry or feeling contrite. Apologies need not be accompanied by inner gestures; promises however are discredited immediately the moment we have the inkling that there is no intent to keep the promise. Diplomacy is a great arena for performative uses of language (one can apologize for saying of certain countries that they constitute the “axis of evil” because it is diplomatic to do so not because one really thinks or feels that they are not).

Another way in which performative and expressions differ is in the way they come off or suffer some *infelicity*. For performatives to come off (i.e., for them to be felicitous) there are some conditions that must be met.

1. There must be some accepted *conventional* procedure having a certain conventional effect, which includes uttering certain words by certain people in certain circumstances.
2. The particular persons and circumstances in the given case must be *appropriate* for the invocation of the particular procedure (performative) invoked or uttered.
3. The procedure must be executed by all participants both *correctly*, and
4. *completely*.
5. Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts and feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must *intend* to so conduct themselves, and
6. must so *actually* conduct themselves.

Failure of these conditions will result in infelicity (unhappiness) in the *performative* utterance. The rules can be placed into two categories (1) those whose infraction results in *failure to accomplish* the intended action (failure of the performative to come off), and (2) those whose infraction does not nullify the act but qualifies it as *insincere*. I will fail to marry even though I utter the words “I do” in appropriate circumstances if, say I am already married (breaking rules 1-4). But if I thank someone effusively, without gratitude, I have not thereby failed to thank him, but I have done so insincerely (breaking rules 5 and 6).

Now expressions may be unhappy, infelicitous, through being false, unsuccessful, inappropriate, unapt, exaggerated, or insincere. False expressions are like false friends (unlike false promises); that is, s/he is not a friend. False smiles are *false expressions* because they fail to express what they purport to express (as in a host’s smile at an unwelcome guest). A false promise is one that is insincere or deceitful, but remains a promise (performative) nonetheless. But a false friend is not a “friend”. *Unsuccessful expressions* resemble *false expressions* in failing to express, although there may well be an implication of intent to express. For example, I want to express my annoyance but I am too inhibited, so my inclination to express annoyance is dissipated in fidgeting. Of course, one can argue that fidgeting is still a (displaced) expression of annoyance, but if so, then we need a place for *unsuccessful expression* as one which fails to realize its intentions in appropriate behavior. Unapt or exaggerated expressions fall under the category of “inappropriateness”. Obviously, here there are **vast possibilities** (also in “works of art” as we will see) but inappropriate expressions (unlike false expressions and unsuccessful expressions) ***are still* expressions**, although unhappy in other ways.

On the other hand, the conditions which render a performative inappropriate usually nullify the performative as well. If an officer commands a civilian who is outside his domain of proper authority, his command is issued inappropriately and so fails to come off (that is, fails to carry over into the intended action). In contrast, *inappropriate expression, no matter how bizarre, is still expression* (if voicing my unrestrained glee over the cakes at a funeral is grotesque and inappropriate, it is *still an expression*).

Hence differences emerge depending on the conditions under which performatives and expressions may succeed or fail. The happy execution of a performative relies on conventional procedures, circumstances, relationships, and the ordered following of prescribed ceremonies (all social and cultural conditions). Performatives also depend on their successful communication (quite simply, one must hear and understand the performative uttered). However, a faulty performative may be a genuine expression: for example, if “I give you my word” that I will be faithful to you and do so while you are miles away and unmindful of my promise, *it fails as a performative* but I may yet be giving *expression to my intentions, hopes, or my fears.*

Unlike performatives, expression does not rely on *communication*. Nor does expression require communication in order to be successful. I may intent or hope to communicate something (by saying or doing) but what I say or do is not a condition of expression that this should be so, or that I should succeed (which is always the case for performatives) in getting another to understand.

Finally, insincere expressions can be assimilated to false expressions. Performatives such as an apology or a promise, given insincerely, are still an apology or promise, but the insincere expressions of *admiration* is nothing but hollow flattery, and it is not an expression (of *admiration*) at all.

Awareness of the difference between the performative and expressive functions of language should dispel any temptation to collapse them, and should enable us to preserve their relative autonomy.

**5.** The distinctions I have made hardly exhaust the issues that arise over the peculiarities of linguistic expressions. They do however conceptually triangulate the manner I which linguistic *expressions* can be located in relation to other language acts and to non-linguistic behavioral expressions. Linguistic *expression*, *like* its non-verbal behavioral counterpart, preserves the inferential connection with intentional states of the person, and what they have in *common* distinguishes the linguistic act of *expression* from other linguistic acts.

Where linguistic *expressions* and non-verbal behavioral *expressions* part company we can discern **particular states** of persons for which language provides no alternative but is *the necessary and singular means of expression.*

**IV Art and expression: a critique**

If the distinctions I have developed in the previous three sections are anywhere near correct or appropriate, it should be possible to derive from them a number of implications bearing on our attempt to understand ***art* *as a form of expression*.**

The history of art could be written as the study of the significance of a handful of concepts. The successive replacement of *imitation* by *representation* and of *representation* by *expression* marks one of the more revealing developments in the literature of aesthetics. From the close of the 18th c. to the present, the concept of expression has dominated both aesthetic theorizing and aesthetic criticism. Below I want to explore the claim that works of art or the work of the artist can best be understood in terms of the *concept of expression*.

**2.** Let me first turn to some philosophers of aesthetics who have advanced expressive theories of art. First we recognize that some distinction must be made between the *process of creation* and the *product which is the work of art*. It matters, in other words, whether “expression is predicated of the process, the product or both. Many including Dewey, Reid, Ducasse, Santayana, and Collingwood [see handout of quotations from Expression Theorists] explicitly distinguished between process and product and favor “expression” for *both*. That is, these critics are committed to maintaining that there is a non-contingent and specifiable relation between the artist’s activity and the work of art. More precisely they are committed to the view that the artist in creating the work is “expressing something” (feelings, attitudes, mood, outlooks) which is then **embodied, infused, of objectified** in the work of art. For these theorists, the central problem of the “*aesthetic attitude*” concerns the question of

*how what is expressed got into the object of art* (see Bernard Bosanquet’s *Three lectures on aesthetics*, 1815, p. 74) or, alternatively,

*how the artist in expressing his inner life embodies it into the art work.*

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Some exponents of **Expression Theory of Art**

Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as experience*. NY: Putnam’s.

Ducasse, C. J. (1966. *The philosophy of art*. NY: Dover.

Collingwood, R. R. (1938). *The principles of art*. Oxford: Claredon.)

Reid, L. A. (1966. Feeling and expression in the arts: expression, sensa and feelings. *Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism,* *XXV* 123-135.

Santayana, G. (1896). *The sense of beauty*. NY: Scribner’s

Thomas, V. A. (1962). The concept of expression in art. In J. Margolis (Ed.), *Philosophy looks at the arts.* NY Scribner’s.

Hospers, J. (1954-55). The concept of artistic expression. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society,* LV*, 313-344.*

Carritt, E. F. (1932). *What is beauty?* Oxford: Claredon.

Tolstoy, L. (1898). *What is art?* (Tr. A. Maude). New York: Oxford.

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Common to all these theories are two assumptions:

(1) that an artist in creating a work of art is invariably engaged in expressing something, and

(2) that the expressive qualities of the art work are the direct consequence of the artist’ act of expression.

*I will argue that there is no reason to accept these assumptions!*

But first I want to consider the prior contention which is almost universally accepted by Expression Theorists. This contention is that “aesthetic” or artistic **expression *is something quite different*** from the symptomatic behavioral display of inner states (see section 1, above, on the distinction between expression and signs or symptoms).

Consider what Vincent Thomas, who endorses this contention, has written.

…behavior which is merely symptomatic of feeling such as blushing when one is embarrassed or swearing when one is angry, is not artistic expression of feeling. Collingwood says it is just a “betrayal” of feeling. Dewey says it is just “a boiling over” of a feeling, and Ducasse says it is “a mere impulsive blowing off of emotional steam”. As Hospers says, “A person may give vent to grief without expressing grief”. Unlike merely giving vent to or betraying a feeling, artistic expression consists in the deliberate creation of something which “embodies” or “objectifies” the feeling (p. 31).

The corollary is that “embodying” or “objectifying” a feeling is ***equivalent*** to artistically/aesthetically expressing it. You should notice that these distinctions have been made in the interest of sustaining some favored version of *Expressivist theory of art*. Since the appropriation of the term “expression” for this purpose (namely, as *embodying or objectifying*) involves a significant departure from ordinary usage, we may reasonable demand some justification for the expressivist theorist claim that *expression* (for aesthetic purposes) means *objectifying and embodying*.

On this point John Dewey is most articulate and I will confine my critique to his version of *aesthetic expression* (as objectifying and embodying) in distinction from the ordinary usage of expression.

Dewey writes:

Not all outgoing human activity is of the nature of expression. At one extreme*,* there are storms of passion that break through barriers and that sweep away whatever intervenes between the person and something he would destroy. There is activity, but not, from the standpoint of the one acting, expression. An onlooker may say “What a magnificent expression of rage!” But the enraged being is only raging; quite a different matter from expressing rage. Or, again, some spectator may say “How that man is expressing his dominant character in what he is saying and doing”. But the last thing the man I question is thinking of is to express his character; he is only giving way to a fit of passion. (p. 61)

Dewey is concerned to protect us from the “error” which has (he claims) invaded aesthetic theory… that the mere giving way to an impulse, native or habitual, constitutes (aesthetic) *expression*.

He adds, that “emotional discharge is *necessary* but not a *sufficient* condition of expression” on the grounds that “while there is no expression unless there is an urge from within outward, the welling up must be *clarified and ordered* by taking into itself the values of prior experiences before it can be an act of expression.” Thus, there can be no expression without inner agitation but the mere discharge of this agitation is insufficient to constitute expression. “….to express is to stay with, to carry forward in development, to work out to completion”; and where “…there is no shaping of the materials in the interest of **embodying** excitement, there is no expression”.

Now Dewey provides these remarks in support (as evidence for) of the **Expression Theory** (ET) of art. But note, in fact, these remarks hold good only if one has *already* *assumed the truth of the theory*. **The circularity can best be seen in Dewey’s refusal to admit anything as an *expression* which does not result in the production of an object or state of affairs that embodies some *aesthetically valuable quality.***

But there are also more serious objections to Expression Theory.

Dewey wants to confine “expression” to activities which are *intentionally or voluntarily* undertaken (from the standpoint of the one acting). The involuntary venting of rage is ruled out with his comment that “the last thing the man in question is thinking of is to express his character; he is only giving way to a fit of passion”.

But I have made a distinction between voluntary and involuntary expression – and Dewey provides no argument that would support abandoning this distinction – other than to assert his support for the Expression Theory of Art.

One reason that Dewey restricts expression to the voluntary is obviously that many of our behavioral expressions are irrelevant to the production of aesthetic objects (works of art). Most Expression Theorists agree that the artist is engaged in something quite different from the person who simply vents his rage or airs his opinions. But the fact that the artist is doing something so different (when s/he expresses) ought to suggest not that the artist alone is expressing (and us ordinary folk are not) but that perhaps the activity the artist is engaged in is not an expression at all. So rather than making manifest by way of expression, where expression has the restricted meaning Dewey attributes to Expression Theory, we ought to question Expression Theory itself as a debatable theory of aesthetic production.

Thus, rather than follow Dewey and other expression theorist in distinguishing between *aesthetic expression* and *other* *meanings of expression*, we might ask whether the artist is engaged in doing something other than expressing – this other being the “making” (techne) of *aesthetic qualities* inthe created product, *the work of art*.

In turning to *aesthetic qualities* of the *work of art* itself, we are not leaving behind the act of expression. For by focusing on the work itself or, as Dewey writes, “the object that is expressive and that speaks to us,” we are reminded, as Dewey continues, “that isolation of the *act of expressing* from the *expressiveness possessed by the object* leads to the notion that expression is merely the discharge of personal emotion”, and “that expression as personal act and objective result are **organically connected** with each other” (p. 82).

But it precisely here in the “**connection**” between the act and the object that Expression Theorists have failed to provide an adequate understanding.

Expressions theorists customarily argue somewhat as follows:

aesthetic objects, including works of art, are said to possess certain perceptible physiognomic or expressive qualities such as sadness, gaiety, longing, nostalgia, and where these are qualities of intentionally structured objects it is reasonable to assume that their presence in the object is the intended consequence of the productive activity of the artist.

But this characterization is not enough for the Expression Theorist and hence the Expression Theorists will go on to assert that since the relevant aesthetic qualities of the object are **expressive** **qualities**, the productive activities of the artist must have been expressive (i.e., acts of expression) and, moreover, the act of expressing just those feeling states whose analogues are predicated of the object. That is, the *aesthetic qualities* of the object of art, if these qualities are expressive, express just those feeling states of the artist which the artist intents to give expression to in the object.

More schematically, *Expression Theory* (including Dewey, Ducasse, Collingwood, Carritt, Gotshalk, Santayana, Tolstoy, and Veron whatever their other differences) may be described as follows (I will call this the schema of Expression Theory). Thus **ET** is defined as follows.

**If art object O has expressive quality Q, then there is a prior act C of artist A such that by doing C, A expressed his F for X by imparting Q to O (where F is a feeling state and Q is the qualitative analogue of F).**

[Harold Osborne (*Aesthetics and criticism*, 1955) summarizes Expression Theory in a somewhat different way. He writes (paraphrasing),

the underlying theory, in its baldest form, is that the artist lives through certain experiences; s/he then makes an artifact which in some way embodies that experience; and through appreciative contemplation of this artifact other people are able to duplicate in their own minds the experience of the artist. What is conveyed to others is then an experience of their own which is as similar as possible to the artist’s experience in all it aspects. In contrast, my schematic formulation above is intended to draw attention to relation between aesthetic qualities and the activity of the artist.]

**Now the schematic formulation contains an error and this error is that it treats all cognate forms of expression as terms whose behavior is logically similar. In particular, the error (of Expression Theory) is that the purported existence of *expressive qualities* in the object (work of art) implies a prior *act of expression*.**

Now to say that a work of art (object) contains expressive qualities, or has a particular expressive quality, is evidently to say something about the *object*. [Even those who argue that the “music is sad” can be translated as “the music makes me feel sad” or “has the disposition to make me and others feel sad” will agree that their accounts are only plausible on the assumption that the object has some properties (qualities) which are at least causally relevant to inducing in percipients feelings of sadness.] **But the Expression Theorist is committed to a further assumption of a *necessary link* between the qualities in the work and certain states of the artist.**

Now critics have been quick to reply that this second assumption would make all art works *autobiographical revelations*. More so, it would entail that descriptions of expressive qualities in the work/object were *falsifiable* in a peculiar way. Thus if it turned out that Gustav Mahler had experienced no state of mind remotely resembling despair or resignation during the period that he was composing *Das Lied von der Erde*, the Expression Theorist would be obliged to conclude that we are mistaken in saying that the final movement (*Der Abschied*) of that work was expressive of despair or resignation. But this hardly seems plausible since it implies that statements ostensibly about the music itself (the work of art) are in fact statements about the composer. (It might be countered that the composer is in fact expressing something that he *remembered* or some unconscious *residue,* but if so, *I can strengthen the argument by supposing it to be false that the composer* ***had ever*** *experienced, consciously or otherwise, the feelings corresponding to the qualities attributed to the music.)* If works of art *were* indeed expressions in the way that I spoke of behavioral expressions of states of persons, then that is precisely what we would say.

After all, normally attributions of expressions are *falsifiable*, and the assertion that a person’s behavior constitutes an expression of something is defeated (falsified) when it can be show that the imputed inference is unwarranted. But statements about the expressive qualities of a work of art remain irresolutely statements about the *work itself*, and any revision or rejection of such statements can be supported only by referring to the *work itself*. “That is a sad piece of music” cannot be *falsified* by saying “No, the composer wasn’t sad” or “The composer was just pretending”. Rather, we would say, “you haven’t listened carefully” or “you must listen again, there are almost no minor progressions and the tempo is *allegro moderato*”, hence the work is sad.

Thus, descriptions attributing expressive qualities to works of art are not subject to falsification through discovering any truths about the inner life of the artist. An Expression Theorist could of course argue that the presence of quality Q in O is *sufficient* evidence of the occurrence of state S in A, such that A felt F for X (see my schema, above). But this claim rules out the possibility of independent and conflicting evidence of the artist’ feeling states, and makes the Expressivist Theorist claim (that art is expression) *analytically true and therefore empty*.

It is in fact remarkable that the Expressivist Theory as a theory of art has been so widely embraced. I think this is largely due to the misunderstanding of the nature (logic) of “expression” and “expressive”. *I would maintain that statements attributing expressive or physiognomic to works of art should be construed as statements about the work itself, and that the presence in works of art of expressive properties (qualities) does not entail a prior act of expression.*

**3.** “Expressive” (as in “expressive properties) despite its grammatical relation to ‘expression” (as in acts of expression), do not play the logical role one might expect. Thus, sometimes we can substitute one term for another as, for example,

“His gesture was an expression of impatience”, for which we substitute

“His gesture was expressive of impatience”.

But there are other contexts in which the two terms are significantly different in meaning, for example,

Livia has a very expressive face, does not mean that

Livia is adept at expressing her inner states (or that she is blessed with an unusually large repertoire of feelings and moods which she displays in many facial configurations).

To clarify this we need to refer back to a distinction I made previously between two syntactic forms:

*……. expressions* (A) and

*expressions of ......* (B).

Remember that this distinction was intended to establish that instances of B are *inference-warranting* whereas instances of A are *descriptive* and that A and B are logically independent in the sense that no instance of A (or B) entails an instance of B (or A). A cruel expression in the face does not entail the inference that cruelty was being expressed.

[One may argue that a person who has a cruel face (whose face is marked by a cruel expression)…is responsible for his face being so expressive…such that it is likely that he acquired this permanently cruel expression as a result of having often given expression to cruelty. But note that this may or may not be so…it is contingent or empirical matter.]

The claim that if someone has an expressive face does not imply s/he is expressing, or disposed to express, his/her inner states in facial configurations. The difficult is that “expressive” is *systematically ambiguous*. It may be an alternate reading of “is an expression of….” or it may be understood as a one-place predicate with no inferential overtones. Which meaning it has depends on what substitutions we are willing to make and what further questions we are prepared to admit.

For example, if the question “expressive of what?” is blocked we can then conclude that “expressive” is not functioning here as a variant of B, above. “X is expressive” does not entail that there is an inner state S such that S is being expressed, any more than the appearance of a cruel expression in a face entails that cruelty is being expressed.

The statement that “X is expressive” then may be logically complete, and to say of a person’s gesture or face that it is expressive is not invariably to legitimize the question “expressive of what?” Here “expressive” is used intransitively (I). Yet we would not call the face expressive unless it displayed considerable behavioral mobility, and a face that perpetually wore the same expression would not be expressive, and this point should help us to understand the intransitive use of expressive. A face is expressive (I) when it displays a wide range of expressions A, above. The successive appearance of sad, peevish, sneering, puzzled, etc., expressions on the face of the child may lead us to say that s/he has an expressive face without however committing ourselves to any implications about the inner states of the child. [Evidently, this is also what we say about dogs, cats, etc. namely that they have expressive faces/body motions but they do not for that reason express themselves in their faces or bodies.]

This meaning of expressive (I) may be said to be *dispositional* in the sense that the face is expressive in virtue of its great behavioral mobility in forming perceptual configurations even though it presents no recognizable expressions A for which there are established names. Hence, the domain of the term “expressive” can be *much wider and less precise* than the more specific “expression” A. The term “expressive” may refer say simply to the capacity or disposition of a person to move his/her body in varied and perceptually interesting ways (say, like that of the Thai dancer performing a *Lakon* as expressive even if we have no idea that the movement means and no language to describe these movements). But whatever the correct analysis of ‘expressive” (I), the fact remains that its use imposes *no* *inferential commitments* and we may use to it refer to the qualities of persons or objects *without* implication of some correlated *act* of expression.

**4.** Now you may well respond that all is stuff about the meaning of “expressive” is interesting as far as it goes, but surely it is entirely irrelevant from the standpoint the Expression Theorist.

But I think these distinctions are important for understanding the very art form to which the Expression Theorist have made most frequent appeal.

The point I want to develop here is that the language of composers and performers of music is at variance with the conception of musical activity derivable from the proponents of Expression-Theorist (ET). Nor is this a case where artists are merely naïve in contrast to philosophers/aestheticians (i.e., those who propound a version of ET); rather, the word “expressive” has a particular and quasi-technical meaning within the language of musicians – a meaning which is logically very similar to the intransitive sense of “expressive”, and hence which is clearly distinguishable from “expression” (B), and so importantly, *does not commit us* *to any version* *of* ET

There are numerous passages in the music of the Romantic period (and later) which are marked “*espressivo*” (“expressively or with expression”). This is a particular instruction for the performance of an indicated passage or phrase in the composition and so can be compared to such instructions as *agitato (agitated), grazioso (gracefully), dolce (tenderly), leggiero (light/delicate), secco (dry), sturmisch (rapturous), schwer (weighty), and pesante (heavy)*. All these terms indicate that the passage or phrase is to be played in a certain manner, and espressivo is merely to play in one manner or another. It is not to play well or badly, or to play with feeling rather than without, nor to communicate an intention, feeling, idea etc. rather than not. One does not play *“agitato”* or “*pesante and espressivo”*; rather the choice must come from alternatives all of which are similar in that they belong to a single category.

[Many of these instructions for performance are incompatible, though not all. *Leggiero (light) and animoso (lively)* are clearly compatible, as are *doux et expressif (*as inDebussy’s *Prelude a L’Pare-Midi D’Un Faune*) but *secco (dry) and espressivo* would be contradictory in that both these instructions cannot be performed at once.]

Moreover, to play *espressivo* is not to be engaged in expressing anything, any more than to play *leggiero* is to express lightness. Similarly an expressive work does not entail that the composer be expressing anything. Failure to understand this has led some Expression Theorists into associating an expressive musical performance with some presumed act of expression on the part of the performer, composer, or both – and hence some attributable feeling state associated with the composition, performance, etc. (usually when there is difficulty in naming particular feeling (psychological) states, and Expression theorists resort to a general category of “aesthetic emotions”).

It would follow from ET that we might always be mistaken in thinking that a performer had played a phrase expressively since the correctness of this belief would depend on the truth about the *psychological* state of the performer. But “espressivo” (expressively) is an *adverbial characterization of the manner of performance*, and hence the ET claim that the expressive performance must be linked non-contingently to some particular inner state of the performer is untenable.

But it could be objected that both Expression Theorists and I have misconceived the role of “expressive” for consider that in critical usage, “expressive” may characterize *entire performances* or *personal styles of performances* (for example, David Oistrakh’s performance of Sibelius *Violin Concerto* was more expressive than Heifetz’s or, generally, A’s playing was more expressive than B’s). Note that “expressive” is still used intransitively here but resists reduction of specific occurrences of passages played “espressivo”. This usage may lead to the suggestion that “expressive” has a primarily *evaluative* function in critical discourse and therefore does not license inference nor does it label some particular or even general features to be assessed, rather it does the assessing (to call a performance expressive is to approve, applaud, and commend it, and not to infer, notice or describe).

But I think we there are two decisive objections to this suggestion.

(1) For even if “expressive” is used to characterize a style or an entire performance (which cannot be explicated with reference to specific “espressivo” passages) the possibility remains that “expressiveness” (as applause or approval) may be still misplaced. There are numerous opportunities for misplaced expressiveness in musical performances, and we would find something rather offensive in an *expressive* performance of Stravinsky’s *Histoire du soldat* or Bartok’s *Allegro Barbaro.* In fact, appropriate and effective performances of these works require *the absence or even the deliberate suppression* of expressiveness. Similarly, austere performances of austere works are not bad performances – and indeed to call such works expressive may well be to condemn them. If “expressive” were primarily an *evaluative* device, the notion of misplaced expressiveness would be contradictory or paradoxical, or to describe a work as non-expressive is not to condemn it nor is it *prima facie* evidence that it lacks artistic worth.

(2) The second error results from a failure to notice the first error. Whether “expressive” may be used correctly to *praise* a performance is a function of whether an expressive performance is *appropriate* to the work being performed. Where is it appropriate, and the performance is commensurately expressive, calling the performance expressive may also serve to commend it (evaluative). But this no more shows that “expressive” is an essentially *evaluative* predicate of our critical language, than commending figs for their sweetness shows that “sweet” is an evaluative predicate of our culinary language. That we prefer expressive to on-expressive performances of Rachmaninoff and Chopin implies that we regard expressiveness as required for an *appropriate* reading of the Romantic architecture of their works; it does not imply that “expressive” is an aesthetic variant of “good”.

We can see this if we consider how we might teach someone to *play* *expressively*, or teach someone to *recognize an expressive performance*.

If a student asks “what must I do to play this passage expressively?” we cannot give him a rule to follow (such as you always play this passage in *this* way) even as we can give him/her a rule of sorts:

to play expressively you must vary the dynamics of the phrase,

stress some notes more than others, and

you cannot play with rhythmic rigidity.

But we cannot give him/her a precise rule specifying which notes to stress and where and how to vary the dynamics. *There are no paradigmatic examples of expressive playing from which a universal rule could be abstracted and applied to other phrases.* No phrase can be played expressively without some deviation from the literal note values, without some modulation in the dynamic level, but the choice of just where and how is itself not rule- governed. In fact, a student who follows our second-order rule and plays a passage with rhythmic freedom and dynamic modulation may in fact produce a grotesquely unmusical and inexpressive result.

The problem is analogous to teaching someone recognize an expressively played passage. *There are no rules either*. If someone were totally ignorant of what to listen for, we might say “it happens when the pianist closes his eyes” or “watch for him to sway from the waist”, etc. It may be thought that the difficulty here is much the same as that of showing the face in a cloud to someone who only ever sees clouds. There is an analogous kind of expression-deafness but the analogy is only partial and it can mislead. There is no way to teach a color blind person to see the normal color range but we may succeed in getting someone to see the face in the cloud or to see the aspects of a duck-rabbit figure, and we may succeed in teaching someone to recognize an expressive performance.

But the analogy isn’t perfect. Recognition of expressiveness in Grumiaux’s performance of the Debussy *Sonata for violin and piano* presupposes that we are able to discriminate a number of qualities that are predicable of musical performances. Thus, to hear a performance as expressive is to also hear that it is not dry, strained, heavy, agitated, or hollow. *In other words, it presupposes that we are conversant with a highly complex set of predicates and their relationship to one another.* On the other hand, recognition of the duck-rabbit figure (reversible figures) does not presuppose that we are so conversant. Even those who have little direct acquaintance with ducks and rabbits can come to recognize these in a reversible figure. But talk of expressive performances (works of art) can occur meaningful *only within a developed language of musical criticism and commentary*, and it implies the ability to discriminate and select from among a number of logically similar predicates.

There is no possibility that someone could learn to use “expressive” correctly and yet be unable to correctly apply any other aesthetic predicates as one might, for example, learn to use duck without at the same time being able to use correctly other zoological predicates. (Seeing the figure of a duck more closely resembles hearing the sounds of music rather than hearing the music as expressive.)

Aesthetic predicates are *not learned independently* of one another is some ostensive (pointing) or discursive manner. (I suspect neither is ordinary language so learned/acquired.) They acquire significance only in relation to one another as we become participants in the art “world” (aesthetic world). Seeing or hearing a work *as expressive* (or garish or sentimental) is very different from seeing a face in a cloud or a duck in a reversible figure. ***We do want to be careful not to locate works of art in ontologically peculiar domains, as distinct say from material objects we hang on our walls or improvise, but neither can we simply see aesthetic aspects in all objects as if it depended on a special (“aesthetic”) perception (seeing an object as if through specially trained aesthetic eyes) to see all objects as incipient works of art.***

**5.** The Expression theorist may of course object that s/he is not concerned so much with the *language* of musicians or critics as with the possibility of giving a theoretical description of the art which would enable us to grasp certain *aesthetically relevant features* of the process of creating, performing, and appreciating musical compositions. We must admit that there is a sense in which it would be correct to say that a piece of music may be an expression of (B); at least this is a possibility in the account I have given above. But this admission concedes nothing to the ET for the only sense in which “expression” (B) is admissible here is *inconsistent* with ET.

The admission then amounts to this:

aside from certain occurrence of non-verbal behavior and linguistic utterances, there is a class of things we may call *indirect or secondary* expression. The shoes I wear, the manner in which I comb my hair, the way I arrange my room, may all express some aspect of my character. My handwriting, preference in literature, style of playing poker and my choice of acquaintances may likewise reveal something of my inner states/dispositions. It is legitimate to speak of these as expressions (B) where they satisfy the conditions of being evidential or inference warranting, and may lead to the correct attribution of an intentional state. Hence, indirect expressions, like direct expressions, admit of inferences.

But if my style of poker can express my temerity or avarice, why should not my style of painting landscapes express something of me as well, or my style of playing the flute? Evidently, the conditions of warranted inference to an intentional state may be met by art as a form of action as well, and there are impressive examples in the literature from psychoanalysis of the use of art works to unlock the psychic labyrinths of the artist (e.g., Freud’s own study of *Leonardo*, but also see Carl Jung’s *Symbols of transformation*). In this sense a work of art may well be an expression of something such that we can use it to infer some intentional state of the artist**. *But I also maintain that this does nothing to support ET, and it does nothing to distinguish art from any other product of human activity.***

Recall that ET entails that the (successful) artist, by his/her creative activity, imparts a quality to the work (e.g., sadness) which is descriptively analogous to the feeling state (e.g., sadness) expressed by him/her, and ought therefore to be recognizable as the embodiment of his/her feeling without relying on extra-perceptual sources of knowledge.

But it is far from clear that this is always possible in case of works of art, it would seem that in many cases it is impossible.

*An example*

The Danish composer Carl Nielsen completed his *Sixth Symphony* in 1924-25 during a period of his life that “he was harassed by ill-health, depression, puzzling by the notoriety enjoyed of he deemed to be musical nihilism, and upset by the failure of his music to take hold beyond the borders of his own land.” It is not unreasonable to suppose that this is the source of some exasperation that manifests itself particularly in the second and final movements of the *Sixth Symphony* (the second movement is later referred to as “a bitter commentary on musical modernism of the 1920s”).

Now the second movement is marked *Humoresque*, and the prevailing impression left by the music itself is that of lighthearted buffoonery. It is not unreasonable to conclude that Nielsen is venting exasperation, bitterness, or disappointment here but it is difficult to see how such an inference could have been suggested *by merely attending* the qualities of the music alone. The music does not sound exasperated or disappointed; *in fact I cannot see how any piece of music could have such perceptible qualities.*

The movement sounds humorous and there is obvious reference to Prokofiev’s *Peter and the wolf;* but the suggestion that Nielsen was manifesting exasperation or commenting bitterly on musical modernism can have arisen only from biographical information of the composer’s life. If a critic now wants to maintain that the *Sixth Symphony* is an expression of Nielsen’ bitterness and disappointment, we may agree this is a plausible inference given the truth of his biographical data, but it has little if anything to do with the *aesthetically relevant expressive qualities* of the music itself.

This is something of a paradox for ET. In order for the *Symphony* to be an expression of the composer’s disappointment and bitterness (i.e., to be a secondary expression) it must have certain perceptible qualities which, together with the biographical data, will yield an inference. But the qualities of the music are not and cannot be analogous to the intentional state of the composer. The music is humorous; the composer is bitter. *The composer cannot inject his bitterness and disappointment into the music the way that ET requires.* There is no sense in which the music is disappointed, and even if we suppose that the critic’s inference is correct and the composer was exasperated, bitter, and disappointed, there is nothing in this to establish the presence of a *non-contingent* relation between the perceptible qualities of the music and any particular state of mind of the composer. Such linkages are *contingent*, and dependent in every case on the possession of some extra-musical knowledge of the composer’s life. In itself, humor in a piece of music no more guarantees the presence of bitterness than it invariably betrays a carefree state of mind. Paralleling the distinction between syntactic form A and B, the expressive qualities of a work are logical independent of the psychological states of the artist, and humor (or sadness) in a madrigal is neither necessary nor sufficient for amusement (or despair) in a Monteverdi.

Thus, even where we speak of a piece of music as expression (B) of some state of mind, this use *fails* to meet the requirements of the ET.

**First,** there is *no* direct, non-contingent relation between qualities of the work and states of the artist as the ET supposes (F and Q are not related in the required way). The relation is contingent and mediated by extra-musical considerations, including appeal to psychological theories.

**Second,** it is often impossible to impart a feeling quality to a work which perceptually reflects the artist’s feeling state.

**Third**, the presence of an expressive quality in a work is never sufficient guarantee of the presence of an analogous feeling state I the artist. What the music expresses is logically independent of what, if anything, the composer expresses.

[Obviously many of these points can be extended beyond music. For example Freud’s analysis of *Leonardo* makes use of certain features of the paintings (the similarity of facial expression in *Gioconda* and the *Madonna and child with St Anne*; the incompleteness of many of the canvasses); yet none of Freud’s analytic inferences are based on the qualities of the paintings alone. They are rooted in his interpretation of available biographical material. I would claim that inferences from works of art alone, whether music, fiction, architecture, to the character of the artist are generally suspect.]

It follows from this that statements of the form “The music expresses x” or “the music is expressive of x” must, if we are to understand them as making remarks about the music (and not elliptical remarks about the composer/performer), be interpreted as *intensionally* equivalent to syntactic form A: that is, they are to be understood as propositions containing “expression” or “expressive” as syntactic parts of a one-place predicate denoting some perceptible quality, aspect, or gestalt (form) of the work itself.

Moreover, “the music expresses x” cannot be interpreted as an instance of the use of “expression” (B) since it would make no sense to ask for the *intentional object* of the music. The sadness of the music is not sadness *over* or *about* anything. I am not suggesting that everyone who uses these constructions does in fact understand them to have this meaning, but I do contend that this is the only interpretation which is both coherent and which preserves the aesthetic relevance of such assertions.

**6.** To recapitulate, neither playing “expressively”, nor composing “expressive” music need entail that one is expressing anything. [Of course in a *trivial sense* all our activities may be an expression of something – say an expression of the desire to get “it right” - but this sense of expression is irrelevant to ET.] They require only that the product of the relevant activity have certain phenomenal properties that can be characterized as non-inferentially expressive.

Once we have rid ourselves of the tendency to look behind the expressive qualities in the art work for some correlated act of expression, we shall be closer to a correct understanding of the relation between an artist and his/her work, or at least we will no longer misunderstand that relationship. Artists generally do not express themselves in their work in any sense that is aesthetically relevant. Obviously this does not mean that there is no relation between the activity of the artist and the resulting expressive qualities of his/her work but, rather, that it must be something other than envisaged by ET.

It would be less misleading, if somewhat archaic, to say that the relation is one of making or “creating”. The artist is not expressing something which is then infused into the work by some alchemical transformation; s/he is making an expressive object. What the artist must do to accomplish this remains of course complex and mystifying and I think what is involved in the creative process remains to be understood except to argue that whatever the creative process is it is not identical with some *act of expression*.

One aspiration of aesthetics has always been to demonstrate that creation of art works is a unique and exalted form of human activity. Even those like Dewey (ET) who have been determined to narrow the gap between art and ordinary experience reflect the urge to find something extraordinary in art. Just because the tradition concept of art as expression fails to realize this aim does not mean we should abandon the conviction that there is something singular in the creative process. All I have tried to do is abandon a theory (ET) which fails to do justice to that conviction, and to suggest that we need to give a more trenchant and persuasive formulation of the creative process.

The theory that art is *the* *expression* of human spirit is either trivial or false. The sense in which art is an expression of the state of mind or character of the artist *does not serve to distinguish art from any other form of human activity*, and I think that the attempt to utilize the concept of “expression” to distinguish artistic or creative activity from the mundane affairs leads only incoherence. **If there is a residual truth in ET, it is that works of art do have expressive qualities.** But then so do natural objects (are these the result of expressive acts of God or the creative forces of evolution?). The only way that we can interpret the notion of art-as-expression is to construe statements referring to works of art and containing some cognate form of “expression” as reference to certain properties of the works themselves, and that is my final effort.

**V. Art and expression: a proposal**

Philosophers of aesthetics have taken the concern with the *expressive dimension* of art in many different directions, but it would serve no purpose to survey or assess these directions even if it were an attainable goal. Instead I want to extend some of my earlier arguments and conclusion in a *proposal* for understanding the *expressive character* of art works.

**2.** It clearly makes no sense to assert that an art work *literally* has properties of anguish, or longing, or sadness (such that one would have to “cheer up” the work!). And yet it is common enough to claim that an art work is *expressive of* anguish, longing, or sadness. “Is expressive of…..” is *not* a relational predicate linking an art work to something external to it. Rather it is an incomplete one-place predicate which, when properly completed, is descriptive of some feature of the work. We can refer to the properties denoted by these predicates as “**expressive properties**”. Thus, a work of art that is *expressive of sadness* will be said to have the ***expressive******property of sadness*** rather than simply the *property of sadness*, a modification that serves to indicate both (1) affinity with instances where “sadness” has unqualified application, and (2) obviate absurdity engendered by taking art to exhibit full-blooded sentient states.

The question then becomes one of establishing the *connection* between a “property x” and an “expressive property x” and explaining the apparent fact that expressive properties are not merely garden varieties properties belonging to a special class of objects (namely, art objects).

So far I have suggested the following: expressive properties are those properties of works of art (or natural objects) whose names also designate intentional states of persons. Thus tenderness, sadness, anguish, nostalgia may denote expressive properties of art works because they also denote states of persons that are intentional, and thus expressible in the fullest and clearest sense. This proposal imposes some limitations on what shall be counted an *expressive property* – hence it is a stipulation but one that can be defended in ways alternative ways of understanding the expressive dimension of arts cannot.

*Expressive properties* of art works are then properties denoted by a predicate which can also denote intentional states of persons. Non-expressive properties will constitute a complementary class defined by exclusion (duration, pitch, color, weight, being-the-portrait-of, being-a-six-voice- motet, and the like are non-expressive properties of art works as is evident by the fact that none of these are denoted by predicates which also denote states of persons. It is a rough dichotomy admittedly and cuts across distinctions that are common in aesthetic analysis.

Now obviously the relation between expressive and non-expressive properties is an intimate one. For example, Maurice Ravel’s *Pavane our une infante defunte (Pavene for a dead princess, 1899 while he was studying with Gabriel Faure)* is often characterized as tender or nostalgic and these expressive properties are dependent in some way upon such non-expressive properties as the contour of the melodic line, the quasi-harmonic structure, the moderate tempo, and the limited dynamic range. It is the relation between expressive and non-expressive properties that is important here and it is in virtue of these that art works can be thought of as ***autonomous self-expressive objects****.* That is, the complex of relations among the properties of an artwork is such that the work can be seen a ***presenting*** some of its properties and ***revealing*** others**. *Expressive properties are revealed through the presentation of sets of non-expressive properties.***

**Now this claim requires some defense and clarification**.

**First**, I will have to justify the retention of an expressive vocabulary to characterize the relation between expressive and non-expressive properties. The relation between expressive and non-expressive properties is more intimate that would be implied by reference to necessary conditions, critical warrants, or rule-governed regularities all of which leave open the possibility that the relations (between expressive and non-expressive properties) are logically *independent.*

But more positive reasons can be derived from my arguments (presented earlier) for taking linguistic and non-verbal behavioral expressions of the person to be *partially constitutive* of his/her intentional states. I argued that certain observable aspects of behavior are *logically proper parts* of complex *referents* of such predicates as anger, jealousy, joy, fear, etc., and thus *partially constitutive* of the intentional states denoted by predicates of this sort. And since I already stipulated that expressive properties of art works are the aesthetic correlates of intentional states of persons, it follows that the relation between non-expressive and expressive properties of art works is analogous to the relation between human (animal) behavior and the intentional states of which the behavior is partially constitutive.

The aesthetic situation is analogous, however, with the exception of the important difference that the non-expressive properties of an art work are *wholly constitutive* of its expressive properties, (since) there are no “inner” aspects of art comparable to the ostensibly private states of persons. Since there is nothing “hidden” from us in art works, there is no room for the construction of inferences from some of its properties to others. (**There is essentially nothing private in an art work even, and this is important, as what is not essentially private need not be essentially obvious.)** Works of art may have a perceptual “thickness” and our task is to see *into* them, but it is not to see *through* them or *beyond* them.

Recall the example I gave of Ravel’s *Pavana*. Its tempo, dynamics, harmonic texture, and melodic contour (non-expressive properties) are not merely the ground, warrants or criteria for asserting that the work is tender, rather these *non-expressive properties* of the composition/performance ***are the constituents of its tenderness****.* This relation of constituency is the aesthetic analogue of the expression of full-blooded intentional states of person, and so furnishes at least provisional justification for describing art works as **self-expressive** objects. I use “self-expressive” here to avoid a relapse into the language of **Expressive Theory** which implies that what is expressed belongs to someone other than the work itself. The tenderness of the *Pavane* and the apprehensiveness of “Parade” are expressive properties of the works themselves expressed in or through the differing complexes of the non-expressive properties tempo, texture, and structure of the work.

But a serious difficult seems to arise here, for if a given set of non-expressive properties (s) is wholly constitutive of an expressive properties (x) it might appear as if (s) is equivalent to a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for (x). And it would follow from this that we should need only to establish the presence of (s) in a particular art work to conclude that the work is expressive of x, since (s) would entail x. But it has been persuasively denied that such sets of conditions can be assumed to exist on grounds that it would render the detection of expressive properties a *quasi-mechanical* process available to anyone with normal perception, and hence obviates the need to develop particular aesthetic sensitivities, or to exhibit good “taste”, as opposed to merely requiring good sight or good hearing (i.e., mere sensory acuity).

However, it would be a mistake to assume that my argument implies an equivalence of (s) with the set of necessary and sufficient conditions for (x). For such an equivalence to hold, (s) must be unambiguously correlated with (x). But the relation between sets of non-expressive properties and the expressive properties of art works is such that a given set of non-expressive properties may be compatible with, and constitutive of, *any one of a range* of expressive properties (just as a given set of gestures or movements may be compatible with, and partially constitutive of, more than one intentional state of a person). That is, (s) will not be ***uniquely constitutive*** of (x); and, thus, while non-expressive properties of an art work are *wholly constitutive* of its expressive properties, they are always ***ambiguously constitutive***. It is this ambiguity which is the source of our inability to determine decisively whether, for example, the Ravel *Pavane* is truly expressive of tenderness or of yearning, or of nostalgia, since all of these expressive properties may fall within *the compatible range* of the work’s non-expressive properties.

Moreover, the ambiguity is symmetrical. Not only will (s) be compatible with more than one expressive property, but more than one work may be justifiably described as tender without it following that these two works possess identical sets of non-expressive properties. Consequently, the relation (between non-expressive and expressive properties) is not one of necessary and sufficient conditions, nor of sufficient conditions alone, and hence, no encouragement is lend to the fear (or hope) that rule books and check lists will replace the exercise of *taste* (and so herald the triumph of the philistine who would claim art appreciation/creation requires nothing special).

Hence, we cannot explain the relation between non-expressive and expressive properties as rule-governed such that “whenever (s), predication of (x) is warranted”. *This is not only because such rules cannot be formulated in practice, but rather because any rule of this sort would fail to provide for the two most relevant features of this relation.* The concept of rule-governed relation is at **once too weak and too strong** – it is too weak because it fails to account for *constituency*, and too strong because it fails too allow for *ambiguity*. In general, the language of rules, conditions, and criteria is inadequate to capture the relation we are considering (between non-expressive and expressive properties of a work).

**4.** My argument is then that the relation between non-expressive properties and expressive properties of an art work is one of **ambiguous constituency**. I think there are also good reasons for believing that the resulting *expressive ambiguity* cannot be essentially eliminated and that, consequently, *critical disagreements* (about the expressive properties of an art work in relation to its non-expressive properties) of at least one sort are of necessity *irresolvable*.

There are simply no uniquely decisive procedures for adjudicating between critical judgments that a work (W) displaying the set (s) of non-expressive properties is expressive of (x) rather than say (y), or (y) rather than say (z), so long as the relevant grounds for such claims are recognized to lie *within* the work itself, and so long as (s) remains *compatible with a range* of expressive properties which include (x), (y), and (z).

[In fact, the membership of particular compatible ranges is flexible and subject to continuous revision as we can readily note from *art history and art criticism*. We now “see” Bambara antelope figures in ways in which no one would have seen them before Cezanne and Modigliani, and we “hear” the Mahler symphonies quite differently after exposure to Schoenberg and Stockhausen. The actual membership of particular compatibility ranges must of course be determined by *aesthetic and critical judgment* (history and psychology) and not by philosophical theory.]

Moreover, we cannot *confirm or disconfirm* claims about the expressive properties of art works in the same way we frequently can confirm claims that a person is expressing a particular intentional state. There is no independent evidence comparable to a person’s avowals of his feelings, thoughts, or subsequently behavior. Paintings unlike people remain ***silent*** in the face of our persistent misjudgments of them, and the possibility of disagreement over the expressive properties of art works remains essentially and necessarily open ended.

It may be suggested that there are, after all, means available to us for eliminating or accommodating critical disputes resting on the expressive ambiguity of art works. We may be tempted, for example, to resolve the issue by conceding that an art work has all the expressive properties falling within the relevant compatibility range. But this is an excessively generous concession, and it is open to the objection that some of the expressive properties falling within the compatibility range may be psychologically or aesthetically incongruent. For example, it may be extremely difficult to say of a particular drawing by Kathe Kollwitz whether it was expressive of despair, anxiety, resignation, or fear. But to attempt to resolve this difficulty by attributing to the work a conjunction of all these expressive properties, or attributing to it a complex predicate of “despair-anxiety-resignation-fear” would not only abandon all efforts at critical discourse, it would do violence to our understanding of these expressive qualities.

Conversely, we could assign members of the compatibility range of expressive properties disjunctively to a work but if this is inoffensive logically, it is also *aesthetically* pointless. One has to make choices within the range of available predicates, and it would hardly be aesthetically enlightening to be told that the Kollwitz drawing was actually expressive of despair or anxiety or resignation or fear. *Expressive ambiguity* cannot be eliminated or accommodated, and resort to either conjunctive or disjunctive descriptions of expressive properties of art works is an evasion not a resolution of the critical problem.

There is a more decisive reason for believing that expressive ambiguity *cannot* be essentially eliminated. The expressive “gestures” of art often occur in a space *devoid of explicit context and intentional objects*. It is the *absence* of the elusive ***intentional objects*** that *impede* our critical efforts to dissolve the ambiguity and *disclose* the equivocal expressive quality in the art work. It may be true that we cannot tell a smile, isolated from its context, whether it is a smile of parental benevolence directed toward a sleeping child or a smile of sadistic satisfaction directed toward a suffering victim (see Wittgenstein #539), but the difficulties that can be theoretically resolved by uncovering the intentional context*. In contrast, many art works are intentionally incomplete*. There are simply no further contexts to be uncovered and no intentional objects to be disclosed. We are free to invent contexts of course, to wrap the art work in fictions that would yield intentional objects, but then is one fiction more appropriate than another? How do we justify the chosen fictional context if we are to resolve the expressive ambiguity?

It is not the contingent failing of the arts or of ourselves that we frequently cannot discover what the expressive gestures of a work are about (against, for, towards etc.); it is *a common and aesthetically relevant condition of art*. For example, the expressive ambiguity of modern dance movements isolated from specific dramatic contexts, consists of a context-neutral series and clusters of movements that are no less expressive than the explicitly narrative patterns of classical ballet; they are only more expressively ambiguous. There are innumerable works of art of which it would be pointless to raise the question of intentional context of intentional object (e.g., the Catalonian, Joan Miro’s *Painting*, 1993, or the trio sonata from J. S. Bach’s *The Musical Offering)*.

In contrast to Baroque trio sonatas, abstract dance forms, and much of contemporary visual art, many art works commonly classed as *representational* present us with intentional contexts (in which intentional objects can be identified) as integral to their content. Most theatrical works, as for example, in Euripides we are shown not only the tears of Medea, we are shown what the tears are about (Medea’s murder of her children) and in this sense Greek tragedy and Baroque instrumental music are worlds apart. The world of drama encompasses intentional objects while the world of trio sonatas precludes them.

To the extent that intentional objects are available, it might appear as if excessive expressive ambiguity can be circumscribed or removed entirely. But the appearance is chimerical. In *representational* works we can and should distinguish between the expressive properties ***of*** the work and contained or represented properties ***in*** the work. Among the things that a representational work may represent are acts of expression and failure to distinguish between represented *acts of expression* and *expressive properties* of the work will generate confusion. For example, Gian Lorenzo Bernini’s *David (1623)* expresses a concentrated and intense determination. But this is misleading for the *work* does not express this, rather *David* does (as he is about to slay Goliath). The Bernini work, *David*, *represents* David-expressing-intense-determination, but it does not follow from this that intense determination is an expressive property of the work of sculpture *itself*. Of course, it does not follow that it is not an expressive property of the work itself either. Identical predicates may apply to the work and the represented content alike, but each is independent of the other.

There is an instructive parallel between this situation and that of the actor, I discussed earlier. I argued that it would be a distortion to describe the actor portraying Lear as expressing Lear’s grief and despair (we should say instead that the actor is portraying or representing Lear-expressing-Lear’s-despair-and-grief). Where an action is both *expression and a representation of an expression* we have grounds for distinguishing between actor and character as discrete logical subjects. Now art works, like actors, may *portray*, among other things, *acts of expression*, and in both cases distortions will be avoided only if reference *represented expressions* is distinguished from *reference to properties correctly attributable only to the representing agency* – the actor or the art work.

In general, it is only the *contained or represented expression* whose ambiguity is dissolved by the availability of the intentional object in the art work. For example, we may, given the circumstances of the action of the *drama*, be justifiably certain that the cries of the protagonist are an *expression of remorse*, but this does no answer the question of the *expressive properties of the play itself*. The drama itself may *project* pity, horror, or contempt *towards* the remorse of the protagonist. That is, the play itself may have as one of *its* expressive properties pity, horror, or contempt, and so *comment expressively* on the represented acts of expression by the protagonist.

*Acts of expression* cannot themselves be *expressed* in art works but rather they can be *depicted, described, reflected upon, or judged* and all these possibilities lie within the domain of the representational arts (drama, poetry, film, etc.) The distinction I have been getting at should in fact explain the capacity of the representational arts, generally, to make expressive comments on their represented content. While the availability of intentional contexts may help to obviate the ambiguity***in*** represented expressions, it may do little or nothing to alleviate critical discord resting on the expressive ambiguity of the *art work itself* even where the work is incontestably representational and contains intentional contexts as an integral part of its content.

**5.** ***Expressive ambiguity*** is an inherent feature of most if not all art. It is part of the percipient’s (and critic, philosopher, aesthetician) task to make and defend choices from a range of available alternatives for describing the expressive character of particular art works – choices that in fact must be made in the absence of any clearly decisive means of eliminating alternative and competing descriptions. This dilemma is inescapable since it rests on the *aesthetic requirement (need?)* that we make critical choices conjoined with the impossibility of establishing the necessity for making just those choices that we do make. It is this that makes the exercise of *critical judgment* so *intriguing* for those whose tolerance for indeterminacy is high (and of course so *frustrating* to those for whom the quest for certainty is paramount).

Finally, then, to the extent that our concern is with the *expressive dimension* of art, I suggest that **art works** be thought of as **ambiguously self-expressive objects**. The virtue I claim for this way of thinking about art works is that it does not commit us to either of the disjuncts of the prevalent assumption that *reference* to expression in art is either

1. reference to something lying behind or beyond the work itself (such as a thought, feeling, mood, attitude in relation to which the art work bears some external relation), or
2. a reference to something immediately presented to perception as an aesthetic “surface”.

There are decisive objections to this antithesis.

If my previous arguments are anywhere near convincing, critical appreciation the **expressiveness** of an art work is *not* an inductive or inferential procedure. However, it does not follow that if we are not engaged in searching out something behind the work, then its expressiveness must be there in the open, obviously, on the “surface”. If the latter were the case, we would be at a loss to explain to ever divergent opinions concerning the expressive qualities of art works.

*Hence, I conclude that the alternatives have been misstated.*

Discerning the expressive properties of art is neither a matter of scanning surfaces with the naïve eye nor is it sounding the hidden depths with delicate inferential tools. Conceiving of art works (or works of art) as **ambiguously self-expressive objects** offers an escape from this alternative or antithesis, and hopefully a more promising way of elucidating the expressive dimension of art, and of accounting for the legitimacy of critical disagreements. Discerning of expressive properties (of art works) requires the **fusion of perception and judgment/choice** and that, I hazard to guess, is what we mean by the exercise of **“taste”** (or “aesthetic” judgment/perception/evaluation/appreciation).

**Three tasks of the poetics**

In my course outline I referred to Wilhelm Dilthey who in 1887 published “*The* *imagination of the poet: elements for a poetics*” (in short, *Poetik*) wherein he affirms the importance of aesthetics (notably literary history) in his philosophical view of history and that he hopes that aesthetics will play a similar role in the systematic study of the “historical expressions of life” (i.e., the *Geisteswissenschaften*). In other words, Dilthey’s interest in literary history is not just relevant for the field of aesthetics (one *Geisteswissenschaft*) but is relevant to the methodological and theoretical problems of all the human sciences.

It is particularly by way of his concept of the imagination that Dilthey sought to contribute to aesthetics, of course, but also to the epistemology of other *Geisteswissenschaften*. The significance of what he calls the “poetic imagination” together with the aesthetic principles he articulates in his *Poetik* are involved in the development of his general theoretical approach to the Geisteswissenschaften. Dilthey maintains that there are “psychological laws of the poetic imagination” that characterize the “poetic imagination” which is part of his epistemology of the human sciences.

It was in his *Poetik* that Dilthey tried to formulate explanative laws appropriate to the human sciences, and so aesthetics became a model *Geisteswissenschaft*. It was his hope that through a poetics/aesthetics the efficacy of psychological processes in historical products could be illuminated in an exact manner. For on Dilthey’s view, psychology could only describe the operations of mind, but in the context of poetics psychology can explain the process of imaginative metamorphosis.

The *Geisteswissenschaften* consist of three classes of propositions:

1. Facts
2. Theorems
3. value judgments and rules

If we apply these to the sphere of aesthetics this means that a poetics must encompass

1. a historical study of the influences of literary traditions, and in particular the social context of a work of art (literature),
2. the theoretical investigation of creative artistic processes, and
3. a normative consideration of the rules for the production and evaluation of poetic works.

These three tasks of a poetics would seem to establish three separate sub-disciplines each with its own totally different methodology:

1. literary history which is descriptive,
2. psychological description having its roots in explaining creativity, and
3. study of the rules of technique which allows poetic creativity to become publicly understandable part of a cultural system.

From the perspective of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, the systematic unity of these three approaches of factual description, theoretical explanation, and normative understanding reveals the need for a new epistemology.

In fact, we can discern in modern aesthetics three epochs in terms of which reflect the three methodological approaches, above. Each one attempts to develop its approach into a systematic foundation of aesthetics from which the others can then be derived. The demand for a new epistemology is in fact a critique of these more or less exclusive epochs such that the three epochs/methodologies are not reduced one to another.

1st epoch: rationalist aesthetics

The first epoch of modern aesthetics represents a rationalist approach to art and as such understands beauty as a manifestation of the logical in the sensuous. This Cartesian approach is characteristic of the 17th c. but only received systematic formulation through Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714-1762) who also introduced the term aesthetics in his *Reflections on poetry* (1735) to designate the new science of *sensory cognition*. Baumgarten’s aesthetics was largely indebted to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz (1646-1716) conception of a harmonious universe and his parallel intuition of the human soul as a creative nexus of powers. For Leibnitz the source of aesthetic pleasure lay in the logical character of the form of things, and the general ideal of unity in a manifold led to a conception of the artist as willfully imposing an architectonic order on matter.

In evaluating this rationalist aesthetics, we see that even the freest expression of the imagination is regulated by rules…and that these rules are finally grounded in the rational order of the universe. Rational aesthetics is on-sided in subsuming sense to logic and feeling to will. Spontaneity of impulse is sacrificed to the will-for-perfect-order. Such aesthetics is primarily normative in stressing the ideal of the cultural system of art at the expense of psycho-historical factors, but its norms receive a kind of metaphysical grounding which endows them with absoluteness. Thus the ideals of the *cultural system of art* provide a rational for translating general norms into fixed rules of technique – fixity similar to that imposed on artists by the *external organization of an institutional* counter part like the art academy. Due to its predominantly normative character, rationalist aesthetics results in the denial of any real autonomy to the imagination of the artist. To find such autonomy we have to turn to the second epoch of modern aesthetics.

2nd epoch: theoretical or explanative aesthetics

This is especially characteristic of the 18th c. England where the idea of beauty is analyzed in terms of subjective sense impressions. Prepared for by Anthony, Ashley-Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713, see his *Sensus communis: Essay on freedom of wit and humor*, 1709, and his 3 volume *Character of men, manner, and opinions and times*, 1711), Francis Hutchinson (1694-1746, see his *Inquiry concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, Design: inquiry into moral good and evil,* 1725; also his *Thoughts on laughter*, 1725) and James A. Harris (1709-1780), executed by Henry Home Lord Kames (1696-1782), and later perfected by Carl Gustav Fechner (1801-1887) in his *Vorschule der Aesthetik*, this moral of analysis is psychological in nature and tends to model aesthetics on the experimental sciences. Its aim is to explain general agreement on taste by analyzing a work of art into its components, each of which could then be tested for its lawful effect on the observer. Aesthetics becomes thereby part of “spectator psychology” – or a sense oriented psychology.

The inadequacy of the theoretical approach lies in the fact that the aesthetic nature of a work of art is reduced to its separate impressions produced on the spectator, especially as the direct effects of his/her feelings. But it is naïve to think that the several parts into which a work of art can be analyzed will have isolated and immediate pleasurable effects. In fact, many of our apparently natural responses of feeling are in fact historically conditioned and the atomistic character of spectator psychology makes it incapable of explaining the contextual aspects of aesthetic experience.

In fact, one can criticize this epoch’s concept of the imagination by considering the role the imagination played in aesthetic and epistemological theories of the time. Whereas the Cartesians (rationalist epoch) tended to be suspicious of the imagination and assimilated it to sense, from the time of Francis Bacon and Thomas Hobbes the English had a more positive attitude towards the *imagination*. For example Joseph Addison (1672-1719) the imagination was conceived of as an extended sense of sight and to be distinguished from both sense and understanding (reason). Thus the pleasures of the imagination are not as gross as those of sense or as refined as those of reason. Stressing the psychological side of the imagination, Addison connected it with the appreciation of greatness, the uncommon, and the beautiful.

In David Hume (1711-1776) we find a more technical conception of the imagination within 18th c. British psychology. Far from being a source of error, Hume deemed the imagination to be indispensable to our belief in the stability of reality. He writes, by the natural propensity of the imagination we are led to ascribe continued existence to our perceptions which we find to resemble each other in their interrupted appearance. However, when analyzed the notion of the permanence of perceived objects shows nothing more than the association of sense perceptions. The function of the imagination is only practically and not theoretically justified.

For Hume the imagination is not controlled by rule as it was for the Cartesian rationalists, but he restricted it to working only with elementary images posited by associationist psychology. As such the imagination either reproduced past associations of ideas or produced new associations. *The reproductive function* is described by Hume: “Whenever any object is presented to the memory or the senses, it immediately, by force of custom, carries the imagination to conceive that object, which is usually conjoined to it”. Note that here the imagination remains tied to the habitual order of experience, whereas in the following statement by Hume its freedom to vary the associations of experience is stressed: “Nothing is more free than the imagination of man; and though it cannot exceed that original stock of ideas furnished by internal and external senses, it has unlimited power of mixing, compounding, separating, and dividing these ideas”. It is in this relatively free mode that the imagination is also spoken of as “fancy” – and, although free (productive), fancy still only plays with fixed ideas that constitute the unalterable elements of sensory experience. It is impossible for fancy to add anything to the given of the senses.

Generally, in this epoch of aesthetics, the artist’s imagination was conceived in terms of the fanciful play of images, but insofar as aesthetic theory of the 18th c. relied on associationist psychology, the creativity of the imagination was not recognized. The artist’s freedom was thought to manifest itself in making different combinations of his impressions, and rearranging them to produce new ideas. Dilthey was critical of this spectator psychology that characterized the second epoch of aesthetics, and because of that it is sometimes thought that Dilthey was critical of a psychology of the imagination, but this is not so. Dilthey rejected associationist psychology even as he also recognized its contributions. So he suggested that spectator psychology initiated a much needed analysis of aesthetic *impressions as feelings,* and he recognized that for example the psycho-physics of Fechner discovered something about the uniformity of impressions and feelings which could be incorporated into artistic technique because there it could help explain certain details of aesthetic experience. Yet he also emphasized that this psychology of aesthetics could never account for the overall meaning of a work of art.

3rd epoch: historical aesthetics

For a more adequate appreciation of the concrete meaning of works of art, Dilthey turns to the historical approach prevalent in Germany since the late 18th c. It is only this 3rd epoch that that the classical ideals of universal (metaphysical) standards is challenged. While the English psychologists had been skeptical about the 1st epoch’s rationalist approach to art in terms of classical (metaphysical) norms, they had not challenged the universality of such norms. Rather they sought an explanation of these universal rational norms in terms of the empirical agreement of taste. However, in the 3rd epoch, the German Romantic movement stressed the historically conditioned deviation of taste which they claimed reflected differences in national genius.

According to this Romanticist and historicist conception of aesthetics, the sacred classical rules or norms of art are justified as long as the work of art remains true to local context and expresses the spirit of a particular people. For example, for Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803, with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 1749-1831, initiated in 1771 the *Sturm und Drang* period of German classicism) a poem should not be an artificial construction based on abstract rules but a characteristic growth from the soil of a nation. Of course, once a critic has adequately described this local context, a work can then be appreciated properly by all people or all nations at all times.

What we have here in this 3rd epoch of aesthetics is a historical basis for the artist’s imagination. However, the artist is merely re-creating what is already unconsciously developed by the spirit of a people. In contrast, Dilthey suggests that the artist’s relation to the *Zeitgeist* involves the artistic imagination not in reflecting the times/locale but as creating a unity for the time/locale.

It was Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770—1831) who made the artist even less creative by interpreting art as the product of Absolute Spirit. Yet Hegel’s peculiar contribution was to combine the rationalist normative approach of the 1st epoch with the historical concerns of the 3rd epoch. Like the Romantics, Hegel denied the validity of universal rules/norms of technique or content he insisted that art be judged/appreciated by the rationality of its content. The history of art was to be judged by the rationality of its content – reflecting the dialectic of Reason. Since Hegel assumed that the time had passed for the Absolute Spirit to reveal itself in art (the banner having been passed on philosophy), Hegel found it necessary to extrapolate from artistic principles determining past epochs to predicting its future development. Thus, he was willing to assign historical limits to the prescriptive power of the philosophy of art without qualifying its absolutist perspective.

This ambitious effort by Hegel to synthesize both rationalism (1st epoch) and historical consciousness (3rd epoch) exemplified what Dilthey critically deemed to be Hegel’s closed philosophy (wherein art necessarily served the historical unfolding of Absolute Spirit). But Dilthey deemed this to be a death of art, and for Dilthey art remained as vital as ever in satisfying our human need for giving expression to a world-view (*Weltanschauung*). That is, Dilthey, oddly enough since he criticized the English conception of the imagination, returned to a psychologically rooted function of art and therefore also to a reevaluation of the nature of psychology as part of his effort to overcome the one-sidedness of each of the three epochs of aesthetics.

A renewed perspective on aesthetics

Dilthey broadened the psychological (i.e., psycho-physical) characteristic of the 2n epoch such that the psychological could be made to overlap with the normative/rationalist of the 1st epoch and historicism of the 3rd epoch. But this meant that the normative/rationalist norms had to be redefined not as metaphysically valid in a universal and absolute sense but as *methodological rules for evaluating* what from past aesthetic systems was still relevant for establishing aesthetic principles. *But this evaluative approach to rationalist norms, as methodological rules, also opened the way for a historical consideration of these traditional norms and, at the same time, allowed for their formation /confirmation through a psychology of aesthetics.*

Thus, Dilthey introduced psychological criteria for evaluating the classical norms with his claim that “a work of art is a classic if it satisfies our senses and expands our soul – in producing a lasting and total satisfaction in people of different nationalities and times.

Importantly, Dilthey hereby also suggested an inner connection between the normative and psychological approaches of the first two epochs and presupposed that a psychology can be developed which makes such a “total satisfaction” intelligible. But this would only be possible (i.e., the development of such a psychology) if the 2nd  and 3rd epochs were allowed to intersect more closely. That is, it would only be possible if a psychology could be developed which was genuinely historical.

The way Dilthey hoped to overcome the deficiencies of the 2nd and 3rd epochs was by applying the historical-descriptive method of the 3rd epoch to the theoretical explanations of the 2nd epoch. What was *wrong* with 18th c psychology was it assumed that all individual were alike (or that empirical generalization based on statistical method could generate uniformities which held to all individuals) and that was oriented to spectators rather than towards the creator/artist and his/her historically conditioned genius. On the other hand, despite the admirable appreciation of creativity of 19th c. German aesthetics, neither the historicist conception of art as a product of national genius nor its philosophical conception as a transcendental power, properly took into account the artist as an individual. To the extent that the individual was taken into account at all in the 3rd epoch, it led to a Romantic notion of the artists as abnormal even insane.

One of the tasks that Dilthey set for psychology was to develop a sense of individuality which would not lapse into eccentricity, and hence the idea of the normal would have to be reconsidered to distinguish it from that of sameness/uniformity. Dilthey maintained that the idealist aestheticians (Hegelian tradition) “all stopped short of the decisive point, namely the psychological analysis of the creative process in a particular art”. Because German idealism had no real use for psychology, Johann Gottlieb Fichte’s (1762-1814) idea of “transcendental imagination” was easily transformed into Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling’s (1775-1854) “unconscious creation”, and as such *transcendental creativity* becomes the counterpart of the *deterministic concept* of historical genius. Only if the creative imagination is ascribed to psychological individuals can historical determinism be resisted. [Note here Dilthey struggle to find a way out of the tension between the individual and history.]

Dilthey’s own psychology was sketched in his *Introduction to the human sciences* (1883) wherein he focused both on (1) the individual’s poetic imagination (the poet’s freedom to transform images) and on (2) the historically conditioned cultural system within which this poetic imagination is realized. It was not until 1894 in his *Ideas concerning descriptive and analytical psychology,* that Dilthey articulated a full-fledged experiential psychology, but between 1883 and1894 Dilthey worked out a theory of the poetic imagination. That is, prior to formulating his full-fledged psychology Dilthey formulated a theory of the poetic imagination (hence aesthetic was his route to psychology) and the laws of metamorphosis which were to constitute the core of his psychology.

I want to examine these laws of imaginative metamorphosis.

**Laws of imaginative metamorphosis**

At first (in his *Introduction*, 1883) Dilthey proposed a descriptive psychology (rejecting the traditional explanatory psychology, notably of English empiricism/associationism). But in his *Poetik* (1887) he writes about a “psychological method” which by appropriating the already existent insights into the artist’s creative processes would provide a causal explanation of literary products. According to Dilthey,

“Poetics seems to stand under conditions which perhaps make it possible for it to provide for the first time an inner explanation of a total historical-spiritual (psychological/mental) product according to causal methods”.

This Dilthey hopes will be an improvement over the explanations traditionally provided in psychology which accounted for how phenomena stand in lawful relation to antecedents and consequents. According to Dilthey such explanations are external and always hypothetical, whereas in contrast Dilthey developed the idea of a non-hypothetical, or inner, connectedness in his psychology. What an inner explanation serves to do is to render intelligible how psychic life as whole, and any phenomenon in it, preserves itself and develops over time.

Traditional psychological explanations of the imagination were also external in that they appealed to hypothetical associations between representations or ideas. Hume had claimed that a given idea can produce another if the two resemble each other or stand in spatial or temporal contiguity - and hence their connections are loose associations, arbitrary, and so inadequate for discussing psychic life. Instead of “association” Dilthey reformulates the idea of association and asserts that it presupposes a *fusion* that can be described to exist among constituents of psychic processes.

Perceptions or representations (ideas) which are similar or alike *fuse* into each other independently of the position they take in the psychic context. They form a content which is, as a rule, connected with a consciousness of the different acts that constitute it and which can incorporate distinctions among its component contents insofar as they are not simply ignored. In contradistinction to the causal nexus of the external world, all representations involved in this psychic process are equally close and equally distant from each other.

The way we explain psychic life inevitably invokes metaphors from the external world (which also explains why our knowledge of nature advanced more quickly than that of ourselves) but also Dilthey notes above we must neutralize the *spatial* relations into what he then calls *symbolic* relations. There is more than mechanical association (of contiguity or similarity) and the principle of association presupposes a larger mental framework including interests, feeling, and attention/will.

Since interest in what we perceive is a function of the feelings we attach to things, and attentiveness presupposes the contribution of the will, Dilthey maintains that associative relations among representations/ideas must also take into account feelings and the will. So that Dilthey refuses to give representations/ideas fundamental status such that feelings and will are merely relations among representations. The assumption that representations generally produce feelings which in turn lead to dispositions to act is only superficially correct. There is a more intimate connection among representations, feelings, and will such that representations are themselves affected by feeling and will in a dynamic which constitutes the whole psychic nexus. Perceptions/ideas/representations are inseparable from the dynamism of feeling and impulses/instincts/volitions. [We see something similar in William James’ (1890, Principles of psychology) “stream of thought” and in the various writings of phenomenologists.]

Dilthey even suggests in his *Poetik* that perceptions and representations as these appear I the real nexus (*Zusammenhang*) of psychic life are penetrated, colored and animated by feelings, efforts of attentiveness which also stems from feelings but are forms of volitional activity which impart impulsive energy to ideas/representations and also permit them to fade away. Therefore very representation is psychic life is a *process.* Sensations, perceptions, representations, and images are always subject to inner changes (not first of all mechanical connections of association).

How do representations undergo internal changes? Here we need to consider not the connection between representations but rather the changes within representations.

In the context of the poetic imagination, Dilthey speaks of such inner changes as the “metamorphosis of images” (*Metapmorphose der Bilder*) and proposes three laws of metamorphosis. While he does not specifically label these three laws, he characterizes their artistic consequences such that they might be called:

1. Law of exclusion (*Ausschaltung*)

2. Law of change in intensity (*intensitat*)

3. Law of completion (*Erganzung*)

These three laws were intended to explain the productivity of the “poetic imagination”. However they describe imaginative processes in general and it is only the third law which is exclusive to the artist and poet.

That is, the first two laws are not special to the imagination but hold for all representational processes (i.e., the reproductive processes of memory) and Dilthey, in doping so, brings out the continuity of psychic life according to which *every process* is in some ways **formative** (a process of *Bildung* if not *Einbildung*) of the interest of feeling.

For example, the first law states that “*images transform themselves because components either drop out or are eliminated or excluded*”. This law reflects the impact of attentiveness on representational processes. We fail to attend to aspects of the “given” which do not interest us, and as we focus more and more on what is central, more and more will drop out. Memory processes also exemplify the same exclusion. We ordinarily remember only our original impression in rough outline because most of their content no longer matches our current interests. However, in case of the poet/artist, s/he will often intentionally exclude some aspects of things, even if she vividly remembers them, in order that s/he might produce a more unified image in what Dilthey calls a “*clarity and harmony of parts*”. Hence from this law it follows that we can account for *qualitative* changes in the image even as it does not explain artistic productivity (in accord with the first law there would only be a shallow harmony of an empty ideal if the other laws were not also operative).

The second law (change in intensity) is defined as follows: *“Images change in that they expand or shrink in that the intensity of the sensations of which they are composed is increased or decreased”.* Here feeling and interest does not merely serve as a formal selective principle for deciding whether something is worth attending to, rather the concrete interest of feeling actually colors the resultant image. Again we can take as an example an ordinary memory process wherein the event remembered takes on different dimensions as we remember it in different circumstances and emotional conditions. Thus, if we happen to remember a childhood event in melancholic mood, then its vividness tends to be dampened and the people involved tends to diminish in liveliness. In a nostalgic state of mind however the events remembered can be enlarged and made livelier than ever. With respect to the poetic imagination this effect is very much enhanced. Artists have a gift of intensifying their experience and enlarging life. In fact, we can use the adjective “poetic” to the non-linguistic arts as well in heightening experience and enlarging reality and so creating a more meaningful world.

In fact, we can call anything that heightens life “poetic”. He question is whether laws 1 and 2 sufficient to account for the productivity of the poetic imagination. Dilthey maintains that “exclusion and intensification serve to provide art with idealized images, yet together they cannot fill a poem or art work with satisfying life”. In Dilthey’s terms, law 1 produces only an *empty ideal* and since law 2 only produces the possibility of *quantitative change of degree,* it cannot move beyond Law 1. To select from reality and then expand what remains still produces only a caricature of reality.

The first two laws point to the essential life-like nature of the image but do not explain how a poet creates an image so full and satisfying as to embody a sense of life. This will require the third law of metamorphosis which Dilthey claimed deals primarily with the poetic imagination as well as the broader aspects of psychology of course (since these are laws of mind).

Having established that images change temporally (in time) according to fluctuations of interests, feelings, and attention Dilthey now has to explain these fluctuations. The first two laws constitute theoretically pregnant descriptions but do not provide for the controlling conditions for metamorphosis. Thus, the descriptions of varying temporal exclusion, intensification and impoverishment of parts of the image only possess psycho-historical value. Unless we have a more comprehensive context for the life of feeling and willing, the inner explanations of these laws of imaginative metamorphosis lack real explanatory power.

But with law 3, the completion of images, Dilthey expected his theory of the poetic imagination to become genuinely explanative. He formulated this law in terms of his conception of an integral psychic structure and hence the third law may be said to deal with *structural* changes in images. To understand the interpretation of this law we have to first discuss broadening the *normative* aspects of Dilthey’s psychology.

The reconciliation of the psychological (2nd epoch) and historical (3rd epoch) approaches was only half of Dilthey’s methodological task, the other half being the exploration of psychological theory (2nd epoch) in relation to the problem of norms (1st epoch). What Dilthey’s enthusiasm about inner explanation was all about was that he thought he found a way of incorporating normative structure into psychological description. The way he did this was through his conception of a controlling psychic structure to be found in normal experience.

This idea of a controlling psychic structure (to be found in Dilthey’s *Poetic imagination and insanity)* stressed the fundamental inter-relatedness of all experience in what he called the “acquired psychic nexus” (*erworbener Seelische Zusammenhang*). By acquired psychic nexus, Dilthey meant a nexus structured by experience (not abstract or inferred/hypothetical) concretely possessed through an individual’s life history*.* Thus, the acquired psychic nexus is a historically acquired system which reveals the structured ordering of all past experience.

It is interesting to note that the German word *Geschichte* (history) has as one of its roots the word *Schichte* or stratum, thus having an archeological conception of history which makes history more than a chronological narrative. The past must have structure if it is to constitute history and not simply be a conditioning of the future. The past is not merely a storehouse of contents but also of connections among those contents. Therefore the acquired psychic nexus therefore does not stand over and against experience but it articulates the connections that *normally exist within experience*. The psychic nexus then stands as a controlling influence on individual psychic processes while at the same time it is shaped by them. Hence, present consciousness acts on individual processes and is retroactively influenced by them.

Of course, the psychic nexus is more than the sum of conscious representations (e.g., Herbart suggested that ordinary perception involves seeing the present in terms of an apperceptive mass of representations accumulated through past experience, and this apperceptive mass renders present experience conscious in that it assimilates it to the totality of conscious representations). For Dilthey the acquired psychic nexus is a condition of consciousness but it is not for that reason sharply focused within consciousness. The components of this nexus is not clearly conceived or distinctly delineated, nor are the relations between the components brightly conscious. Yet the nexus is active in grounding all new experience.

Interestingly, we are aware of the psychic nexus (so it isn’t really unconscious) but we are not conscious of it in the way certain elements in it are clearly conscious. Here Dilthey anticipates Edmund Husserl’s critique of the Cartesian assumption that apodictic evidence for the existence of the self must be clear and distinct. The indubitability of inner experience never possesses mathematical precision. We act from within the acquired psychic nexus but it itself remains tacit.

One reason why the acquired psychic nexus is not fully conscious or definable is that it encompasses not only our representations but also determinations of value arising from feeling and ideas of purpose deriving from acts of will. By interrelating representations, feelings, and will the concept of acquired psychic nexus is the counterpoint to separating these faculties. Every act involves something of all three faculties.

Here Dilthey asserts the central role of feeling in psychic life – that is the acquired psychic nexus is essentially an *evaluative* structure. This means that we need not respond to every stimulus in our milieu but can act on that milieu *reflectively*. Instead of having our interests determined by endless feelings arbitrarily aroused by changing life situations, our feelings are ordered in an evaluative structure which assures that we have a coherent attitude towards the world/life. Hence, when we speak of the effectiveness/efficacy of the acquired psychic nexus, and notwithstanding its composite nature, it works as a whole on whatever representations or states which draw our attention. As an evaluative structure it constitutes the basis for focusing our interests of feeling in practical life. In a sense feelings are objectified in terms of values and as such our attention becomes ever more selective, and as these values are in service of the will, our action becomes increasingly deliberate and meaningful.

Now the values embodied in the acquired psychic nexus include cultural-normative ideals as well as more individual or personal-psychological and social-historical values, and hence the acquired psychic nexus fulfills the explanative requirement as a framework for the human sciences, and as such “psychological explanations” move far beyond the strictly psychological (individual).

If we now turn the 3rd law of metamorphosis, we can see a special link between the poetic imagination and the acquired psychic nexus. The 3rd law of completion involves *structural changes in images*, and as such metamorphosis reflects the development and elaboration of the structure of the psychic nexus. In particular, the 3rd law also specifies how the acquired psychic nexus functions in experience in that the poetic imagination can best articulate its *feeling and evaluative* nature.

Whereas the 1st and 2nd laws simply dealt with qualitative and quantitative changes within images, the 3rd law of completion concerns the structural transformation of an image which is made possible by its relation to other representations. The danger that this metamorphosis produces a “very thin caricature of reality” is overcome through the process of completion in which the image comes to embody the overall context of the acquired psychic nexus. The 3rd law of completion brings fullness and concreteness to imagery by representing its relation to the acquired psychic nexus. Here we get the notion of “**typification**” in the sense that the image becomes typical of reality (which is now the whole psychic nexus).

With the 3rd law of metamorphosis we also get the idea of a nucleus or core of an image which can be interpreted as the sum of the concentrating power of the first two laws. Once this core is located in someone’s image representational consciousness must be related to it in a way that further unfolds this core. This unfolding of the core image allows the incorporation of new components and allowing what is at the fringe of the image to be brought into focus in a completed image. Hence, we can define the 3rd law as follows: Images and their connections transform themselves in that new components and connections penetrate into the inmost core and so supplement and complete it (i.e., typification).

Now it is important to appreciate that completion is not merely the addition of external elements to the original image (such as association which allows images to enter into relations of mutual signification, or fusion which involves combining images into complex unities of meaning for in both these cases images retain their original identity and are simple brought into larger context). But the 3rd law proposes that components from the larger context enter into the very core of a particular image such that they become compressed into a single image which then unfolds and typifies these components.

So that completion is a mode of (image) elaboration which is both internal and external. Thus, the 3rd law articulates what is already implicit in the idea of association or metamorphosis: when images enter into changed relationships with each other, they may simultaneously undergo inner changes and yet such inner changes set off by feelings do not occur in a vacuum but in the midst of psychic processes which incessantly affect our sphere of experience. In this sense, the 3rd law comes into effect **when the whole acquired psychic nexus becomes active and so transforms images such that innumerable, immeasurable, and almost imperceptible changes occur in their core, and hence completion is elaboration which derives from the fullness of life”.**

It is then in the process of completion (3rd law) that an image embodies or symbolizes the structure of the acquired psychic nexus. Most processes controlled by the psychic nexus do not manifest (show) or represent the structural influence of the psychic nexus. This is due to the fact that the controlling influence of the psychic nexus is often obscured by the demands of immediate conditioning factors. For example, the demand in remembering that we be truthful to the original experience there is an image transformation for the sake of focusing on some isolated aspect of an original experience which is relevant to a current demand. In contrast, when through a kind of spontaneous recall a sense of the entire experience is revived, it is not focused at all. The 3rd law of completion ought to preserve a sense of wholeness of an experience and at the same time be able to articulate it. [Another way of seeing this is that “understanding” admits of genuine articulation of specifics from out of that understanding.]

Ordinarily external conditions deter images from being completed and help to explain why exclusion (1st law) and intensification (2nd law) often fail to contribute to the process of making an image representative (typification). Another way of saying that the entire psychic nexus is involved in the process of completion is to say that *current demands* do not obscure the way the psychic nexus regulates the imagination. [This is also what we mean when we ay that the imagination is *free*, namely that it is controlled by the whole psychic nexus and not by current demands (of whatever kind including demands of technique etc.).

We see here that the imagination does not aim at imitation (which is a current demand).The processes of excluding, expanding, shrinking are only bound by the total order of reality (*Zusammenhang des Wirklichen*) within which the freely create image should be possible. The imagination expands images of experience to make them *typical* or reality as such. We can distinguish here three different types of imagination according to whether they refer to reality in terms of representation, feeling, or will, or scientific, artistic, and practical imagination, respectively. We can ask here whether these distinctions are ever so separated since I already suggested that the artistic (poetic) imagination always involves the *whole* acquired psychic nexus. In any case, what is remarkable is that all three types of imagination *transcend* experience but for very different reasons.

In the ***scientific imagination*** images are transformed for the sake of representation of knowledge of the external world and the ultimate product here is a hypothesis which goes beyond description of observed data and arrives at an explanation of the date (induction, generalization).

The ***practical imagination*** transcends experience for the sake of what is willed. The impulse of the will is to mold and direct reality in accord with desires (adaptation and control). We might note that religious and moral conscious requires that we not act in accord with desires but pause to order our impulses and goals in setting priorities. The practical imagination is often guided by the will which orders representations, feelings, desires, and passions in the light of “ideals”.

**The *artistic imagination*** presupposes an aesthetic contemplation of reality which occurs when the mutual adaptation of self and environment is suspended. Such aesthetic suspension derives from either temporary conditions as, for example, when there is an equilibrium of feeling and life takes a holiday, so to speak, or from moments of tension when unnerving and eradicable facts impart their dark color to all things. In the former, one feels in harmony with reality (so that adaptation is unnecessary), and in the latter, the tension is such that no act of will can remove it. Such states force us to consider not just the significance of aspects or projects of life, but the sense of life itself. Since the poetic imagination is influenced by feelings associated with extremes of human situations, all its imagery can be expanded in terms of the reflective framework these situations make possible.

Of the three types of imagination, the artistic imagination is least restricted. Scientific hypothesis must always remain testable, and practical ideals cannot remain divorced from available resources for action. Hence, both the scientific and practical imagination work within more determinate frameworks of criteria of verification/falsification and applicability to conduct, whereas the artistic imagination is free from both descriptive and pragmatic responsibility, and so allows images to unfold in amore comprehensive and spontaneous manner (beyond the limits of the real).

Dilthey’s formulation of the three laws of metamorphosis suggests that the imagination is inherently bounded in its freedom, and that the artistic imagination transcends reality precisely for the sake of uncovering what is *typical* in reality. The *typical* is here is such that it transcends reality so that it can nevertheless be felt more powerfully and understood more profoundly that any faithful imitation of reality. Works of art depict what is typical in reality in disclosing the normative structure of the acquired psychic nexus because these transcend reality. This is a paradox that lends weigh to the important role of the acquired psychic nexus in relation to the structural changes involved in the 3rd law of completion.

In the evaluation of reality, the acquired psychic nexus is not especially concerned with individual representations, yet it first makes possible a total perspective on the world in relation to which individual representations are meaningful. Likewise the poetic image which unfolds under the guidance of the acquired psychic nexus may not be true of the details of reality. However in being typical of the totality of the psychic nexus, it gives sense (significance) to the world even though it does not give us “knowledge” of it.

It is the 3rd law of metamorphosis which allows us to feel reality more powerfully and related to an inner sense/significance. Conversely, completion can create an appropriate intuitive content for a state of feeling. External experience is always animated by inner experience and inner life which is given visibility through outer manifestations (i.e., **expression**). These two modes of completion are central to artistic/poetic metamorphosis and this is so because they are grounded in the acquired psychic nexus which is itself the intersection of inner (psychical) and outer (historical). Hence, it is neither totally subjective nor totally objective nor totally conscious or unconscious. Completion constitutes our evaluation of life, or our *Weltanschauung* in which feeling and intuition are intertwined.

Hence the psychic nexus conceived of as an inner-outer complex regulates the poetic imagination it cannot be said to impose anything on it from without. Once new components are incorporated into the unfolding image, they continue to have an inner necessity. What from the perspective of the original image may be seen as external additions, receives an inner necessity from the perspective of the acquired psychic nexus. The intersection of inner and outer in the psychic nexus allows us to interpret the process of metamorphosis as the self-completion of the original image and not as an external combination of images…association. Here is the compelling side of artistic creation…or the construction of the work of art. It has to be so; it is just right, etc.

**Imagination and apprehension of style**