

Preface

Eight Assumptions

In the long history of poetics and aesthetic theory, there has been a vague division of cognitive labor within the discipline, often troubled by conflicting demands. Concern with the process of making and experiencing art, the artist's relation to themselves to the apparent resistance to their work, and the act of display. At the same time, exposed to the demands of critical thought, of which they are themselves participants, they are forced to sacrifice specificities such as genetic and historical context to overriding general, but also therefore naïve, assumptions, commodating themselves to the resistance of the market, the danger of becoming superfluous. In important ways, this is true elsewhere, whether epistemology or social theory, as they conform themselves into service enterprises within the sphere of art. While they certainly cannot avoid the question, as called, in his *Aesthetic Theory*,¹ the full answer is to be found in itself, in invoking domains of the unsayable, the unrepresentable, to priorate into a myth.

That situation has a long, somewhat complicated history. The question today is whether the "possibility of theory" remains an open option, or whether it continues to hide its discontents with the "aesthetic" characterizing even the opponents of aesthetic theory. The question is whether aesthetics is a theory (although it is difficult to say what a theory consists of) in which a cognitive process is wrested "logically" from affective experience, or whether the process. Even if one holds that modern theory is not the emotions in the trivial sense, the touchstone of the "spiritual excitement."²

The dilemma of theoretical sensibility

man close to the empirical destinies of his
ignoring underlying, more general regula-
distancing, systematizing, sense-making
possible to plunge into the accumulated
trapped in their constructed histories, wit-
by them? Here, at the beginning of just
come as no surprise that the answer is
such an enterprise can no longer share the
the scene of literary studies, for instance
struction.³

Theoretical purity—provided it ever comes
in assertions that it is still possible, more
pursuing the “spiritual excitement” of a
rough and ready approach, seeking insys-
handling—theories as diverse as those of
What I call “manhandling theories” is
“deconstruction” or “poststructuralism”
cerns of this book. Instead, however much
quoted, the *disiecta membra* of existing a-
directions suggested but not determined by
ory, which themselves are more diverse
be desirable.

Writing, in particular writing of the
carries theoretical implications. To look
forts, however, is to become aware that
evident discursive priorities. Above all, the
theory and methodological orientations
whether, apart from certain periods and
oretical and analytical writing, then, is
pulled in various directions. The present
tions and media of emphatic, if ideolog-
have to suffer that fate with a vengeance.
our thoughts entangled in theories, and
them.” In the sentence, from book 1, chap-
dlemarch, I have replaced “metaphors”
does not, of course, indicate any preference
suggests that the status, the reach and ra-
tended statements of facts, emerges in con-
ries are symptoms. Something—something
always lurking behind or below them. W

matologies. It is goaded on by senses (ambiguous) and feelings for the pertinence (central) and the persistence of facts. Something may *emerge* in the course of argument. It is in the wake or as the consequence of an interim or temporary situation of theory, as I see it, is so difficult to decide which kinds of argument are which kind of theory. In the present context, especially those called "anthropological," with their afterthoughts in the wake of analyses in a completely controlled, by what is called theory.

Rumor has it, and reports keep pouring in, that it is replacing, or already has replaced, art toys in the old sense, baseball bats, soccer balls, and drawing utensils as preferred and popular. If that is the case, as it may well be, the present is a decidedly awkward situation. My position is that it will, automatically, improve if it turned out, as I think it will, not really be multimedia-capable because the body or powerful body codes remain. I assume that the rumors are not yet true because they will come true unless some biotechnological breakthrough occurs. In any case, the book may strike me as tentative and sometimes almost transcendentally awkwardly and unprofessionally empirical on the one hand, occur because theories and their historical precedents, must claim a considerable if not a considerable. They construe their objects and yet they do not have the idea of what these objects, as one would expect, are themselves. We do not say so anymore, but the paradox involved. We are constructivists, and we respect any theoretically legitimate construction, but it is not respected, but not necessarily in the close history have been conventionally transmitted, and this as the manhandling of theories. In the present, tentative, theoretical, quasi-transcendental context, they seem to oddly merge with the empirical. The book is many of the theoretically and popularly known, and in the main of the "arts" in cavalier fashion. It is a mix of authenticity and consumerism, with high art and

biological explanation of the criticism of
shift, even if their relative validities are
stead, my concerns point elsewhere.

There are eight central assumptions un-

(1) The term "media," in spite of its fu-
sited than the traditional term "the arts"
inquiry into aesthetics. In the course of
tory, the notion of "arts," from *techne*
jected to specific interests and to a narrow
ment frequently culminated in the privi-
arts, which, in its turn, necessitated dual
compromises ("arts and crafts," "indust-
This is not to say, though, that the analy-
higher sense does not frequently yield into

(2) Cultures need media in order to
experiences, without which social and p-
and its burdens overwhelmingly oppressi-
atic claim but an assertion that draws o-
dence in many theories directly or ind-
and/or human consciousness. We could
play—play being necessary for a fully hu-
its turn, being a prerequisite of culture. W-
distinction between an ordinary culture
culture, or rather cultural experience, lift-
ture and history for a short while. Or w-
terms, about Csikszentmihalyi's notion o-
with its combination of engrossment (co-
cape from boredom (and anxiety). Anth-
musicologist) has perhaps summed this u-
for a lack of concepts and notions taking
systems theory, which does not grant
within the machinery of social systems
that there may be a need for more attrac-
human consciousness than those deman-
All of this will be elaborated later on.

(3) Experience consists in interaction
structivist enactments, with all kinds of
ence, when it is aesthetic experience, is h-
crystallized and refined—vitality. Again,
tion, various strands of traditional and

heterogeneous but persistent evidence. I would like to suggest, then, that we can, and should, think of Bergson and his definition of life as a process that is not only more intense but also more (and, in a sense, also more harmless) media enactments. Bergson developed the crucial notion that the arts, and the various realizations of a partly spiritualized human life, can convey the impression of being fully, perhaps even more so, than in life itself. In so-called life, some of the things that ward and mar that impression. More radically, the world and existence could only be just as it is. In a more sober vein, the pragmatist Dewey suggests that from the ordinary to the fully human being, the sense of heightened vitality comes into play when the human is intimately connected with and shaped by media. Media of aesthetic experience extend through the world. Only in pure, or only seemingly pure, forms of "absolute" music and painting are perhaps the most examples) do media represent forms of an "absolute" aesthetic" experience.

In spite of its concern with the concept of media, its attempt at defining what a medium is or what a medium's orientation, however, I would suggest that the concept of intermediality, and with them some of the things that emerge when an ordinary process of life is transformed, for instance, when elements of some kind of "stage" or "ritual" that enactment gains some kind of formal structure. All of this can happen very easily within the world and can be extended and rarefied into the most remote corners of the world.

To put it another way, in the pages that follow, I will attempt to relate the experience of relating experience and art (and in the process, I will attempt to take Dewey's aesthetics, Richard Shusterman's aesthetics, and the notion of media as a background to be taken more seriously than it is in Dewey's aesthetics, Richard Shusterman's aesthetics, and the notion of media that will be assumed as a given here:

That aesthetic experience extends beyond the boundaries of art should be obvious. It exists, first and foremost, in nature, not least that part of nature which is the most beautiful. We also find it in ritual and sports. In para-

tools and cave drawings to contemporary
and indeed in the countless colorful scene
cities and enrich our ordinary lives.⁵

Clearly, in thus extending the range of
cept of media may easily get out of control.
ent book will try to limit the range by look-
dia to which neither the status of art nor
pirical success has normally been denied.
the form of an investigation into the con-
ized, often elitist and spiritual or intellec-
entertained with respect to a commercial
very problematic) mass phenomenon of p
these cases, Dewey remains helpful beca
volvement, in the more active performati
sive experience, in a paradigmatic fashi
most fully alive when there is a coalit
grounded but heightened vitality and a
“disinterestedness.”⁶ This merger in the
into a crucial distinction between a “wo
art and into a privileging of the former ov

When we say that tennis-playing, singing
activities are arts, we engage in an elliptic
the conduct of these activities, and that th
made as to induce activities in those wh
also art. The *product* of art—temple, p
work of art.⁷

If, like Dewey, we insist on the continu
thetic experiences, even if the cultures an
held sway for a while seem to argue in the
higher and lower, “ethereal” and techn
mately, out of place and stupid,” as he
made, but they cannot be made in the ma
explicit disciples: Kant was “a pastmas
and then erecting them into compartmen
fall of theory we will endeavor to avoid h

The question looming and lingering
really coming to the foreground, howeve
fore also personally significant and attr

product of art may consist in the single object we encounter. If it is to turn into procuring a broader range of personal contain, or suggest a broader range of artistic techniques, by topics treated or also reside in what the term "media" also material and performative aspects of work ate involvement. I am thus extracting a himself did not openly embrace: that histo are no longer possible. If that is so, cert crumble. They will be destabilized espec the West) in which culturally relevant lev mainly derived, implicitly or explicitly, normally taken for granted, but not at a nineteenth century. It is the nineteenth "imaginative" literature in the shape of digmatically precious vessel of (mostly na

If literature is relativized, it is also rest high ineluctable cultural-aesthetic niche. retical problem of media theory must r media may balance the easily conflicting plexity (tending often, but not necessar dia" specialization) and simplistic ("po behind the facile excitement, boredom lo

If one looks at the broader range of normally see that the purification and "figurations into single media is paid for ments on other fronts. Thus, the highly c ern cultures have to grapple with forms o liked to think banished into the museum

(4) Media tend to show up most often or hidden combinations: in "intermedia han's sense.¹⁰

In saying this, I am restating in somew what I tried to extract from Dewey above older European tradition tried to analyz the arts. McLuhan, though, has put this all received the attention it deserves, m "multimedia" age. "The crossings or hy says, "release great new force and energy

fact that they do interact and spawn new forms, we can wonder over the ages.”¹¹ While the etymology of the word cannot be preserved in any seemingly pure or essential central component—the arousal of the senses, for example—for an anthropology of media. In emphasis on the notion of “experience” thus is deconstructed, and its authenticity, artificiality, and the like are questioned, and the range of its “aesthetic” dimension is explored.

For example, if we drop Hegel’s notion of the will and freedom, we see that his criticism of the aesthetic is philosophically insufficient and breaks down.¹² What he calls “dramatic liveliness” (in painting, for instance) is not its media, the “ideality” of the “animation of the spirit” or the animation of universal ideality, the “living soul” in motion, all these assertions are false. Schulz appropriately denies, therefore, the traditional usually thought to offer: an aesthetics of the “contents” are instead so multifarious that they cannot be for instance between crafts, techn(olog)ical, or scientific.

(5) Although modes of strong experience are not what could be said to be “cultural” forms, the question of how best to pursue them from a point of view that is not strictly anthropological. Using this highly and variously understood term immediately what it does not mean. Anthropology as an ethnography practiced, especially in the United States, as Boas, A. L. Kroeber et al. Although for the most part they occur in this book, they are supposed to be the result of exoticist mixtures that have all too often been criticized from ethnography. While the presence of a Eurocentric bias, that bias is strictly internal to the discipline. To a far greater extent than the discipline was aware of, the deconstruction of Eurocentricism is these ideologies themselves. Furthermore, the discipline is identified with the structural anthropology of Lévi-Strauss, the evolutionary anthropology of, say, V. G. Childe, as well as much of what is commonly called “cultural anthropology” concerned with formal structures of social organization, systems of information inheritance, with social structures derived from individual experience, but rather from the social history, like marriage rules or rules of inheritance.

ests of a householder are governed or even
color terms—not with the ways and esp
sons, through cultural mediation, organ
ences. The descent, the dilemma, and the
cal mode of thought I would like to prac
from there, down to the “pragmatic” fo
like Helmuth Plessner or Arnold Gehlen.
thropology “in pragmatic respect” beca
matters could not be squeezed into the
three critiques. (Incidentally, Kant’s effec
public reputation were based on his ant
gave for thirty years, not on the critique
concerned with how persons, as free age
alizing procedures plus various modes o
could transform themselves into reason
mane—beings. Even if such approaches,
Böhme in 1985, do not really presuppos
man nature, they remain tied to specula
(like childhood, birth and death, sex
Böhme’s chapter titles). When focusing o
topics, one tends to invest them, in sp
“oblique” anthropology (cf. Chapter 19
tinge. On the other hand, the impulses to
Böhme’s work (and the book written wit
are too manifold and too strong to be
then, the existential tinge is transformed
enactment in and through culturally si
though, some approaches in (what I v
American anthropology come in very stro
pose, Victor Turner and the work of tho
have used Turner’s mode of thought for
ments in both the ordinary and broader
thropological approach will also connect
that is, aesthetics.

Experiences take place on predomina
emotional, and cognitive levels of aware
with the highly variable codes ruling co
body is indeed an anthropological referen
nificance in itself. Rather, the continuo
turally variable body constructs is an an

transformed into problematic sense of
into attractive *scenes*. Historically, this r
ent shifts in media development that are h
theories of the “arts.” This is why, for in
and literature, far apart as they appear
book.

The relative interchangeability and e
highly heterogeneous media tend to beco
terculturally, as it were, at the relative po
ent cultures or at identical functions of c
tures. This does not mean that “plus
chose.” Equivalence and interchangeabil
cal version of and variation on the (Dele
difference.

For example, Paul Veyne’s research in
concept of generosity in ancient Greece a
historian’s compulsion to see “invariants
in historical processes and are modified
singles out mental illness and outstanding
in the list of such modified invariants. S
achievements, irrespective of the prefer
the other. In the United States, Veyne hol
in spite of a basic layer of Puritanism w
out the example of Italian Renaissance
Systems of gift-giving are cultural invaria
in always modified forms. In Veyne’s ap
set of continuities and gradual change an
nities and relative (modified) exchange
overall “plasticity” for which historical c
of possibilities.”¹⁶ Veyne does not speak r
he singles out, though, is the Roman circ
leged uniqueness of historical options, h
and in that sense anthropological—equiv

The combined effects of biological and
like to capture with the notion of “ant
may be altered because the onslaught of
berspatial pastimes may indeed have a
nervous system. As I have said, I prefer t
this is unlikely to occur.

(6) Media are the supreme instrumen

with engrossing, rascinating effects because of their “fictionality,” and in spite of the enormity of their presence in our lives these days—they tend to neutralize the distinction between fiction and reality/fiction that have come to be blurred (and, in construction, continue to haunt) at least Western culture. We tend to neutralize, indeed, the conceptual distinction between fiction and life. Nicholas Negroponte is right in saying that “the computer will turn finished and unalterable art into a mere number of mustaches given to Mona Lisa is just a matter of time.” To mention that the very notion of “unalterable art” is epistemologically difficult to sustain in a world where, in the relatively recent past of relatively linear time, the linearizing aspects of participation in or “interaction” with finished works of art indeed does not mean that they are important cultural icons.” It is something that has been done in areas latently and often with a bad cultural conscience, however, quite openly, for most of cultural history. It can be appreciated and analyzed in an allegorical fashion, but only one crystallization within media communication, and with interference. And it is also true, as we have seen, that the elements, in their combination of technology and expression, constitute a crucially important medium of communication, a technology and expression,” between fragments of reality.

(7) In spite of the historical heterogeneity of media, especially at the present time, when anything that is popular (rarely successful fashion or fad), talk about the medium, the functionality of media is still meaningful. It is not to claim that any medium exercises definite functions, but I am instead interested in the anthropological (and sociological) import that what I call media communication can develop. In some cases, as with opera and film, and even music, one medium can be looked upon as a “medium” (medium), as a (however culturally twisted) medium of communication, an import in itself. In other cases, especially in popular cultures, the implicit status of single media communication and its significance must be assessed in more deviant terms.

(8) Although the genesis and forms of media communication to specific historical, sociological, technological, and cultural functions and effects are not—at least in the past—oscillate between specificity and a trend toward generality,

Opera buffa, for instance, perhaps the best example according to Wolfgang Osthoff, is a specific cultural development. It may be genetically related to the reflexive laughter in which an aristocratic audience still enjoy its somewhat endangered and declining status. But it also combines forms (*intertexts*, etc.) that place it squarely into the modern comic opera, the operetta, the musical, and so on of our time. It is one of the central but unexplored in Strohm's book on eighteenth-century Italian opera. To reconcile the specificities with some more general forms and media from opera down to modern popular culture in a relatively unified space.¹⁸ In what follows, I explore anthropological trends vibrating within shifts in cultural form.

These interests have determined the shape of the book. One, I start out with speculative sketches of the relationship between theory and cultural—that is, modernity—the “beginning,” with Aristotle, this relationship between the late eighteenth and the nineteenth century, that, to put it mildly, does less than justice to the large. One can detect that cultural break between the (modern) literary form—itsself. To a much extent, history has made us aware of, the novel is a new form, up its own reduced mode of communication (and, incidentally not always, silent reading) with various other media in which body codes play a significant role. On the theoretical side, the issue is then pursued through the plurimedia awareness (Lichtenberg, Nietzsche, etc.) with the contemporary theoretical approaches (especially systems theory). On the other side, the vanished long ago as a concrete combination of forms, is probed for its potential as a cultural form (Chapters 2 and 3). The results are embedded in a methodological excursion into the status of the novel and their cultural transformation into spectacle. A comparative analysis must come in, even if stereotypes of the representation of Western splits between literature and culture. Versions of the same problem in Japanese culture and the evaluation of somewhat submerged or forgotten forms in cultural history. Central to that is the c

question to what extent the "operative principle" can serve as an epitome of media problems, and also where the full, the anthropological, the modern forms of aesthetics, from Hegel to the forefront. While such connections have been vaguely before, the book finally, and perhaps on the risk of seeing systematic connections have been admitted into critical connections of hostile opposites, in the relations between body-exploiting sports (Part Three, Chapter 4) am trying to develop and fortify the concept of "protoliterary" (or protopoetic) discourse. In relating experience, the imaginary (whether from Jacques Lacan, or "sociologically" or some other authority insisting on its basic nature) to discourse are anthropologically unavoidable. The discourse (visible from epic formulas do not form an organized system or institution of literature) the protoliterary plays out its appeal with the body, which suggestive images of the body loom large.

A final warning: it goes without saying that I do not adopt any unified methodology. As theoretical methodology lost its purity. Readers will find whether the arrangement and mixture of theory with both intuitions and empirical assumptions are as interesting as those produced by a rigorous methodology.