MIECZYSŁAW WALLIS: EXPERIENCE AND VALUE

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Editor's Introduction

These three essays are from a collection of Mieczysław Wallis's (1895–1975) papers on aesthetics *Przeżycie i wartość* (Experience and value; 1968). The first is a summary of Wallis's views on the aesthetic experience, in which, on the one hand, he distinguishes aesthetic experience from other ways of experiencing an object (such as religious or practical) and, on the other hand, he analyzes the general features that aesthetic experience shares with other experiences and considers features characteristic of aesthetic experience alone. The second essay is Wallis's classification of aesthetic objects, which according to his theory are equivalent neither to beautiful objects nor to artworks. The last sets out his position on aesthetic values, and probably constitutes his most important and original contribution to aesthetics.

Erfahrung und Bewertung
Die drei Essays stammen aus Mieczysław Wallis gesammelten Aufsätzen zur Ästhetik, die unter dem Titel *Przeżycie i wartość* (Erfahrung und Bewertung) erschienen sind. Der erste Essay fasst Wallis' Standpunkt zur ästhetischen Erfahrung zusammen, wobei einerseits die ästhetische Erfahrung von anderen – etwa religiösen oder praktischen – Arten der Objekterfahrung unterscheidet und andererseits Überlegungen zu den Charakteristika anstellt, die nur der ästhetischen Erfahrung zu eigen sind. Der zweite Essay stellt Wallis' Klassifizierung von ästhetischen Objekten vor, die seiner Theorie zufolge weder mit schönen Objekten noch mit Kunstwerken gleichzusetzen sind. Der letzte Essay beschreibt Wallis' Position zur Frage ästhetischer Bewertung und bildet vielleicht seinen wichtigsten und originellsten Beitrag zur Ästhetik.

Mieczysław Wallis was born in Warsaw in 1895. He studied at Heidelberg, where he attended lectures by Wilhelm Windelband, and was for a short period inspired by Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory. He continued his philosophical education at Warsaw, where he grew critical of Neo-Kantianism as a result of his associations with the famous Lvov-Warsaw School and the teachings of two of its influential representatives, Jan Łukasiewicz and Tadeusz Kotarbiński. This link would later result in his pioneering works on the semiotic approach to art. He spent the Second World War in a prisoner-of-war camp where he continued to write and teach courses for officers. This period of his intellectual life was mostly devoted to semantic art theory.[1] After the war he became the head of the Department of History of Art at the University of Łódź. He died in 1975.

Teresa Pękala, the author of the most extensive monograph on Wallis's aesthetic theory, arranged his philosophical papers into five main areas of interest: aesthetics (most of his writings on the subject are compiled in the volume *Przeżycie i wartość*);[2] the semiotic approach to art theory (published posthumously in *Sztuki i znaki*);[3] art history, such as his famous monographs on Art Nouveau, self-portraits, Canaletto, a history of the mirror (in which he analyzes the magical, symbolic, and psychological significance of the mirror in various cultures), as well as his last book, on the late works of great artists;[4] art criticism, which he practised throughout his life; and, lastly, his papers on philosophy and methodology.[5]

As he recalls in the introduction to the selection of his aesthetic papers published in 1968, the groundbreaking moment in the establishment of his own aesthetic position was in 1916 when he became acquainted with Władysław Tatarkiewicz's position on aesthetic pluralism, which he adopted and developed in his own philosophical work.[6] Although Wallis refers to an early article by Tatarkiewicz, 'Rozwój w sztuce',[7] Tatarkiewicz's version of aesthetic pluralism was established in its mature form in two later works: 'Postawa estetyczna, literacka i poetycka'[8] and 'Skupienie i marzenie'[9] in which

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1 Teresa Pękala, *Estetyka otwarta Mieczysława Wallisa* [The open aesthetics of Mieczysław Wallis] (Warsaw: Instytut Kultury, 1997), 9.

2 Mieczysław Wallis, 'Wstęp' [Introduction], in *Przeżycie i wartość: Pisma z estetyki i nauki o sztuce 1931–1949* [Experience and value: Essays on aesthetics and the theory of art, 1931–1949] (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1968), 12.

3 Mieczysław Wallis, *Sztuki i znaki: Pisma semiotyczne* [The arts and signs: Semiotic writings] (Warsaw: PIW, 1983).

4 See the following works by Wallis: *Autoportret* [Self-portrait] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1964); *Dzieje zwierciadła i jego rola w różnych dziedzinach kultury* [The history of the mirror and its role in the different spheres of culture] (Lodz: Łódzkie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 1956); *Późna twórczość wielkich artystów* [Late works of great artists] (Warsaw: PIW, 1975); *Secesja* [Art Nouveau] (Waszaw: Arkady, 1967), and others. Wallis is known abroad as an art historian rather than as an aesthetician. His art-historical study on Canaletto was translated to English, German, and French, see *Canaletto, malarz Warszawy*; *Canaletto, the Painter of Warsaw; Canaletto, peintre de Varsovie, and Canaletto, Warschaus Maler* (all published in Warsaw: PIW, 1954). His book on Art Nouveau (*Secesja*) has also been translated to German as *Jugendstil* (1st ed.: Munich: Kayser, 1974; 2nd ed.: Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1982). He published numerous entries and articles on Polish art and artists (mostly painters) in foreign catalogues and journals.

5 Teresa Pękala, *Estetyka otwarta Mieczysława Wallisa*, 12–13.

6 Mieczysław Wallis, 'Wstęp', 12.

7 See Władysław Tatarkiewicz, 'Rozwój w sztuce' [Development in art], in *Świat i człowiek* [Man and the world], vol. 4 (Warsaw, 1913), 228–81.

8 See Władysław Tatarkiewicz, 'Postawa estetyczna, poetyczna i literacka' [The aesthetic, the poetic, and the literary attitudes], *Sprawozdania PAU*, no. 5 (1933): 3–7. In French: 'L'attitude esthétique, poétique et littéraire', *Bulletin International de l'Académie Polonaise des Sciences et des Lettres*, no. 1–6 (1933): 123–9.

he held that there are various, essentially different aesthetic phenomena, and he divided the multifarious field of aesthetic attitudes into three main categories: the aesthetic (with a dominant sensory element), the literary (with a dominant intellectual element), and the poetic (with a dominant element of feelings and fantasies). Consequently, the sphere of aesthetic experiences and values can usefully be classified analogically.

It seems that artistic and aesthetic pluralism in its various versions was a position characteristic of most Polish aestheticians of the first half of the twentieth century, not only Tatarkiewicz and Wallis, but also Stanisław Ossowski, Leon Chwistek, and others. 'Monism versus pluralism' was one of the hotly debated questions in Polish aesthetics of the interwar period, together with the debate among the absolutists and the relativists, and the subjectivism-objectivism question.[10] The debate between 'aesthetic absolutists' (such as Henryk Elzenberg and Roman Ingarden) and the 'aesthetic relativists'[11] is important here, because Wallis criticized radical relativism from the position of pluralism.[12] Aesthetic absolutism generally holds that aesthetic values are universal and constant, independent of personal or cultural predilections, while a relativist would say that they are relative and changeable, dependent on the tastes and preferences of a given group of people, period, or culture. Aesthetic pluralism is usually accompanied by the acceptance of a weak version of relativism, as it is in Wallis. Whatever position is adopted on these matters, it has its theoretical consequences for all other contentious matters in aesthetics, such as aesthetic experiences, attitudes, values, and judgements. Wallis expressed his views in all these areas, and was in all of them a consistent pluralist. In his paper 'O rozumieniu dążeń

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9 See Władysław Tatarkiewicz, 'Skupienie i marzenie' [Concentration and fantasy], *Marchołt*, no. 3 (1934–1935): 393–405. The expanded version in French: 'L'Esthétique de la concentration et l'esthétique de la reverie', *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 72 (1967): 170–83.

10 A detailed account of this debate is presented in Bohdan Dziemidok, *Teoria przeżyć i wartości estetycznych w estetyce polskiej dwudziestolecia międzywojennego* [The theory of aesthetic experiences and values in Polish aesthetics of the interwar period] (Warsaw: PWN, 1980). As to the subjectivism-objectivism question, Dziemidok notices an interesting regularity: that when you are a subjectivist, you have to adopt a relativist position as to aesthetic values, whereas you can be a relativist and at the same time reject subjectivism (p. 275). Absolutists would generally concur with objectivism.

11 Dziemidok notices that in Polish aesthetics of that period the strong, or radical, version of aesthetic relativism was not a very popular theoretical standpoint, though we find traces of it in the writings of Leon Chwistek and Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz; Bohdan Dziemidok, *Teoria przeżyć i wartości estetycznych*, 284.

12 See Mieczysław Wallis, 'O zdaniach estetycznych' [On aesthetic propositions], in *Przeżycie i wartość*, 48–53.

artystycznych'[13] he expounds his position of artistic pluralism (criticizing the monistic approach, which favours one ideal or criterion and disregards all others, or judges all others from that one favoured point of view, and he advocated the acknowledgment of different yet equally valuable kinds of art). In 'Wartości estetyczne łagodne i ostre',[14] on the other hand, he expanded on his ideas of aesthetic pluralism.

Wallis should not, however, be perceived as an aesthetic anarchist. A pluralist position assumes that there exist many different but equal aesthetic and artistic values and experiences, but it does not hold, at least for Wallis, that any experience may be called aesthetic or that any given aesthetic experience is appropriate. In fact, he names three main groups of 'inappropriate' aesthetic experiences: undersaturated or incomplete ones, oversaturated or exaggerated ones, and experiences evoked not by the object itself but by circumstances or remote associations.[15] He also makes a clear distinction between aesthetic judgement and aesthetic proposition: when we experience some aesthetic object aesthetically, this experience is accompanied by a thought concerning the value of the object – this is aesthetic judgement. When this thought is expressed, we are dealing with an aesthetic proposition. There are, he claimed, two basic kinds of aesthetic proposition: the positive aesthetic judgement and the negative aesthetic judgement.[16]

Another important subject recurring in Wallis's philosophical reflections is semiotics, documented in papers compiled posthumously in *Sztuki i znaki*.[17] The first part of the volume groups together various texts on general matters: the notion of sign, semantic field, iconic signs, and symbols, as well as a classification and historical outline of different fields of art from the perspective of their semantic structures and the practical application of the semantic method to analyses of artworks. The second part of the book includes articles discussing

[13] See Mieczysław Wallis, 'O rozumieniu dążeń artystycznych w dziełach sztuki' [On the understanding of artistic aspirations in artworks], *Przegląd Filozoficzny* 38 (1935): 295–321. Reprinted in *Przeżycie i wartość*, 59–79.

[14] See Mieczysław Wallis, 'Wartości estetyczne łagodne i ostre' [Sharp and soft aesthetic values], in *Księga pamiątkowa ku uczczeniu czterdziestolecia pracy naukowej Prof. Dra Juliusza Kleinera* [Essays to mark forty years of Professor Juliusz Kleiner's academic work], ed. Stefan Kawyn et al. (Lodz: Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza 'Polonista', 1949), 65–98. Reprinted in *Przeżycie i wartość*, 185–209.

[15] See Mieczysław Wallis, 'Wstęp', 13–17; Mieczysław Wallis, 'O zdaniach estetycznych', in *Przeżycie i wartość*, 45–7.

[16] See Mieczysław Wallis, 'O zdaniach estetycznych', in *Przeżycie i wartość*, 31.

[17] Mieczysław Wallis, *Sztuki i znaki*. For an English translation of Wallis's works in semiotics, see *Arts and Signs* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975). This publication pre-dates the Polish edition by eight years, but comprises only six essays, whereas the Polish includes six more.

these problems in detail, such as the semantic and symbolic elements of architecture, medieval art as language, and interesting essays concerning titles of artworks and inscriptions on paintings. Wallis believed that the universe of signs constitutes a separate aspect of the human world and that there are diverse connections between the world of signs and the world of art: artworks may be considered sets of signs; they may be recorded and reconstructed as signs.[18] What is particularly important is that Wallis recognized the existence of semantic and asemantic artworks, but he contested the traditional approach that there are semantic and asemantic fields of art, arguing that in all fields of art one can find representatives of both, although there are spheres in which purely asemantic artwork is difficult to imagine (for example, asemantic theatrical performance).[19]

One of Wallis's many important contributions to aesthetics and the philosophy of art is his theory of aesthetic values, especially his treatment of the concept of ugliness, which he classifies as having a positive aesthetic value. An ugly object, he claimed, can evoke aesthetic experiences when it expresses something important or when its unusual qualities stimulate our imagination.[20] Aesthetics therefore cannot be understood as a theory of beauty.

In 1968, in the introduction to his collected essays in aesthetics from 1931–41, Wallis states his meta-aesthetic position and formulates a kind of concise manifesto of his aesthetic views. He postulates that the centre of aesthetics as a discipline should be aesthetic objects, that is to say, objects which evoke aesthetic experience. He conceives aesthetic experience as an empirical term that can be described but not defined. He makes a clear distinction between aesthetics, which deals with any aesthetic object, and the theory of art, which deals with art not only as an aesthetic object but also takes into account other, extra-aesthetic aspects of artworks. Nevertheless, both disciplines, in his view, have empirical grounds and should be based on observable and describable facts.

Wallis claimed that both aesthetics and the philosophy of art must, in their considerations, take into account all kinds of creativity: not only elite art, but also the creative activities of all social classes, as well as, for example, those of children and the mentally challenged; not only traditional, established forms of art, but also new ones (such as radio, television, and design),[21] art of all cultures,

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18 Mieczysław Wallis, 'Świat sztuk i świat znaków' [The world of the arts and the world of signs], in *Sztuki i znaki*, 74.

19 Ibid., 83.

20 See Mieczysław Wallis, 'O przedmiotach estetycznie brzydkich' [On aesthetically ugly objects], in *Przeżycie i wartość*, 270–84.

21 Wallis was also one of the pioneers in Polish aesthetics of film. See, for example, 'Filmy dokumentalne o plastykach' [Documentary films on the visual artists], *Film* 1 (1946); 'Odkrycie filmu' [The discovery of film], *Przegląd Filozoficzny* 45 (1949): 158–73;

continents, and peoples, of all times and periods. Aesthetics and the philosophy of art should also refer to, and benefit from, the developments in neighbouring disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, history, and ethnography.[22] Wallis believed that our common aesthetic judgements are restricted to our culture and our times, and it is therefore the responsibility of aesthetics as a philosophical discipline to supplement its resources with evaluative systems of other cultures and times.[23] In 1972, he summarized his views on the matter, postulating a model of 'open aesthetics'.[24]

Wallis's writings on aesthetics in English and French (in chronological order)

'L'art au point de vue sémantique – une méthode récente de l'esthétique.' In *Deuxième Congrès international d'esthétique et de science de l'art*, vol. 1, 17–21. Paris, 1937.

'Verité et validité des propositions esthétiques.' In *Travaux du IXe Congrès International de Philosophie (Congrès Descartes)*, vol. 12, 98–103. Paris: Hermann et Cie, 1937.

'Polish Contributions to Aesthetics and Science of Art before 1939: A Selective Bibliography.' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 7 (1948): 51–3.

'The Origin and Foundations of Non-Objective Painting.' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 19 (1960): 61–71.

'La notion de champ sémantique et son application à la théorie de l'art.' *Sciences de l'Art*, Numéro Special (1966): 3–8.

'The History of Art as the History of Semantic Structures.' In *Sign. Language. Culture*, edited by Algirdas J. Greimas, Roman Jakobson, Maria Mayenova et al., 524–35. The Hague: Mouton, 1970.

'Zagadnienia współczesnego filmu' [Questions of contemporary cinema], *Problemy* 1 (1946): 69–70. Against the then dominant tendency to criticize the technological reproduction of art and to perceive it as a means to cause art to degenerate, Wallis was convinced that the new technologies that create and distribute recordings and reproductions of artworks (despite their obvious incongruity with the original) play an important role in broadening cultural horizons and stimulating the imagination of ordinary people as well as artists. See Wallis, 'Świat sztuk i świat znaków', in *Sztuki i znaki*, 93.

22 Mieczysław Wallis, 'Wstęp', 9–10.

23 Ibid., 11.

24 See Mieczysław Wallis, 'Przemiany w sztuce i przemiany w estetyce' [Changes in art and changes in aesthetics], *Studia Filozoficzne*, no. 10 (1972): 3–18. Białostocki, in his posthumous tribute to Wallis, makes the important point that Wallis not only postulated the democratization of art and aesthetics in theory, but also applied this postulate in practice – he regularly published art criticism directed towards uneducated readers, aiming at their artistic education; see Jan Białostocki, 'Wspomnienie pośmiertne' [Posthumous tribute], in Mieczysław Wallis, *Sztuki i znaki*, 326–7.

'The World of Arts and the World of Signs.' In *Aesthetics in Twentieth-Century Poland: Selected Essays*, edited by Jean G. Harrell and Alina Wierzbianska. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1973.
Arts and Signs. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975.
'On Certain Difficulties Involved in the Concept of Sign.' *Dialectics and Humanism: The Polish Philosophical Quarterly* 4 (1977): 113–20.

The following three essays are from Mieczysław Wallis's (1895–1975) collected papers on aesthetics, entitled *Przeżycie i wartość* [25] (Experience and value). Containing essays published in various sources from 1931 to 1949, the volume was published in 1968. The first essay is a summary of Wallis's standpoint regarding aesthetic experience, in which, on the one hand, he distinguishes aesthetic experience from other ways of experiencing an object (such as religious or practical) and, on the other hand, he analyzes the general features that aesthetic experience shares with other experiences, and considers characteristic features specific to aesthetic experience alone. The second essay is Wallis's classification of aesthetic objects, which according to his theory are equivalent neither to beautiful objects nor to artworks. The last describes Wallis's position concerning aesthetic values. He distinguished (i) soft aesthetic values, which include beauty and loveliness and are the source of harmonious aesthetic experience; and (ii) sharp values, including the sublime, the tragic, the ugly, and the comic, which evoke partly disharmonious aesthetic experience. Together, these three essays form a relatively integral whole and provide insight into Wallis's aesthetic theory. Some parts of the original texts have been omitted – namely, those parts which concern either Wallis's interpretations of, and polemics with, other philosophers or analyses of examples (especially if taken from Polish literature probably unfamiliar to non-Polish readers), or, in the essay on aesthetic objects, the parts on human activities, lives, and organizations, ourselves, products of technology, scientific theories, and philosophical doctrines as aesthetic objects. Omissions are indicated by […] and all other editorial additions appear in square brackets.

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[25] Mieczysław Wallis, *Przeżycie i wartość. Pisma z estetyki i nauki o sztuce* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1968.)

MIECZYSŁAW WALLIS: EXPERIENCE AND VALUE

ON AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE[1]

(1931)

When we stand in front of a sunset, we can approach this phenomenon in various ways. We can succumb to feelings like admiration, adoration, worship, either for the sun itself, or for the nature it belongs to, or for the god that created it. We can try to forecast the weather for tomorrow from the shape of the clouds, which, for some reason, can be useful to us. Using the appropriate instruments, we can come up with interesting astronomical or meteorological observations or notice an interesting optical illusion – namely, the diameter of the sun seems to increase as the sun approaches the skyline. Lastly, we can take pleasure in the game of colour and light; we can observe how again and again the shapes and fiery or delicate colours of the clouds change; we can immerse ourselves in the contemplation of this wonderful phenomenon, forgetting everything else, not wanting to know anything or reap any benefit from this contemplation.

In the first case, we worship something greater than ourselves. In the second, we aim at some benefit. In the third, we want to study, to know something, to expand our knowledge. Only in the last case can we take pleasure in the phenomenon itself, for itself. The first attitude is a *religious attitude*, the second *practical attitude*, the third *cognitive attitude*, and the last *aesthetic attitude*.

When a strange face strikes us with its noble shape or complex outline of wrinkles of the forehead; when some scene in the street we witness inadvertently strikes us as dramatic; when some melody, some vivid metaphor, some apt epithet emerges form our memory; when we notice the delicate tone of a rose petal, the reflection of sunbeams on a water carafe; when we contemplate a magnificent building, listen to a beautiful concert, read a good poem; whenever any of these things suddenly gives us an intense, deep feeling of pleasure, whenever it evokes delight in us, it takes us to a different world, it takes us away from the anguish or dullness of everyday life at least for a moment, it increases our feeling of being alive, it wakes us and revives us; when we keep in our memory the reminiscence of this state as something exceptional, isolated, festive – in each of these situations we assumed the aesthetic attitude, we had an aesthetic impression or, when it lasted longer and was richer and more complex, the aesthetic experience.

[1] ['O doznaniu estetycznym', in *Przeżycie i wartość*, 237–42.]

These examples were given to emphasize the most important characteristics of aesthetic experience. Now we will consider them in detail.

I. Aesthetic experience is a state of intense concentration.

There are weak aesthetic experiences which do not require concentration. The pleasing proportions of a room we are in, the fresh colours of some flowers standing on a table in front of us, a vivid rhythm of background music in a café – all this can have an aesthetic effect on us, colour the course of our experience, deepen our sense of life, while operating almost at the periphery of our awareness. At home, in the street, in a tram, we experience many fleeting and immediately forgotten aesthetic impressions: the sight of the sky reflecting in a puddle, a poster or a neon light, the colour of somebody's lamp, the shape of a tree, the broken line of a roof, the sound of rain, the sound of a horn, can provide a moment of aesthetic pleasure without any intense focusing of attention. Any fuller, richer, deeper aesthetic experience is, however, the state or a sequence of states of intense concentration. In cases of increased aesthetic enjoyment – contemplation of a landscape or a painting, listening to music, reading a novel, watching a theatrical performance – we concentrate totally on the experienced object, we immerse ourselves in it, we 'sink into it', we 'become lost in it' and this object fills our entire field of consciousness; as a result, as the saying goes, 'we forget the whole world' and ourselves, our distresses and worries, fears and concerns, and we become the 'pure experiencing subject', 'the eye of the world'.

Consequently, intensive *aesthetic enjoyment* does not so much erase, but rather *suspend for some time the drives, lusts, desires, and aims that toss us about in everyday life*. This should by no means imply that aesthetic experience is a state of 'disinterestedness' or 'purposelessness', impassionate or purely contemplative, devoid of any traces of need and desire, as former aesthetics had it.

From our perspective, *aesthetic experience can relate to many elements of will*:

1. In any aesthetic experience there are active elements: *decision, the act of will*. The example of the aesthetic experience of nature is the easiest way to demonstrate this. When I see a landscape, I stop and find the point of view from which it looks best. Then, from the space in front of me I select a smaller space, I enclose it from all sides, so to speak, as if I were creating a frame for my landscape. Then, in this selected space, I emphasize, blunt, suppress, or omit various elements. I choose, reject, decide – these are all acts of will.
2. *Often in matters of aesthetic enjoyment we want this state to last*: something inside us pleads: 'More, more!'

3. While experiencing a novel, a drama, or a film in which there is a struggle, we experience emotions of sympathy or antipathy towards characters, *we take one or the other side*, we want rescue or see triumph for some and see the humiliation or destruction of others. While reading *The Odyssey* we want Odysseus to win and the suitors to be punished. […] Watching a comedy by Molière or Fredro[2] we sympathize with the loving couple in their predicament, we wish them well and we are happy when they finally reconcile.
4. The aesthetic experience of beautiful women and men, as well as many artworks – most dances, many sculptures or paintings of nudes, many novels, theatrical pieces and films – can be connected with some, stronger or weaker, *erotic excitement*. The same applies to the aesthetic experience of fruits and vegetables: looking at painted still lifes depicting fruit, vegetables, fish on a plate, chicken, game dishes, to reading descriptions of dinners and feasts in epic poems and in novels, which may be connected with some *sharpening of the appetite*. When the appetite or lust becomes stronger, however, the aesthetic experience ceases.
5. *Aesthetic experience*, by strengthening our sense of life, *evokes in us* a certain surge of energy, some *general need to act*, a desire for activity and expansion. Some artworks in particular have this effect on us: Beethoven's symphonies, the *Nike of Samothrace*, [François] Rude's *Departure of the Volunteers of 1792* on the Arc de Triomphe, Paris, and [Mickiewicz's] *Ode to Youth*.[3]

The intense concentration when an experienced object fills our entire field of consciousness, forgetting the whole world, the suspension of the desires and lusts of everyday life – these are not yet exclusive features of aesthetic experience. They characterize aesthetic experience as well as many other states: the state of intellectual enjoyment of scholarly research, states of erotic delight and mystical ecstasy. I will now proceed to describe the specific features of aesthetic experience.

II. Each aesthetic experience has something insular about it – in a twofold sense.

1. *It is not joined to any other aesthetic experience*. My experience of *The Merchant of Venice* and my experience of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, my experience of the *Apollo Belvedere* and of the *Venus de Milo* live in my consciousness as separate experiences and do not merge.

[2] [Aleksander Fredro (1793–1876), Polish poet and playwright.]
[3] ['Oda do Młodości', by the Polish Romantic poet, Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855).]

Each erotic delight is a moment in history of somebody's love. Each religious experience is an episode in someone's religious history. Someone's scientific consideration is connected to their previous considerations and prepares their subsequent considerations; their thoughts are linked and directed towards becoming a system. An activity is a realization of previous intentions and serves future aims; it is connected with other activities referring to a cause or action. Each aesthetic experience, however, is isolated; it has its centre of gravity within itself.

The erotic, religious, practical, and intellectual life of each person is characterized by some, stronger or weaker, continuity, whereas the aesthetic life of each of us is a set of separate experiences – separate moments, so to speak – which together do not form any more general whole.

2. *Aesthetic experience* is isolated in yet another sense. *It breaks the course of our everyday life*, it tears us form our everyday life, which is, for most of us, monotonous and grey, for many people hard and painful, it takes us to another world, so to speak. It is different from the rest of our lives: it is a festive break in the long sequence of ordinary days, it is an oasis in a desert. When we enjoy aesthetically, we cease being ourselves, the ones we are in everyday life, people having a profession, occupation, position. No matter how underprivileged we are in our ordinary life, when we enjoy something aesthetically, we are all kings.

This should by no means imply that aesthetic experience is unconnected with the rest of our psychological life; on the contrary, our whole past, all our artistic and life experiences, take part in it. What I mean is that in our consciousness, in our conscious apprehension of our own life, aesthetic experiences are isolated, separate from each other, as well as from the rest of our life.

III. Aesthetic experience is 'self-sufficient'; it does not refer us to anything beyond it; it has its centre of gravity within itself in yet another sense.

In order to find elation or religious comfort in some phenomenon or event, we have to believe in something; in order to feel intellectual joy because of some scientific statement, we have to acknowledge this statement as true or at least acknowledge the assumptions and methods leading to this statement; only an object which we experience aesthetically – some landscape, artwork, product of technology – gives us delight, not wanting anything in exchange.

IV. The quality of pleasure in aesthetic states has been discussed for a long time. We usually speak of 'aesthetic pleasure' or 'aesthetic delight'.

Two remarks are indispensable here:

1. Together with aesthetic experiences characterized by a uniformly pleasant tone, there is also a wide sphere of aesthetic experiences having unpleasant elements as necessary components. These are, for example, *experiences of characteristic or expressive ugliness, of the sublime and of tragedy*. Some characteristically ugly animal – a mandrill or bulldog, some expressively ugly old man's head by Rembrandt – may at first sight repulse us, evoke a slight disgust. The desert or impressively high mountains, the Colosseum, the Eiffel Tower, an astronomical picture of the universe, or Hegel's system may at first fill us with amazement and fear, may crush or stupefy us. A novel by Dostoyevsky or Conrad, a tragedy by Shakespeare or Sophocles may at first depress us, cause us pain and suffering or shock us. Only after we overcome this initial unpleasantness can we experience a more complete and deeper aesthetic pleasure.
2. The 'pleasure' or 'delight' we find in aesthetic experience is something *essentially different* from the pleasure we gain, for example, from eating a tasty piece of fruit, and different from the delight we find, say, in lying on the grass in the sun. We can describe this state only metaphorically. It is sometimes a complete, deep satisfaction pervading us, a comfort, inner calm, and sometimes an illumination, elation, ecstasy, displaying something triumphant. In its emotional tone and sometimes even in its physiological symptoms (increased heartbeat, deeper breath or, conversely, loss of breath, sometimes contractions or even fainting) the aesthetic experience is most similar, especially in its most intense forms, to states of erotic admiration and, if one may infer this from the confessions of mystics, to states of mystical ecstasy.

APPENDIX

It is immensely difficult to determine precisely the relation between erotic and aesthetic experiences.

Two questions arise here: (i) Does erotic excitement contribute to a more complete aesthetic experience of members of the opposite sex, real or represented in artworks (and, similarly, whether having an appetite contributes to a more complete aesthetic enjoyment of fruit, vegetables, and so forth, real or represented)? (ii) Can aesthetic experience of members of the opposite sex, real or represented, be connected with erotic excitement (and, similarly, can

aesthetic delight in enjoyment of edible objects be connected with a whetting of the appetite)?

Most aestheticians would answer the first question negatively, saying that desire and appetite exclude aesthetic experience. I enjoy an object aesthetically only if I do not want to possess it (of course, I do not have in mind the legal sense, but the sense of 'receiving from the object other stimuli than aesthetic ones'). I enjoy an apple aesthetically when I take delight in its shape and colour, not wanting to consume it; I enjoy a woman aesthetically when I feel the fullness of her beauty, not desiring her. Others question this approach: they claim that it is when I want to eat an apple that I experience its beauty in full force, or the beauty of a woman when I desire her.

What needs to be distinguished here is the state of being in love or merely erotic interest in a woman from the moments when I actually desire her. When I love a woman, when I am 'attracted to her', when 'she impresses me', I feel her beauty most intensely, subtly, I am most sensitive to different aspects of her beauty, to the charms and allures of her body, her gestures, her bearing. When the desire grows too strong, however, the aesthetic experience ceases.

Concerning the second question (reducing it for the sake of simplicity to art and its erotic effect), many artworks evoke in us stronger or weaker sensual excitement. Many people look at paintings and sculptures, read novels, go to the theatre or cinema mainly to feel this excitement. We have to accept it as a fact.

Formerly, aesthetics, assuming the definition of aesthetic experience as a 'disinterested', impassionate state devoid of any elements of wanting or desire, considered everything that is erotically exciting in an artwork as an 'extra-aesthetic' component.

Is it possible, however, to separate in this way elements intimately connected to each other? The *Aphrodite of Cyrene*, or a nude by Titian or Renoir, is for me not only a wonderful symphony of lines, shapes, and colours, but also a representation of a charming young woman. Contemplating the sculpture or painting I do not forget this even for a moment; this objective-erotic element cannot be excluded or torn away from these artworks. It is even more intense when I watch, for instance, a dancer performing a dance with erotic overtones.

It is also well known that artistic creativity is intimately connected to states of erotic excitement. Dance, song, and verse are often born of our sexual excitement. Artists have always painted or sculpted their wives and lovers. It is difficult to believe that what was created under the influence of erotic excitement is supposed to evoke states completely devoid of any eroticism.

THE WORLD OF AESTHETIC OBJECTS[4]

(1931)

Any object that evokes or can evoke in us an aesthetic experience I call an *'aesthetic object'*.

I have in mind the broadest sense of the *'object'*: an aesthetic object can be a 'thing', something relatively stable, as well as a *'phenomenon'*, something proceeding in time, *the material body* as well as the *psychological process or order of sentences*, for example, a scientific theory or philosophical system.

I. Aesthetic objects and beautiful objects

Every beautiful object is an aesthetic object, but not every aesthetic object is a beautiful one. Objects characteristically or expressively ugly, comic, sublime, or tragic evoke aesthetic experiences as much as objects we usually describe as beautiful. The beautiful – in the common meaning, not in the meaning given to the word by some philosophers – is only one part of the aesthetic. *The world of aesthetic objects is wider than the world of beautiful objects.*

II. Aesthetic objects and artworks

Just as aesthetic objects should not be identified with beautiful objects (and aesthetics with the theory of beauty), so aesthetic objects should not be identified with works of art (nor aesthetics with art theory). *Every work of art* – a building, sculpture, painting, vase, kilim rug, garden, piece of music, poem, dance, theatrical piece, photograph, or artistic film – *is an aesthetic object, but not every aesthetic object is an artwork*.

We can aesthetically enjoy many things – objects and phenomena, bodies, psychological processes, and orders of sentences – outside art. *The world* of *aesthetic objects is wider than the world of artworks*. Amongst the many objects (besides works of art), which in appropriate conditions can evoke in us aesthetic experiences, we can distinguish and discuss the following groups: (i) things and phenomena of nature, (ii) human activities, lives and organizations, (iii) ourselves, (iv) products of technology, (v) scientific theories, (vi) philosophical doctrines.

(i) Things and phenomena of nature as aesthetic objects […]

E. When we compare *natural phenomena and artworks* as aesthetic objects, we find a number of differences between them.

An artwork is always *limited* and has its definite boundaries either in space or in time or in both respects. Each symphony has a definite number of musical

[4] ['O świecie przedmiotów estetycznych', in *Przeżycie i wartość*, 243–55.]

phrases, each novel has a definite number of sentences; both have a beginning and an end. Each theatrical piece is performed in a certain space and during a limited period of time (of course, in all these cases I have in mind artwork as such, not its content). By contrast, *nature is* usually *unlimited*, unrestricted, and boundless, in terms of both time and space, and we only superficially isolate some fragment of it (usually, not always, for in nature we also have isolated and limited objects, such as organisms and crystals).

Natural stimuli are much stronger that those of artworks. No painting can reflect the intensity of light and colour we sometimes find in nature. The most colourful portrait seems pale compared to the portrayed person.

The same applies to the size of artworks, even the biggest ones – Gothic cathedrals, Egyptian pyramids, American skyscrapers: they cannot compete with the scales we find in nature. The impression of the actual vastness and the illusion of vastness in artwork are different. No painted landscape, even the one that most successfully evokes the illusion of depths and distance, will ever inspire the awe inspired by the depths and distance of the space in front of us.

Nature has an impact on all our senses. Aesthetic experience evoked by a forest involves not only visual sensations – lines, shapes, and colours of trees, ferns, and flowers, but also aural sensations – bird's songs, the swoosh of leaves; olfactory sensations – the smell of resin; tactile and thermal sensation – puffs of wind, coolness, humidity. Sharp, salty, invigorating seaside air is one of the elements of aesthetic experience evoked by the sea.

Artworks, however, usually have an impact on selected senses. Impressionist painting from the end of the nineteenth century has an almost exclusively visual impact. Italian painting or sculpture refers only to vision and, through vision, to the sense of touch. Music appeals only to the sense of hearing. Theatre gave up on appealing to the sense of smell or coolness and warmth. Only poetry seems to refer, to some extent, to experiences of all the senses.

Nature is infinitely large. Artwork consists of a selection of elements. In nature, the aesthetic neighbours (and mingles) with the aesthetically indifferent or the non-aesthetic, whereas artworks do include aesthetic and extra-aesthetic elements, but in principle should be devoid of non-aesthetic elements.

Confronted with a beautiful person or a beautiful landscape we sometimes feel that some of its aspects could be different, without any discredit to, or even in favour of, the entire object. Confronted with a great artwork, however, we have a feeling that it is exactly how it should be. Renaissance Italian aestheticians held that an artwork is beautiful when there is nothing to be added to or taken from it. *Each* artwork, even one with the most liberal or loose composition, is a *system*, an arrangement, and each of its parts owes its value chiefly to its relation to other parts and to the entire work.

F. Aestheticians in the old days argued about whether *the beauty of nature is superior to the beauty of art*. […]

Today this argument – like other disputes of the same kind – is merely a historical side note. The aesthetic values of nature – not only beauty, but also characteristic ugliness, the sublime, and so forth – are different from aesthetic values of artworks, and are therefore incommensurable. Some may prefer nature, some may prefer art; it is pointless to argue whether one is more valuable that the other.

[…]

III. Beautiful objects and artworks

We have discussed the relation between aesthetic objects and beautiful objects and artworks. What remains to discuss is the relation between the last two classes of objects. *The worlds of beautiful objects and artworks overlap.*

There exist beautiful objects which are not artworks, such as a beautiful sight, a beautiful woman, a beautifully executed ski jump, a beautiful machine, or beautiful reasoning. There exist artworks which are not beautiful (beautiful in the conventional sense), such as classical statues of satyrs, *The Crucifixion* by Matthias Grünewald, old men's portraits by Lentz,[5] 'diableries' of the late Middle Ages, or grotesque dances. Lastly, *there exist artworks which are beautiful*, such as the Parthenon, landscapes by Chełmoński,[6] or Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, and *Pan Tadeusz*.[7]

The parade of aesthetic objects is finished. Yet, some necessary explanations remain to be given.

First, *ranking a certain object or group of objects among the 'world of aesthetic objects' is not to claim that these objects evoke aesthetic experience always and in everyone*. It only means that these objects, in the appropriate conditions, can evoke aesthetic experiences in people who are willing and qualified. What can be taken for granted, however, is that aesthetic objects, even artworks, relatively rarely evoke in us aesthetic experiences. Usually we are either not qualified to do this or are too preoccupied with our mundane concerns, our 'interests', our worries and problems. Only in some moments and situations – in the evening or on holiday, during a trip – when we manage to get away from our ordinary occupations and concerns – are we more prone to assume an aesthetic attitude towards people or things. What we see or hear in such circumstances therefore usually holds a special kind of charm for us.

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5 [Stanisław Lentz (1861–1920), Polish illustrator and painter, mainly of portraits.]

6 [Józef Chełmoński (1849–1914), Polish painter.]

7 [*Mister Thaddeus* (1834), an epic poem by Mickiewicz.]

Second, *when I discuss the beauty of scientific theories, products of technology, social systems, forms of social life, and so forth, what I mean is not that these objects are solely of aesthetic value*. I maintain, however, not only that these objects may be discussed from the essential point of view, that is, a scientific theory from the point of view of its truth (or its logical validity or productivity), a bridge from the point of view of its convenience, a machine from the point of view of its efficiency, and so on, but that they can be discussed from an aesthetic point of view as well.

Consequently, one more misunderstanding should be eliminated. In this essay I examine the world from an aesthetic point of view; I review different spheres which may be enjoyed aesthetically. Nevertheless, I do not want to recommend treating the world exclusively as an object of possible aesthetic enjoyment, as a beautiful spectacle; I do not wish to recommend a 'spectatorial' attitude to the world, aestheticism as a programme for life. In this essay I only deal with aesthetic values. All the same, besides aesthetic values there exist functional, moral, erotic, religious, cognitive, and other values.

To what proportion aesthetic life should relate to other spheres of life, or what place aesthetic values should occupy in our general system of values, is not my concern here.

SHARP AND SOFT AESTHETIC VALUES[8]

(1949)

[…]

1. General remarks

[…] By 'aesthetic value' we understand here the ability to evoke in a willing audience and in suitable circumstances a positive aesthetic experience. Aesthetic values do not have any existence independent of aesthetic objects. When we say that 'object *a* has aesthetic value *b*', all we are saying is that 'object *a* is *b*'; for example, by stating that a rose has the value of 'beauty', we only mean that a rose is beautiful. Again, saying that 'object *a* is *b*', we only mean to say that 'object *a* evokes (in a willing audience and in suitable circumstances) an experience *b*'; for example, claiming that a rose is beautiful, we actually mean that a rose enables (in a willing audience and in suitable circumstances) an experience of beauty.[9] Every kind of aesthetic object has its counterpart, on

[8] ['Wartości estetyczne łagodne i ostre', in *Przeżycie i wartość*, 185–209.]

[9] Roman Ingarden, *O poznawaniu dzieła literackiego* (Lwów: Ossolineum, 1937), 241n, describes this interpretation of the aesthetic with the sentence 'an unfounded psychologization of value' [Eng. trans.: Roman Ingarden, *The Cognition of the Literary*

the one hand, in a specific aesthetic value, and, on the other hand, a specific aesthetic experience.

When we review [the field of] aesthetic objects, we can see that they are divided into two major classes.

The first class includes beautiful and lovely objects which are a source of harmonious aesthetic experience. The second includes sublime, tragic, grotesque, characteristically and expressively ugly objects which are the source of partly disharmonious aesthetic experience. Comical objects do not seem to constitute a homogeneous class.

Analogously to the division of objects into those which are the source of harmonious aesthetic experience and those which are the source of partly disharmonious aesthetic experience, we may divide aesthetic values into the values of objects which are the source of harmonious aesthetic experience and the values of objects which are the source of partly disharmonious aesthetic experience. Let us call the former *'soft aesthetic values'*, and the latter *'sharp aesthetic values'*. Beauty and loveliness are in this case soft aesthetic values, whereas the sublime, the tragic, the grotesque, and characteristic and expressive ugliness are sharp aesthetic values. The question of the group to which the comic belongs cannot be considered at the moment.

2. Soft values

Beautiful and lovely objects evoke harmonious aesthetic experiences. Beauty and loveliness are therefore soft aesthetic values.

Nevertheless, our attitude towards lovely objects – ornaments and trinkets, watercolours and pastels, minuets and eclogues, butterflies and flowers – is different from our attitude towards beautiful objects in terms of a certain specific quality. Our attitude towards lovely objects includes: (i) the sense of our advantage over these objects and a nice feeling of our own power coming from it; (ii) kindness towards them. The combination of these two elements results in this 'good-naturedly protective', 'patronizing' attitude we assume towards them. […]

Work of Art (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973)]. As for me, I cannot find in the sentence '*S* is aesthetic' any other meaning than that *S* has the ability to evoke, in a willing audience and in adequate circumstances, a positive aesthetic experience, which in turn comes down to saying that *S* evokes, in a willing audience and in adequate circumstances, a positive aesthetic experience. If we deprive aesthetic value of the ability to evoke in an audience an aesthetic experience, nothing remains of it […]. On the other hand, deriving the ability to evoke aesthetic experience from aesthetic value, making one an effect of the other, would mean doubling what in reality is one and the same.

3. Sharp values

Sublime, tragic, aesthetically ugly and, at least partly, comical objects evoke a partly disharmonious aesthetic experience […]. The course of experiencing the sublime differs from the course of experiencing beauty or loveliness. […]

'The experience of beauty or loveliness in all its phases has a pleasant quality. We usually have an increasing feeling of pleasure, delight, happiness, which step by step overwhelms and pervades our being.

The experience of the sublime takes a very different course. In the initial phase unpleasant feelings of varying intensity, of a dejecting, depressing character, predominate or at least play an important role. Steep, bare mountains at first are depressing: we feel crushed, powerless. Huge buildings or technological constructions at first stupefy us, astonish us, evoke fear, terror, horror.

Later, however, we try to overcome these unpleasant feelings. And when this first 'blow' gradually passes and we recover from this first shock, we experience a deep feeling of intense pleasure. Only then can we fully enjoy the greatness of the object which at first crushed us. And the awareness of victory over it gives us a strengthened sense of well-being, a joyful sense of greatness and power […].'[10]

'Unpleasant feelings in the initial phase of the experience of the sublime can sometimes be accompanied by certain physiological sensations, for example, slight dizziness, shivering, a so-called "thrill", and so forth, as well as some physiological symptoms usually accompanying terror or fear, whereas the final phase is usually accompanied by physiological symptoms characteristic of feelings of joy, such as deeper breathing and a faster heartbeat.'[11]

Experience of the sublime seems to be the opposite of the experience of loveliness. 'The essential component of our experience of lovely objects is the feeling of our advantage over them, whereas the essential component of our experience of sublime objects, at least in the beginning, is our feeling of their advantage over us. Faced with a cup of Sèvres porcelain, a miniature painted on tracing paper, or some ornament made of ivory we feel great and powerful. Faced, however, with impressive mountains, the dome of heaven, frescos of the Sistine Chapel, or a Beethoven symphony, we feel, especially at first, small and weak. A sense of advantage over someone or something is always pleasant. Consequently, the quality of the experience of a lovely object is always pleasant, without any trace of unpleasantness, and the quality of the experience of a sublime object is unpleasant, at least in the initial phases.'[12]

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[10] Mieczysław Wallis, 'O przedmiotach wzniosłych' [On sublime objects], *Wiedza i Życie* 12 (1937): 283–91, 285.

[11] Ibid., 286.

[12] Ibid., 286–7.

This is the standpoint of most aestheticians. Most of them recognize that the experience of the sublime entails, at least at the beginning, unpleasant elements – fear, terror, depression, stupefaction, and so on. […] Experience of the sublime allows for gradation, and the passage from sublime objects to beautiful ones is continuous. Moreover, on the line going from sublime objects to beautiful ones, but still on the side of sublime ones, we can isolate a group of objects which may be described as 'magnificent' or 'majestic'. […]

Let us leave aside the question of whether the tragic is merely some variant of the sublime or a separate aesthetic value. No one would deny that the experience of the tragic involves unpleasant elements, and, therefore, that the tragic is a sharp value or a variant of a sharp value. Aristotle recognized fear and pity, that is to say, unpleasant affections, as essential elements of the experience of the tragic.

The class of aesthetic objects usually called 'aesthetically ugly' is not, as we have seen, a homogeneous class. We may, in particular, distinguish objects which are characteristically ugly and expressively ugly.[13] Nevertheless, they both have in common a similarity of evoked psychological reactions. An 'aesthetically ugly' object – a chameleon, the face of an old person, a mascaron on the roof of a Gothic cathedral or Rodin's *La Belle Heaulmière* – at first evokes some kind of negative reaction (which is probably of biological origin, connected perhaps in some distant way with the sex drive), maybe some stronger or weaker feeling of repulsion, aversion, disgust, a feeling similar to that which is evoked by slimy, cold, rough objects. Sometimes it results in some specific physiological sensations, such as gooseflesh or a tingling. This repulsion is often linked with astonishment or a sense of strangeness. Only after we have overcome these initial feelings of repulsion, disgust, astonishment, or sense of strangeness can such grotesque, characteristically ugly, and expressively ugly objects give us more or less intense pleasure. In other words, these objects evoke a partly disharmonious aesthetic experience. Consequently, their corresponding values – the grotesque, characteristic ugliness, and expressive ugliness – are sharp aesthetic values.

Let us now proceed to comical objects and experience of the comic. […]

Any joke, pun, parody, or caricature involves a kind of deformation – a deformation of reality, a linguistic creation or an artwork. This deformation at first evokes a sense of strangeness; it astonishes, confuses, or worries us. Only after we intellectually take control of the situation can we experience more or less intense pleasure; sometimes we laugh.

[13] See my paper 'O przedmiotach estetycznie brzydkich' [On aesthetically ugly objects], *Wiedza i Życie* 7 (1932): 374–8, 481–95.

The experience of the comic is usually strongest at the first encounter with the object evoking this experience and quickly weakens during subsequent encounters because there is no initial shock, no initial intellectual distress or pleasure as a result of overcoming it.

For this reason, experience of the comic usually entails in its initial phase unpleasant intellectual impressions – a feeling of strangeness, astonishment, confusion – and is a partly disharmonious aesthetic experience.

Can we generalize these remarks? Do all experiences of the comic begin with this initial shock, this state of intellectual confusion? It seems that there are objects – some human figures, gestures, situations – which amuse us and make us laugh just like that, without evoking initial intellectual distress. It seems that there are experiences of the comic in which it is hard to find any unpleasant elements, such as the feeling I get when I see a man chasing his own hat.[14]

It seems therefore that experiences of the comic do not form a homogeneous group and we have to leave aside, at least for now, the affiliation of the comic with either one or the other group of aesthetic values.

4. The division of aesthetic objects

The following division of aesthetic objects emerges, based on the division of aesthetic experiences:

Harmonious experiences may be divided into those which deal with objects experienced on equal terms, so to speak, and those towards which we have a 'protective' attitude. The former correspond to 'beautiful' objects, the latter to 'lovely' ones.

Partly disharmonious aesthetic experiences can also be divided into several groups, depending on the kind of unpleasant feelings which appear in their initial phase.

Experiences which begin with astonishment, terror, horror, defeat, or stupefaction are experiences of the sublime (and the tragic). They correspond to sublime (and tragic) objects.

Experiences, at the beginning of which we feel repulsion or disgust, sometimes accompanied by astonishment and a sense of strangeness, are experiences of grotesque, characteristic, and expressive ugliness. They correspond to grotesque, characteristically and expressively ugly objects.

[14] See B[ohdan] Zawadzki, 'Teorie komizmu' [Theories of the comic], *Przegląd Filozoficzny* 32 (1929): 33. […]. [Wallis's reference should read: 'Przegląd krytyczny ważniejszych teorii komizmu' [A critical survey of important theories of the comic], *Przegląd Filozoficzny* 32 (1929): 17–59.]

Finally, experiences entailing at first unpleasant intellectual impressions – a sense of strangeness, confusion, concern – are variants of experience of the comic. They correspond to comic objects.

5. Continuity and discontinuity in the sphere of aesthetic objects

As we have seen, the passage from beautiful objects to sublime ones is continuous, which means that we have aesthetic experiences in which unpleasant feelings of astonishment or depression are barely recognizable, so that we may have doubts whether the object evoking these experiences is beautiful or sublime.[15]

The same applies to the passage from lovely objects to beautiful ones. It is sometimes hard to decide whether, in our aesthetic experience of some object, the 'protective' attitude towards it is present, and therefore whether we are dealing with a lovely object or beautiful one.

Sometimes it is also difficult to determine the borderline between grotesque objects and characteristically ugly or expressively ugly ones, or between them and comical ones.

It seems, however, that there is no passage from beautiful objects to comical ones, or from sublime objects to comical ones, although both can be quite close to each other, as the saying 'Du sublime au ridicule il n'y a qu'un pas' suggests.[16]

6. Objects having mixed value

Besides objects evoking harmonious experiences, that is, objects having soft values, and objects evoking partly disharmonious experiences, that is, objects having sharp values, there are objects which consist of parts evoking harmonious experiences and other parts evoking somewhat disharmonious experiences; or objects, parts of which have soft values and other parts sharp value: objects having mixed value. We encounter them especially among artworks of greater size. Objects of a soft-value character often include sharp-value components, and in sharp-value artworks we usually have soft-value enclaves, episodes, scenes or passages, introduced if only for contrast. In the *Divine Comedy* the sharp values of the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio* are contrasted with the soft values of the *Paradiso*. In *The Merchant of Venice* soft-value scenes intertwine with sharp-value scenes.

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15 It was previously noticed by [Arthur] Schopenhauer in *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, vol. I, § 39.

16 [From the sublime to the ridiculous there is but one step.]