

# ‘For Beauty is nothing but the barely endurable onset of Terror’: Outline of a general psychoanalytic aesthetics

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(Accepted for publication 21 January 2016)

*Even close to 80 years after Freud’s words that psychoanalysis “has scarcely anything to say about beauty” (Freud, Civilization and its Discontents, SE 21, p. 82) the question of a specific psychoanalytic aesthetic is still faced with a deficit in theory. Since aesthetics is related to Aisthesis, the Greek word for ‘perception’, a psychoanalytic aesthetic can solely emerge from a psychoanalysis of perceptive structures. The term ‘kinaesthetic semantic’ is introduced in order to exemplify via music how perceptive experiences must be structured for them to be experienced as beautiful. The basic mechanisms – repetition of form (rhythm, unification) and seduction (deviation, surprise) – are defined. With the help of these mechanisms an intensive contact between perceiving object and kinetic subject, the physical self, is established. The intensive relatedness is a requirement for the creative process in art and also for psychic growth on the subject’s level. The described basic mechanisms of the aesthetic process in music can also be encountered in painting and poetry. By the means of a self-portrait by Bacon it will be examined how, in art, terror and traumatization are represented via targeted disorganization of beauty endowing mechanisms, hence finding an enabling form of confrontation and integration of fended contents.*

**Keywords:** art, music, poetry, painting, perception, kinaesthetic semantic, trauma, Francis Bacon, beauty

‘For Beauty is nothing, but the barely endurable onset of Terror, which we admire so because it serenely disdains to destroy us’

(Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, 1999)

## The question of a psychoanalytic aesthetics

In this paper, I will be attempting to portray these lines by Rilke in psychoanalytic language. They seem to me to convey something about the structures of art and its capacity to give a form to conflicts and traumas – the terrors of psychic life – that enables the subject to deal with them while avoiding traumatic destruction. Intuitively we understand in these words a deep recognition of the demands of the aesthetic process. But how can we

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account for this process in psychoanalytic terms? Even in his later work, Freud states that “psychoanalysis, unfortunately, has scarcely anything to say about beauty” (1930, p. 82). What metapsychological concepts do we use to describe beauty? What are the ‘laws of beauty’ to which Freud refers (1913, p. 187)? How do they transform our psychic functioning to make us receptive to the deep impact of art? And in what form does beauty in art simultaneously represent terror?

The term ‘aesthetics’ is cognate with *aisthesis* (meaning ‘perception’ in Greek). Beauty is a perceptual phenomenon. The precondition for a psychoanalytic aesthetics is therefore a psychoanalysis of the perceptual function. But here we encounter a glaring deficiency in the development of psychoanalytic theory. In no psychoanalytic dictionary does ‘perception’ appear as a headword (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973; Hinshelwood, 1989; Evans, 1996). From a psychoanalytic viewpoint, then, what is perception and under what conditions does an object of perception become an aesthetic object?

I think it is necessary to remedy this deficiency and develop a psychoanalysis of perception that can provide the basis for a psychoanalytic aesthetics. I summarize my attempt to carry out this task using the concept of *kinaesthetic semantics*, with which I describe a system for generating and transforming meaning that exists outside language, that is, outside lexical semantics (Leikert, 2012). Kinaesthetic semantics works from the premise that perceptual processes are organized into a signifying system, close to affect, in which, as in language, experience is shaped, processed and communicated. There is nothing new about the insight that the pre-verbal domain plays an important role in psychic life. Nevertheless, perception has always so far scraped a rather humble living in psychoanalytic thinking. It is no mere coincidence that this field has only so far been described in negative terms as *pre-verbal* or *non-verbal* because this actually encapsulates the problematic. The hegemonic structure in psychoanalytic thinking is the linguistic order; what lies beyond it appears as the negative aspect of language. So the perceptual domain as what lies beyond this order is constantly shrouded in the suspicion of disorder, chaos and inundation. The sensory is considered as a danger to be overcome by language.

With the concept of kinaesthetic semantics, I am proposing a positive concept for the sensory domain and painting a different picture. The distinction between perception and language – *aisthesis* and *logos* – as the two basic capacities of psychic functioning implies that both domains should be regarded as complex and variously structured. Each domain has its own arrangements, is regulated by its own specific mechanisms and has a distinctive impact on the uniqueness of the object-relationship being established in it.

For the psychoanalytic reader, adopting this perspective means expanding our habitual thought patterns. As psychoanalysts we tend to suppose that psychic life can only assume sense and meaning within the system of language. Freud went so far as to connect the function of consciousness with the link with word-presentations. He certainly concedes that “The process of something becoming conscious is above all linked with the perceptions

which our sense organs receive from the external world” (1940, p. 160), but he also states that this psychic element only becomes enduringly accessible to consciousness when it is linked with “the mnemonic system of indications of speech” (1900, p. 574). This conception is obviously incomplete because it omits to describe an important part of psychic life. Music, for instance, is a conscious phenomenon that not only exists in the moment of perception but can also be remembered and is rich in emotional qualities. Admittedly, the concepts of “perceptual identity” and “thing-presentation” (Freud, 1900, 1915) or the concept of the “transformational object” (Bollas, 1987), the “autistic-contiguous position” (Ogden, 1989) or the “vitality affects” (Stern, 1985) do provide some terminology for this domain. However, the perspective that I develop with the concept of kinaesthetic semantics consists in exploring how central this sensory system of creating meaning is to psychic life. It is clear from the example of music that there are also various different systems outside language for producing, transforming and storing meaning. These systems are certainly not translatable into language – no linguistic interpretation of a Beethoven symphony comes anywhere near the artwork itself in power and complexity although it certainly exists and takes its effect. Let us explore the structure and meaning of this domain.

The question of a psychoanalytic aesthetics will be explored in the following steps.

- First, I will define the context and methodology of the question by specifying which psychoanalytic tradition is providing the context for addressing it and which investigative methodology is being chosen to answer it.
- Then I will describe the structures of music. With the processes of rhythmization and seduction, the two basic mechanisms of perception are elaborated.
- A digression on the theory of ritual provides a way of describing the transformation that occurs in the subject’s psychic organization through the perceptual orientation. This explains the function that is fulfilled for the subject by the disengagement from linguistic semantics and the return to kinaesthetic semantics. The argument is put forward that psychic growth only becomes possible where the kinaesthetic relation is established.
- These considerations provide a basis for various distinctions: it is now possible to answer the question of what distinguishes perception in general from aesthetics in particular. Distinctions can also be made between the use of aesthetic mechanisms in art and their use in other contexts.
- I will then extrapolate from the findings that relate to music to rediscover them first in the domain of poetry and then the fine arts.
- Finally, I will analyse a self-portrait by Francis Bacon with regard to the question of how aesthetic mechanisms are applied here and how far art provides a form (a container) that enables it to approach destructive and traumatic material. The consideration of Bacon can contribute to explaining Rilke’s lines quoted above.

## Context and methodology of the question

### *Context*

My conviction that music, like aesthetic phenomena in general, is to be addressed from the perceptual perspective, is the result of a series of unsuccessful attempts to describe music from other standpoints. At first I was fascinated by Lacan's structural analytic theory of language, which seemed to offer a psychoanalytic way of understanding (Leikert, 1995) Adorno's statement that 'Music is similar to language ... But music is not language' (2002, p. 113).

I now consider the attempt to describe music using linguistic categories as erroneous. Nevertheless, I am convinced by Lacan's methodology of making the *subject's relation to his representation* the fundamental question and I will transfer this perspective from language to music. From Lacan it also becomes clear how far psychoanalysis in general can be conceived as a theory of language. When Lacan demonstrates that the mechanisms of the dream work described by Freud correspond to the basic linguistic mechanisms of metaphor (condensation) and metonymy (displacement), it becomes clear that psychoanalytic theory generally describes the psychic domains constituted by the system of language (Freud, 1900; Lacan, 1989b).

The failure of the endeavour to understand music as similar to language convinced me that new categories are required for describing music. The quest for perspectives led me to engage with some classical philosophical positions (Aristoteles, 1994; Plato, 2005) and philosophical aesthetics (Baumgarten, 1750; Schopenhauer, 1818; Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Nietzsche, 1988). Furthermore, it has proved productive to consider ritual theory as it specifically studies the social and psychic meaning of an aesthetic practice in social functioning (Durkheim, 1926; Bellinger and Krieger, 2003; Malloch and Trevarthen, 2009). Within psychoanalysis, I am guided less by existing attempts to understand the aesthetic process because they generally focus entirely on the *content* than by authors who examine the specific *form* of primary human communication and object relationship (Ogden, 1989; Tustin, 1981; Stern, 1985). From the structural analytic viewpoint, my reflections are close to Kristeva's work (1984). This has led to works on the connection between music and ritual, on the concept of *kinaesthetic semantics* and finally on the extension of the idea to all artistic domains (Leikert, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013).

### *Methodology*

My paper takes its inspiration from various contexts and is not aligned to one specific school. However, there is a heuristic and methodological core. The fundamental question is the psychoanalysis of music and then the aesthetic process in general, understood as a sensory part of human communication. In accordance with the view that "the philosophy of art should be conceived as an integral part of metaphysics and epistemology" (Goodman, 1978, p. 102), I believe that a psychoanalytic aesthetics should be given a

place in psychoanalytic theory and can answer the question of the structure and function of sensory cognition.

Methodologically, the central question is the relationship between the subject and its representation: in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud asks how the subject is represented in the seemingly nonsensical dream material. He only takes a passing interest in the *content* of dreams and primarily describes their *form*. Freud (1900) describes the mechanisms of the dream work, condensation and displacement and derives the *structure* of the unconscious from the *phenomenological form analysis* of the dream work. If with Lacan we suppose that here Freud is examining the characteristics of a semantic system, namely language, with its conscious and unconscious components, the question arises of whether the semantic system of language covers all forms of human communication or whether there are additional semantic systems with other specific characteristics. The methodology of the investigation with which I will be considering music and then other aesthetic fields is to describe, at first phenomenologically, the *form of the medium* and then to infer the *structure of the semantic system*, which represents the subject in a specific way.

If aesthetics is explored here as the non-verbal order, it is necessary, at least in one respect, to identify how language is conceived and how it differs from perception. What, then, is language?

Language is a system of signs that has the function of describing something that it is not itself. The linguistic sign therefore represents something else. Since Freud's investigations of his grandson's *fort-da* game, psychoanalysis has assumed that play and consequently the linguistic symbol have the function of dealing with the absence of the primary object (Freud, 1920). In this game, the child on the brink of language acquisition comforts himself when his mother goes away by representing his mother's disappearance and reappearance by controlling the to-and-fro movement of a bobbin. Language serves affect-regulation by mitigating the sensory absence of the object with a symbolic presence. The object is thereby represented in a general way that involves an abstraction from various segments of experience. This corresponds with the general tendency towards abstraction that constitutes a key achievement of language. At a second stage, language also supports the development of separation: the structure of language essentially consists of the subject-predicate-object elements and thus already represents in the formal structure the differentness and separateness of subject and object, which is not necessarily predominant in experience. This opposition is a precondition of the reflexive and self-reflexive function of language. In the sentence 'I think, therefore I am', the subject takes himself as the object and clarifies his relationship to himself.

Perception, however, operates by organizing something that is present in succession. Perception always exists in the momentary transition. Connection and meaning arise by means of a rule that connects disparate presences. Music refers to nothing beyond itself. Music is the sound that reverberates. Its structure arises from the particular succession of the sounds. What is perceived refers to itself; the linguistic element refers to something else. Of course language is also something that is perceived.

A word makes a sound as it is spoken, but it refers to a meaning that lies beyond it. Beyond aesthetic contexts, the perception of the word in its tonality plays no significant role.

## **The structure and relational dynamics of music – rhythmization and seduction**

The psychoanalytic theory of psychic functioning cannot be regarded as complete if it ignores such an essential expressive and communicative domain as music. Even more essential than the question about music is the question about the psychic structures that correspond to this medium. While my concept of kinaesthetic semantics may be unconvincing, the descriptions flawed, and my conclusions inapposite, the task remains of finding other answers to these questions.

But how can we begin to describe music? What data can be demonstrated with a clarity comparable to Freud's mechanisms of the dream work? What are the mechanisms of the *music work*? And what does this mean for the subject who entrusts himself to this medium?

### *Rhythmization*

The simplest datum that can be described in music is repetition. It is found on every level of music. The simplest musical parameter – rhythm – arises from an acoustic event being repeated in regular succession. The emergence of acoustic events in time is regularized or stylized, and rhythm arises from this mechanism. With melody, the next parameter of music, there is a similar process: the spontaneous rises and falls of the speaking voice are regularized into defined intervals and assembled into melodic curves that are themselves repeated and varied. Variation is no true opponent of repetition here because variation, as the term suggests, is after all only an alteration of repetition and merely introduces a certain balance and suppleness into the composition of the musical flow.

Repetition of form, however – that is, the repetition of stylized forms of progression – is also found on all other levels of music: harmonic sequences constantly follow a ritualized pattern of progression and reveal simple and readily comprehensible cycles of repetition both in what is known as classical music and in pop music. But above all repetition occurs in the construction of musical form. It is not only sonatas and fugues that follow a predefined pattern of repetition and change; simple pop songs are also structured by the repetition of refrain and strophe.

“There can be no doubt”, wrote Freud, “that the stimuli which produce the pleasure are governed by special conditions, though we do not know what those are. A rhythmic character must play a part among them” (1905b, p. 183). Rhythm is repeatedly described as the ordering principle of early communication (Tustin, 1981; Ogden, 1989) but what is pleasurable about repetition? Repetition within language is not at all pleasurable but destructive of meaning. The subject has entered another order here. According to Freud, in sensory experience the subject encounters “pleasurable

effects, which arise from a repetition of what is similar, a rediscovery of what is familiar” (1905a, p. 128). This implies a co-creative process in which the subject recognizes the rule of the sequence, co-creates the approaching rule in anticipation and greets its appearance with pleasure.

But to return to describing music, repetition, variation, balance, proportion and rhythmization are all mechanisms that describe the construction of musical form. They seek to construct a ritualized and anticipable order within the stream of sensory events. They provide a framework for perception. But does this characterize music in general?

### *Seduction*

If music followed only the above mechanisms, it would be a very dull thing. These are directed at making it possible to anticipate what is approaching. They cannot convey the experience of present aliveness. Complete repetition is close to Thanatos. But the experience of vitality is the goal of aesthetic experience. The aesthetic experience aims at shaping creative vitality but also the direct cathartic experience of terror, pain and fear. But how is this dimension conveyed? What mechanisms seduce the subject into opening himself up to the highest intensity in the experience of pleasure and pain?

The above-described mechanisms of rhythmization and ritualization characterize the construction of the structured *order* within the stream of sensory experience. Seduction, on the other hand, entices the subject into *deviation*, into what cannot be anticipated, in order to be relieved of the protection of expectation and to surrender to experience in its greatest possible immediacy. Seduction is on the side of Eros and constitutes the tendency to introduce “fresh *vital differences*” (Freud, 1920, p. 55).

A deviation in itself can hardly be defined as a mechanism in the material of art. However, describing seduction as a basic mechanism of art is legitimate on two counts. For one thing, art is far from being the only context in which sensory processes are instigated in a planned way. Every ritualization uses aesthetic mechanisms. But art is the only context in which a skill in using seductive processes plays a central role and essentially achieves ethical effects – I will come back to this. The second reason is that psychoanalysis – unlike other psychotherapeutic contexts – involves a similar skill with deviation. Freud’s interest in the arresting detail, and in parapraxes and dreams, points just like Lacan’s concepts of lack and hiatus to the fact that psychoanalysis like art is concerned with deviation.

But to return to the specific – what is meant by seduction in music? With reference to rhythm, every musician knows that the laboriously precise observance of rhythm leads to sterility and the death of musical aliveness. Seduction arises through the right degree of deviation from the metronome in the phrasing. Tone is similarly seductive; its oscillating qualities elude rhythmization. Every musician knows that enjoyment and emotional expression are represented primarily in tone (Nohr, 1997).

However, there is also a describable engagement with seduction in terms of objectivizable musical form. By repetition, the composer creates expectations in order to play with this expectation. Omission, allusion, fugato,

extension and fragmentation of the basic thematic form can be described. A composition is original to the extent that it succeeds through surprise in the construction of the form in engaging the attention and seducing the subject. The development in the sonata, the cadence in the instrumental concert and the improvised solo in jazz are sections within the musical form that allow the subject to complete it in a deviation (Poizat, 1986). The psychological function of this paradox of musical enjoyment will be explored.

### **Affective dialogue and ritual theory**

Analysing the structure of a medium only becomes meaningful in psychoanalytic terms if its implications for the subject can be shown. The mechanisms of the dream work enable a compromise to be reached between the wish to sleep and the unconscious wish that bypasses the censor. But what are the effects of music in which the subject shows such lively interest?

Beyond the psychoanalytic field, some knowledge has been formulated that has not yet been assimilated. Using the concept of *communicative musicality*, Malloch and Trevarthen (2009) describe how the early mother-child dialogue is structured in musical arrangements. They demonstrate that the bond between mother and child is structured and deepened at a very early stage in ritualized children's songs. The characteristics of the acoustic mother-child dialogue include cultural and pathological patterns (Gratier and Apter-Danon, 2009). Dissanayake (2000) also demonstrates that these mechanisms reveal a continuity between the early mother-child dialogue and culture-producing rituals. A consideration of ritual theory also shows that in this research field it is the same basic mechanisms of repetition and stylization that are considered as structuring as those described for music and affective dialogue (Bellinger and Krieger, 2003; Leikert, 2010). The first implication of these structures for the subject is therefore to establish a continuity between the adult ritual participant or art recipient and the primary and affective perceptual essence of that person's early life. If we now endeavour to understand these processes psychoanalytically, the necessity re-emerges to review pre-verbal structures as such and their implications for the subject. Meaning is constituted here only in the process of execution. The performative power of music therefore subtends the reflexive order of language and seizes the subject in a way that is not replicable in reflexive knowledge. Music demands the willingness to be "moved by a thing without knowing why I am thus affected and what it is that affects me" (Freud, 1914a, p. 211). This failing of reflexive detachment, which alarmed Freud, and is so familiar to us from language, urgently poses the question of the specific nature of the relationship between subject and object, as it is structured in the domain of kinaesthetic perceptual semantics.

### **Subject and object in kinaesthetic semantics**

In kinaesthetic perceptual semantics meaning is not stored in verbal signs that give the subject and its objects a symbolic framework, stability and duration. Everything is structured in execution. This means that the object alone is the object of perception and is therefore an aesthetic object that is

perceptible by the senses. In exploring early forms of communication, Tustin refers to the “sensation-object” (1981, p. 22), while Bollas emphasizes how this object experience relates to temporal execution and refers to the “transformational object” (Bollas, 1987, pp. 13–29).

But how is this constituted around the experience of a person’s own subjectivity, when it can no longer be attached to any symbol or enduring self-image? Now, consequently it is experienced as a modulation of a person’s own bodily sensation, the bodiliness that is felt. The order in which the subject understands himself within the perceptual context is purely *kinetic*, that is, it results from changes experienced in bodily tension. My proposed concept of *kin-aesthetic semantics* therefore encompasses both the aesthetic nature of the object-experience and the bodily-kinetic nature of subjectivity. It is the *kinetic subject* that corresponds to the aesthetic object.

In kinaesthetic semantics, meaning arises from a connection being made between two tiers of perception – kinetic internal perception and aesthetic external perception. The quality of the kinaesthetic relationship results from the extent of coordination or discoordination of these perceptual sequences and here the meaning of the ritualized order of the aesthetic event is disclosed. The anticipatability of the aesthetic chain of events enables the receiving subject to open up to what is occurring by his kinetically generative co-creation. As Merleau-Ponty writes in his *Phenomenology of Perception*: “before my body synchronises with it, the sensible is nothing but a vague beckoning” (1962, p. 248). The link of synchronization unites kinetic subject and aesthetic object and generates the bodily intensity of the aesthetic experience.

### The kinetic subject and psychic growth

Psychic growth requires the momentum of an immediate experience and temporarily suspends the reflexive state. I will now reconsider the fundamental question of the subject’s relationship to his representation. The subject is represented by the representation, but this means a relationship of occultation, a primal repression. Representation is the sediment and abstraction of an experience; it is the carapace of what is living. To attain psychic growth, it is necessary to abandon this carapace. The term I give to the subject in the immediacy of his experience of vitality is the *kinetic subject*. In general, the kinetic subject is unhappily disordinated from his environment. Beyond the realms of aesthetic experience, there is no coordination with the sensory environment and linguistic representation rejects the immediacy of experience by a reticular reference to other contexts. The kinetic subject pounds against the walls of abstraction from inside. But change requires the ardent presence of experience, “For when all is said and done, it is impossible to destroy anyone *in absentia* or *in effigie*” (Freud, 1912, p. 108).

The words that Freud uses to describe the vital core of psychoanalytic transformational work are surprising. They merit a close reading. Psychic change occurs neither *in absentia* nor *in effigie*. Freud delineates a place beyond representation. It is neither the linguistic symbol, which reflects an

experience in absence – *in absentia* – nor a linguistic image (metaphor), which reflects the experience in an image – *in effigie* – that lead to the change, but the collision of two subjects in the kinetic momentum of an unguarded encounter. The enemy that Freud would like to slay in this quotation is the neurotic demand for love that threatens to destroy the analytic work. My reading of this passage does not set out to criticize Freud for the apparently martialistic dealing with the transference, but to thank him for the openness of the description, which indicates the immediate affective momentum that the subjective forces in the analytic treatment encounter where change and psychic growth occur.

I am discussing the immediate experience as a precondition for psychic growth in a clearly defined sense. With it I describe a tension as understood by Ricœur (1977) in the opposition between living metaphor and habitual metaphor; Langer (1942) refers to the difference between the presentative symbolism of art and the discursive symbolism of language; Stern (2004) distinguishes the moment of the present and the encounter from the linguistically represented psychic event. It is therefore a matter of aliveness, presence and encounter.

In the context of the considerations presented here, I am not referring to the immediacy of experience in any way that suggests a lack of method. Both in the therapeutic and in the aesthetic context clearly definable methods, namely the mechanisms of kinaesthetic semantics, produce this kind of transformative experience. Rhythmization, seduction and ritualization lead to a synchronization between the environment and the kinetic subject. This transcends the temporal discoordination between the aesthetic realm and kinetic subjectivity. In experience there follows a sudden change of the *representative* into *presence*, *liveliness* and *encounter*. The precise temporal coordination is a first component of the immediacy of the experience of psychic growth. It is immediate in the temporal sense. But there is also a second, more important component: surprise or creation.

The developing coordination between the aesthetic environment and kinetic subjectivity has a vitalizing effect on the body-self. This animation of the kinetic structure leads to the *emergence of an emancipatory impulse*. The emancipatory impulse is substantiated in a creation that specifically cannot be inferred from the representational chain, but produces something new and unexpected in relation to it.

In the psychoanalytic treatment, the analysand's surprising association or the analyst's reverie generates new psychic spaces. In art, this new psychic place is substantiated by the production of something unique. The most important criterion of the artwork is its novelty in relation to the historical context. The artwork has a value only when it transforms the historical context, rather than just affirming it in conformity with the rules.

I take a critical view of the Freudian psychology of the artist. According to Freud, the function of art is to purge the artist's wishful phantasies of the quality of what is all-too-private, to shape them attractively, and make them available to the social group to obtain a narcissistic gain (Freud, 1908). I think it is appropriate to acknowledge, by contrast, that art is avant-garde to the extent that it provides spaces of psychic growth that

transform society. This is evidenced by the current function that art fulfils for Chinese society, as by the role of Renaissance art in the emancipation from the dictatorship of religion in European society.

### **Aesthetics between ritualization and creativity – some distinctions**

It has just been described as a paradox of musical enjoyment that while music celebrates the repetition of form, its enjoyment is achieved not in form but in deviation or seduction. This paradox can now be explained to the effect that it is a seduction that leads us to the immediate experience and celebrates the subject's freedom and sovereignty, such as in the jazz solo or in the cadence of the instrumental concert. A place is made for the subject inside the aesthetic process that contains a reversal of direction. Although the musician must first subordinate himself to the form of the other and serve the composer, he is still granted the possibility of free emancipatory play with the form in the cadenza or the solo. Starting from the previously attained synchronization between aesthetic form and body-self, the aesthetic material is now shaped from the present moment. Starting from the subversive impulsiveness of the moment, the form is worked through, destroyed and newly produced. In performing the first movement of a sonata, the attempt is made to capture these moments in the composition itself. Beethoven's emancipatorily revolutionary energy creates its own document and allows the listener, actively creating afterwards, to identify with these dynamics. In Bollas's terms, Beethoven's works are revolutionary transformational objects. Albeit usually only fleetingly, they turn us into subjects with revolutionary feeling.

Freedom, creativity and psychic growth are not the only possible goals of kinaesthetics. Aesthetics is also used for other purposes and in other contexts. Reference has also been made to ritualization and connection and in fact ritualizations do not always seek transformation and psychic growth but often the construction and restoration of connections. This variety in the goals corresponds with a variety in the emphasis on the basic mechanisms: the *replicatory ritual* seeks *connection* and emphasizes rhythmization; the *productive ritualization* of art seeks *creativity* and emphasizes seduction. Nevertheless, the poles of aesthetic composition generally remain in a certain hybrid relationship. If a composition follows the principle of form-repetition too closely, it comes across as fascistically empty and negates the subject. If a composition follows the principle of seduction too closely, it disintegrates into details and fails to achieve the aesthetic fascination necessary for reception, which is always based on intuitively recognizing the rule of the composition and so entering into a co-creative process.

### **Outline of a psychoanalytic theory of beauty**

A psychoanalytic aesthetics is grounded in a theory of perception and must be able to state how from a perceptual context as it is constantly given, an

aesthetic context emerges in which the experience of beauty plays a role. But the task does not end here for it must also be asked whether the experience of beauty is the essential function of art. This is disputable. But what must accompany it?

Let us suppose again that we live in the domain of language and language mostly structures, bounds and organizes our experience. This does not mean that we are not at the same time perceiving subjects, but perception here is the source of a linguistic category and functionality. We do not admire the uniqueness of a green traffic light but drive on because this is its socially agreed meaning. We refer to an aesthetic context where the logic of perception begins to control psychic events in a way that can deepen the relationship between the aesthetic object and the kinetic subject. This is achieved by the object of perception when the above-described aesthetic mechanisms exceed a certain measure. The sensory context assumes a good form in the sense of a well-proportioned internal structure. The subject's capacity and readiness for a co-creative process are preconditions for a kinaesthetic relationship.

An object that is beautiful in the psychoanalytic sense is one that by its internal structure, so through form-repetition and seduction, allows the subject to enter into a synchronization process between the object of perception and the body-self and thus transcends an alienation with which the person is afflicted by language acquisition. Beautiful in this sense is what transforms our psychic events so that they return from lexical semantics to the original kinaesthetic semantics with their affective intensity. In this definition of beauty, I therefore emphasize not only the specific structure of the aesthetic object but above all the specific form of *relationship* between the kinetic subject and the aesthetic object.

If the interest in beauty is considered from this perspective, it is soon obvious that it plays a role in the most varied contexts. The functionalization and abstraction of language alienate the subject from his own sensory nature. Various endeavours seek to restore this sensory relationship to the environment. The living environment is aestheticized in order to harmonize the relationship between the body-self and the environment. The most impressive example of this is undoubtedly the Tuscan landscape with its rows of cypresses on the hills that seem to want nothing other than to demonstrate the principle of form-repetition. But also architecture and internal architecture, the interest in fashion and cosmetics, the aestheticization of culturally important machines such as cars or smartphones: human purpose is certainly not only directed at symbolization, abstraction and functionality, but just as decisively at revitalizing the kinaesthetic relationship and cultivating sensoriality. All this describes the human subject's interest in beauty, but does not define a psychoanalytic aesthetics as such. Art contains a specific reference to conflict and trauma. Before this question is pursued, two further questions should be considered. First I will examine how the concept of kinaesthetic semantics is related to classical concepts of the aesthetic process; then I will ask whether the aesthetic mechanisms that were worked out in the musical context can be applied to other artistic domains.

## **Kinaesthetic semantics in the context of classical concepts of the aesthetic process**

I will briefly summarize here the debate with other authors conducted in more detail elsewhere (Leikert, 2012, 2014).

### *Freud: Sublimation and fore-pleasure*

Using the concepts of sublimation and fore-pleasure, Freud situates aesthetic events in a realm beyond language. Sublimation describes a transformation of the drive's relation to its object (Freud, 1905b). With the concept of fore-pleasure, Freud analyses the details of the sensory stimulus that rushes towards the connection of sublimation almost from the side of the aesthetic stimulus. This basic order is transcended in my theory insofar as I also understand the psychic process of art as the merging of the drive-related kinetic engram with the structured aesthetic stimulus. Rhythmic form-repetition in particular is already very clearly articulated in Freud: "There can be no doubt that the stimuli which produce the pleasure are governed by special conditions, though we do not know what those are. *A rhythmic character* must play a part among them" (1905b, p. 183, my italics). Freud describes the reciprocal approach between the sublimation of the drive-related kinetic and the rhythmically organized fore-pleasure of the aesthetic material, which he also terms "the purely formal – that is, aesthetic – yield of pleasure" (Freud, 1908, p. 152). Unfortunately Freud did not develop these ideas any further after 1908. I therefore understand my concept entirely in these terms and hope to be able to show that it can easily be related to the details of the artwork if form-repetition is understood as a basic mechanism of aesthetics. There are no clear parallels in Freud to the mechanism of seduction. But in my view the principle of seduction is prefigured in the concept of fore-pleasure, even though Freud does not examine the formal details of the seductive process.

### *Lacan: Elevating an object to the dignity of the Thing*

Lacan's preoccupation with art and creativity contains a central paradox. On the one hand, art has a key function in the orientation of the treatment, indeed Lacan (1959–60) formulates the ethics of psychoanalysis exclusively by engaging with aesthetic principles. On the other hand, he indicates the limitation of his own theory by referring to processes that he cannot represent with his concept of language. Central to psychoanalytic ethics is the commitment to *desire*, but desire is directed at what is beyond language. Language orders, articulates and restricts desire, but it does not represent it. In the seminar on ethics, Lacan goes so far as to compare language with the *Ten Commandments* (1959–60, p. 66). Creativity and desire, however, are directed at a reality beyond language. What is beyond it – the Real, Pleasure – Lacan condenses in the seminar on ethics in a concept that he goes on to put forward and refer as to *the Thing* – *la Chose* – which describes the direction of desire and remains excluded from linguistic representation.

Now the creative act consists in conferring on an object, as Lacan puts it, the *dignity* of the thing: “The object is elevated to the dignity of the Thing” (1959–60, p. 112). Here he draws support from the *function of beauty*, by which desire is guided. However, Lacan cannot derive this specific principle of beauty from his theory of the signifier. Likewise, however, he does not attach it to the Imaginary because on the one hand he ascribes the Imaginary to the gaze – that is, to perception – but on the other hand he understands the Imaginary as resistance towards desire and not, like beauty, as the stimulant of desire. It can therefore be said that, unlike Freud, who deals thoroughly with perception, Lacan does not have any theory of perception in its productive function. A theory of the aesthetic process and beauty can therefore only be put forward if – as with the structural theory of language – a structural theory of the perceptual dialogue is worked out. It is precisely this attempt that is undertaken by kinaesthetic semantics.

### *Winnicott: Inventing the breast where it is ready to emerge*

The theme of *creativity* is connected with the theme of *alienation*. Creation liberates the subject from alienation by the object and creates a place for the subject in relational reality. According to Lacan, language entails an alienation because the network of the signifier casts the other’s knowledge over the subject and pre-forms his place before he can orientate himself in it. In Winnicott this alienation is conceived in the concepts of the true and false self. The false self arises when the subject does not have his own adequately protected space and constantly has to escape from the encroachment of the object or construct his self in relation to intrusive impulses from the caregiving object. The self that emerges in this way is ‘false’ because it is defensively connected with the object and only slightly with its own bodily-vital impulsiveness (Winnicott, 1951). Winnicott criticizes psychoanalysis for having lost sight of ‘the main theme’ – “that of the creative impulse itself” (1971, p. 69) – and its function in the quest for the self – Winnicott’s expression for what Lacan terms desire.

Now the *transitional object* is one such creative invention in which the subject creates an object to have available that helps to safeguard his fragile autonomy. Winnicott emphasizes that the structure of this invention is the one that will later be extended: “It loses meaning, and this is because the transitional phenomena have become diffused, have become spread out over the whole intermediate territory between ‘inner psychic reality’ and ‘the external world as perceived by two persons in common’, that is to say, over the whole cultural field” (1951, p. 234). The concept of the transition/object can now be interpreted in various dimensions: the object is (1) in transition between dependence and autonomy. It is (2) in transition between a sensory and a symbolic representation of the object. And it is (3) in the transitory space between the self and the object. But above all it describes a domain of optimal sensory coordination between infant and mother. Winnicott explains that the transitional object is “originally the breast, that is to say, the thing [see Lacan above], created by the infant and at the same time provided from the environment” (1951, p. 241; my interpolation).

Winnicott emphasizes the sensory, that is, haptic, olfactory, acoustic or optical characteristics of the transitional object and its position of intersection between the field of the subject and the sphere of the object. It seems to me that these elements can also be better understood by considering the logic of kinaesthetic functioning. The grammar of the sensory entails a synchronization between the body-self and the sensory order. Only in the domain of the intersection and the good coordination between the reality co-creatively generated by the subject and the reality provided by the aesthetic object (breast) can meaning be developed and a good connection be experienced between the creative self, that is, the kinetic subject, and the world of objects.

The baseline of the aesthetic conceptions in Freud, Lacan and Winnicott therefore consists – as understood in the concept of kinaesthetic semantics – in the bodily aspect becoming synchronized with the sensory object. This movement can also be found in Klein and Bion (Leikert, 2014). I consider my reflections to be entirely in line with the named authors and by formulating the basic mechanisms of the kinaesthetic – form-repetition, seduction and ritualization – I am attempting to describe more precisely the details of the aesthetic process. But I will now address the question of the validity of the basic mechanisms described above for other artistic spheres as well.

### **Form-repetition and hiatus in the fine arts**

If it is actually the mechanisms that are significant for the aestheticization of perception that are being investigated in relation to music, these should also be identifiable in other artistic domains, as they too are characterized by perceptual processes. This will next be examined with regard to architecture.

Turning to consider aesthetics and ritualization as comparable processes, it comes as no surprise that it has always been buildings that reveal a high level of stylization and form-repetition that serve ritual in the narrower sense. Goethe's beautiful description of architecture as *frozen music* has a thoroughly positive meaning. From Stonehenge to the Acropolis and to the Christian cathedral, the rhythmization of architectural elements seems directly to serve the purpose of providing ritual events with a correspondence in the architectural perceptual environment. The consistency with which this principle can be traced through the most heterogeneous cultural contexts from Stonehenge to the present day is impressive. This principle obviously follows a completely ubiquitous and fundamental psychic process that we can now analyse with the concept of kinaesthetics.

This principle is demonstrated in particular by the Greek temple. First of all it is clear that the ritual participant receives the impression of an ordered perceptual environment here. This corresponds to the ancient concept of the ordered cosmos that the subject enters through worship. This concept is transposed by sensory proportions. The proportions of the Greek column in fact correspond to the dimensional ratios of an upright human being. The relation between body-self and temple was therefore produced by idealizing

the proportions of the human body in the architectural element of the column and its repetition. Something similar can be found in the Gothic cathedral. Here the saint's statue is an integral part of the building and produces the connection between body-self and transcendent reality in a sensory way.

Form-repetition, rhythmization and seduction are easily found in the visual domain too. Even where artistic invention departs from order, as in Pollock's drip-paintings, these works do not show chaos but something akin to the ornamentation of the random.

Here we are in the pictorial-visual domain, to which psychoanalysis has a rather mistrustfully dismissive relationship. Since Freud's theory of narcissism that proceeds from the gaze, the visual relationship has often been regarded as an impediment to development (Freud, 1914b). In the psychology of the mirror stage, Lacan (1989a) examines the organizing effect of the image in the mirror on the fragmented body-self (*corps morcelé*) and accords the function of the narcissistic image a similarly alienating quality. This critical analysis is correct where, from the heroic sculpture to the fashion photograph, the image is functionalized in flawless ideality, in order to produce connections between the subject and alienating contexts. In art however – to which I will return with the example of Bacon – the painting itself destroys the narcissistic surface in a way that forces the kinetic subject to grapple with his rifts and traumatizations (Leikert, 2005).

### **On the dual structure of poetry**

Turning to poetry, it is immediately clear that this cannot only be analysed in terms of a single semantic system. The poem is of course the realm of metaphor; the mechanisms of the linguistic production of meaning, metaphor and metonymy are at work in the poem. That does not need to be proven. But is this all that establishes the poem's aesthetic effect? I do not believe so. A linguistic event only becomes poetry where a second, namely kinaesthetic, order is also taken into account. Poetic intimacy only arises where the poem's metre, the sound of the words and the subtle attritions of rhyme introduce a second almost musical framework into the linguistic structure.

We can now also analyse how this operates: through language and its semantic effects certain meanings are brought into play. But it is only through kinaesthetic processes, through the rhythm and the ritualization of the sound layer, that the poetic word becomes, in addition to the symbolic meaning, a perceptual object that plunges into an enchanting poetic closeness because of the kinaesthetic transcendence of boundaries. Only this second order connects the linguistic structure with the body-self, that is, with the matrix of kinetic meanings.

In this way language acquires a fulminant affective charge. This results from the changed relationship to the kinetic subject. For one thing, an emotional immediacy of the meaning arises from the synchronization with kinetic impulsivity; for another, metaphor is now dominated by subjective meaning. In Winnicott's terms, metaphorical verbal meaning now enters the realm of the self's original creative omnipotence phantasy. As the infant in

primary omnipotence experiences having created the world himself (Abram, 1996, pp. 116–117), in poetry the kinetic subject experiences the world as metaphorically and creatively charged with his own meaning.

This process is also described in Kristeva's book *the Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984). In many points in parallel with my conception, Kristeva describes in addition to the normal linguistic meaning a second level of the psychic organization that she terms the *semiotic chora*. Semiotics means the relationship of signs to each other and therefore what remains of the sign when the content-related meaning is subtracted. Now what remains is the *form* of the sign, its sound, rhythmic quality and gestural force. Here we are on the musical plane and in fact Kristeva also explicitly refers to music: there are "nonverbal signifying systems that are constructed exclusively on the basis of the semiotic (music for example)" (1984, p. 24). *Chora* in Greek means the *foster mother of becoming*, therefore a dynamic underlying structure with an energy that is expressed in other structures, as in the linguistic structure. According to my interpretation, with the concept of the semiotic chora Kristeva formulates a first drive-near representation of the encounter with pre-verbal objects. The specific characteristic of this semantic system consists in operating close to the body, that is, kinetically and without storing meaning in linguistic signs. "The kinetic functional stage of the *semiotic* precedes the establishment of the sign; it is not, therefore, cognitive in the sense of being assumed by a knowing, already constituted subject" (1984, p. 27).

The memory of the semiotic chora is therefore not explicit, but operates as implicit memory, such as in poetry. Now in the poem there is a productive or, as Kristeva says, *revolutionary* tension between the semiotic chora and the established verbal meaning. The poem demonstrates "a resumption of the functioning characteristic of the semiotic *chora* within the signifying device of language" (Kristeva, 1984, p. 50). Kristeva understands this process by which the kinaesthetic, that is, the semiotic chora, becomes operative almost as an attack on the symbolic order. "Language thus tends to be drawn out of its symbolic function (sign-syntax) and is opened out within a semiotic articulation; with a material support such as the voice, this semiotic network gives 'music' to literature" (1984, p. 63). However, it seems to me that what can be recognized in this antagonistic collision between the two semantic systems, indeed precisely in the violent destruction of the husks of language, is the "*destructo-creative process*" (Schneider, 2009, p. 92) that leads to this charging with new meaning in the linguistic image, which Ricœur (1978 [1975]) terms *living metaphor*. Again we identify in the creative process the moment of a space for psychic growth. This space or container is conveyed by the kinetically charged metaphor that is the "law of growth of every semantic" (Langer, 1942, p. 147).

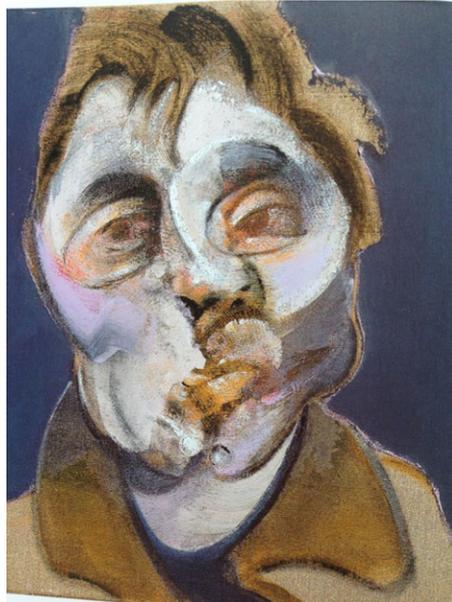
### *Bacon's anti-narcissism – an aesthetics of terror*

Various components of the aesthetic process have now been assembled. Form-repetition, seduction and ritualization were described as simple building blocks of the perceptual process. I have also identified the

synchronization between kinetic subject and aesthetic object that leads to the animation of the body-self and to the emergence of an emancipatory impulse that is substantiated in the creation of a new object. This process has been described as the basic process of psychic growth. These are specific preconditions for an aesthetic process in the narrower sense. But something essential has constantly been said to be missing. I will now consider a specific artwork in order to look for it.

To this end I will analyse a self-portrait by Bacon from 1969 (Figure 1). It would not initially be called beautiful in the generally accepted sense. Furthermore, it reveals the limitations of Freud's aesthetic conception, for it may not appear even in the logic of the sublimated sexual stimulus (Freud, 1905b, p. 155). Nevertheless I consider it meets the above psychoanalytic definition of beauty, which is based not on the content but on the formal structure and describes the conditions that enable the subject to immerse himself in a perceptual conversation that bypasses his rational functioning and moves him on a kinaesthetic level. In this way Bacon's pictures unfold their almost hallucinatory intensity.

But what can be seen here and what is the fundamental artistic process involved? What specific techniques are applied? And can these methods be deciphered by the mechanisms of form-repetition and seduction described here? I will first turn to the form-analysis. Bacon has created his own language of forms. A picture by Bacon is immediately recognizable. Even when he is painting a portrait of Michel Leiris or Lucian Freud, the specific pictorial language created by Bacon is immediately identifiable. If we look at the picture more closely, the element of form-repetition is distinctive. The



**Fig. 1.** Francis Bacon, *Self-portrait*, 1969, private collection.

face disintegrates into a shattered kaleidoscope of craters and spirals. The chalky coloration oscillates between an inky violet through brown to a pallid white from which the vitality is further drained by the pale violet.

The face appears to be decomposed and covered with growths and cuts, and nevertheless it has a unique concentrated stillness and clarity of gaze. Although it is deformed, it simultaneously bears an uncanny resemblance to the photographic portrait (Figure 2).

The resemblance arises specifically not from a reality-imitating replication of the facial features but from an artistic transformation of the expression. I would describe this expression as the *calm gaze amid the strife of the inner world*. To quote Bacon himself – “There was so much war in my life” – but rather than pursue the biographical aspect, I will return to the form analysis.

What can be surmised from looking at the photographic portrait and what is formally transposed in the picture is the strife and *fragmentation* of this human subject. The artistic technique with which Bacon transposes this is the torsion, destruction and subversion of the face shape by the crater form and the rift. This also occurs with seduction: formal elements are added to the face and at the same time cut it. Seduction in the Latin sense of *seducere* – to lead to the side – becomes visible here as activity that “can be likened to the work of a psychoanalysis” (Freud, 1900, p. 261). It involves tracing the deviation and fractures, instead of glossing over the rifts of human experience by harmonization. If we look more closely at the painted portrait, the formal process becomes autonomous. The eye appears at the base of an ash-white crater – uncanny like a whale’s gaze. The semi-circle below the nose arches over a growth. Mouth and chin disintegrate into an abyss. The left half of the chin, as a white ball, is a pure metastasis of the formal process that requires no depiction.

I will now abandon the consideration of the artwork to ask what basic process we are witnessing here. Discussing the aesthetic process in the fine



Fig. 2. Francis Bacon, *Portrait*, 1979, Dmitri Kasterine.

arts, I had indicated the reserve that psychoanalysis harbours towards the visual. The starting-point was the psychology of the mirror stage in Lacan's theory (1989a) and the organizing effect of the image in the mirror on the fragmented body-self (*corps morcelé*). But it is now obviously the case with Bacon that the kinetic subject is addressed by the aesthetic process, but certainly not reassured by an ideal narcissistic form. In accordance with the perceptual language of the picture and its high level of internal organization, the attentive viewer of Bacon disengages from linguistic identification and returns to being the kinetic perceptual subject that he was before language acquisition and has also always remained beyond language. The logic of the "transformational object" (Bollas, 1987) to which the viewer entrusts himself is one not of reassurance but disturbance. Bacon's self-portrait is fundamentally anti-narcissistic.

The picture perseveres and gouges until it has exposed the stratum of the rift in the subject, the festering, toxic wound left by the war of inner experience. But at the same time it is also a form for the trauma. It is a process of penetrating to what is intolerable and giving it a form. In this sense it is – in Bion's terms (1970) – both beta- and alpha-element. It is both what is intolerable and reverie about what is intolerable, a container for what is terrible and yet must be tolerated.

However, this certainly does not make the picture a vehicle of self-idolization. It does not serve the narcissistic function, that is, an escape into the fiction of an autarky of self-enclosed form. Here the picture serves the analytic function and ethic. This ethic implies that an elaborative encounter with the toxic is possible and the subject liberates and emancipates himself by confronting conflict and trauma. With it, however, the *perspective has reversed*: we now consider the artistic form from a different perspective. It is no longer the rhythmization and harmonization of aesthetic form, in perfect proportion, that prevails as the goal of the artistic process but an entirely different question.

The question that now arises is in fact the one that I regard as key to the aesthetic function. The artwork is legitimately evaluated with regard to whether it represents something of the subject's anarchic freedom and pleasure and his sovereign humour. But above all art is valued because it represents some of the strife and terror of the inner world. I hope to have shown with my description of Bacon's self-portrait that in its vocabulary the artistic form also makes recourse here to form-repetition. But at the same time seduction predominates. I understand seduction here not in the sexual sense but in the sense of *seducere*, leading to the side, leading away from the path of convention and the harmonious surface *towards the depths of human experience*. A yardstick for the evaluation of art here is the question of whether art provides a form that uses beauty to represent something about the tragic aspects of the human world.

The idea that the artistic form is accomplished in deviation in order to stimulate the process of emancipation and psychic growth can now be amplified. It is not about the psychic growth of the strong from strength, or beauty springing from beauty, but about beauty that claims its vitality in the face of terror. We can refer to art when psychic events are transformed

so that they have returned to the original kinaesthetic semantics with their affective intensity and are now striving to represent unprocessed psychic elements so as to require the subject to grapple inventively with unintegrated elements of pleasure, but above all with conflict, pain and damage.

This is well summarized by Jörg Immendorf's statement that "*Art is becoming a human being – nothing else*" (Kammertöns, 2007). Art serves the process of *psychic growth* on the personal and social level. In this sense I think art and psychoanalysis have a common ethical foundation. They provide spaces for psychic growth and serve the undertaking of making repressed and split-off suffering emotionally present in order to process it instead of being destroyed by it. As he enters into a real reception process, the viewer of art appropriates the spaces of psychic growth by a co-creative execution and can in the encounter with art invigorate and work through his own conflicts. Perhaps in this outline I have touched on something akin to what Rilke describes in his words about the terror of beauty and the danger of a destruction of the subject that is averted by art.

## Conclusion

The concept of the kinetic subject describes the subject in the immediacy of his experience of life and terror. The subject's experience is mostly represented through language. Language transmits to subject and object an enduring symbolization through a system of public signs that is influenced by culture, has grown out of an abstraction process and is linked with the most varied contexts by referential connections. Language thereby achieves something that is crucial for stabilizing the subject's inner world and integrating him into social contexts. On the other hand, language confronts the subject as the language of the other with a consolidated supremacy. It is no coincidence that Ferenczi (1949) referred to the linguistic confusion between *the adults* and *the child*. Language is the language of the other, whereas perception only becomes a perception in the complete sense when it is connected with the subject's vitality. Of course, the subject can also invigorate language with his own colours through a personal and creative process; in general, however, language entails an alienation for the kinetic subject. This position is formulated in philosophy by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, and in psychoanalysis by Ferenczi, Lacan, Kristeva and Stern.

To describe perception in terms of kinaesthetic semantics as an autonomous semantic system represents the attempt to develop various approaches to a non-linguistic order in its autochthonic logic. This has its own forms of alienation: the concept of the mirror stage was used to describe the characteristic tendency to assemble perceptual processes, which are constantly connected with the kinetic elements of subjectivity (*corps morcelé*), in an idealistic and solidifying imago and to connect with it. It may be no coincidence that my conception of aesthetics has emerged from a preoccupation with music. Music forces conceptual developments to realize the dynamic processuality of the aesthetic event.

Rhythmization and form-repetition are one aspect here; seduction is the other. Form-repetition creates a framework for kinaesthetic experience,

while seduction can focus experience on the moment and lead it to flourish in the moment. The procedure of ritualization encompasses the entire process. It shapes the process of synchronizing the aesthetic object with the kinetic subject, which co-creatively helps to create the aesthetic object until the point at which an intensive and transformative encounter can ensue.

Where the process of form-repetition prevails, replicatory rituals emerge that play a valuable role in guaranteeing and regulating the existence and psychic contact of communities. Aestheticization in this sense is a mechanism that is used in the most diverse contexts to construct and regulate connections. In this sense many aesthetic procedures and works have nothing to do with art.

Aesthetic objects in the narrower sense show in their formal aspect an emphasis on seduction and therefore processes that tend to lead away from regularity and bring destabilization. By this formal structure they stimulate less a reassurance than an animation or disturbance of the kinetic subject. Many artworks actuate the margins and extreme regions of human experience in order to measure themselves against them. Rather as the analytic psychotherapy setting frames the analytic relationship, art by its formal structure provides a framework for representing psychic suffering, while the subject's aliveness is simultaneously protected and challenged. This leads to the emergence of an emancipatory impulse and to a process of psychic growth.

### Translations of summary

« **La beauté n'est rien d'autre que le commencement de la terreur ...** » - **l'esquisse d'une esthétique psychanalytique générale.** Bien que quatre-vingt années ou presque nous séparent de la déclaration de Freud selon laquelle "la psychanalyse a d'ailleurs moins que rien à dire sur la beauté" (Freud, 1930, p.270), la question d'une esthétique psychanalytique spécifique pâtit toujours d'un manque théorique. Étant donné que l'esthétique est liée à l'Aisthesis, le terme grec pour « perception », une esthétique psychanalytique doit nécessairement passer par une psychanalyse des structures perceptives. Le terme de « sémantique kinesthétique » est introduit ici pour illustrer via la musique comment les expériences perceptives se structurent afin de pouvoir être éprouvées comme source de beauté. Les mécanismes de base – rythme (répétition formelle, régulation) et séduction (surprise, divergence) sont définis. C'est à l'aide de ces mécanismes que s'établit un contact intense entre un objet percevant et un sujet cinétique, le self physique. Seule une relation intense peut permettre le déploiement d'un processus créateur artistique, au même titre que le développement de la croissance psychique chez le sujet. On retrouve les mécanismes de base du processus esthétique en musique également en peinture et en poésie. Par le biais de l'étude d'un auto-portrait de Bacon, l'auteur de cet article examine la façon dont l'art vient à représenter la terreur et le traumatisme via une désorganisation ciblée des mécanismes générateurs de la beauté, ce qui permet de donner naissance à une confrontation et à une intégration des contenus réprimés.

“**Denn das Schöne ist nichts als des Schrecklichen Anfang ...**” – **Umriss einer allgemeinen psychoanalytischen Ästhetik.** Die Frage nach einer spezifisch psychoanalytischen Ästhetik stößt auch gut 80 Jahre nach Freuds Worten, die Psychoanalyse wisse „über die Schönheit am wenigsten zu sagen“ (Freud 1930, S. 441) auf ein Theoriedefizit. Insofern Ästhetik auf Aisthesis, d.h. auf Wahrnehmung, beruht, kann eine psychoanalytische Ästhetik nur aus einer Psychoanalyse der Wahrnehmungsstrukturen hervorgehen. Der Begriff der kinästhetischen Semantik wird vorgeschlagen, um – zunächst am Beispiel der Musik – zu untersuchen, wie sich ein Wahrnehmungsgeschehen so strukturiert, dass wir es als schön erleben. Grundmechanismen – Rhythmisierung (Formwiederholung, Verregelmäßigung) und Seduktion (Verführung, Abweichung) – werden herausgearbeitet. Mit Hilfe dieser Mechanismen wird ein intensiver Kontakt zwischen dem Wahrnehmungsobjekt und der kinetischen Subjekt, also dem Körperselbst, hergestellt. Diese intensive Bezogenheit ist die Bedingung für den kreativen Prozess in der Kunst und für psychisches Wachstum auf der Ebene des Subjekts. Die in der Musik untersuchten Grundmechanismen des

ästhetischen Prozesses lassen sich auch in der Malerei und in der Poesie wiederfinden. Anhand eines Selbstportraits von Bacon wird untersucht, wie in der Kunst, der Seduktion folgend, durch eine gezielte Desorganisation der Schönheit stiftenden Mechanismen Schrecken und Traumatisierung repräsentiert werden und so eine Form gefunden wird, sich mit abgewehrten Inhalten zu beschäftigen und sie zu integrieren.

**“Perché la bellezza altro non è che l’inizio del terrore ...” proposta di un’estetica psicoanalitica generale.** Sebbene siano trascorsi quasi 80 anni da quando Freud affermò che “è proprio sulla bellezza che la psicoanalisi ha poco da dirci” (Freud 1930, p.144), la questione di un’estetica specificamente psicoanalitica non ha ancora ricevuto una sistematizzazione teorica. Poiché l’estetica è riferibile all’*Aisthesis*, termine greco che significa percezione, un’estetica psicoanalitica può emergere solamente da una psicoanalisi delle strutture percettive. Il termine ‘semantica cinestetica’ viene/introdotta allo scopo di esemplificare, attraverso la musica, come le esperienze percettive debbano strutturarsi per poter essere vissute come belle. Vengono/quindi definiti gli elementi fondamentali – ritmo (ripetizione delle forme, regolamentazione) e seduzione (improvvisata, divergenza). Grazie a questi meccanismi, è possibile stabilire un intenso contatto tra la percezione/dell’oggetto e il soggetto cinetico, il sé fisico. Un’intensa relazionalità è essenziale sia per il processo creativo artistico che per la crescita psichica a livello soggettivo. Si può riscontrare anche in pittura e in poesia la presenza di quello che viene considerato il meccanismo di base del processo estetico in musica. Utilizzando un autoritratto di Bacon, si esamina come, nell’arte, terrore e traumatizzazione siano rappresentati per mezzo di una disorganizzazione mirata dei meccanismi che dotano di bellezza, trovando, quindi, modalità/che permettono di affrontare e integrare contenuti psichici precedentemente respinti.

**“Pues lo bello no es sino el comienzo de lo terrible...”: Esbozo de una estética psicoanalítica general.** Incluso cerca de 80 años después de que Freud dijera que el psicoanálisis “tampoco tiene mucho que decirnos sobre la belleza” (Freud 1930, p.144), la cuestión de una estética específicamente psicoanalítica aún enfrenta un déficit teórico. Dado que “estética” está relacionada con *aisthesis*, la palabra griega para ‘percepción’, solo puede surgir una estética psicoanalítica de un psicoanálisis de las estructuras perceptivas. Se introduce el término “semántica kinestética” a fin de ilustrar, a través de la música, de qué manera deben estructurarse las experiencias perceptivas para que estas sean experimentadas como bellas. Se definen los mecanismos básicos: el ritmo (repetición de la forma, regulación) y la seducción (sorpresa, divergencia). Con la ayuda de estos mecanismos, se establece un intenso contacto entre el objeto percibido y el sujeto kinético, el sí mismo físico. Esta relación intensa es un requisito para el proceso creativo en el arte, como también para el crecimiento psíquico del sujeto. Los mecanismos básicos del proceso estético en la música evaluados también pueden encontrarse en la pintura y la poesía. Mediante uno de los autorretratos de Bacon, se examina cómo, en el arte, terror y traumatización están representados a través de la desorganización orientada hacia los mecanismos que confieren belleza, encontrando así una forma que permita la confrontación e integración de los contenidos eludidos.

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