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On the reality clarified by art

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Abstract: In this article, I propose that there is a reality that can be clarified by art. This mode of reality — the ontologically subjective — is *by definition* inaccessible to science. Artistic creation hence stands as the academic endeavour which is better equipped to provide a suitable ground for its clarification, here understood as providing the means for a shared comprehension of such reality. However, not all artistic creation aims to do that and, if misdirected — as when it follows research methods and procedures borrowed from science —, it can't help but fail to do so. We thus face the challenge of defining a focus that is specific to artistic creation and that can help art to accomplish its full potential within the academy.
Keywords: artistic research; artistic creation; philosophy of art

I am a newcomer to the problem of artistic research. In fact, I completed a PhD in Music (more specifically in Composition) in 2014 without ever seriously considering the problem. Right after completing it, and after several years of teaching at art schools, I joined a faculty of engineering to teach at a Master and a PhD in Digital Media.[2] Though initially overwhelmed by the confidence that my engineering colleagues had in the soundness of their methods, I quickly realised that such methods were inadequate for the problems that some of my students and I were looking to address. Hopeless to help the students that came from artistic backgrounds, who were increasingly expressing how lost they felt regarding the choice of methods and validation procedures they were presented with, I first dwelled into the literature on artistic research.

I will not attempt to do a full review of such literature here,[3] but it was very frustrating to realise that none of the proposals that I found could help solve my problems, which included the difficulty of conveying the relevance and particularities of artistic research to my science and engineering colleagues. As it is common (even if often unsaid) in research, my problem only became fully defined when I thought about why these existing answers failed to appease my urge. A significant part of the literature that I found was focused on bringing forward the *research* element of artistic creation by proposing methodologies and validation procedures, whilst I quickly realised that I even had a problem with the expression *artistic research*. It stroke me as an oxymoron, but at first I wondered if that impression was due to my experience of the sharp dissimilarities between, on one hand, my by then affiliation with a rather orthodox engineering institution and, on the other, my many years of training in somewhat conservative music schools.

Traditionally, in art schools, we could witness a noticeable gap between the activities related to the theory of art and the activities related to the craft of art, i.e. the ones that look at art from a downstream perspective versus the ones that look at art from an upstream perspective. The former could be pursued as research (earning one a PhD and, hopefully, a subsequent academic career), the latter had to be evaluated solely by the aesthetic reception of the finished products, ideally by people who could claim to represent a relevant branch of the *Artworld* (Danto, 1964).

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3 Though I can recommend some: for a state of art overview (Almeida, 2015a), for an interesting statement of the problem (Coessens et al., 2009), and for a particularly good analysis of the problem (Almeida, 2105b).

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Nowadays, we witness a growing demand for PhD programs that allow one to pursue artistic creation *as* research. This is first and foremost a battle for the legitimacy of artistic creation — and, with it, a battle for the careers of artists within academia —, and associating it with the *pathos* of research might seem like a good solution in the short run. Artistic creation does often imply research, as scientific research does often imply creation. But focusing on the research aspect of artistic creation can be as misleading, in regard to its goals, as it would be to focus on the creative aspect of scientific research by calling it *scientific creation*. Artistic creation is a highly specialised activity, one that involves a lot of research-like activities and a thorough acquaintance with a relevant state-of-the-art. But, strictly speaking, it is not research[4] — in the sense that it does not strive to abstract theory from systematically observable phenomena —, and also not development — in the sense that it does not seek to come up with generalisable solutions for a given technical problems. Quite the opposite, in fact: when original, artistic creation struggles for the concretisation of singularities.

Academic research, with all of its many flaws,[5] is a scrupulous collective effort that, as such, becomes ineluctably conservative. On the other hand, artistic creation is an endeavour that thrives on the eccentricities of individuals who learn how to trust their own singularities over the consensus-forming force of the group. How do we combine the two without overthrowing either? How do we make a convincing case for the importance of hosting artistic creation within academia, one that aims to have an outreaching contribution, as opposed to further segregating the academic silos? And how do we create artistic graduate programs that don't stifle the individualisation of students?

It is easy to claim that any artistic creation makes a contribution — the artwork — and that each artwork is somewhat original. Thus, it is particularly easy for artistic creation to claim to fulfil two out of three parts of the sacrosanct triad "original contribution to knowledge". But what kind of knowledge can artistic creation provide? And, most importantly, is that particular type of knowledge exclusive to — or at least better attained by — artistic creation? If we do not provide a convincing answer to these questions, we will have a hard time persuading the academy at large that artistic creation deserves more than a role in the training of future professionals, or that it can seriously claim to be more than a creative embellishment of other, more serious, endeavours.

We can obviously abstract propositional knowledge — the know-that — from artworks and artistic practices. In fact, we have been successfully doing so for centuries in the philosophy of art, anthropology of art, sciences of the arts and related areas where art serves as a topic or object of study. As important as the theory of art is — e.g., for the training of artists and for our understanding of art as a human practice —, it does not set the ground for artistic creation, since it looks at art exclusively after the fact. We cannot deduce artworks from art theory, even if we often do it as a training strategy, naming the results *exercises* as opposed to *artworks*. This does not mean that theory is not important to artistic creation, it simply means that there is more to this creation than the simple application of theory. If the absence

4 A similar point has been made by John Croft (2015), in an article that raises some relevant issues regarding the problem of formulating artistic creation as research. Croft's article triggered an interesting thread of discussion in the following issues of the same journal.
5 Flaws that are quite possibly increasing in an age that favours external signs of productivity over scrupulous commitment.

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of propositional knowledge can hinder artistic creation, its mere presence does not provide any guarantee as to the artistic relevance of the outcomes.

We also cannot credit artists for the theoretical knowledge lifted from their artworks: that work should be (as it usually is) credited to the person doing the research on the artworks. Demanding from the artist an analysis of her[6] artworks as a requisite to confer to her activity the status of an academic endeavour can seriously undermine the quality and reach of such artworks, since it induces a shift of focus from the process of artistic creation into the methods of theoretical abstraction. Proper theoretical analysis requires a detachment from the artwork that its creator can never have, hence this shift of focus encourages not a reasonable induction of universals from the observation of particular artworks, but an undesirable design of artworks so that they can stand as good examples of the universals that the artist needs to claim to have induced from them. We are very likely to end up with a theory that only explains a small number of artworks that, in turn, owe their entire existence to their standing as examples of said theory: a paradigmatic example of circular reasoning.

There is also a great deal of procedural knowledge — the know-how — involved in artistic creation and art schools have become, even if only in relatively recent times, the place to develop that skill. It is rather difficult, however, to convey that know-how to another person. Since it is procedural and not propositional knowledge, we have no option other than helping that person acquire it herself by slowly guiding her on a one-to-one basis. For this reason, the fact that an artwork can display a significant amount of skill does not imply that it can make that know-how accessible to anyone else simply by being displayed.[7] In other words, the artwork can be an original contribution and it can clearly display a high degree of procedural knowledge — knowledge that has the potential of being slowly passed on to others via individual lessons with the creator of the artwork —, but the artwork is not a contribution to procedural knowledge *per se*. The newly acquired procedural knowledge remains with the artist, and whilst it is certainly good for her to master a given skill, it is only good *because* she can put that skill to use. It is only when she actually uses it that the results can be evaluated, and any skill can be used for both good and bad purposes alike.

The problem does not change whether we focus the development of skill on achieving a high standard of craft or on seeking novel skills. They are obviously not mutually exclusive, but different focuses nevertheless. We should expect academic artists to develop their skills to a very high standard, including for pedagogical reasons, since only a highly skilled artist can help students to achieve a similar standard of embodied knowledge. Nevertheless, the simple pursue of a high standard of skill without any novelty does not form an original contribution. And while novel skills can open new paths for artistic creation, they are important only insofar as they actually open those new paths, with their relevance and scope being the ones of the new artworks that they enable. A skill is interesting not merely because it is new — and certainly not solely because it is difficult to achieve, even if we can admire

6 I take gender-neutral language to be an important issue. I am, however, unaware of any solution that does not compromise the fluidity of reading, either because of the use of extraneous characters (e.g., s/he) or due to strange grammatical formulations (e.g., singular they). I therefore decided to use feminine pronouns whenever the gender is not determined by other elements of the discourse. Whilst obviously not gender-neutral, it contradicts the century-old tradition of using masculine pronouns to refer to abstract persons.
7 E.g., hours of appreciation of the results of Glenn Gould's virtuosity does not make one any closer to being capable of playing the piano like him. Believe me, I've tried…

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that as an athletic feat — but because it comes pregnant with novel and relevant artistic practices. Hence when we evaluate the artwork, we are evaluating the experience that the artist's skill affords, along with her criteria in developing and using it for the sake of that experience, not the skill *in itself*.

An art school surely needs people well-versed in theory and artists that are proficient in the specific techniques of each medium. But one can admittedly be both an eloquent thinker and a mediocre artist, and vice-versa. We are certainly also all familiar with cases of stellar technical accomplishments that are artistically sterile, as we are with ground-breaking artworks that seem — even if only after the fact — disarmingly simple in terms of skill. This suggests that putting the emphasis on either the know-that or the know-how as outcomes of artistic creation — or even in both, as it is increasingly the case in recent artistic research programs — does not offer us any assurance as to the quality and relevance of the artistic outcomes.[8] In fact, I believe that this emphasis can even inhibit, or at the very least deflect, the struggle for excellence in artistic creation. We nevertheless need to identify the possibility for meaningful and original contributions that go beyond the mere caprices of the artist and the contingencies of context, ones that we can evaluate as the outcome of art as an academic endeavour. The alternative that I propose — that artistic creation is the key to sharing the *know-what-it-is-like*, or experiential knowledge — is the main topic of this article.

I will begin by outlining my view over what art is, or at least over what it can be. As difficult as it is to deal with that subject, I believe that no take on artistic research would be complete without such positional statement. Every proposal for artistic research is built on implicit stances regarding both *art* and *research*, and we can only benefit by making them explicit. Hence, in section 2, I will claim that a complete view of art cannot stand on an analysis of neither the artwork as an object, nor of art as a social phenomenon, nor even on a combination of the two. As it happens with many other things that we also have trouble defining, art has first and foremost a subjective ontology that consists on the relationship established between an individual and an artwork. I will try to show that the subjective nature of this relationship does not render art incapable of escaping solipsism or subjectivism.

In sections 3 and 4, I will strive to clarify what is experiential knowledge and how artworks are designed to convey it. In section 3, I will delve on the question of the vividness of an experience as something that transcends the facts about the same experience. I will try to show why the propositional knowledge thrives on the stripping away of the vividness of experience and, conversely, why experiential knowledge can prosper from the divergence from facts. In section 4, I will examine how artists shape their materials into conveying a vivid experience, using the metaphor as an example. Moreover, I will strive to show how the process of materialisation is actually a process of clarification in itself, as opposed to a process of conveying ideas that exist *a priori*.

In sections 5 and 6, I will situate artistic creation in the academic context at large. In section 5, I will try to show that art deals with realities that lay beyond the scope of science, and that

[8] Or, even worse, placing the emphasis on the institutional validation of the artistic outcomes. I shall not discuss here what I believe to be the inherent problems of the institutional theory of art (Dickie, 1969), even if I hope that they will become obvious to the reader after reading this article. However, the simple reliance on the validation by institutions that are external to academia — and thus authorities that cannot be placed under direct peer scrutiny — constitutes *in itself* a problem for academic evaluation.

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science is as incapable of dealing with these realities as art would be of describing the ones that fall within the scope of science. Finally, in section 6, I will take a more practical approach, using an admittedly strict take on scientific research to provide both a contrast in purpose and a benchmark of earnestness for artistic creation within academia. The conclusion will point out to some future work, including a small first take on the ethics of academic artistic creation.

The artistic object and the artistic phenomenon as misconceptions

One popular misconception is to think about artworks as objects, i.e. to think that we should be able to find in the materialisation of a given object the characteristics that make it into an artwork. Most philosophy of art has long abandoned such idea, replacing it with variations of the idea of art as a social phenomenon that is built around these objects we call artworks. Both perspectives have an element of truth to them: our contact with an artwork is usually established through objects[9] and art is obviously part of human culture and, as such, a social phenomenon. Notwithstanding, either one of these perspectives, if taken exclusively, can be extraordinarily misleading. Not only because they can exclude one another, but mainly because they both exclude the personal relationship that each one of us establishes with particular artworks. Art is also — in fact I am convinced that it is mostly — the name we give to the personal relationships that each individual subject can establish with objects we call artworks. These objects have the particular ability to sustain such relationships, due to their material characteristics and the social context of each encounter, but they are not art unless someone actually establishes such relationship. For the sake of comparison, let us look at another word that we use to name a similar kind of relationship: a *friendship*.[10]

If I say that "Hannah is *a* friend", you do not understand what I mean by looking at Hannah as a particular object that you should agree to also call a friend. Instead, you take that as a testimony that I have established a particular kind of relationship with her, one that is somewhat similar to relationships that you have established with other persons. If you and I have something in common, you might feel inclined to try to befriend Hannah, but it would be silly to observe her objective characteristics striving to find what makes her *a* friend. You could, at some point, befriend her and also begin to call her *a* friend — as opposed to *Rui's friend Hannah* —, but that would not imply that we would share the exact same relationship with her, as only half of that interrelation would be the same. Despite that, we would be referring to the same person, and we could even argue about what Hannah felt, thought or intended in a given situation. We would do so by referring to observed actions and contexts as support, whilst comparing our interpretations of them: in short, our knowledge of Hannah as *a* friend would be complementary.

We could say that Hannah has the *affordance* of becoming a friend, but that would be applicable to every single person on earth. And despite what present day social networks seem to imply, we certainly do not maintain real friendships with every human being we have ever encountered: even if we would like to — and we certainly would not —, that would be

9 Which can include the material manifestation of sounds, movements, etc.
10 Friendship is a concept whose importance to philosophy — brought to prominence by the presence of the element *philos* (friend) in the word *philosophy* — stands in contrast with the comparative lack of prevalence in the canonic literature. For a very interesting short review, I highly recommend an article entitled *Friendship*, by Giorgio Agamben (2004). What I will attempt to do here, notwithstanding, is an analysis based on the common use of the word.

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utterly impossible, not to mention exhausting! Knowing Hannah as a friend provides me with a knowledge of her that is entirely different from what I could get from, e.g., a careful inspection of her whole-body MRI[11] or a thorough study of her context and behaviours. In fact, I think that most people — even hardcore materialists, committed (post-)structuralists or devout behaviourists — would have no trouble recognising that sustaining a long and fruitful friendship with Hannah is, in a sense, the only way of *truly knowing her*. This is, however, a knowledge that I can claim to have, but that I cannot pass on to others using solely propositional statements.

A friendship is a relation that can only be established by nourishing a first-person perspective over a second-person. I cannot befriend a third-person: even if I can mention a friend in the third-person, I am always referring to a bond that was established by interacting with a second-person. Some people are *friendlier* than others — which means that their affordance as friends is more outwardly evident —, but that usually means that it is easier to establish a friendly relationship with them, implying nothing about the profoundness and significance of such relationship. It is commonly easier to establish a friendship with a person that we can more effortlessly understand, i.e. a person that we have less trouble forming a *theory of mind of*. That might be because we share the same culture, the same set of beliefs and similar goals in life; or simply because we are currently enduring the same hardship. However, the more profoundly reshaping friendships are perhaps the ones that we establish with persons who are somewhat different from us: they can be life-changing precisely because they imply that, in order to have them, we had to conjure a theory of mind that enabled us to attain a new perspective over the world.

There are many ways in which prejudices can interfere in the establishment of *true* friendships. Sometimes we identify so strongly with a given set of beliefs that the mere fact that we recognise the same creed in someone else makes us immediately connect with, and perhaps even befriend, that person. Or the other way around: we can simply be unable to befriend someone whose creed or culture stands in direct opposition to our own system of belief. In other situations, we can be so absorbed by the impression we want to cause on others, or by the norms that govern the behaviour to be expected in a given setting, that we simply silence any action that could convey what we are truly thinking or experiencing. We thus act inauthentically and consequently prevent the establishment of meaningful relationships, which is something that could happen even whilst being *friendly*. Establishing a friendship with someone we deeply admire but only know superficially (e.g., a celebrity) can be very difficult because of all of the expectations we bring to the table. Conversely, being someone who is expected to always behave according to strict external expectations (as is the case in some professions) can seriously undermine our capacity to establish sincere friendships. *True* friendships are solely the ones that are based on an authentic and free encounter between two individual persons that face each other as such. This is what Hannah Arendt, when she responds to Gershom Scholem's accusation of displaying no trace of "love for the Jewish people", eloquently conveys with these words:

> How right you are that I have no such love, and for two reasons: first, I have never in my life "loved" some nation or collective — not the German, French, or American nation, or the working class, or whatever else there might be in this price range of loyalties. The fact

[11] Magnetic Resonance Imaging.

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> is that I love only my friends and am quite incapable of any other sort of love. Second, this kind of love for the Jews would seem suspect to me, since I am Jewish myself. I don't love myself or anything I know that belongs to the substance of my being. (Arendt & Sholem, 2017, p. 202)

Imagine that I try as hard as I can to provide a description of what friendship *is*. No matter how detailed I got, that description would remain powerless to convey the *what it is like* of having a friend and it would always seem incomplete to anyone who read it.[12] We cannot strip away what is subjective and singular about each particular friendship to abstract a consensus without entirely missing the target, since a friendship *consists* primarily on the ineffable subjective experience of *having a friend*. There is an emotional aspect to friendship that can be stated as a necessity, but never described in its specificity. Nevertheless, the fact that we cannot satisfactorily describe friendship does not mean that we do not know what it is. Our personal friendships, each with its own idiosyncrasies, establish the scope and profundity of our own first-person understanding of *what it is like* to have a friend. And even if we cannot reach a consensus on how to describe friendship, we can recognise one when we experience it and even when we witness it unfolding in others. It is important to note, however, that a friendship is not a static entity, but a flux that is constantly *becoming* (which of course also includes *unbecoming*) by manifesting itself as interactions in the social realm. Crystallising what a friendship happens to be at any given point in time will hinder its natural motion and render it inauthentic. Yet at each moment it either has a subjective existence — i.e. I *feel* that Hannah and I are friends and consequently also believe that to be true —, or it doesn't exist at all, even if I manifest behaviours that seem to attest otherwise.

A very interesting attribute of friendship is the fact that, despite consisting mostly on a subjective, first-person perspective, it is never solipsistic. As an example, I can easily feel self-centredly detached whilst interacting with a group of acquaintances, but I rarely do when I am silently drinking a cup of tea with a good friend. In fact, understanding another as a friend stands at the very foundation of the interrelation of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. As Giorgio Agamben puts it:

> The friend is not another I, but an otherness immanent in selfness, a becoming other of the self. At the point at which I perceive my existence as pleasant, my perception is traversed by a concurrent perception that dislocates it and deports it towards the friend, towards the other self. Friendship is this de-subjectivization at the very heart of the most intimate perception of self. (Agamben, 2004, p. 6)

Whilst I can only know that *I* love Hannah, for the friendship to work I have to somehow *trust* that she also loves me. This trust does not hang solely on her statements or actions, but instead on the confidence that I place on the theory of mind that helps me to conjure plausible intentions with which to explain such acts. In other words, this trust does not hinge on the observable characteristics of such acts, but on the confidence I have in my interpretation of them. In a sense, we could say that my friend is not Hannah, but my *theory of mind of Hannah*. The wider the scope and the better the consistency between the two, working also from Hannah towards me, the more profound will the friendship be at a given time.

[12] What I am attempting to do here is to analyse some properties of friendship, not describing what it is.

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Having an earnest theory of mind of Hannah, together with observing her actions towards a world in which I am included, allows me to observe the world and myself through a perspective that I now have privileged access to — after all, it is *my* theory of mind. But it is one which is not entirely mine, as it continuously strives to correspond to an alien subjective reality to which I will never have direct access: Hannah's own mind. The more foreign her perspective is in regard to my own, the more difficult it will be for me to embrace it, but the more beneficial it can be in expanding my own worldview and self-knowledge.

Strangely enough, the authenticity of a friendship is independent from its existence as a fact. As we've seen, the existence of a friendship does not depend on a correspondence to an outside, observable reality: since it has a subjective ontology, it *is* real for as long as I feel it. But it can be inauthentic if my theory of mind lacks correspondence with Hannah's intentions: if its' becoming, at any moment, is based on false assumptions, on forged intentions or on misinterpreted actions. This does not have to imply Hannah's intent to deceive me,[13] as it can be the consequence of, e.g., a theory of mind based on superficial affinities or the result of an unresolved misunderstanding. Or even simply because we both underwent significant changes of worldview without having an opportunity to update our respective theories of mind, as it is often made painfully clear when we run into friends who were once a significant part of our life. A friendship can exist and be inauthentic (or even damaging) at the same time. The earnestness and care with which I strive to observe the world and myself through Hannah's perspective whilst providing her with the opportunity to do the same through mine — together with the crucial maintenance of (and respect for) the individuality of such perspectives — are therefore critical components of an authentic friendship.

I went to great length in this analysis of friendship, a concept which at first sight might seem alien to the purpose of this article, because I am convinced that what we call art is entirely related. Art is the name of a relationship — perhaps we should call it an *artship* — that we can establish with a given object: the artwork. This object is special because it was intentionally made for us to take it as a materialisation of an action of a fellow human being,[14] giving us the opportunity to form a theory of mind — i.e. to conjure in us a perspective — that helps to explain such action. We have seen that the unfolding in time of a friendship:

1. happens only through direct experience of the other as an individual person;
2. is entirely dependent on its subjective ontology — I either feel it, thus being certain of its existence, or it doesn't exist;
3. provides a knowledge of the other that is entirely unique for each combination of two persons, but that can be complementary for two friends that share a friendship with a third person;
4. depends as much on the other as it depends on me;
5. can be inauthentic, even when existing as fact, if based on false or superficial assumptions;
6. is more difficult — but also potentially more meaningful and life-changing — when it requires me to adopt an unfamiliar perspective.

[13] The intent to deceive can be well-meaning, when it is born, e.g., from a genuine care about the other's feelings. However, it cannot prevent but to create a gap in the correspondence between the mind of one and the theory of mind of the other, particularly when it is successful.
[14] I have argued, together with Miguel Carvalhais, that we will always anthropomorphise — and thus misunderstand — artworks made by other species of intelligence in (Penha & Carvalhais, 2018).

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Similarly, the unfolding in time of an artship:

1. happens only through direct experience of an artwork which is understood as a materialisation of a human action;
2. is entirely dependent on its subjective ontology — I either feel it, thus being certain of its existence, or it doesn't exist;
3. provides a knowledge of the artwork that is entirely unique for each combination of a person and an artwork, but that can be complementary for two persons that develop an artship with the same artwork;
4. depends as much on the characteristics of the artwork as it depends on me;
5. can be inauthentic, even when existing as fact, if based on false or superficial assumptions;
6. is more difficult — but also potentially more meaningful and life-changing — when it requires me to adopt an unfamiliar perspective.

Due to the limited scope of an artwork as a materialised action, the theory of mind I evolve through this artship will not be one of a complete person. Nor will it correspond to the one I could establish if I befriended the author. Far from a limitation, that is actually what allows artworks to be more focused on the particular perspective they were designed to convey. In fact, details from the artists' life that are unrelated to the perspective materialised in a given artwork are not only irrelevant, but actually potentially intrusive in the establishment of an artship. The ones that are relevant, however, can take that artship to a deeper level, and should be chosen precisely for that reason. Facts and commentary about artworks and their creators, either provided by the author or by someone else, are only adequate companions to the experience of the artwork insofar as they contribute to deepen the immediacy and authenticity of such experience. As Susan Sontag puts is:

> Our task is not to find the maximum amount of content in a work of art, much less squeeze more content out of the work than is already there. Our task is to cut back content so that we can see the thing at all.
> The aim of all commentary on art now should be to make works of art — and, by analogy, our own experience — more, rather than less, real to us. The function of criticism should be to show how it is what it is, even that it is what it is, rather than to show what it means. In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art. (Sontag, 1966, p. 14)

When an artwork is totally unintelligible to us, we should not call it art just because someone else in power says that it is. If I can't establish a meaningful artship with it, it is not art *to me*, even if it has the potential to become so. An artwork is thus an object that was purposely designed to *afford* the establishment of artships. But I can establish artships with objects that were not built to be artworks. If I believe something to be an expression of an intentional action of another being, I can establish a relationship with it and interpret it as an artwork (or even as a person): after all, animism, teleology and imaginary friendships all have long traditions in human history. But, as it happens with friendships, the fact that an artship exists does not imply that it is an authentic artship. And if the theory of mind that allows me to understand an artwork can be shown to be implausible, then my artship is inauthentic. Artists too can establish inauthentic relationships with their own artworks, if they are not earnest and candid with themselves about the reasons for their artistic decisions. And just as I cannot

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establish an authentic friendship with someone who acts inauthentically, I cannot establish an authentic artship with an artwork made by someone I do not trust to be behaving earnestly and authentically. I will highlight the focal point of this earnestness in the next section.

I can appreciate an object by what it does *for* me, by judging how well it fulfils a particular need or desire. As I can appreciate an interaction with someone without establishing a friendship, e.g., when that interaction is an agreeable fulfilment of a social need. This usefulness can go beyond the satisfaction of basic pragmatic needs and extend well into necessities such as, e.g., entertainment, hedonism, group bonding or even class distinction. And when I witness people from my community manifesting similar behaviours in response to matching objects, that certainly goes a great length in bringing about social cohesion, even if it can ultimately also have the reverse effect of excluding the other. There is an undeniable place in our culture for the creation of well executed artefacts that express our values and bond our communities, and this *poiesis* often requires a high degree of craftsmanship. The very best of these artefacts are perhaps more striking and enduring examples of our cultures than most of our artworks. As Ortega y Gasset puts it:

> At every moment we can find poetic voices around us, some of which are full and harmonious, or at least correct; but very few of them are original lyrical cries. Let's not be too harsh with the lack of originality; let us apply to works of art that do not aim at a new style an appropriate criticism. Let us demand of them fullness, harmony, or at least correction — the virtues of eternity. [15]

When I establish an artship, however, I am mainly empathising with the intentions I ascribe to the author *through* my contact with the artwork. Please note that I didn't write the intentions *of* the author, as these can be entirely dissimilar from the former for a great number of reasons. It is scarcely surprising that, e.g., when we are only able to form an understanding of an artwork as a mockery of something that we care about, the result can be an uneasy feeling of being insulted by the proposal. It is also not surprising that the beliefs we come to hold about a specific work of art, such as that of being a forgery or an imitation, can significantly change the way we relate to it.[16] After all, the intent to deceive or imitate is very different from that to express something original. Just as when a friend being dismissive can be seen in better light once we become aware that she was doing so in order not to ruin our birthday surprise, gathering contextual information before jumping to conclusions about other peoples' actions — in art as in life — can enable us to better relate to their intentions. As John Dewey puts it:

> For to perceive, a beholder must create his own experience. And his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent. They are not the same in any literal sense. But with the perceiver, as with the artist, there must be an ordering of the elements of the whole that is in form, although not in details, the same as the process of organisation the creator of the work consciously experienced. Without an act of recreation the object is not perceived as a work of art. The artist selected,

[15] Translated from the original in Spanish: "En todo instante pueblan el aire poéticas voces de las cuales son algunas plenas y armoniosas, por lo menos correctas; pero muy pocas de ellas son gritos líricos originales. No seamos demasiado duros con la falta de originalidad; apliquemos a las obras de arte donde no se intenta un estilo nuevo, una crítica apropiada. Exijámosles plenitud, armonía, por lo menos corrección—las virtudes de eternidad." (Ortega y Gasset, 1964, p. 247).
[16] For a thorough analysis of examples, I recommend (Winner, 2019).

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> simplified, clarified, abridged and condensed according to his interest. The beholder must go through these operations according to his point of view and interest. In both, an act of abstraction, that is of extraction of what is significant, takes place. In both, there is comprehension in its literal signification — that is, a gathering together of details and particulars physically scattered into an experienced whole. There is work done on the part of the percipient as there is on the part of the artist. The one who is too lazy, idle, or indurated in convention to perform this work will not see or hear. His "appreciation" will be a mixture of scraps of learning with conformity to norms of conventional admiration and with a confused, even if genuine, emotional excitation. (Dewey, 2005, p. 56)

As with my friend Hannah, what an artwork is *to me* will not be the exact same thing that it is *to you*. The establishment of artships depends on our individual capability of understanding the perspective of others through their actions as artworks and, perhaps even more significantly, on the rare chance of finding a fertile artwork at the right moment and with a suitable state of mind. Our perspectives can be complementary if they are based on plausible readings, but either (or both) of them can be wrong if they stand on misinterpretations, false information or on intersubjective prejudice — which certainly includes having the artwork presented from the start as a masterpiece. When we form beliefs about someone based on superficial evidence and failing to interact with them as individual *persons*, we are exercising prejudice, something that is unacceptable even when happening with a positive bias. The exact same thing happens with artworks.

I will go out of my way to present a friend to another friend if I know both well enough to anticipate that they will share something that can trigger a fruitful relationship. If I care about someone, I will do my best to make her aware of what I believe to be an inauthentic friendship that she naively maintains, gently presenting my best arguments to support that opinion. Perhaps we should do the same about artships: presenting new artworks to friends only when we think that they will be able to relate to them, sparing no efforts to introduce them to the appropriate background information and context; alerting friends about inauthentic artships that they maintain, providing good arguments to support that claim and being ready to change our own minds if that need arises. But we should keep in mind that it is about caring for one another and never about exercising authority.

As we have seen, all friendships are different, even when one of the persons is the same, and they can be inauthentic even when existing as a fact. It would be foolish, however, to use that as an excuse to dismiss the importance that friends have in establishing the very foundations of our self-knowledge and worldview. No amount of propositional knowledge could ever be a remotely adequate replacement for that. Both friendships and artships are fundamentally important for those who have experienced them. My life would be as incomplete without true friendships as it would be without true artships, and the deepness of the perspectives that they both enabled in me played — as they still play today — *the* instrumental role in the construction of my worldview and, above all, of my own self-image. In short, they helped shaping who I am and who do I aim to be, they were the catalysts of my becoming.

If friends have an edge for being actual persons — and that is obviously a very important upper hand —, artworks have the advantage of being more focused, less erratic and more easily accessible in similar terms to a broader range of people. Whereas persons act differently according to who they are facing at any given time, most artworks diligently remain

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undisturbed whilst conveying the human actions that they carry. As opposed to what happens with friendships, artships are not bidirectional and hence provide a more stable vertex for the triangulation of the complementary knowledge of multiple artships.[17] As a result, their impact might be frailer than that of our closest friends, but they provide a much wider common ground for discussion with others. Also, when I interact with the same artwork repeatedly over the years what gets highlighted is, above all, what has changed in myself and not in the artwork.

The unsurpassed role that friends play in each of our own lives as individuals can be played by artworks in our existence as a culture, providing we do establish individual artships with them and freely discuss those artships amongst us. Still, how do we materialise human actions as artworks so that they can enable the establishment of artships? What is the difference between the knowledge that they convey and the knowledge that is best conveyed by standard propositions? How do we shape matter into being capable of conveying a human perspective?

Being truthful to the vividness of experience

David Hume might not be a household name as well-known as, e.g., Aristotle, Descartes or Kant, but his influence in shaping our culture is certainly at least as extensive as that of any of the three.[18] One of his most famous ideas deals with the difference between perception, memory and imagination:

> Every one will readily allow that there is a considerable difference between the perceptions of the mind, when a man feels the pain of excessive heat, or the pleasure of moderate warmth, and when he afterwards recalls to its memory this sensation, or anticipates it by his imagination. These faculties may mimic or copy the perceptions of the senses; but they never can entirely reach the force and vivacity of the original sentiment. (Hume, 2007, p. 17)

One might read these words as suggesting that we store no memory of the vividness of perception, but in fact we need to somehow keep a memory of that vividness to realise that what we latter retrieve or imagine cannot reach such vividness, or to be able to recognise a similar vividness when we experience it again. We merely seem unable to recall that vividness without external help. The same external help, however, will elicit different vividnesses in different people with different states of mind. But what is the nature of such vividness? Is it an additional fact about the experience that we can selectively sense but not retain? Is entirely dependent on our own mind? Or is it something that emerges from the encounter between the facts of the experience and our attention?

The attention we give to an event, as well as the focus of such attention, certainly seems to play a key role in the vividness of the experience of such event. Let us imagine a trivial example: the experience of a sunset by the ocean. The vividness of the experience of that same sunset will be greater for the person focusing her attention on the intense saturation of

[17] This triangulation will be explored in section 5.
[18] Recently, a famous philosophy podcast asked 57 contemporary philosophers to name their favourite philosopher, and David Hume came out in first place. He got 12 votes, well ahead of Immanuel Kant's second place with 7, being praised as "wonderful to read" and "keen to understand exactly how humans work" (Bartlett, 2013).

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colours, the gentle salty breeze and the serene beach soundscape — even if she is not looking directly at the sunset — than it will be for her friend who spends the same time striving to get better signal reception on her smartphone — even if she states that she *is* experiencing the sunset with her friend. It is also important that the attention is given to how the particularities of the event arouse our senses and imagination, as opposed to their standing as a somewhat blemished version of a given ideal. In short, we need erotic rather than platonic attention.

This suggests that there is a gap between the vividness of a given experience and the facts that we can abstract from the same experience. I can state that I am seeing a red tomato — and even measure the average wavelength of that red — without implying anything about the vividness of such experience, i.e. about my experience of its redness. The intent to describe the facts is, in most cases, directly opposed to the intent to convey the vividness. The former implies detachment from my personal perspective and consequent annihilation of the subjective vividness:

> The colour of the *Solanum lycopersicum* fruit is derived from the cells within the fleshy tissue, which encloses between 50 and 200 small seeds in gelatinous membranes inside bilocular or multilocular cavities.

whilst the latter implies the narrowing of focus on my subjective perspective and thus on elements that might not be accessible to others:

> This tomato reminds me of the ones we ate during those long summer vacations at my grandmothers', remember? Straight from the bush and with nothing but salt and a little sip of olive oil: I will never forget that taste!

This first example conveys useful information, but it is not *interesting*, in the sense that it does not arouse any sensorial or emotional attachment, even if it can satisfy a curiosity of a previously triggered interest. The second example reveals an interest of the speaker, but it is unlikely to convey that interest to anyone who does not share the particular experience it is referring to. In short, it conveys the existence of an interest, but not the interest itself: we would need something more for that to happen, as we will see below. Children seem to have a capability of paying attention to particularities of the here and now of their experience that is vastly more profound than that of most adults, and that is certainly not solely because they lack previous experience to leverage a detached abstraction. Rather, it is mostly because they still know *how* to focus their full attention and imagination on the singularities of each unique experience, also understanding that one can't postpone an opportunity to have one.

Interestingly, we don't need to segregate our attention over a given element in order for it to be a relevant component of the vividness of the whole experience. Going back to the sunset by the ocean, it is easy to see that it can be capable of intensifying the vividness of, e.g., an otherwise unrelated conversation between friends simply by providing a welcoming environment of vivid colours. Even if the friends are mostly focusing their attention on the interaction between them, the warm sunset by the sea provides an environment that endows the conversation with a vividness that is greater than it would be if it was happening in a comparatively duller setting. But can the light from the sun somehow carry the vividness of the sunset? That sure seems unlikely. Is it, on the other hand, merely a cultural convention?

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We might come to associate the colour saturation of a sunset by the beach to an idea of "vividness of experience" and, e.g., deploy it as a colour filter that conveys such idea on an advertisement for beer. But vividness, as Hume argued, is not an idea that we can articulate, but a passenger — perhaps even the driver — in the vehicle of experience. And *recognising* an experience is not the same thing as *having* one. Nor is recognising which experience we are supposed to be having and displaying, even if unconsciously, the consequent appropriate behaviours. That would be an inauthentic experience, which can only be a vivid experience of that inauthenticity. In order to have a vivid experience, we need to be focusing our full attention to our sensibility, including our inner one, without excluding any element of it: even to the ones that we might not consciously notice.

In fact, we cannot divide our attention without undermining the vividness of the whole experience: e.g., a severe pain will ruin an otherwise great concert experience or a cellphone constantly calling for attention will ruin the chances of having a great meal. Actively trying to pay less attention to the things that are not positively contributing to the vividness of experience might, at first sight, seem like a good idea, but paying less attention to our senses seems to always entail a reduction of the vividness of experience. What we want is instead to make sure that everything around us — as well as inside of us — is helping us to focus our attention, as opposed to competing for it. John Dewey — whose chapter "Having an Experience" is perhaps the best companion for this section — calls this the *unity* of experience:

> An experience has a unity that gives it its name, that meal, that storm, that rupture of friendship. The existence of this unity is constituted by a single quality that pervades the entire experience in spite of the variation of its constituent parts. (Dewey, 2005, p. 38)

Artists need to be particularly trained into always being aware of what is catalysing and what is intruding in the vividness of each experience. They need to be conscious of all of the elements of an experience and of the role that they play in it. If they want to converge their complete attention into a unified experience, they need to be able to quickly understand what they should eliminate, change, introduce or reinforce in their environment and in themselves to make sure that their experience is as vivid and as focused as it can possibly be at any given time. This acute awareness is the exact skill that allows them to also shape artworks that convey vivid experiences for others, because they first and foremost create them as vehicles for their own vividness of experience. This is a very important point for artistic creation: to convey the vividness of an experience, an artist cannot simply *describe* the experience, nor merely *point* to the experience. The vividness of experience cannot be represented, only *summoned*. As the famous Mark Rothko adage goes, "a painting is not a picture of an experience; it is an experience." (Winner, 2019, chap. 1) To convey an experience with vividness, the artist has to find a way to summon the experience in a holistic and narrowly focused way, first in herself and then in others. She has to provide the right context and focus to the experience, using all the resources she can in order to make sure that the recipient has the best opportunity to actually summon the experience within herself.

If the recipient resists having the experience, or if she is unable to relate to it for some reason — including an ill-suited state of mind —, then that particular artship will fail and the experience will not be a vivid experience of the kind the artist intended, even if it can be a

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particularly vivid experience of discomfort or even torment. Also, if the artist looses the focus on the experience at hand, that artwork is doomed to fail.[19] Leo Tolstoy, unsurprisingly, expresses this in a much simpler way than I am capable of:

> If a man infects another or others directly by his look or by the sounds he produces at the moment he experiences a feeling […], this is not yet art. […] Art begins when a man, with the purpose of communicating to other people a feeling he once experienced, calls it up again within himself and expresses it by certain external signs. (Tolstoy, 1995, chap. V)

The better control one has over how these external signs work to convey experiences, the better one will be able to use them to communicate. But this control does not equate with *proper use*, instead being closer to *more effective use*. But how does one know that it is effective? The man does not call the experience within himself in its entirety before expressing it, referring to it as an ideal form to which the expression should aim. Instead, the man calls it up again within himself *by* expressing it. He surely has to remember the experience, and remember that it was a particularly vivid one, in order to start conveying it. In fact, he probably has to crave the opportunity to relive that vividness in order to be stimulated to find a way to do so. He has to be in an appropriate state of mind to express it correctly and that might require some preparation. But he is listening to the story as much as his listeners are, and he is doing it at the same time, experiencing himself the vividness which he is able to invoke. His reference point is not the memory of the facts of the experience, nor his ideas about the experience, but mainly his will to relieve the vividness of the experience itself. A memory that has the peculiarity of only being retrievable by repeated exposure to experience. As Susan Sontag puts it:

> For we are what we are able to see (hear, taste, smell, fell) even more powerfully and profoundly than we are what furniture of ideas we have stocked in our heads. […] A great work of art is never simply (or even mainly) a vehicle of ideas or moral sentiments. It is, first of all, an object modifying our consciousness and sensibility, changing the composition, however slightly, of the humus that nourishes all specific ideas and sentiments. (Sontag, 1966, p. 300)

Tolstoy's man wants to remain truthful to his experience, but it is not as vivid in his memory as it was when he actually lived it. Merely describing the facts does not help in any way. In fact, it would be unsettling to witness someone describing an event that we would expect to entail a vivid experience by sticking to an enumeration of the facts in strictly declarative, detached terms. As with Elliot, António Damásio's famous patient, that always "[…] seemed to approach life on the same neutral note." During his time of working with this patient, Damásio "never saw a tinge of emotion in […] many hours of conversation with him: no sadness, no impatience, no frustration with [Damásio's] incessant and repetitious questioning" (Damásio, 1995, p. 45). The same Elliot that remained extraordinarily intelligent, perfectly able to reason and aware of how social conventions applied to the problems, but who had lost his emotional abilities. Without them, he could not listen to music, lead a

[19] Which can happen for a great number of reasons: for lack of deep, first-hand experiences of the world and of relevant cultural references; because of poor skill to manipulate the material; due to a shift of focus as a response to peer pressure; owing to an excessive reliance on factual truths; because of the distance brought in by platitudes or conventions; etc. This statement should not be understood as an advocation of, e.g., expressionism or minimalism. As to the former, our experience of, e.g., visual forms or ideas can certainly *be* vivid experiences. As to the latter, a long, intricate and unresolved ambiguity can often be the best way to convey a particular kind of vivid experience.

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balanced life or even reason properly, as he could not assign “different values to different options” and as “his mental landscape [was] too shifty and unsustained for the time required to make response selections” (Damásio, 1995, p. 51).

By the very nature of the vividness of experience, it can never be described to others, as it cannot be detached from particular experience. Words are powerless to describe the most vivid experiences, even if they can perfectly detail the facts about such experiences. The vividness of experience *is* the subjective, emotional attachment to experience, and that can only be summoned, not described. We call the experience of being left without words *the ineffable*. However, being left without words is not the same thing as being unable to find the right ones. In other words, we don’t experience the ineffable when we can’t find the adequate vocabulary to describe the facts about an experience. In that case — and particularly when speaking a foreign language — we might spend some time searching for the right word, but the feeling is that the word is just there, inside our minds and impatient to get out — even if only in our native language. We do not feel impotent to express something, we feel impotent to retrieve the right word to do so. When we find the one we were looking for we feel instantly gratified, not settling for a lesser one, nor longing for a more effective one. If we can’t find the right word, we point to the thing or describe it until the other person gets what we want to say, a point in which that person might even utter the word that we were longing for. Either way, we find ourselves pacified once a correspondence with a thing or fact is established. Even if we might latter find a better word (or formula) to describe that fact, our current need is appeased with the one we know now.

The ineffable vividness of experience, on the other hand, is more contemplative than impatient, as its object cannot stand in memory as an ideal reference towards which the words should aim. Instead, it has to be again recalled, which Tolstoy’s man does by *experiencing himself expressing it*. The ineffable is not beyond description because it consists in memories that we can recall and still remain unable to express. In other words, we do not walk around carrying some things that we can say and another things that we cannot. We are left without words when we want to refer to an experience and find ourselves unable to convey it, to others *as to ourselves*, with an appropriate vividness. We resort to every expression we know, to every language we speak, to terms used in other realms of experience and we still find that the vividness is not there, on our experience of listening to ourselves. But we cannot point at it, as it is not out there to be pointed at. The difficulty to express the ineffable *is* the difficulty to summon the experience in ourselves in the first place.

Until, at some point, we listen to a poet uttering a metaphor that brings about a vividness that we recognise. And we are immediately engulfed by the experience, as if we were smelling a distinctive perfume lost in the memories of our childhood. From that point forward, we can use that very metaphor to summon that experience in us and to convey it to others. We can use it to triangulate with others a vividness of experience that would otherwise remain not only in the privacy of our experience, but also hidden in an otherwise unretrievable section of our memories. We value a description by the correspondence it displays with a given reality as it appears detached from particular experience, but we value a metaphor by the vividness of the experience it summons in us. Hence the Aristotelian idea that “it is metaphor above all that gives perspicuity, pleasure, and a foreign air, and it cannot be learnt from anyone else” (Aristotle, 1926, 1405a). We of course have other ways to convey experiences besides

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metaphors: in fact, any strategy that can be effective in convening in us an authentic, non-alienating, vivid and focused experience can be used in art. As T. S. Elliot wrote:

> […] music heard so deeply
> That it is not heard at all, but you are the music
> While the music lasts. [...] (Eliot, 1971)

It is by summing in myself the vividness of experience *through* its expression that I can make things that have a subjective ontology memorisable, recallable, comparable, articulable and used to form the basis of further private and public thought. By providing others with the means to actually have a vivid experience, the poet is enabling them with a point of reference that can help them relive aspects of previous experiences and inform future ones. By using the limits of her *poiesis* to make that experience as holistic and focused as possible, she is establishing the basis for a shared comprehension and articulation of a unified *what it is like*: in short, she is creating an opportunity for experiential knowledge. Whether that experiential knowledge is original and relevant is, of course, another matter. Nevertheless, artworks enable us to summon vivid experiences that can serve as references for our other experiences, both in art as in life — or in art as a chapter of life. Even if it is important to keep in mind that, despite their convenient focus, artworks can set unreasonable standards that may hamper authentic real-life experiences. As Patrícia Portela puts it, "one cannot love without reading Marguerite Duras; and one never loves enough after reading Marguerite Duras."[20]

This is certainly not because Duras' lovers claim that their love is greater than any other, nor because we will never experience the exact same facts described in her love stories. It is the vividness of the experience that she conveys in her love stories that may seem beyond reach, and the vividness of experience is not contingent upon the facts of such experience. In fact, demanding a correspondence of facts as a requisite to attain a given vividness is nothing short of fetishism. And as much as clinging to the subjective nature of experience can undermine a description of facts, sticking to a correct and detached description of facts can ruin the opportunity to convey the vividness of experience.

Going back to Tolstoy's description of the beginning of art, we are now presented with a boy who is expressing the fear he felt on an encounter with a wolf. Tolstoy remarks that art begins when this boy, "as he tells the story", "relives the feeling he experienced, infects his listeners, makes them relive all that the [he] lived through." In order to do so, Tolstoy claims, his best option might be to actually depart from factual truth:

> Even if the boy had not seen a wolf, but had often been afraid of seeing one, and, wishing to call up in others the feeling he experienced, invented the encounter with the wolf, telling it in such a way that through his narrative he called up in his listeners the same feeling he experienced in imagining the wolf – this, too, is art. (Tolstoy, 1995, chap. V)

Being truthful and honest in art has nothing to do with the factual characteristics of the means we use, but on the experiential ends that they serve. In other words, the earnestness and authenticity in art is due to the experience and not to the facts. As Bertolt Brecht puts it:

[20] Translated from the original in Portuguese: "Não se pode amar sem ler Marguerite Duras. E nunca se ama o suficiente depois de ler Marguerite Duras" (Portela, 2017).

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> The actors may not use make-up — or hardly any — and claim to be 'absolutely natural' and yet the whole thing can be a swindle; and they can wear masks of a grotesque kind and present the truth. It is hardly open to debate that the means must be questioned about the ends they serve. (Brecht, 2007, p. 83)

Being truthful to the experience means conveying the experience as it *is*, i.e. as we experience it, not as factual truth. If the boy's experience of fear of a wolf is best summoned by referring to a wolf that never actually existed, that is in no way dishonest. In fact, stating that some facts about a narrative or an artwork are false is as pointless as stating that illusionists are not doing "actual magic": we know and we do not care, but stating it out loud can divert our attention and thus ruin the experience. As a magician, an artist should refrain from discriminating the real from the illusion.

We can nevertheless be dishonest as artists, and that happens when we claim a perspective that we are not experiencing ourselves. If the boy was afraid of seeing a wolf, he can earnestly tell the story of when he ran away from a pack of red-eyed, salivating wolves in order to convey that fear. But if he is not afraid of a wolf and is only trying to, e.g., have fun by terrifying his little brother, he is not being honest about the experience. In order to be in earnest as an artist,[21] he has to believe in what he is telling not because the story is true or even credible, but because he is able to summon in himself the vividness of the experience *as* he is conveying it. As Jorge Luís Borges puts it:

> When I write something, I think of it not as being factually true (mere fact is a web of circumstances and accidents), but as being true to something deeper. When I write a story, I write it because somehow I believe in it — not as one believes in mere history, but rather as one believes in a dream or in an idea. (Borges, 2000, pp. 110-111)

Art thrives on this earnestness and commitment regarding experience, beyond the earnestness regarding facts and the commitment towards the display of novelty for novelty's sake. Experimentation in art is, first and foremost, about providing novel *experiences* rather than performing novel *experiments*: as we have seen in the introduction, a new skill in art is relevant only insofar as it opens relevant doors for new, vivid and hopefully focused experiences. But this novelty does not refer to mere difference from previous materialisations: as we will see in the next section, entirely different materialisations can easily convey very similar experiences (and vice versa). Originality in art is thus much less about finding new materialisations that summon familiar experiences and much more about finding ways that successfully summon novel experiences. As Susan Sontag puts it:

> The basic unit for contemporary art is not the idea, but the analysis of and extension of sensations. (Or if it is an "idea," it is about the form of sensibility.) Rilke described the artist as someone who works "toward an extension of the regions of the individual senses"; McLuhan calls artists "experts in sensory awareness." And the most interesting works of contemporary art (one can begin at least as far back as French symbolist poetry) are adventures in sensation, new "sensory mixes." Such art is, in principle, experimental — not out of an elitist disdain for what is accessible to the majority, but precisely in the sense that science is experimental. (Sontag, 1966, p. 300).

[21] Which is obviously much more than we should ask from a little boy, but I will stick to Tolstoy's example for the sake of discourse.

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Whenever I solve an artistic problem according to a tradition — however recent that tradition may be and regardless of the material novelty of the particular solution —, I am merely displaying my education: in short, I am being well mannered. Which is fine if the experience I want to convey is that of belonging to a particular group, of being well-behaved or even, and depending on further context, of being ironic. It is the artistic equivalent of using

> clichés, stock phrases, adherence to conventional, standardised codes of expression and conduct [that] have the socially recognised function of protecting us against reality, that is, against the claim on our thinking attention that all events and facts make by virtue of their existence. (Arendt, 1981, Introduction)

If, on the other hand, I vow to reject any previously explored artistic resource, I will almost surely be rendered unable to summon a focused experience in anyone, including in myself. It is the artistic equivalent of mumbling gibberish. There is an intricate balance between tradition and novelty behind our ability to make novel experiences vivid and unified. To stand a chance of understanding originality — both as a receiver and as creator, who is the first receiver — we first of all have to be fully aware of what is already out there and of how others have dealt with related problems. As artists, we need to finely train our ability to summon experiences in ourselves as well as in others, which we can do by learning the traditional ways of doing it until we can eloquently and effortlessly use them. But that training is not enough to push the boundaries of what can be successfully summoned.

The expansion of the scope of art requires each artist to bring forward the perspectives that she — as a singular individual living in a singular context — is in a privileged position to attain outside of that tradition. The experience summoned by an artwork can lay beyond what was previously attainable and, hence, be inexistent without that artwork. But the artist has to first recognise the vivid qualities of an experience before using her *poiesis* to provide it with further focus and unity. In other words, the experience brought by that materialisation can be novel, but it has to be earnestly understood by the artist *as* experiential knowledge in the first place in order for her to then be able to shape it into a successful artwork. The limits of my experiential knowledge thus set the range of my artistic capabilities. Similarly, the scope of my experiential knowledge sets the scope of my artistic capabilities. If all my vivid experiences come from a limited pool of somewhat similar artworks, what can I bring to art besides a reiteration of that tradition?

These experiences can be of anything: e.g., of a particular soundscape, of an yet unnamed colour, of the impotence to change something in world, of a glimpse of order within the chaos. *Qualia*, emotions, feelings, ideas: everything that a person can experience has a *what-it-is-like* to experience it which is not exclusively dependent neither on the thing in itself, nor on the cultural context around it. It has to include an authentic, subjective, first-person perspective or it does not exist. This is the realm of art. Each art form has a somewhat limited scope of experiences it can effectively convey, even if it can do it with a virtually unlimited depth. Each artist becomes a specialist in vividly experiencing the world through her medium's particular scope. But I believe that it is important to keep this focus outward looking: there is a certain degenerescence when art becomes solely about the *what it is like to experience art*. The experiences an artist has over the years — in art as well as in life — constitutes both her raw material and her critical stance. As James Baldwin puts it:

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> One writes out of one thing only — one's own experience. Everything depends on how relentlessly one forces from this experience the last drop, sweet or bitter, it can possibly give. This is the only real concern of the artist, to recreate out of the disorder of life that order which is art. (Baldwin, 2012, Autobiographical Notes)

Relaying the ineffable: the case of metaphors

Jorge Luis Borges understood, perhaps better than anyone, how artworks completely transcend their material existence by standing as tokens of very specific human intentions. In his short story *Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote* (Borges, 1999, pp. 88-95), the narrator is a literary reviewer who presents Pierre Menard, a French writer from the early 20th-century that wrote a word-by-word rendition of Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quijote de la Mancha* in the original language. This is not, however, a copy of Cervantes' book, but the result of a laborious process of summoning in him the capability of writing the original book, from scratch and exactly as the original. Of course that it is completely different to write such book in the early 17th-century or in Menard's context. At some point, e.g., the reviewer highlights how one passage in Cervantes' work is just a "rhetorical praise of history" written by someone "who employs the Spanish of his time with complete naturalness", as opposed to how the exact same passage in Menard's work is a "staggering" idea written by "a con-temporary of William James" who writes in a "somewhat affected", "archaic style" (Borges, 1999, p. 94).

The only difference between the passages is, of course, what we came to believe about their different contexts of creation. Those beliefs enable us to infer entirely different theories of mind that we use to explain the manifest intentions of the two authors. It is worth noting the great length to which Borges went to impart the colossal scale of Menard's effort. After all, if we believed that this was a mere copy of Cervantes' text, that would lead us to form an entirely different (and utterly uninteresting) theory of mind behind his *Quixote*. We would have the exact same handwriting and the exact same words on the exact same paper, written in the exact same external context. But an entirely different intention and, hence, an entirely different artwork. In fact, this one would be an inauthentic one. We would remain powerless to see the difference, however, if we refused to look beyond the words.

And this is the crucial part: Borges is not merely declaring that Menard's text is not a copy. Instead, he undertook a great deal of effort to write a biography of his fictitious character, to detail his previous works and to provide a testimony that allows us to conjure a theory of mind of Menard that supports the earnestness of his endeavour. It is this theory of mind that enables us to understand the staggering idea that two identical texts can in fact be very different artworks. And we experience an understanding of that idea through our reading of Borges' text that is more profoundly clear and vivid than it would be through any declarative formulation that anyone, including Borges, could write. That is why we call it a work of art.

Of course that a significant part of our interpretation of this artwork is due to a cultural context that we still share with Borges. At some point in the future — or in a culture that has, e.g., a different concept of authorship —, the significance of this text might be entirely lost. As it will be for someone who reads it whilst clinging to an *a priori* notion that "if it has the same

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material characteristics, it is the same artwork". Again we see how the successfulness of an artship depends as much on the artwork as it depends on each receiver.

If we do understand *Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote*, we wouldn't need to refer to any further or preceding theory, nor to any analysis of the merit of Borges' skill, to recognise that it is in itself deserving of the status of an original contribution to human knowledge. It reveals a given reality with, as far as I can tell, an unsurpassed clarity and vividness. The fact that, more than half a century after being written, it is still often quoted and analysed when discussing that very reality, shows how much it withstands as a token of the experience it conveys — and as one of our major human achievements at that. It would make a fine example of an outcome of *artistic research* or, as I prefer to call it, *artistic creation*.

The short summary I gave above is, of course, not even a remotely adequate substitute for the original text. As none of its analyses are, even if they can help us to better understand it. But I actually first read the text in a Portuguese translation and latter, when I was preparing this article, in both the original Spanish and in an English translation. The Portuguese translation is closer to the original in Spanish, for obvious reasons, but both translations are entirely different from the original text. Here, we face the opposite problem of Menard's: how can entirely different texts still be identified as the same artwork? Let us look at what John Berger has to say about translation:

> Most translations today are technical, whereas I'm referring to literary translations. The translation of texts which concern individual human experience.
> The convencional view of translation involves studying the words on one page in one language, then rendering them into another language on another page. This involves a so-called word-for-word translation, then an adaption to respect and incorporate the linguistic traditions and rules of the second language, and finally another working-over to recreate the equivalent of the 'voice' of the original text. Many, perhaps most, translations follow this procedure and the results are worthy but second-rate.
> Why? Because true translation is not a binary affair between two languages but a triangular affair. The third point of the triangle being what lay behind the words of the original text before it was written. True translation demands a return to the pre-verbal. (Berger, 2016, p. 4)

I would say that the first step of the technical translation is also a triangular affair, but one that looks for the socially agreed correspondence between words in the original language and both the objective and intersubjective realities that they refer to, in order to replace them by words that, in the final language, refer to equivalent realities. It only seems binary because we, like computers, usually use dictionaries that have done this triangulation for us. Nevertheless, the triangulation of the literary translation — or, as Berger calls it, *true translation* — involves something more: it requires an understanding the original text as an act that uses words to convey an intention that lays beyond their literal meaning. And two different texts that convey the same intention — as in a literary translation — can be regarded as instantiations of the same artwork, whereas two identical texts that convey different intentions — as in Cervantes' and Menard's *Quixote* — can be entirely different ones.[22] This is of course only applicable to literary texts, i.e. the ones that concern, using Berger's own words, *individual human experience*.

[22] Even if the actual artwork, in the last case, is obviously Borges' text *about* Menard's *Quixote*.

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If I say that "the sun is a star", that is fairly easy to translate *technically* because my intention refers only to things that are *out there*. In this case, I am merely stating that the object we can point to and that we have agreed to call *sun* is a particular element of an universal that we have abstracted from objects that share a given set of observable characteristics and that we have agreed to name *stars*. It would only be difficult if I was trying to translate that phrase to a language that originated from a culture that, e.g., didn't abstract particulars into universals or had never experienced the object we call *sun*.

However, if I say that "Juliet is the sun", as Shakespeare's Romeo, I am obviously not pointing to "object" Juliet and implying that it has a similar ontology as the incandescent body we call *sun*. Even if I can, in this particular case, translate word-by-word to, e.g., Portuguese[23] and still convey a similar meaning, the triangulation that this phrase implies is with an intent that does not point to a reality that exists *out there*, but to the inner, subjective reality of experience. Romeo, through Shakespeare's writing, is trying to tell us something not about Juliet, but about the vividness with which he experiences her. Since there is no shared reality that we can point in reference to *Romeo's feelings towards Juliet* — as, by the very definition of a subjective ontology, it is only accessible to the subject in question —, and since we cannot all love Juliet in the exact same way as Romeo does, Shakespeare has to resort to the relationships he expects we all have established with other things in order to fulfil his intent to convey this reality.

Hence, Juliet is not a massive incandescent body floating in the same Universe that Romeo also inhabits, but instead the person that shines light into his otherwise dark life, the person that warms his body with the mere touch of the light that she emanates, and, most importantly, the person that bestows him with the becoming of his very existence. He is not referring to *the sun*, but to *the vivid experience of the sun*: amongst others, to the overwhelming light that reveals the redness of our tightly closed eyelids, to the glowing warmth on our face, to the explosion of life around us in the early spring and to the majestic magnificence of summer sunsets by the ocean.[24] All this, and perhaps much more, can be understood from four simple words — "Juliet is the sun" — with a clarity and vividness that no "I very much love Juliet" could ever have. We call it a metaphor.

To understand declarative sentences, I merely have to be able to decode them, they don't require any further involvement on my part. To understand experiential expressions such as metaphors, however, I need to do something that appears to be much more complex than to merely decode them: I need to be able to summon in myself the appropriate experiences to be able to grasp their meaning.[25] Yet metaphors, as Aristotle claimed, actually provide a much simpler way to understand complex things. This suggests that they ask us to do something more complex not for the sake of complexity itself, but actually because we don't know a simpler way of doing it.

If we look closely, the process of decoding declarative sentences is actually quite complex, since it requires a significant acquaintance with a given culture and with symbols that

[23] "Julieta é o sol."
[24] This one is very localised, I know, but, having grown up living a few hundred meters away from the Atlantic Ocean in Portugal, I can't help but to picture sunsets this way.
[25] For a very relevant contemporary approach to metaphor — one that takes a similar starting point but arrives at different conclusions —, I recommend chapter 2 of (Harman, 2018).

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abstract the elements of our empirical experience, forcing us to use logic and empirical data to verify the claims that they carry. Comparatively, the act of using simple means at our disposal — e.g., gestures, inflections and non-literal use of words — to put actions into the world until one of them reinforces the vividness of our state of mind seems as simple as smiling when we feel happy. And, as with an authentic smile, it can be contagious simply by means of empathy. In this sense, metaphors are not more elaborate than declarative sentences, they are simply less dependent on symbolic culture, logic and empirical data to be understood: they speak the much more fundamental language of experiential knowledge. That is perhaps why children are so prone to coming up with astonishing metaphors that relate their new experiences with peculiar details of older ones: it is their way of coming to terms with new experiential knowledge, by relating it to the vivid details of their previous experiences.

We find metaphors particularly clarifying because we understand them as an act of another mind asking us not to articulate symbols that refer to external realities, but instead to summon relationships that we can find within ourselves. As we have seen, they do not deal with symbols, relations or contracts: they convey experience.[26] If I don't remember exposing myself to the warmth of the sun just for the sake of it, or if I've never loved anyone intensely, I will not truly get the appropriate experience from "Juliet is the sun", even if, through acculturation, I can know "what it means". Fortunately, we were all children and youths at some point in our lives. The problem is that our classificatory impetus, the ever-growing myriad of handed-down *a priori*, the illusion that knowing many things *about* the world equates with having experienced *the* world, the fetishism of longing for particulars to resemble idealised universals, etc., all tirelessly work *against* the vividness of experience. This vividness of experience — the ontologically subjective *what it is like* — is the field of art. We become responsible adults when we redirect the eagerness of knowing *what the world feels like* for the prevalence of knowing *how the world works*. Artists cannot afford to let that happen to them.

Unsurprisingly, Jorge Luis Borges often stated his interest in the strange ability of metaphors to manifest things that greatly transcend what is apparent in the words that carry them, doing so in a way that defies analytical approaches. In a lecture titled "The Metaphor" (Borges, 2000, p. 21-41), Borges makes the case for Leopoldo Lugones' idea that all words are death metaphors. He shows how, in order for those words to emerge in their new symbolic vests, we need to subdue our awareness of their metaphorical "misuse": e.g., the *arm* of a chair is only effective as a symbol once we forget that chairs don't have actual *arms*. But something is lost in this emergence, namely the relation with the object that the living metaphor conveyed. And we certainly feel somehow enlightened when we become aware of the metaphorical etymology behind our everyday words. As Ralph Waldo Emerson puts it:

> The poets made all the words, and therefore language is the archives of history, and, if we must say it, a sort of tomb of the muses. For, though the origin of most of our words is

[26] I have serious issues with the use of the symbolic in art. The use of existing symbols for their common symbolic value calls for intellectual recognition rather than experience, which can make interpreting the artwork easier, but at the significant cost of making it more distant and superficial. The invention of symbols by the artist — the stereotypical "this symbolises such and such" — always strikes me as a misunderstanding of how the establishment of cultural symbolic relationships work: an artwork can certainly become a symbol, but that is a process that happens slowly and independently of the artist's will. And I do not know if it can remain an artwork that affords the establishment of authentic artships in the end of that process.

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> forgotten, each word was at first a stroke of genius, and obtained currency, because for the moment it symbolised the world to the first speaker and to the hearer. The etymologist finds the deadest word to have been once a brilliant picture. Language is fossil poetry. As the limestone of the continent consists of infinite masses of the shells of animalcules, so language is made up of images, or tropes, which now, in their secondary use, have long ceased to remind us of their poetic origin. But the poet names the thing because he sees it, or comes one step nearer to it than any other. This expression, or naming, is not art, but a second nature, grown out of the first, as a leaf out of a tree. (Emerson, 2004, The Poet)

Borges then looks at the apparently reduced number of "stock patterns of metaphor" (Borges, 2000, p. 23), giving us two examples of metaphors that relate the eyes and the stars (my numbering):

> (1) I wish I were the night, so that I might watch your sleep with a thousand eyes.
> (2) The stars look down. (Borges, 2000, p. 24)

to which I will add a variation of my own writing:

> (3) The stars are like eyes that look down.

Borges asserts that, regarding (1) and (2), "if we take logical thinking seriously, we have the same metaphor." You might correctly point out that (3) is not a metaphor, but actually a simile. There is thus a sense in which (1) and (2) can be regarded as equivalent, but in which (2) and (3) are entirely different. "Yet the effect on our imagination is quite different," Borges points out regarding (1) and (2). And I would claim that (3) is just a second-rate version of (2).

If I ask you which one is better — (1) or (2), let us forget (3) from this point onwards —, what would you reply? That certainly depends on the perspective we take. Logically, we could say that they establish the same relationship between eyes and stars. Theoretically, we could say that they are both correctly phrased but, as metaphors, neither has a correspondence to factual reality. We could say that they have very different styles, and we could analyse those styles and compare them to other examples, but an evaluation would require external criteria. In terms of poetic craft, one person might feel inclined to prefer the grandiloquent style of the first and another the comparatively clean style of the second. In the end, and taken in isolation, it would boil things down to personal taste. Both perspectives, that of theory and that of craft, would be inconclusive without the context provided by intention.

What if I was writing a poem about successive generations of slaves, forced to serve successive generations of cruel, greedy and conniving princes whilst experiencing the great indifference of the universe?[27] In this case, the "tenderness" of (1) would clearly not be as adequate as the "lofty indifference" (Borges, 2000, p. 24) of (2). And hence the evaluation becomes easy. In order to appreciate artworks, it is not enough to look at the theory that we can extract from them, nor it is enough to look at the craft involved. It is not enough to search for the beautiful, for the impressive or for the stylistic affiliation. Instead, we have to look for

[27] My poetic abilities are not good enough to suggest an adequate poetic context, so this example is a mix between the image suggested by Borges and *Retrato de uma princesa desconhecida*, a poem by Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen (translated to English by Richard Zenith as *Portrait of an unknown princess*).

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the end intentionally served by the craft, i.e. we have to search for the unity, focus, relevance and vividness of the experience it conveys.

It is possible to craft graceful metaphors just for the sake of conveying the experience of graceful metaphors. Someone well versed in the *poiesis* of poetic writing can certainly take one of the many "stock patterns of metaphor" and craft new formulations that stimulate our imagination. Similarly, an artist can take a mundane idea and use her skill to make it look more complicated, more "poetic". Or even take something that she wants us to relate to in very specific terms — e.g., a moral statement about something, or a product that she was commissioned to boost sales of — and use her artistic craft to varnish those things with a vividness of experience that makes them easier to memorise and relate to. But those are all examples of manipulative and inauthentic use of artistic skill, of not being truthful to the vividness of the experience lived by the artist. As James Baldwin puts it:

> Sentimentality, the ostentatious parading of excessive and spurious emotion, is the mark of dishonesty, the inability to feel; the wet eyes of the sentimentalist betray his aversion to experience, his fear of life, his arid heart; and it is always, therefore, the signal of secret and violent inhumanity, the mask of cruelty. (Baldwin, 2012, Everybody's Protest Novel)

Art does not prescribe how I *should* relate to this or value that. Art gives me a perspective with which I can relate to this or that, so that I can enlarge the scope of my reference points and, using those, improve my chance of making informed decisions on what to value. This is how I interpret Herman Hesse's well-know aphorism "the morality of artists is replaced by aesthetics."[28] Experience, rather than prescription.

Also, artworks should not be made any more complicated than they need to be to convey the experience at hand. Quite the contrary, in fact, as anything that diverts our attention contributes to defocus the experience and, consequently, to numb the artship at hand. Most of the things that art deals with, however, are incredibly complex and difficult to convey. Consequently, many artworks have no option but to be incredibly complex and difficult to relate to. Any detail that can contribute to the vividness of experience should be included and appropriately articulated with all the others, and often that entails exquisitely crafting what might seem like an overwhelming web of elements. That complexity is acceptable when it is the result of a sincere and focused quest for an unattainable simplicity. It is not acceptable when it is the result of varnishing with complexity what would otherwise be an absence of authentic experience. If we earnestly look beyond the surface and deep into the human intentions materialised in an artwork — if, in Berger's words, we turn it into a triangular affair, a return to the pre-verbal — that difference becomes immediately apparent.

Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective

I can't overstate the importance that the ideas of both Thomas Nagel and Donald Davidson had in shaping my own view on epistemology. In an article titled "Three Varieties of Knowledge" (Davidson, 2001, p. 205-220), Davidson presents what he considers to be the three kinds of knowledge that are irreducible to one another: *subjective*, as knowledge of our own minds; *intersubjective*, as knowledge of other minds; *objective*, as knowledge of an

[28] Several sources — Hesse's biographies, short biographical notes in other books, etc — trace this aphorism to a letter from Hesse to his parents. I was unable, however, to find the original source.

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external reality. Davidson is of course well aware that all propositional knowledge is intersubjective. As he points out, "the source of the concept of objective truth is interpersonal communication; thought depends on communication" (Davidson, 2001, p. 209). Hence his *objective knowledge* — our most common aim when we speak of epistemology — does not entail something that transcends humanity, even if it can transcend any given individual. Quite the contrary, in fact: his claim is that these "three sorts of knowledge form a tripod: if any leg were lost, no part would stand" (Davidson, 2001, p. 220). The best that we can aim in terms of our knowledge of the outside world is to, using this tripod, arrive at a provisional, and always cultural, "view from nowhere" (Nagel, 1986).

Subjective knowledge is self-evident and attainable without appeal to external evidence, but objective knowledge depends on our senses and perception, which gives birth to an epistemic chasm of dreaded uncertainty that we have been for centuries seeking to bridge. However, this "logical or epistemic barrier between the mind and nature […] not only prevents us from seeing out; it also blocks a view from outside in" (Davidson, 2001, p. 207). This is a very interesting but often overlooked fact: unless we are prepared to let go of the idea that there is an epistemic barrier between the subjective and the objective — and fortunately very few people are, at least in academic circles —, we cannot assume that there is no epistemic barrier between the objective and the subjective — and here, unfortunately, I cannot say the same. This has very important implications regarding experiential knowledge, even if they seem to be often ignored. My experiences *are* the *what it is like to have them* — or, in other words, they *are* the way they appear to me —, something that only I have full access to. As Thomas Nagel puts it:

> Very little work has been done on the basic question (from which mention of the brain can be entirely omitted) whether any sense can be made of experiences' having an objective character at all. Does it make sense, in other words, to ask what my experiences are really like, as opposed to how they appear to me? (Nagel, 1974, p. 448)

Materialist and computational claims abound, but so far none has been able to destroy the epistemic barrier. And we cannot draw any conclusions from the argument "How *else* could it be?" (Nagel, 1986, p. 22), with perhaps the exception of the inference that we lack the necessary imagination to come up with a satisfactory explanation. This problem only becomes apparent, however, if we do not corner ourselves into the abnormal stance of disregarding the subjective character of experience:

> So long as mental states are looked at objectively, in their causal relations to stimuli and behaviour, no special issues arise which do not arise about the physical analysis of other natural phenomena. Even problems of intentionality may seem to be soluble if one puts aside their subjective aspect, for then one may be able to describe certain kinds of computers as intentional systems. What seems impossible is to include in a physical conception of the world the facts about what mental states are like for the creature having them. The creature and his states seem to belong to a world that can be viewed impersonally and externally. Yet subjective aspects of the mental can be apprehended only from the point of view of the creature itself (perhaps taken up by someone else), whereas what is physical is simply there, and can be externally apprehended from more than one point of view. (Nagel, 1979, p. 201)

And here we have, the first division: two legs of the tripod. Davidson then asks how can we know more about the outside world, and the answer is: together with other minds. But I don't

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have a direct access to the content of other minds, as I do to my own, and, as we have just seen, minds are not knowable from the outside. His answer, in short, is that the knowledge of other minds depends on my ability to observe their behaviours and interpret them as the result of intentions of someone who has a subjective experience akin to my own. In other words, it depends on our capacity for empathy, even if Davidson never actually uses the word, and it is bounded by the limits of our own experience and imagination. It is worth reading Davidson's take on the teaching of language:

> If we are teaching someone a language, the situation becomes more complex, but more clearly interpersonal. What seems basic is this: an observer (or teacher) finds (or instills) a regularity in the verbal behaviour of the informant (or learner) which he can correlate with events and objects in the environment. This much can take place without developed thought on the part of the observed, of course, but it is the necessary basis for attributing thoughts and meanings to the person observed. For until the triangle is completed connecting two creatures, and each creature with common features of the world, there can be no answer to the question whether a creature, in discriminating between stimuli, is discriminating between stimuli at the sensory surfaces or somewhere further out, or further in. Without this sharing of reactions to common stimuli, thought and speech would have no particular content — that is, no content at all. It takes two points of view to give a location to the cause of a thought, and thus to define its content. We may think of it as a form of triangulation: each of two people is reacting differentially to sensory stimuli streaming in from a certain direction. Projecting the incoming lines outward, the common cause is at their intersection. If the two people now note each other's reactions (in the case of language, verbal reactions), each can correlate these observed reactions with his or her stimuli from the world. A common cause has been determined. The triangle which gives content to thought and speech is complete. But it takes two to triangulate. (Davidson, 2001, p. 212-213)

This gives birth to communication and it is this communication that makes all thought and knowledge possible:

> Communication, and the knowledge of other minds that it presupposes, is the basis of our concept of objectivity, our recognition of a distinction between false and true belief. There is no going outside this standard to check whether we have things right, any more than we can check whether the platinum-iridium standard kept at the International Bureau of Weights and Standards in Sèvres, France, weights a kilogram. (Davidson, 2001, p. 217-218)[29]

The limits of each of these three varieties of knowledge is reflected on the limits of the group: for the tripod to be stable, each leg cannot be longer than the others. Our objective knowledge depends on our knowledge of ourselves and on our knowledge of others; our subjective knowledge depends on our knowledge of the world and on our knowledge of others; our intersubjective knowledge depends on our knowledge of ourselves and on our knowledge of the world. It is perhaps worth restating that by *objective knowledge* I mean *knowledge about the external world*, as opposed to *knowledge attained from the perspective of an object*, a view that, as we should all be acutely aware, is completely inaccessible to us. A disengaged perspective can certainly bring us knowledge of ourselves as objects and of others as statistical abstractions. But those are examples of objective knowledge about human beings or human societies, not of subjective and neither of intersubjective knowledge. As Thomas Nagel puts it:

[29] The comparison to the platinum-iridium standard is no longer up to date, but the point remains valid.

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> We can pursue a unified if very etiolated conception of reality by detaching progressively from our own point of view. We just have to keep in mind what we are leaving behind, and not be fooled into thinking we have made it disappear. (Nagel, 1979, p. 213)

Improving subjective knowledge certainly depends on external factors for triangulation, but it is mostly dependent on an effort to be earnest and authentic with oneself: the ancient maxim *know thyself*, with the caveat that the self is a becoming and thus *know thyself* is always in a delicate balance with a *build thyself*, which brings into greater evidence the dependence on others and the world. But what about our knowledge of others not as objects (human beings), but as subjects (persons with particular minds)? When the knowledge of the other mind stands on the observation of an action towards an object or event in our shared environment, as in Davidson's take regarding the teaching of language, things do not seem that difficult. The problem of intersubjective knowledge lies precisely in what falls within the privileged access of other minds: their own subjective experience, the *what it is like to be them*, the ineffable. We stand a very small chance of relating to the experiential knowledge of another mind, with anything deeper than superficial observations, only if we interact with that person directly and are able to summon the conditions to earnestly empathise with her. In other words, if we are able to build a plausible, authentic and profound theory of mind that enables us to relate to her perspective. Shall we confine our intersubjective knowledge to the scope defined by the small number of loved ones we have authentic friendships with? Or, even worse, to the superficial detachment of handed-down prejudices or codified behaviours?

What if I try to materialise my subjective experience back into the world? Not merely by pointing to *that red*, but by creating a context that invites others to attentively look at *that red* whilst summoning in them a theory of mind that enables them to get a glimpse of what it is like *for me* to vividly experience *that red*? Anyone can see the same red thing, but not everyone can experience it with the same vividness and focus. Pointing to it is useless, as I can direct the attention to the thing but not to the experience of the thing. But if I can experience it with a vividness that is focused on its singularity, if I can find a way to abstract it from the particular facts and if I come up with a way to summon that vividness repeatedly in myself via a carefully designed external stimuli, I can become closer of being able to do the same for others.

This is the difference between, e.g., a simple portrait of my grandmother — one that I display in my house to remind me of her, being close to useless to everyone else — versus a photograph that is able to summon the vivid experience of longing for a lost relationship that helped to form our childhood — one that could be used by everyone to recall their own particular experiences, even if it still consists on a portrait of my grandmother. In the first case, the fact that it is a photograph of my grandmother is the main aspect that triggers my memory of her. If it is a beautiful photograph, that can make me more likely to engage with it and it might even convince others to appreciate it as a beautiful portrait. In the second case, however, something makes the vividness of the experience of longing detach from the fact that it is a photograph of my grandmother, or even from the fact that it is a pleasant one. It is the abstraction of the vividness from the facts — i.e. it transcends the facts, even if it cannot exist without them — that makes the experience shareable. This sharing can extend from *qualia* to feelings, including emotions and the experience of ideas: anything that has a *what it*

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is like to experience it or, in other words, experiential knowledge.

I believe that art is the best way we have to give scale to a triangulation of knowledge of other minds, which is essential for both our knowledge of ourselves and, even if it might be less obvious, for our knowledge of the world. Whereas science gives us critical distance from the world, art brings us closer to its singular peculiarities. These peculiarities are not nuisances, but reality checks. Even when doing science, whenever we feel the need to bring vividness to complete a picture of our object of study, we regularly resort to artistic means. Some of the best anthropological reports, e.g., are literary works in their own right and brilliant science communicators do not run shy of using poetic expressions to better convey their astonishment with their object of study.[30] But this is not done in a systematic way and calls for an ability that the formal training for science not only does not usually include, but can actually prevent as a result of its promotion of a detachment from the object of study. The scientific world has been emptied of meaning and purpose — of teleology — precisely because it has eliminated the source of all meaning and purpose: the subjective reality of human experience and intent. As Thomas Nagel puts it:

> […] if the way things are for […] subjects is not part of the way things are in themselves, an objective account, whatever it shows, will omit something. So reality is not just objective reality, and the pursuit of objectivity is not an equally effective method of reaching the truth about everything. (Nagel, 1979, p. 213)

We would turn to an astronomer to describe and explain the movements of planets and stars in the night sky, but we would turn to a poet to evoque the seduction that those movements exert over us. The poet can clarify that astonishment with a vividness that can be illuminating even for — perhaps *especially* for — the astronomer. Of course that the astronomer and the poet can be the very same person: science and art are complementary, not contradictory. The dance between science and art can take us closer to the edge of the knowledge we can build as humans: but it takes two to tango.

A practical note on science and art as academic poles

The days when science was still striving to emancipate from philosophy and to gain recognition as an activity as noble as the classics that we came to know as *the humanities* might seem like a very distance past. But not even two centuries have passed since William Whewell carved the neologism *scientist* — out of an analogy with *artist* — to designate the new "students of the knowledge of the material world" that were to receive the baton from the natural philosophers of the past (Ball, 2015). Nowadays, and even if positivist excitement has long been grounded, natural sciences reign as *the* undisputed paradigm of contemporary academic research. In this section, I will look at how natural science fits into Davidson's triangulation of knowledge, using that as a reference point to establish an akin triangulation in art. I do not intend, however, to suggest that there is an unsurpassable chasm between these "two cultures" (Snow, 1993). They are merely opposing polarities of a continuous spectrum that fluidly includes these and many other academic activities. What I will discuss below are idealised takes on both scientific research and artistic creation that, as such, will significantly diverge from applied ones. Notwithstanding, characterising these two abstract polarities can provide a good map to better navigate the real-world continuum that includes

[30] Carl Sagans' famous words — *"We are a way for the Cosmos to know itself."* — are a striking example of that.

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both art and science. Let us start with the latter.

Science depends, first of all, on individuals who ask questions and who come up with hypothesis. This is the often understated part of the scientific method: it starts with the creative act of coming up with new questions (or re-enacting old ones), followed by another creative act of conjuring mental models capable of providing plausible answers to those questions. Yet without these creative acts, we would have no science at all. These mental models we first call hypothesis have a subjective existence until they are recognised by someone else, a point in which they gain intersubjective existence as theories. It is important to always keep in mind, however, that they do not have, and they never will have, an objective existence. Science is not after the creation of reality, its business is to create useful mental models that allow us to establish prolific relations with said reality.

In order for a scientist to come up with a new useful hypothesis, she needs to know the current state of the art, to know the problems yet to be answered or the problematic issues of previous ones. After coming up with a viable hypothesis, she has to test that hypothesis against observable reality. No hypothesis that we can envision can both be brief enough to test experimentally and thorough enough to explain the entire reality, so she needs to "isolate her object of study". "Isolation" actually means creating an artificial situation, one that is unlike anything that we could find within the reality we want to study. Instead, we try to make this artificial setting as close as possible to the model we devised: if our model, e.g., does not consider air resistance, we try to create an environment that is as exempt of air resistance as it is feasible with our current technology. This oversimplification of reality is generally a good thing, since it is what enables our limited minds to understand these models and, through the combination of a growing number of them, create an understanding of reality. A scientific model is particularly successful *if* it empowers me with the ability to see reality through it and, for that, it needs to be somewhat simple. But this simplicity can become a problem when we take our models to *be* the reality and begin dismissing anything that doesn't fit the model as a nuisance or a figment of our imagination.

Experimentally testing the hypothesis, analysing the data and communicating the results are the steps that more greatly depend on accepted practices. Since our goal is to create new objective knowledge for the collective, we want to make sure that virtually anyone believes that they would arrive at the same conclusions as we did. There is an intrinsic drive towards a claim of universality within every quest for objective knowledge. We should thus take great care to distance ourselves from the things we are dealing with, which we try to do by adopting standard procedures and terminology, by using the most precise and thorough measurement instruments we can get, by deferring judgment as often as possible to the accepted practices in our field and even by communicating the results with strictly declarative and impersonal language. We then analyse the published documentation of methods and results, looking for gaps that could have compromised the process and — ideally, yet rarely — replicating each other's results and further testing each other's models in order to ratify collective trust in them. Far from relying on empathy with the scientist proposing the theory, a good scientific model is the one that is able to convince even the one who approaches it with scepticism.

One final step is needed, though, to get this contribution positively evaluated. The success of

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new mental models depends on them being more useful than our current ones. Mental models are particularly useful if they enable a quick understanding of complex phenomena — hence the value of abstraction —, if they enable us to reliably predict future behaviour — hence the value of observability and the reliance on falsification —, if they do not collide with current models and, finally, if they serve as a fertile ground for future development.[31] An evaluator — both in a PhD jury or in a peer-review setting — has to do more than merely check whether all the steps were taken according to the best practices and whether the contribution is original: she has to be the judge of this usefulness. If, e.g., a scientist comes up with an original theory that has similar experimental results as a given prevailing one, being much more complicated to understand and having no foreseeable advantages over the latter, she will have a hard time getting it accepted and used by the community. If, on the other hand, she comes up with an original theory that has no experimental results to show for itself, but that provides a great mental model with which to survey reality and catalyse further exploration, it can get enthusiastically accepted amongst her pears in a short amount of time. In fact, that is what often happens in scientific paradigm shifts (Kuhn, 1962).

Knowing that all of these models are merely temporary does not prevent us from adopting them as lenses with which to see the world. It is by learning how to see the world through the prevailing lens of a specific scientific field that I can identify further opportunities to expand this field and to develop technical solutions to control and shape the reality it describes. It is no surprise that people looking to the same reality using different lenses can see entirely different (sometimes even incompatible) “realities”, since they are not looking at reality itself, but at performances of the models that they learned to use to explain it. Reality is, in a sense, seen as a puppet on strings pulled by the theory and that is how we are able to form a useful understanding of it. But it is important to remember that these models that get us, as a collective, closer to a useful understanding of reality, are the very same ones that distance us, now as individuals, from experiencing the peculiarities of each singular fragment of reality. “Recognition is perception arrested before it has a chance to develop freely,” John Dewey reminds us. (Dewey, 2005, p. 54)

In summary, and going back to Davidson’s triangle, science is looking for a useful intersubjective agreement on what objective reality is. Its best bet is, therefore, to transform every subject (i.e. each individual scientist) as much as possible into a localised “intersubject” (i.e. an idealised scientist) and every topic of interest into a well-delimited and isolated object that we can use to triangulate. Science has been a remarkable way of gathering knowledge about everything that we can study by distancing ourselves from it. In fact, we can say that science is fundamentally a method of distancing ourselves, as individuals, from our objects of study. However, and as we have seen, there is something that we cannot distance ourselves from without causing its annihilation: subjective experiences that make up the ontologically subjective. For those, we have art.

Every single strategy that we deploy to bridge the epistemic barrier between mind and nature was designed to bring us closer to an utopian “view from nowhere”, seeking to make individual subjects capable of reasoning as close as possible to the intersubjective models that constitute their scientific lenses. For enquiring into the ontologically subjective, we need

[31] As the literature on the philosophy and history of science shows, often these principles come into collision with each other and the water gets significantly muddier than in this simplified description.

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an entirely different strategy. We need a training that makes each person even more individualised, more idiosyncratic, more capable of deeper experiencing the particularities of living as her unique self in a given place and a given time. And we need strategies to enable her to project those experiences into the material world in a way that enables the triangulation of experiential knowledge, i.e. in a way that enables others to recognise in those material manifestations an intention of another mind. In other words, an object or action that allows me to form a theory of mind that seeks to explain it, providing me with a perspective that, if different from the ones I already know, can expand my capabilities of relating to others, of understanding myself and of experiencing the world. Without a way to use others to step outside of our own subjectivity and grasp the world out there, we would have no science and no shareable knowledge of observable external realities. Without a way to materialise our subjective intentions and experiences, we would have no art and no shareable knowledge about what it is like to be a human.

As we have seen previously, propositional knowledge can be understood by merely decoding it. In fact, it can often be paraphrased or summarised without loosing its meaning. I can convey, e.g., the same theory about reality with an extensive text in English, with just a few words in Portuguese, with mathematical expressions or with geometry. Experiential knowledge, however, cannot withstand that: it depends on the experience of the actual thing. I can't paraphrase a piece of music, translate a painting into a written text or summarise a poem without significantly changing the experience it affords. If the knowledge that they convey is experiential knowledge, that means that it is precisely what is relevant about it that will be lost in translation. I can certainly revisit a related experiential knowledge in different works — e.g., when reading a poem and a *true* translation of it, in Berger's sense —, but they will nevertheless be different experiences. That is why it is so important to have appropriate conditions to present artworks: if their experience is ruined, they are rendered powerless artworks. Anything that gets in the way of each individual's capability to establish an artship with a given artwork, including the individual's inability to summon in her the appropriate experience, is an obstacle to experiential knowledge.

In practical terms, this means that the academic artist has, first of all, to make sure that she has a significant amount of authentic experiences of herself, of others and of the world that goes beyond her experiences with artworks. As Sophia de Mello Breyner puts it:

> Poetry does not ask for a specialisation because its art is the art of being. Nor is time or work what poetry asks of me. Nor does it ask me for a science, or an aesthetic, or a theory. It asks me instead for the completeness of my being, for a consciousness that is deeper than my intelligence, for a fidelity that is purer than that which I can control. It asks me for an intransigence without hiatus. It asks me to pull from my life that breaks, consumes, corrupts and dilutes a seamless garment. It asks me to live attentively as an antenna, it asks me to live continuously, to never sleep, to never forget myself. It asks me for an unleashed obstinacy, dense and compact.[32]

[32] Translated from the original in Portuguese: "A poesia não me pede propriamente uma especialização porque a sua arte é a arte do ser. Também não é tempo ou trabalho o que a poesia me pede. Nem me pede uma ciência, nem uma estética, nem uma teoria. Pede-me antes a inteireza do meu ser, uma consciência mais funda do que a minha inteligência, uma fidelidade mais pura do que aquela que eu posso controlar. Pede-me uma intransigência sem lacuna. Pede-me que arranque da minha vida que se quebra, gasta, corrompe e dilui uma túnica sem costura. Pede-me que viva atenta como uma antena, pede-me que viva sempre, que nunca durma, que nunca me esqueça. Pede-me uma obstinação sem tréguas, densa e compacta" (Andresen, 2015, p. 891).

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She needs, however, to have a profound knowledge of the state of the art in order to be able to identify opportunities for further clarification. If, e.g., *Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote* (Borges, 1999, p. 88-95) allows me to experience the dematerialisation of the artwork in a way that is clearer than anything that I can write myself, why bother presenting another second-rate artwork to the world? Of course that we can seek to explore nuances, recombinations and reinterpretations, but the opportunities for those only become clear after having profound experiences of other artworks. An artist also has to develop a highly skilled *poiesis* in her medium of choice. Not in the sense of knowing what procedures to follow to achieve a well-mannered output, but in order to achieve a virtuosity that allows her to bring about the experience at hand without any observable deviations from focus: something that I prefer to call a great *eloquence* in the medium.

This eloquence is particularly important because, and despite the regrettably prevalent myth, the artist cannot have a fully formed idea in her mind before starting to actually materialise the work: as we have seen, the vividness of experience requires external stimuli and thus the artist herself experiences the vividness *through* the materialisation artwork. Skilful knowledge of the materials at hand enables one to anticipate what can benefit or ruin the focus of the experience, as well as to work with models that exist in different scales of space and time of the final materialisation. But the process of artistic creation is a process of clarification in itself, not merely a process of communicating a previously clarified idea. The artist completes the artwork not when she reaches the perfect materialisation of an idea, but when she reaches the limit of her abilities to further focus the experience. As Anselm Kiefer puts it, referring to the famous land art studio-estate he built at Barjac:

> Yet, do not think that, by executing Barjac, I have from the start imagined the concept of emptiness […]. These buildings do not express the illustration of an idea, but, conversely, their realisation revealed to me, a posteriori, the concept.[33]

So when is an artist ready to start, e.g., a PhD? In short, when she has, through her actual work as an artist, a glimpse of a possibility to clarify a given experience in a way that is beyond what the state of the art has to offer. Not an idea to put into art, but an embryonic experience claiming for further focusing. This is, in a sense, the artistic equivalent of the scientific hypothesis. It is worth noting that, and as opposed to a common practice in science, in art we cannot have a student solving a problem formulated and formalised by a supervisor. It is only when the problem arises within me as *my* problem — emerging from my artistic practice *as* an artistic problem and not as a problem to be solved artistically — that I become qualified to solve it. The artist then needs to do some further testing in order to see if her *poiesis* is up to the task or if, as it is most likely, she will have to come up with novel skills and slowly embody them until they become natural means of expression, i.e. until she can eloquently use them. Her PhD proposal should showcase these preliminary tests, along with a detailed report on the direct experience of as many related artworks as possible, referring specifically to what she feels to be the deviations of these artworks from the particular focus of attention she is after. In other words, she needs to know what are the elements of these artworks that divert the focus from the one she is trying to impose upon them. If she is able to convince a supervisor or a jury that she is on the right path and, most importantly, if her

[33] Translated from the Portuguese translation: “Contudo, não se pense que, ao realizar Barjac, tenha à partida imaginado o conceito do vazio […]. Esses edfiícios não exprimem a ilustração de uma ideia, mas, ao invés, a sua realização revelou-me, a posteriori, o conceito” (Kiefer, 2015, p. 15).

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medium of choice, skills and knowledge of the state of the art are appropriate for the task at hand, the process begins.

This process can be as chaotic and idiosyncratic as the artist needs it to be: as we will see below, we will not use the method to validate the results, so the reasoning and order of the steps taken is irrelevant. It needs, however, to be entirely focused and earnest regarding the vividness of experience. The artist should spend all her time experiencing the world, herself, other persons and other artworks — both of related and of extraneous media — through the obsessive lens of the focus she is after. In this sense, she might be temporarily incapable of establishing authentic artships with other artworks, because she will be using those artworks as test material for her own momentarily biased sensibility. This obsession is the essential step for the fine-tuning of her sensibility to her object of study: it is by feeling that all available stimuli are unfulfilling that we become capable of identifying glimpses of opportunities to attain rewarding ones. It is important, however, to learn how to let go of these obsessions at some point. There will never be such thing as a perfect artwork, and an artist that is unable to let go of an obsession will most likely become confined to the recursion of a strict approach and unable to relate to artworks that significantly diverge from that approach.

But, if circumscribed, these obsessions provide the critical capabilities for the artist to judge how fine-tuned is the experience that her artwork affords. She has to make many experiments, taking regular step-backs to judge them. As a scientist works on her mental model of reality by regularly framing it against such reality (or, more precisely, against data gathered from selected observations of such reality), an artist works on her materialisation of the artwork by regularly framing it against her own experience of the artwork. This regular step back is one of the key aspects of artistic creation — "the artist embodies in himself the attitude of the perceiver while he works," as John Dewey writes (Dewey, 2005, p. 50) —, and it consists basically on an appreciation of the artwork closer to its natural scale, as opposed to the detailed scale of *poiesis*, and from a more uncoupled point of view. Not a disengaged one, as it requires her fine-tuned sensibility and her ability to establish an emotional connection, but as if the artwork was done by someone else. In other words, it is not a question of connecting with the artwork *as if she was someone else* — which would prevent an authentic artship —, but approaching it *as if she was not its author*, as if she did not know already the how and the why about the unfolding of the experience. As Sophia de Mello Breyner puts it:

> One day, at Epidaurus — taking advantage of the quietness left by the tourists' lunch time —, I took a position at the centre of the theatre and I said out loud the beginning of a poem. And I heard, in the next instant, from above, my own voice, free, disconnected from me.
> Some time latter, I wrote these three verses:
> The voice climbs the last steps
> I hear the impersonal winged word
> That I recognise because it is no longer mine[34]

[34] Translated from the original in Portuguese: "Um dia em Epidauro — aproveitando o sossego deixado pelo horário de almoço dos turistas — coloquei-me no centro do teatro e disse em voz alta o princípio de um poema. E ouvi, no instante seguinte, lá no alto, a minha própria voz, livre, desligada de mim.¶ Tempos depois, escrevi estes três versos: A voz sobe os últimos degraus / Oiço a palavra alada impessoal / Que reconheço por não ser já minha" (Andresen, 2015, p. 898). The translation of the verses was done according to my limited abilities.

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She should present a selected few of those experiments to others, in order to experience the artwork in a public context, i.e. in a context that provides her with the opportunity to observe others having a similar experience. At one point, she will feel that she has reached the current *poietic* limit to summon the focused experience she was after, she will sense that there is nothing that she can add, change or remove to further focus the experience — one that is now made clearer precisely because of that. That is the point when she has reached the end of her project. As John Dewey puts it:

> Until the artist is satisfied in perception with what he is doing, he continues shaping and reshaping. The making comes to an end when its result is experienced as good — and that experience comes not by mere intellectual and outside judgment but in direct perception. An artist, in comparison with his fellows, is one who is not only especially gifted in powers of execution but in unusual sensitivity to the qualities of things. This sensitivity also directs his doings and makings. (Dewey, 2005, p. 51)

A few years after, it is quite possible that she will have better solutions to deal with the same problem, and she or someone else can certainly reopen the quest. Yet I believe that a PhD in artistic creation is finished when we can't envision anything that we can do to further clarify the experience that the artwork affords. Which means that this final artwork is *the* main element — and sometimes even the only element — that is relevant to evaluate a PhD in artistic creation. All other elements should be chosen only insofar as their ability to provide a suitable context for the establishment of authentic artships with this artwork. As David Markson writes in *Wittgenstein's mistress*:

> Once, somebody asked Robert Schumann to explain the meaning of a certain piece of music he had just played on the piano. What Robert Schumann did was sit back down at the piano and play the piece of music again. (Markson, 1988, p. 242)

I do not intend to diminish the importance of both reading and, most importantly, of writing, perhaps best expressed by Michel Foucault's notion of self writing (Foucault, 1983).[35] Acquiring the habit of writing can help the artist to keep herself in check and, after careful selection, its outcomes can provide the jury with a glimpse over the authenticity of the whole endeavour. Perhaps a few years later, the artist — or someone else who in the meantime became interested in her work — can use those writings to provide further context, uncover unconsciously embedded elements or point out rhizomatic connections to other works, artists or social events. But immediately after finishing the artwork, if there is anything that the artist can add to further clarify the experience of learned audience members, that simply means that the work is not properly accomplished to the limit of her abilities, as any academic endeavour should be. It is only in terms of degree, scale or peculiarities of each situation that this process differs for career academics doing artistic creation, PhD or master students,[36] but I am convinced that it can give birth to significant examples of artistic creation in any of those stages.

Only in academia can science pursue its goals freed from the shackles of utilitarian pragmatism, even if that space is in constant risk of shrinking if it is not actively defended.

[35] This is an article that perhaps every PhD student in artistic research should be acquainted with. This self-writing should not, however, be mistaken with auto-ethnography.
[36] In this article, I make no claim regarding artistic education prior to these levels. In other words, I am writing for artists wanting to frame their activity within academia, not for students who want to become artists.

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Ideally, a scientist working in academia should be offered the best possible conditions to pursue original contributions to knowledge with uncompromising seriousness, with that commitment to propositional knowledge and earnestness in regard to facts forming the foundations of the ethics of science. Similarly, only in academia can art pursue its goals freed from the need to fulfil the current trends of one or more niches of the art market. I am convinced that, as with science, that can only happen if the artist is offered the best possible conditions to pursue original experiential knowledge with uncompromising seriousness and if the commitment to experiential knowledge and earnestness in regard to the vividness of experience form the foundations of the ethics of art. And hence arrises the eternal problem of evaluation.

Scientific juries focus on methods and evaluation procedures because those are the elements that enable us to verge on the intersubjective. Established methods provide individual scientists with an escape for their cognitive biases and, in turn, test procedures provide jury members with an external reference for evaluation. By using their best knowledge of paradigmatic methods and procedures, along with their capacity for logic and reasoning, jury members focus their judgment on methods, test procedures and comparison with previous solutions, inferring from those elements the soundness of the work at hand. Using a similar approach for academic art would be not only pointless, but actually seriously damaging.

The method — or, better called, the process — of an artist can certainly provide important clues as to the earnestness of the work and to the consciousness that the artist has of her decisions. But it can offer absolutely no guarantee regarding the vividness and focus of the final artistic experience. In fact, if an artist relies on external methods to guide her process, she will most likely achieve an inauthentic artwork, as the only earnest experience she has to offer in that case is that of following those external methods. Similarly, evaluation procedures and reports stand in the way of the direct experience of the artwork by jury members. And, as we have seen, no authentic artship can be established without unbiased, first-hand experience of an artwork.

It is impossible to overstate that there is no substitute or paraphrase for the direct experience of artworks. The experience of the documentation of an artwork is precisely that: the experience of the documentation. A documentation of an artwork can also be an artwork itself — sometimes even better than the one being documented[37] —, but it will always be a deviation from the focus of the original artwork.[38] Neither an embedded video, nor a small excerpt of a performance as part of a PhD viva can provide adequate substitutes for the complete experience of an artwork.

When evaluating artistic proposals, jury members have to be presented with the best possible conditions to experience the artwork in its entirety. As we have seen, anything that works against the focus of attention can prevent the establishment of artships. Jury members should, if necessary, be presented with more than one opportunity to experience the artwork.

[37] With the dominance of online portfolios in artists' careers, artworks are nowadays being often materialised in ways that are designed to benefit their online documentation over their public presentations. We need to ask at which point does the documentation become *the* actual artwork.
[38] Unless the documentation *is* the artwork being considered, as, e.g., in a PhD thesis on the documentation of opera.

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Perhaps an ideal procedure would be to have one experience before and another after reading the documentation and discussing it with the artist. I am fully aware that this poses many problems regarding the possible outreach of the outcomes of academic artistic creation, something that I intend to address in the future.

Finally, and most importantly, there is no escape from the subjectivity of both the artist and the evaluators in academic artistic creation. How could we escape subjectivity if we are dealing with something that has a subjective ontology? Yet, and as I hope that I have been successful in arguing with this article, that does not render academic artistic creation necessarily solipsistic or capricious. Artworks can be original and relevant contributions to our collective knowledge, yet that cannot be evaluated in any other way aside from their capability of affording the establishment of profound, authentic and potentially life-changing artships.

In the end, each evaluator has to be able to step away from her own obsessions as an artist and ask herself a number of questions: does this artwork provide me with a vivid, intense and focused artship? Do I trust that this artist was authentic and entirely in earnest in regard to the focus and vividness of the experience that she is proposing? Is this the experience that I will use in the future to invoque the vividness that enables me to discuss or think about (i.e. discuss with myself) this particular *what it is like*? In other words, can this work become *the* major reference regarding the experiential knowledge it conveys? Is this a work that scouts a broad new area of experience, as opposed to further charting an exhaustively explored territory? And does it set a fertile ground for further exploration of nuances of said experience? If, and only if, the answer to these questions is unequivocally yes — and, after all, the answers refer to a strong subjective experience which either *unequivocally exists* or does not exist at all —, then the artwork has an original contribution of experiential knowledge and is a valid result of artistic research. Even if we should simply call it *artistic creation*.

Conclusion

> But be careful! Because if we attribute a place to art, by assigning it a space from which it should act according to its own criteria, we risk impoverishing it, making it innocuous — the risk of confining it to a space in which, once pacified, it no longer acts with it's own manner; the risk of it ceasing to cause damage, when art has to be subversive. Art has to be damage.[39]

It is perhaps easy to read this text and dismiss it as somewhat conservative take on artistic creation — perhaps even an anachronic one[40] —, or, alternatively, as seeking to provide yet another excuse for artists to carry on capriciously doing art that only they can understand, without ever being asked to provide any further justification. It was not, however, intended in either of those ways, far from it. I have written it as a call to action for artists to reclaim appropriate conditions to elevate their work to its full potential within academic environments.

[39] Translated from the Portuguese translation: "Mas, cuidado! Pois, se atribuímos um lugar à arte ao designar-lhe um espaço a partir do qual deve actuar segundo os seus próprios critérios, corremos o risco de a empobrecer, de a tornar inofensiva, — o risco de ela ficar circunscrita a um espaço e de, uma vez pacificada, já não actuar a seu modo próprio; o risco de ela deixar de causar danos, quando a arte tem de ser subversiva. A arte tem de ser dano" (Kiefer, 2015, p. 15).
[40] After all, who uses such tarnished concepts as *clarified*, *reality*, *knowledge* or *truthful* in 2019? This is something that I intend to address in another article.

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Academia is the only safe domain were knowledge creation can be taken to the very best of our individual abilities, without regard for artificially imposed limits or conventions. “Thinking must never submit itself,” as Henri Poincaré famously said. One century later, that is an ongoing fight for philosophers, scientists and artists alike.

But artists have an additional fight, which is to reclaim the importance of knowing who we are as subjects, and not merely as objects or statistical abstractions. Particularly, reclaiming the unique ability of artworks to create opportunities for us to experience *what it is like to be a person, living in this world and at this point in time*. Above all, I think of this text as a call to action for artists working in academia to take their work very seriously, and to use the best of their abilities to focus it in a way that extends beyond their caprices, their careers or the current trends of the art market. A call for artists to release themselves from the shackles of a philosophy of art that seems to be more concerned with classifying the phenomenon than with discerning its limits and supplying it with focus.

Academics today are forced to publish whether they have anything relevant to say or not, as I am sure that we are all painfully aware. Several voices have raised against this problem, but few individuals, myself included, seem to have the courage to take upon themselves to actually do something about it. With artworks the problem can be even worse. If in a written article we can read the abstract and skim-through it in order to check whether it is relevant or not, with artworks we either go through them entirely, or we will not get the experience at all. If overwhelmed with artistic production of dubious quality, we run the risk of enduring it all without ever experiencing a meaningful artship. As Ortega y Gasset puts it:

> Reading poetry is not one of my usual activities. In general, I don’t think it can be an usual activity for anyone. Both for reading as for creating poetry, we should demand a certain solemnity. Not a solemnity of external pomp, but instead that intimate bewilderment that invades our heart in the essential moments. Contemporary pedagogy has been having a disgraceful influence on proper aesthetic culture, by making art an ordinary activity that happens at fixed-times. Hence we lost the feeling of distance; we lost the respect and fear of art; we approach it at any instant, with the clothing and temper with which it finds use and we got used to not understanding it. The real emotion we today refer to when we speak of aesthetic taste is — if we want to be honest about it — a pale delight, devoid of vigour and density, produced by the mere contact with a beautiful work. […] if [the contemporary man] was honest, he would confess that aesthetic taste is no longer different from the sensation he gets from things that are clean and placed in an appropriate order.[41]

Academic art can have an ethic and we should not run shy from that discussion. And whilst this article is not the proper place to have that discussion, I would start it by suggesting that

[41] Translated from the original in Spanish: “Leer versos no es una de mis ocupaciones habituales. En general, no concibo que pueda ser la de nadie. Tanto para leer como para crear una poses debiéramos exigir cierta solemnidad. No una solemnidad de exteriores pompas, mas sí aquel aire de estupor íntimo que invade nuestro corazón en los momentos esenciales. La pedagogía contemporánea viene influyendo de un modo deplorable en el orden de la cultura estética al hacer del arte una cosa usadera, normal y de hora fija. De esta suerte, perdemos el sentimiento de las distancias; perdemos respeto y miedo al arte; nos acercamos a él en cualquier instante, en el traje y temple que nos coge y nos acostumbramos a no entenderlo. La emoción real a que hoy nos referimos cuando hablamos de goce estético es — si queremos sinceramente reconocerlo — un pálido deleite, exento de vigor y densidade, que nos produce el mero roce con la obra bella. […] Y acontece que el hombre contemporáneo […] si fuera sincero confesaría que el goce estético no es placer diverso de que producen las cosas un poco aseadas y puestas en buen orden” (Ortega y Gasset, 1964, pp. 248-49).

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this ethic should begin by our refusal to show more art than that we can take to the upmost limit of our abilities. Of course that we need to experiment a lot to get anywhere — making art is a daily activity —, and some of those experiments need to be shown to others in order to better grasp their experiential outcomes. For pedagogical reasons, we need to regularly display and discuss the becoming of art in art schools. We might even discover that some of those experiments show great promise and decide to further work on them in order to focus them to their full potential. But I believe that we should form the first layer of selection ourselves by discarding any experiment that doesn't live up to the desired standard.

There is a limit to the number of intense experiences an individual can undergo in a limited amount of time, and our production of artworks should respect that by not presenting more than strictly necessary. The pressure to "publish or perish" has reached art schools, and the results can, to a very great extent, be even more damaging here than they have been so far in science. If an artwork does not afford the vivid experience we are looking for, we should keep our silence and work hard until we can make it do so. To quote what is perhaps the most famous closing remark of all times, "what we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence" . However, we should keep in mind that, immediately before this sentence, Wittgenstein writes:

> We feel that even when all possible scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched. Of course there are then no questions left, and this itself is the answer. The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem. (Is not this the reason why those who have found after a long period of doubt that the sense of life became clear to them have then been unable to say what constituted that sense?) There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical. […] My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognises them as nonsensical, when he has used them — as steps — to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.) He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright. (Wittgenstein, 2001, pp. 6.52-6.54)

Art is capable of bringing us closer to a world whose existence lays well beyond our illusion of knowledge and control. Yes, we have great models that enable us to understand and predict the world. Yes, we have a growing myriad of techniques with which we tame matter and energy to make them better serve our needs. But each map and each concept is, at the very same time, an obstacle to our authentic experience of the singularities of the world. Every small deviation from theory in an experiment, even if deemed negligible, is actually reality creeping in to show us how fragile our maps are. Most of the times we don't listen to it. Yet every time we go out of our controlled environments and plunge into the jungle of unnamed and unruly variables, we can't help but to be humbled by the overwhelming power of reality to undermine our claims of understanding it.

But we don't want to be humbled, we want to be in control. Proud of our intelligence, we yell that "the model is the *real* reality". But we know that to be nothing more than self-deception. And we work harder, vigorously protecting the old model for a while, only to discard it when we finally find a better one. No matter how pleased with ourselves to have reached the top again, we know that it is only temporary and that the rock will soon roll downhill again. Reality

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couldn't care less: it merely stays there, in front of us, *existing* and, who knows, perhaps laughing at our efforts.

Until a child or a poet stumbles upon it and accepts it as it reveals itself. Both the child and the poet are wise enough to know that they can never exhaust that reality. Yet they linger, and they play. And, once in a while, they can point their finger and convince others to look to a particular detail of reality in a peculiar way. A look that is not generalisable, pragmatic or even paraphrasable, but instead one that is singular, vivid, transfiguring. A look that won't enable us to understand the world as we want it to be or as we want to make it into, but to experience it through the way it reveals itself to us and through the meaning that we, as humans, ascribe to that particular encounter. A look that is not about the world, nor about the person looking to the world, but about what it is like to be thrown as a person into that particular world and in that particular time. Art begins there, precisely where science gives up.

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