ON SPECTATION: MIKEL DUFRENNE'S VALUATION OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

A thesis submitted in candidacy for the degree of
Master of Philosophy in Aesthetics

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CONTENTS

REFERENCES

All parenthesized references are to the English translation of Mikel Dufrenne's two volume *Phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique* (Paris, 1953) edited by Edward S. Casey under the title *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* (Evanston, 1973).

Textual references to *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* are abbreviated as the *Phenomenology*.

INTRODUCTION

Aesthetics is an historically emergent philosophical discipline. The coincidence and interplay of particular philosophical-historical forces and socio-cultural factors led to the emergence in the eighteenth century of this newly demarcated field of philosophical investigation. As an historically emergent discipline, aesthetics has a pre-history, an advent, and undergoes internal transformations for better or worse in the course of its history. And what its practitioners achieve in their present sets the stage for its future.

The terminological apparatus the student of aesthetics inherits has an advent and a history as well. Basic concepts arise, crystallize and vie for position and prominence.

Terms and concepts name. In the act of naming, "...the world before me is divided and configured into a great assembly of autonomous and resplendent forms....Naming affirms that this is something...."[1]

The identification and isolation of a distinct sort of experience that came to be named "aesthetic experience" is quite recent. It arose in the wake of discussions on taste and the epistemology of beauty among eighteenth century "practicalists."[2] Their "psychological" emphasis stimulated Immanuel Kant's examination of the (subjective) experience underlying "judgements of taste."[3] After metaphysical excess made general theories of beauty suspect in the waxing positivist circles of the nineteenth century, aesthetic experience was awarded the position of honor.[4] Replacing the idea of beauty, it became the pivotal concept and basic point of reference for aesthetic theory.

The theoretic pursuit of identifying and isolating aesthetic experience has produced mixed results. Various theories exist on the contours of the reality it is supposed to name. Wladyslaw Tatarkeiwicz has provided us with an excellent taxonomy of such theories.[5]

The situation issues a challenge.

What does one do with the heritage of divergent theories and emphases? Much depends on the direction one pursues in response to the vistas and impasses of past and current reflection around aesthetic experience.

Along with the identification and conceptual isolation of a mode of experience in theory, along with the differentiation of a specific orientation towards things that it accompanies, entails and prescribes in practice, comes a valuation: a placement of this sort of experience vis à vis other modes of being in the world as a human subject; an attribution of a status and significance.

In 1953, when phenomenology and existentialism were becoming deeply influential in France and had begun to cross-fertilize, Mikel Dufrenne presented as his primary thesis at the Sorbonne, a work of monumental proportions entitled Phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique (English translation, 1973). Its avowed aim was to describe the aesthetic experience of the (contemporary) spectator "...in order to engage afterward in its transcendental analysis and bring out its metaphysical meaning...." (xlv) It unfolds a tacit, modern understanding of what aesthetic experience is, and promotes a valuation.

The Phenomenology has been hailed as a most outstanding and thorough work in phenomenological aesthetics. In his historical introduction to the "phenomenological movement," Herbert Speigelberg hails Dufrenne's Phenomenology as "...not only the most voluminous but easily the most impressive achievement of the Phenomenological Movement in esthetics thus far."[6] Similarly, Edward S. Casey, in his introduction to its English translation which he edited, calls it "...the single most comprehensive and accomplished book in phenomenological aesthetics to have appeared."[7] And indeed, the experience of reading this work confirms a sense of its magnitude.

An increasing number of essays have been devoted to the critical

examination of this pivotal juncture in Dufrenne's philosophical oeuvre.[8] Some of these recognize what Ion Pascadi has noted, namely, its avoidance of subjectivism and "extreme objectualism,"[9] a statement strangely reminiscent of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's suggestion that phenomenology attempts to combine extreme subjectivism and extreme objectivism.[10] Stefan Morawski has, on the other hand, identified Dufrenne's theory of aesthetic value as an objectivist theory.[11] In my own studies of Dufrenne's Phenomenology I have been constantly struck by the surprising correspondence between what Dirk Hendrik Theodor Vollenhoven has described as objectivism in his Gescheidenis der Wijsbegeerte (1950) and Dufrenne's perspective on aesthetic experience.[12] For Vollenhoven, objectivism is ultimately a matter of "where one places the law", that is, where in one's ontology one places what is of decisive and determinative importance: on the side of the subject, on the side of the object, or, failing these, beyond them both. Essentially objectivism involves, for Vollenhoven, the over-rating or over-estimation of the determinative priority of the object and is based in placing what is considered to be of lasting and final significance on the side of the object.

In the light of Morawski's identification of Dufrenne's position as objectivistic, and in the light of the ostensible correspondence between Vollenhoven's definition and Dufrenne's view, Vollenhoven's description of objectivism leads us to raise the question whether the status and significance of the object is indeed over-rated in the Phenomenology.

The chapters that follow explore various aspects of the Phenomenology. The character of each and the progression of the whole were not so much generated by a single guiding thread, or the progressive unfolding of a single theme, or by an attempt to establish and develop some projected, pre-established thesis, or by a preoccupation with a specific problematics induced and stimulated by the material at hand. Rather these chapters represent the fruit of a number of approaches on the way to an understanding of the Phenomenology; a number of personali ed approaches motivated by the urge to know what another twentieth-century philosopher's work

represents in the "scheme of things" as one understands it at a given point in one's sojourn; they represent a number of personalized approaches culled from the selective assimilation of a native and affirmed tradition; they represent a number of trains of thought connecting gathered information, and continually held aloft by a mixture of admiration, fascination and enthusiasm for what one reads and "hears" on the one hand, and on the other, doubts about the fundamental commitments evident in what one reads, puzzling violations of one's own accumulated sense of things, anxieties about the propriety of antithetically oriented commentary. In the end one hopes he is really on the way to understanding, not only in the specific text-critical or semantic-logical sense, but in a more global sense that approaches the use made of the term understanding in contemporary hermeneutical philosophy and in the even more embracing sense of the term implied in the title A Turnabout in Aesthetics toward Understanding: one hopes that his activities as a reflecting person are truly inaugurated and sustained by that pursuit.

After discussing the motivating and methodological context for Dufrenne's treatment of aesthetic experience in the Phenomenology (chapters 1 and 2), we will explore what Dufrenne has in view with the term aesthetic experience (chapter 3), the fundamental philosophical co-ordinates for Dufrenne's discussion of it (chapter 4) and a specific cluster of conceptual results (chapter 5), in order to survey in the final section a disruptive systematic fault in Dufrenne's philosophical landscape and to highlight the status and significance Dufrenne attributes to the object in aesthetic experience. Perhaps the exercise will illuminate and help us weigh Dufrenne's claims for the value of aesthetic experience.

NOTES

1. So writes Walker Percy in his collection of essays The Message in the Bottle (New York, 1975). He adds the following cautionary note: "...in so rescuing the object from the flux of becoming, it (naming) pays the price of setting it (the object) forth as a static and isolated entity." p. 283.

2. According to Vollenhoven the philosophy of the Enlightenment doesn't resist rationalism but is opposed to the scientialism of the seventeenth century. For the Enlightenment, reason is primarily non-scientific. Thus the concern for the extra-analytic: education, language, the social (Voltaire), the economic, etc. The accentuation of practical life brings with it a more positive valuation of perception. This valuation of perception should not however be equated with empiricism though we do meet up with empiricism in the Enlightenment. Just as within scientialism, empiricism appears sporadically within the Enlightenment. Because of this accentuation of practical life, Vollenhoven has used the term "practicalism" to identify the "specific difference" of Aufklärung or Enlightenment philosophical reflection. See Dirk Hendrik Theodoor Vollenhoven, "Hoofdlijnen van de Gescheidenis der Moderne Wijsbegeerte," Correspondentie-bladen, XII (December 1951), 33 (translation mine).

3. From the "first introduction" to the Critique of Judgement and the first section of the Critique itself it is clear that the subjective nature of the ground for the judgement of taste makes it an "aesthetic" judgement, not the fact that it has to do with beauty or taste.

4. According to Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, "Within the 19th century there occurred a great change in Western Aesthetics: the Idea of Beauty, which for more than two thousand years was its topmost subject, was now more or less eliminated and replaced by the Idea of Aesthetic Experience as the main idea of Aesthetics." "Aesthetic Experience: The Last Stages in the History of the Concept," Dialectics and Humanism, I (1974), 81.

5. Tatarkiewicz, "Aesthetic Experience: The Early History of the Concept," Dialectics and Humanism, I (1974), 19-30; and "Aesthetic Experience: The Last Stages in the History of the Concept," Ibid. 81-91. The former article may have been better entitled: "Aesthetic Experience: The Pre-History of the Concept."

6. Herbert Speigelberg, The Phenomenological Movement (The Hague, 1965), II, 579.

7. Mikel Dufrenne, The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience (Evanston 1973), p. xxi.

8. See for example: David G. Allen, "Aesthetic Perception in Mikel Dufrenne's Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience," Philosophy Today, XXII (Spring 1978), 50-64; Randolf M. Feezell, "Mikel Dufrenne and the World of the Aesthetic Object," Philosophy Today, XXIV (Spring 1980), 20-32; Robert R. Magliola devoted a chapter to Dufrenne's views in his Phenomenology and Literature: an Introduction (Indiana, 1977), pp. 142-173; Nicolas Tertulian, "En relisant la "Phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique"," Vers une esthétique sans entraves: mélanges offerts a Mikel Dufrenne (Paris, 1975), pp. 115-128.

9. "...le penseur francaise réussit à éviter aussi bien le subjectivisme, que l'extreme "objectualisme"." "La science, la philosophie et l'art sous la signe de l'homme," Vers une esthétique, p. 129.

10. "Probably the chief gain from phenomenology is to have united extreme subjectivism and extreme objectivism in its notion of the world or of rationality." Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception (London, 1962), p. xix.

11. Stefan Morawski, Inquiries into the Fundamentals of Aesthetics (Cambridge, 1974), p. 18.

12. Vollenhoven's extensive description of objectivism runs from pages 236-241 in his Gescheidenis der Wijsbegeerte (Franeker, 1950) I. It appears translated, in a syllabus prepared by H. Evan Runner (1958-59), pp. 145ff. The translation is included as an appendix to this thesis.

CHAPTER 1: MOTIVATING CONTEXT

Mikel Dufrenne's preoccupation with (what he names) aesthetic experience is rooted in a conviction of its paramount significance. James L. Marsh, upon reading the Phenomenology, remarks:

> ...one puts down the book with an increased awareness of the value of aesthetic experience, its importance for a truly human existence.[1]

Valuation of aesthetic experience as a "privileged experience"[2] has played a role in Western Civilization at least since Friedrich von Schiller's attempts to establish the pivotal importance of "aesthetic education" for the development of humanity, and has roots in Greek philosophy as far back as Pythagoras' patronizing of the "attitude of the spectator."[3]

Dual Value

In the Phenomenology Dufrenne affirms a "humanist significance" and a "metaphysical" or " ontological" significance for aesthetic experience.

According to Dufrenne:

> Man in front of the aesthetic object transcends his singularity and becomes open to the universally human...without ties, freed of the shackles and prejudices which enslave his consciousness, he is capable of rediscovering the stark essence of man within himself and of directly joining forces with others in the aesthetic community. What divides men are conflicts on the vital plane.... But the aesthetic object brings men together again on a loftier plane where, without ceasing to be individualized, they feel themselves to be interdependent (69).

In this "joining (of) forces with others in the aesthetic community," in the consequent "indefinite enlargement of the public" into a "cosmos of spiritual persons" in which is revealed a "spiritual solidarity," Dufrenne discerns the "humanist significance" of aesthetic experience (69).

Furthermore, according to Dufrenne, in aesthetic experience, especially in feeling (sentiment), "its most meaningful moment," where

one grasps the deepest meaning, the truth, and experiences the real's marvelous predisposition to the human subject's faculty for grasping it, the spectator

> ...learns that the existential (which he is) and the cosmological are one, that the human is common to both him and the real, and that the real and he himself belong to the same race to the extent that one and the same a priori is realized in both and illuminates them with a single light. For a brief moment the spectator, sensing his own innocence, feels reconciled with the real (555).

The metaphysical and ontological significance of aesthetic experience lies, accordingly, in the fact that "the aesthetic," while coming about as a moment of the absolute, "illuminates (presages, suggests) that which is absolute: the unity of subject and object, of spirit and nature, of man and world." (xlviiif.)[4]

Philosophical-religious Context

In the Phenomenology Dufrenne presents the above affirmation of aesthetic experience within the context of an immanentistic and articulately existentialistic metaphysics[5] and on the basis of an impressive phenomenological description of aesthetic experience and a Kant-inspired analysis of its validating a priori.

Subsequent Deepening of the Original Affirmation

In subsequent writings, echoes of the assessment of the significance of aesthetic experience voiced in the Phenomenology reverberate and some new accents and motifs become audible. Dufrenne's "Avant-propos" to Jalons (1966) presents aesthetic experience as comparable to Spinoza's highest, "quasi-mystical" mode of knowledge, "consciousness in the third degree," in which one knows oneself united to Nature: "the original and originating totality," where, presumably, man and the world find their common origin. Aesthetic experience is that "privileged experience" which mobilizes the "voices of silence" or the "voices of poetic language" to express what philosophical reflection connot itself evoke:

the "sentiment de la Nature."[6] In his 1974 presentation to the meeting of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, Dufrenne describes two paths down which the phenomenological approach to poetry --description of the lived experience of poetry--can lead. The first is, again, a metaphysical one: "In experiencing the fusing of man and the sensuous we have a presentiment of what the pre-real is."[7] Secondly, in effecting a "return in the direction of nature as origin" and thus a loosening of "the chains of culture," the experience of poetry can change life. In this way Dufrenne's later reflections show themselves "in complicity with the utopian ideal of cultural revolution as post-Marxism might conceive it."[8] Another 1974 article hails aesthetic experience as a return to the "originary."[9] Throughout Dufrenne's philosophical oeuvre then, one discovers a persistent and unfolding affirmation of the significance of aesthetic experience.

Metaphysical Import as Ground-motive[10]

The significance of aesthetic experience--proclaimed throughout Dufrenne's oeuvre--is, for the most part, if not ultimately, a metaphysical significance. Dufrenne's fascination with aesthetic experience and related phenomena seems to have been aroused and sustained by its potential contribution to philosophy, specifically ontology and metaphysics. In an article written in 1948 entitled "Dieu et l'homme dans la philosophie de Spinoza," Dufrenne writes: "la philosophie moderne, qu'elle y consent ou s'en défende est hantée par l'opposition du sujet et de l'objet; toute interrogation sur l'être met en question celui que la pose."[11] Dufrenne is reported to have remarked in his thesis defence that,

> ...si celle-ci (his principal thesis The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience) privilégie de propos délibéré l'expérience du spectateur par rapport à celle du créateur, c'est...surtout parce que l'expérience du spectateur moderne lui est apparue comme une occassion de méditer sur la relation du sujet et de l'objet et sur ses problèmes.[12]

There are, moreover, already indications in Dufrenne's pre-1953 writings

that he was begining to see in aesthetic experience a manifestation of the basic structural solidarity and primordial unity of subject and object, nature and spirit, man and world that would belie the haunting opposition, the "dualism" of subject and object, nature and spirit, man and the world. The principle contribution of aesthetics to philosophy, claims Dufrenne in "L'apport de l'esthétique a la philosophie" (1964), is that, in considering an "originary experience," "...elle (aesthetics) ramené la pensée et peut-être la conscience a l'origine."[13] The Phenomenology is, above all, a monumental attempt to corroborate this contribution, that is, to "bring out" the metaphysical significance of aesthetic experience. Dufrenne's assessment of its human significance and of its importance in the progressive disclosure of being or truth are developed and deployed along the way.

NOTES

1. James L. Marsh, review of Dufrenne's The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience, The Modern Schoolman, LII (March 1975), 305f.

2. see Mikel Dufrenne, "Introduction to Jalons," Philosophy Today, XIV (Fall 1970), 174.

3. Tatarkiewicz, Dialectics and Humanism, p. 19.

4. The English translation omits a crucial sentence here. The passage in the original French edition reads: "Ainsi dirait-on que l'esthétique se réalise comme moment de l'absolu ou comme absolu, et qu'en même temps il éclaire ou fait pressentir ce qu'est l'absolu: l'affinité sujet-objet atteste une unité..." Mikel Dufrenne, Phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique (Paris, 1953), I, 5. Anne Canquelin, in her essay "Mikel Dufrenne: portrait chinois," Vers une esthetique, writes: "C'est dans une expérience de ce type que se réalise l'unité sujet-objet, nature-esprit, sujet-monde." p. 26.

5. see the last section of the prefatory essay to Le poetique (1973 edition), entitled "Pour une philosophie non théologique," pp. 56f: "Concluons. Une philosophie non théologique, c'est une philosophie pour qui il n'y a pas à attendre de parousie: elle sait que la présence est donnée hic et nunc. Elle est le don même, qui n'implique pas de donateur, qui est seulement le devenir imprévisible et prodigue du réel. Pas d'origine absolue aux frontières de néant, mais seulement de l'originaire: la puissance de la Nature. Pas de geste créateur, sinon celui de l'homme qu'habite cette puissance." In an earlier essay "Existentialism and Existentialisms," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, XXII (1965-66), Dufrenne suggests he wants nothing to do with anything reminiscent of a God separated from the world he creates. What is here starkly present is ostensibly still a question mark in the Phenomenology. In the Phenomenology Dufrenne states: "This reflection (on aesthetic experience) will not allow us to say whether this accord (between subject and object) exists ultimately for the benefit of a being who governs it and realizes himself in it." (556) Yet Dufrenne's metaphysical reflections certainly shy away from a conclusion of that sort. That Dufrenne's philosophical orientation can be called existentialistic is clear from his description of the main aspects of existentialism in "Existentialism and Existentialisms," pp. 51-56.

6. see Philosophy Today, XIV (Fall 1970), 187ff.

7. Mikel Dufrenne, "The Phenomenological Approach to Poetry," Philosophy Today, XX (Spring 1976), 18.

8. Ibid., p. 19.

9. see "La perception esthétique comme retour a l'originaire," Ajatus, XXXVI (1974), 235-249.

10. It will be clear that I am not using the term "ground-motive" here in its strict, received Dooyeweerdian sense. Rather I mean by it: most fundamental impulse. The question is: what basic impulse or motive impels the writing of Dufrenne's Phenomenology? The term "ground-motive" as I am using it should also not be confused with the term "ground-motif" that appears as the title of chapter 4. Ground-motif means at that place: basic thematic constellation. My usage in the first instance is I think continuous with Dooyeweerd's basic intent in his usage of the term "grondmotief". My usage in the second instance is co-ordinate with Vollenhoven's use in the thirties of the same term "grondmotief" to indicate: basic thematic complex. It seems the Dutch motief can mean both motive and motif. Very likely Dooyeweerd's development of the term fell prey to the ambiguity. As a result, thematic structures (motifs like form/matter, grace/nature, science/personality and creation/fall/redemption come to be viewed as driving forces (motives). They received a mysterious efficacy, a semi-mystical aura. I do not mean to deny hereby that something like a fascination with science or the human personality exercises power in cultural history, but then it should be kept in mind that it is the fascination that exercises power, not the durable thematic complex science/personality.

11. Mikel Dufrenne, Jalons (The Hague, 1966), p. 28.

12. "Soutenance de thèse," Revue de Métaphysique, IV (1953), 432.

13. Algemeen Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Wijsbegeerte en Psychologie, LVI (1964), 235-40.

CHAPTER 2: PHENOMENOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience is a phenomenological effort.

In contemporary philosophical discourse, the term "phenomenology" denotes, first of all, a "manner or style of thinking"[1] about given realities, experiences and states of affairs. It denotes a specific mode of philosophical praxis. Before the turn of the century the term had already been employed to indicate a specific discipline by Johann Heinrich Lambert and it had been used by Hegel to name his "descriptive" account of the unfolding of Geist. But around the turn of the century, Edmund Husserl began to use the term to denote the complex approach to philosophic inquiry he inaugurated and continually reformulated.

Due to the monumental effort of Husserl, an entire group of thinkers arose, who shared a common core of ideas regarding the practice and proper aims of philosophical reflection and made use of the philosophical discipline which owed so much to Husserl's formative activities. A genuine and identifiable philosophical movement or current thus developed around this promising and complex approach to philosophical inquiry and came to be known as "the phenomenological movement."[2] Yet, as an approach, phenomenology also lent itself to incorporation within other philosophical commitments or programs than the one it arose under. Neo-Kantianism (Nicoli Hartmann), Lebensphilosophie (Max Scheler), existentialism (Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty) and pragmatism (Marvin Farber, Wilfred Sellars) all provided a congenial setting for the ancillary use of phenomenology to promote a variety of philosophical concerns.

According to Johan van der Hoeven,

> Husserl's Phenomenology arose, on the one hand, amidst the permeating influence of positivism and its philosophical heir, pragmatism, with their emphasis on scientific, reductive explanation, and on the other, amidst the funneled outpouring of late idealism in William Dilthey's Kritik der historischen Vernunft (a critique which, even in its "prophetic" allure at

> Nietzsche's hands, gave no effective defence against the positivist-pragmatist direction and eventually spent itself in relativism or nihilism).[3]

In this crisis situation, phenomenology represented and articulated a conviction regarding the primary task of philosophy: "...to describe various regions of human experience in the most nuanced manner possible." (xvi) Phenomenology claimed to provide a technique for "the presuppositionless treatment of ...all types of experience and therewith a sure foundation for all knowledge."[4] "Phenomenology sought to avoid every unwarranted construction and to subject the unquestioned dominion of philosophical theories to critical examination, " that is, "to bring the phenomena to expression."[5] It saw itself as a return "zu den Sachen selbst."

Phenomenology's character, development and diversity rest on two basic components: a theory of intentional acts, and the notion of a phenomenology.[6] Drawing on the tradition of reflection on intentional acts, especially Franz Brentano's development of this largely medieval theme, and his own development of the idea of a phenomenology, Husserl proposed his distinctive approach to philosophical investigation. Husserl claimed that Brentano's "conversion of the scholastic concept of intentionality into a descriptive root-concept of psychology constitutes a great discovery, apart from which phenomenology could not have come into being at all."[7] The phenomenological notion of intentionality is fundamentally a matter of recognizing that consciousness is "meant for a world which it neither embraces nor possesses," nor is it of consciousness' own making, but yet, something "toward which it is perpetually directed."[8]

Building on Lambert's first usage of the term phenomenology and its subsequent use to denote any descriptive study of a given phenomenon,[9] Husserl honed descriptive study into a disciplined exercise and a prolegomenal tool for philosophical reflection.

As a descriptive science hoping to return to the phenomena of immediate experience, "zu den Sachen" as they reveal themselves in

immediate experience without the obscuring overlay of judgements and biases, however imposed, phenomenology's most characteristic core is, says Speigelberg, its method.[10] Notwithstanding significant diversity with regard to the details of the method, the phenomenological treatment of a subject involves a sustained, detailed description of a given phenomenon--not empirically observable matters of fact!, and not in the abstract, but rather as the phenomenon relates to the subject[12]--in order to seize its intuitively apprehended essence.[13]

Dufrenne has consistently championed the privileged character of a phenomenological approach in aesthetics. On several occasions he has articulated what he considers characteristic of and important in a phenomenological treatment of art or poetry.[14] Yet the Phenomenology itself makes little more than a cryptic footnoted comment regarding Dufrenne's conception of phenomenology and his place within the movement:

> It will be seen that we are not striving to follow Husserl to the letter. We understand phenomenology in the sense in which Sartre and Merleau-Ponty have acclimated this term in France: a description which pursues (viser) an essence, itself defined as (a) signification immanent in the phenomenon and given with it. The essence is something to be discovered, but by way of an unveiling, not a leap from the known to the unknown. Phenomenology is applicable primarily to the human sphere because in it consciousness is self-conscious; in this we have a model of the phenomenon: appearance as an appearance to consciousness of a meaning. (xlviii, fn. 2)[15]

Dufrenne offers enough specific indications of his conception of phenomenology in the Phenomenology to communicate a sense of the overall intent or underlying scheme of his phenomenological enterprise. Here the general sketch of phenomenology offered above receives the specificity and concreteness that inevitably attends its assimilation by a particular thinker.

Dufrenne's View

The description Dufrenne has in mind when he specifies the aim of the inquiry (xlv, see p.2 above) is description-in-pursuit-of-an-essence.

But what does this pursuit of an essence represent? Dufrenne's definition of essence as a "signification" (xlviii, fn. 2; see previous page) or the "truth" of the phenomenon (lv) might lead one to interpret this pursuit in terms of his stated aim to bring out the metaphysical significance of aesthetic experience. Or is he concerned to uncover a single defining ("qualifying") feature? We must, I believe, understand as Dufrenne's intent the progressive unfolding, through description of "what is essential in this experience,"(lv) the "sifting out" of "a certain exemplary form" which aesthetic experience "tends to realize," and which "tends to be manifested in it."(liv) Dufrenne is "trying to grasp aesthetic experience in its specificity as beyond differences between the arts."(lvi) He is concerned to highlight those features of aesthetic experience without which it could not be said to be truly that experience that it is;[16] to highlight "what it is as a fact for us before any thematization."[17]

This essence is, for Dufrenne, a signification <u>immanent</u> in the phenomena and given with it.(xlviii) In defining it in such a fashion he claims affinity with Sartre and Merleau-Ponty as opposed to Husserl. The essence has been "existentialized," "put back into existence." Yet this essence, though revealed in history--history, says Dufrenne, is the place in which they first appear and the place of their full realization (lv)--is not altogether historical (liv), "not entirely relative to history."(liii) Dufrenne affirms in this context Max Scheler's anti-relativistic and anti-historicistic attitudes.

Moreover, by abstracting "what is essential in this experience" and giving it the status of a "signification immanent" in the phenomenon, yet not entirely relative to history, Dufrenne is making an important, perhaps unwarranted, but certainly not unprecedented philosophical choice, a choice which is based in and reflects a reification of the distinction between the universal and individual side of things. So Dufrenne's use of the notion of essence gives him a distinct philosophical-historical place among contemporaries and thinkers past.

Dufrenne identifies "intentional analysis--the analysis of the manifold ties between the intentional aiming of the subject and the object aimed at"--as the proper method of phenomenology.[18] In an article on Paul Ricoeur, Sander Griffioen writes:

> Typical for phenomenology is the attention it pays to consciousness, more precisely: to the correlation of the possible ways in which consciousness can orient itself, and the manner in which the phenomenon appears in or to consciousness.[19]

The method of intentional analysis underlies the division of the Phenomenology into a phenomenological treatment of the aesthetic object and a phenomenology of aesthetic perception. Dufrenne's Phenomenology discloses the structure of our "noetic" acts with respect to aesthetic objects on the one hand, and describes, on the other, the "complex structure of the precise objects (PE: noematic correlates) which engage the intentionality constituting the human consciousness."[20]

Thus Dufrenne's pursuit of the essence of aesthetic experience is carried out by way of a description of the objective and subjective structure involved: "we shall thus have grasped aesthetic experience (that of the spectator) while proceeding in terms of a practically unavoidable dichotomy."(lxvi)

It is worth noting here that an ostensible and problematic decentralization of focus occurs by virtue of this typically phenomenological preoccupation with noetic act and noematic correlate, a decentralization away from direct description of the encounter itself, and to explicating structures of the object and act. Yet the aesthetic experience of the spectator, his encounter with the work does remain the point of departure. And Dufrenne's "dichotomistic" treatment does expose the ties between subject and object, illuminating in that manner the character of aesthetic experience.

It should be emphasized that Dufrenne's phenomenology of aesthetic experience is then, strictly speaking, not a description of aesthetic experience itself, that is, as a phenomenon, a specific encounter. The

focus of descriptive concern is not the encounter that aesthetic experience concretely is, rather, it is a phenomenology of aesthetic experience in so far as the object and perception involved in the experience are described as they function within aesthetic experience.

Another feature of Dufrenne's phenomenological praxis deserves to be mentioned. While the Phenomenology is laced with acute description, Spiegelberg's remark that French phenomenology is characteristically more discursive in tenor than descriptive holds for Dufrenne's effort as well. Spiegelberg writes: "...the usual tenor of phenomenological writing (in France) is that of arguing a point discursively rather than of patiently reporting the findings of intuitive proceedure."[21] In the Phenomenology description occurs largely within the context of philosophico-aesthetic (inter-relational, foundational, systematic, thetically oriented) discussions concerning the objective and subjective structures involved in the spectator's aesthetic experience--its "fundamental structures."[22] This philosophico-aesthetic character is present to such an extent that Nicolas Tertulian describes the Phenomenology as "...une oeuvre d'esthétique philosophique aspirant à donner des réponses systématiques aux grands problèmes traditionnels de la discipline."[23] As a discussion of philosophico-aesthetic problematics concerning the objective and subjective structures of the aesthetic experience of the spectator, the Phenomenology "...stands out in its systematic structure"[24] and may well be "...la plus importante synthèse théoretique du domaine esthétique produite par la pensée française depuis la Deuxième Geurre mondiale."[25] Just how promise and praxis coincide remains, however, unclear.

The phenomenological character of the work is, in addition, limited by the relative position of phenomenological analysis within the work as a whole. Part I and III are explicitly phenomenological. Part II offers an analysis of the work of art that is intended to support the conclusions advanced in PartI. "Instead of considering the work as something perceived (as in a phenomenological approach, PE), we shall

consider it as something known, as something which precedes perception." (237) Part IV offers a critique of aesthetic experience which includes a transcendental analysis, the articulation of the metaphysical significance of aesthetic experience and a discussion of ontological perspectives. Phenomenology appears to be prologomenal to transcendental and metaphysical concerns. The phenomenological portions of the work lay the groundwork for the "critique" of aesthetic experience, for reflections on the a priori brought into play or implicit in aesthetic experience, the question of the truth of aesthetic experience, the problem of the place of aesthetic experience within life and the world (ie, within the context of being), and its metaphysical significance. The proposed phenomenological description remains description "in order to engage afterwards in its transcendental analysis and bring out its metaphysical meaning,"(xlv) thus, ancillary. We see once again the centrality of metaphysical, or at least, meta-phenomenological concerns in Dufrenne's reflections.

NOTES

1. Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. viii.

2. According to Herbert Spiegelberg, "'Phenomenology' is, in the 20th century, mainly the name for a philosophical movement whose primary objective is the direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced, without theories about their causal explanation and as free as possible from unexamined preconceptions and presuppositions. The term itself is much older, going back at least to the 18th century, when Johann Heinrich Lambert, in his Neues Organon (1764), applied it to that part of his theory of knowledge which distinguishes truth from illusion and error. In the 19th century it became associated chiefly with Hegel's Phänomenologie des Geistes (1807), which undertook to trace the development of the human spirit from mere sense-experience to "Absolute Knowledge." Doing Phenomenology, essays on and in Phenomenology (The Hague, 1975), p. 3.

3. Johan van der Hoeven, Kritische Ondervragen van de Fenomenologische Rede (Amsterdam, 1963), p. 9.

4. Marvin Farber, The Aims of Phenomenology (New York, 1966), p. 14.

5. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Phenomenological Movement," Philosophical Hermeneutics (Berkeley, 1976), p. 131.

6. According to Vollenhoven, "bij F. Brentano (sinds 1869) en E. Husserl c.s. is fenomenologie verbonden met het thema van intentionele, op een object gerichte akte..." "Fenomenologie," Oosthoek's Encyclopedia (1960), p. 434. Describing the "intentioneel-phenomenologische nevenlijn(en)" within "interactionism" elsewhere, Vollenhoven has said, "Wie enig inzicht wil hebben in karakter, divergentie en ontwikkeling der tegenwoordig wel zeer in vogue zijnde intentioneele phenomenologie, dient zich de moeite te getroosten eerst haar twee componenten--de leer der intentioneele acten en der phenomenologie--afzonderlijk na te gaan. Dit is te meer nodig daar beide ook thans nog afzonderlijk bestaan. Cursus 1959/1960 p. 13.

7. quoted by R. Chisholm in an article entitled "Brentano on Descriptive Psychology and the Intentional," Phenomenology and Existentialism (Baltimore, 1967), p. 1.

8. Merleau-Ponty, p. xvii and the author's introduction to the Phenomenology.

9. see Richard Schmitt, "Phenomenology," The Encyclopedia of Philosophy (New York, 1967), VI, 135.

10. Speigelberg, The Phenomenological Movement, II, 655.

11. Schmitt, "Phenomenology," p. 135.

12. Hugh Silverman, "Dufrenne's Phenomenology of Poetry," Philosophy Today, XX (1976), 20.

13. I. M. Bochenski, Contemporary European Philosophy (Berkeley, 1969), p. 129f.

14. see "Phénoménologie et ontologie de l'art," Les sciences humaines et l'oeuvre d'art (1969); "On the Phenomenology and Semiology of Art," Phenomenology and Natural Existence (1973) and "The Phenomenological Approach to Poetry" presented at the 1974 meeting of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy.

15. I have revised the Casey translation somewhat, using Kaelin's rendering of this footnote in An Existentialist Aesthetic.

16. Schmitt, "Phenomenology, " p. 139.

17. Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. xv.

18. "On the Phenomenology and Semiology of Art," Phenomenology and Natural Existence: essays in honor of Marvin Farber (New York, 1973) p. 86.

19. Sander Griffioen, "De strijd om het centrum. Enkele lijnen en motieven in het denken van Ricoeur," Vrede met de rede? (Amsterdam, 1976), p. 37

20. Stefan Morawski, "Contemporary Approaches to Aesthetic Inquiry: Absolute Demands and Limited Possibilities," Critical Inquiry, IV (1978), 62.

21. Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement, p. 397

22. see M. Natanson's review of the Phenomenology in Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, XV (1954/55), 140-142.

23. Vers une esthétique, p. 115.

24. Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement, p. 580.

25. Vers une esthétique, p. 115.

26. see J-C. Piguet's review, Révue de Metaphysique, p. 268.

CHAPTER 3: THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE INQUIRY

Dufrenne distinguishes three varieties of aesthetic experience in the introduction to the Phenomenology. They are: the aesthetic experience of the creator, the aesthetic experience of the spectator and the aesthetic experience of nature.

From the outset Dufrenne limits the scope of the inquiry to the second of these: the aesthetic experience of the spectator.

The choice is not arbitrary. In his thesis defence Dufrenne justified his choice as follows:

> If this latter (the Phenomenology) deliberately privileges the experience of the spectator, it is because it is the issue of his (Dufrenne's) own experience as spectator, but above all because the experience of the contemporary spectator appeared to him as an occasion to meditate on the relation of subject to object and on its problems, and conversely (it is because) the aesthetic object exists only in as much as it is sensed for and by a consciousness but not in it.[1]

Neither is the isolation of the aesthetic experience of the spectator unwarranted. Systematically speaking, creation--the creator's experience in particular--and the experience of the spectator are to be distinguished. "To create and to appreciate the creation remain two very different modes of behavior..."(xlvi) Yet the spectator's experience is no less decisive than the creator's: "...while it is true that art presupposes the initiative of the artist, it is also true that it awaits consecration by a public," and "...to arise in the world of men, the "aesthetic" must enlist the aesthetic life of the creator as well as the aesthetic experience of the spectator." (xlvi;xlvii)

But let us lay aside these considerations and try to clarify for ourselves what precisely Dufrenne has in mind with the phrase: "the aesthetic experience of the spectator." What, specifically, is being investigated?

Dufrenne's use of the term "spectator" in the context of his

discussion of aesthetic experience clearly suggests that he means: spectator of the work of art. Hence the term excludes a broader meaning such as is implied in Pythagoras' use of it in the alleged dictum: "Life is like an athletic contest: some turn up as wrestlers, others as traders, but the best ones appear as spectators."[2] Dufrenne does not mean just any spectation, rather, he focusses on artistic spectation, that is, spectation of art works.

An additional qualification can be made if we wish to delimit yet more precisely the specific focus of the work implied in Dufrenne's use of the phrase "the aesthetic experience of the spectator." Dufrenne's preoccupation with the aesthetic experience of the spectator must be regarded as a concern to treat normative artistic spectation.

What do we mean with this?

From the start Dufrenne associates spectation and the aesthetic experience of the spectator with the recognition, contemplation and consecration of works of art. (xlviff.) The contemplation Dufrenne has in mind is a "disinterested, solemn and respectful contemplation,"[3] a contemplation that involves leaving aside, transcending, the "shackles and prejudices which enslave (the spectator's) consciousness."(68) In the Phenomenology "contemplation" functions as a synonym for aesthetic perception. Aesthetic perception is the operative subjective or noetic component in the encounter between a person and a work of art that occurs when that person is engaged in contemplation of the work.

Dufrenne defines this aesthetic perception in a striking manner. Aesthetic perception is for him the kind of perception that "gives the work of art its due," the kind of perception that the work of art calls for, it is "faithful perception,"(lii) "pure" perception,(lxiv) "perception droite." All of these expressions bring into play normative considerations, they imply an axiological stance. Especially the terms "faithful," "pure" and "droite" are normative terms: they attempt to give a preliminary indication of what Dufrenne conceives proper perception of art works

to involve.

Faithful perception is a perception in which consciousness busies itself in establishing and maintaining an attitude of vigilant and undiverted attention to le sensible: the verbal and musical ensemble present before the spectator (in the case of an opera).(10ff.)

Dufrenne pursues his description of aesthetic experience against the background of this indication of the essential character of aesthetic perception. His description of the aesthetic object is a description of that object that appears and unfolds within the context of faithful perceiving. Similarly, the description of the path perception takes when it remains faithful or pure forms the content of the phenomenological description of aesthetic perception.(Part III)

Thus normative artistic spectation constitutes the point of departure and the touch-stone for the description and discussion unfolded in the Phenomenology.

It is useful to note at this point that Dufrenne's conception of normative artistic spectation is loaded perceptually. Spectation, understood primarily in terms of contemplation, tends to privilege those arts in which perception and performance are involved. Indeed, perception and performance hold a place of honor in Dufrenne's conception: the perception/performance model functions as something of a paradigm for aesthetic experience of art works.[4]

Worth noting as well, is the fact that, in addition to bringing normative considerations into play, Dufrenne's basic understanding of aesthetic perception has built into it the notion that normative artistic spectation involves submission to the work as presented and places the initiative with the work of art. The work of art solicits a certain type of attention. It exercises its authority. Everything must serve the appearance and disclosure of the aesthetic object, specifically the emergence of its sensible and affective qualities. The appearance and disclosure of the aesthetic object are the heart of aesthetic experience.

This priority attributed to the aesthetic object in aesthetic experience implies the elevation of the object and its prerogatives to a place of honor in Dufrenne's aesthetics. We shall return to this point in the concluding chapter.

We said in the first chapter that Dufrenne develops a philosophical aesthetics in the Phenomenology, that he seeks to provide systematic answers to various issues in aesthetic theory. Because he limits the subject matter of the inquiry to the aesthetic experience of the spectator, the resultant theory can properly be called a spectator aesthetics. By pursuing such a spectator aesthetics Dufrenne departs from what had been considered the royal road to aesthetics by his contemporaries, namely, the creative activities of the artist. As a result, vigorous reaction was voiced at his thesis defence against taking as his point of departure the aesthetic experience of the spectator.[5] Is not the experience of the spectator a onesided and rather inadequate foundation for the construction of a general aesthetic theory or for answering systematic questions in aesthetics? The question becomes more acute since this limited focussing on the spectator is to be the point of departure for mounting a transcendental critique of aesthetic experience and ultimately an evaluation of the metaphysical significance of aesthetic experience.

Dufrenne does acknowledge, however, that "...an exhaustive study of aesthetic experience would in any case have to unite the two approaches...(xlvi) No doubt Dufrenne's view that the essence of aesthetic experience reveals itself in each kind of aesthetic experience cushions the impact of such criticisms.

Yet, another question raises its head: is not the apparent wholesale identification of aesthetic experience with the experience of the work that renders it its due at least problematic? Are normative artistic spectation and aesthetic experience of a work co-extensive realities and should they be conceived as the same thing? Is aesthetic experience of

a work of art not an aspect of normative artistic spectation? We will return to these questions in the conclusions as well.

Meanwhile, our evaluation of Dufrenne's valuation of aesthetic experience must, I believe, take into account the features of Dufrenne's theory just discussed, for they appear to undercut the basis of some of Dufrenne's more general claims.

NOTES

1. "Soutenance de thèse," Revue de Metaphysique, p. 432.

2. Tatarkiewicz, Dialectics and Humanism, p. 19.

3. Mikel Dufrenne, "Commentary on Mr. Elliot's Paper," Linguistic Analysis and Phenomenology, ed. W. Mays and S.C. Brown (London, 1972) p. 129.

4. Such a paradigm militates against a full understanding of the experience of reading.

5. "Soutenance," p. 432f.

CHAPTER 4: GROUND-MOTIF

In the preceding chapter I suggested that Dufrenne's delimitation of the aesthetic experience of the spectator as the focus of the work amounts to a concern with normative artistic spectation. Dufrenne's phenomenological orientation, highlighted in chapter 2, leads him to interpret and conceive normative artistic spectation in terms of the noesis-noemata scheme. In effect, this means that normative artistic spectation is seen to involve "the intentional aiming of a subject" and the "object aimed at."[1] More precisely, it means that Dufrenne regards the aesthetic experience of the spectator as involving two components: 1) the act in which a human subject's individual consciousness orients itself in a specific manner, and 2) the object which appears in or to consciousness by virtue of that act.

A basically phenomenological theory of human consciousness and experience is operative in this approach.

What characterizes this theory?

According to Hans-Georg Gadamer, the phenomenological concept of experience (as initiated by Husserl) is expressly distinct from the "popular concept": "the unit of experience is not understood as a piece of the actual flow of experience of an I, rather the idea of experience becomes a comprehensive name for all acts of consciousness whose essence is intentionality."[2] This concept of experience is assumed in Dufrenne's understanding.

In this concept of experience, consciousness is (tacitly or overtly) conceived as a relatively independent and active agency. This is evident from the introduction to the Phenomenology where Dufrenne sets up his entire treatment of aesthetic experience by identifying a "plane on which consciousness, as a subject's individual consciousness,...arises in the world, borne by an individuality and confronts its object."(xlix) This consciousness is considered a "mode of the subject's being" and is, as

such, "capable of attention, knowledge and various attitudes,"(xlix) hence an active agency. Dufrenne's formulations in these statements bear witness to a theoretic isolation or abstraction of "consciousness" from the being who is "conscious of," and a subsequent understanding of this consciousness as a semi-independent and active agency borne by a being that supports it. This accentuation of consciousness as a relatively independent and active agency is evident as well in the fact that both subject and object are defined in terms of their relation to consciousness: the individual subject is conceived as the incarnation of a consciousness in a body and the object is viewed as that which consciousness confronts.

The abstraction of consciousness and its subsequent isolation, by which consciousness comes to be regarded as a relatively independent and active agency, borne in some fashion by a being that supports it, is deeply embedded in the Western philosophical tradition. As an explicit and thematized notion, it represents the mainstay of a long and respected tradition of philosophical reflection which dates back at least as far as Descartes.[3]

Nevertheless, Dufrenne shares Merleau-Ponty and Sartre's concern "...to overcome or at least transform the Cartesian model of consciousness."[4] For Descartes consciousness comprises a self-contained res cogitans, which, being without extension, is opposed to the world of things that comprises the res extensa. For Dufrenne, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre, consciousness is associated with subjectivity and purely for-itself existence (pour-soi) and contrasted with the in-itself (en-soi) existence of things. Moreover, for them and for Heidegger, consciousness is incarnate, not a transcendental ego-function. Consciousness is within a body, and thereby, in the world. This represents a clearly existentialistic shift away from Husserl's theory of consciousness. Yet the shift is an existentialistic shift within a basically phenomenological perspective: consciousness is "intentional" in structure. Along with Husserl, Dufrenne affirms that consciousness is always consciousness of, that is, consciousness has a bearing on, relates to something other than itself,

namely, that which stands over against it: consciousness has a bearing on an object. As far as Dufrenne is concerned, one can only speak of an object with reference to consciousness. There is no object except for or with reference to a consciousness.

For Dufrenne consciousness "arises in the world,...it awakens in a world already organized, where it finds itself heir to a tradition and the beneficiary of a history."(1) In this world it "adjusts to the natural or cultural given."(1) In the absence of consciousness this "given" is, properly speaking, not an object. "The given" only exists as object in the presence of consciousness. Yet it is an object the moment consciousness directs itself toward it in its acts of attention, knowledge and in its taking up of a certain attitude. Thus "...the object is presupposed and is always already given..." just as, in experience, "...consciousness too is presupposed, being always already present."(1)

According to Dufrenne, the object that consciousness confronts, better, that appears to consciousness is "...revealed and articulated in accordance with the attitude which consciousness adopts toward it and in the experience consciousness has of it."(xlix)[5] In other words, there is a tight correlation between the way or manner in which (the subject's individual) consciousness directs or orients itself with respect to the given and the way or manner in which the object appears in or to consciousness, a correlation between noesis and noema. Dufrenne strongly affirms and makes use of this idea of a correlativity or reciprocity between subject and object.

The notion of a correlativity between subject and object is absolutely basic to Dufrenne's phenomenological enterprise in the Phenomenology. In fact, Dufrenne is to have said in his thesis defence that the "idea of the reciprocity of the subject and the object...has served...as a guiding thread..."[6] for the Phenomenology. This idea can be called the generative idea for Dufrenne's conception of the principle contours and internal dynamics of the aesthetic experience in question. Moreover, the main problematics Dufrenne faces in the Phenomenology are generated by this

basic idea.

Because of the basic position of the idea of the correlativity of subject and object in Dufrenne's Phenomenology, Nicolas Tertulian regards this work as an important contribution to the grand attempts to found a philosophical aesthetics on a philosophical conception of the subject-object correlation.[7] As significant in philosophical-historical context, Dufrenne's accentuating of the subject-object correlation in aesthetics represents a move beyond the one-sided interest in the subjective component of aesthetic experience and in particular, of the subject's "psychological" responses to art and beauty so characteristic of nineteenth century interest in aesthetic experience.

Implications for a Theory of Artistic Spectation

"Within" aesthetic experience, Dufrenne distinguishes perception and its object. On account of Dufrenne's view of experience and consciousness, perception is here regarded as the noetic activity that is involved in the aesthetic experience of the spectator. I have remarked earlier that this identification of perception as the noetic activity in the aesthetic experience of the spectator is attributable to his concern with the spectator as contemplator. It is also the precipitate of a powerful tradition regarding the proper attitude before beauty and hence art.

But aside from this, the word "within" (à l'interieur de) introduces us into a potentially confusing terminological thicket. Dufrenne writes: "Within (à l'interieur de) the aesthetic experience which unites them, we can therefore distinguish the object from its perception..."(xlix) Here Dufrenne seems to be conceiving aesthetic experience as a totality that contains, as it were, both a certain kind of subject functioning and an object, a totality that encompasses, even unites, subject and object. Yet in other places Dufrenne speaks of aesthetic experience as the correlate of the aesthetic object.(xlviii) In the context of such a statement, the term "aesthetic experience" seems to indicate: all that is involved in the concrete subject functioning of an aesthetically

functioning subject, or perhaps, what the subject undergoes or lives in the presence of the aesthetic object. Speigelberg seems to interpret Dufrenne's usage in this manner when he describes the correlation highlighted in the Phenomenology as obtaining between aesthetic experience and the aesthetic object.

What weight must be given to the expression "à l'interieur de?" Perhaps Dufrenne means little more than that the aesthetic object plays a role or is involved in aesthetic experience, that it impinges upon, has a bearing on, co-determines (along with the perceiving subject) the experience had in its presence, where experience is a function of an incarnate consciousness. Perhaps the supposition that aesthetic experience constitutes, to Dufrenne's mind, an encompassing totality is unwarranted. But what are we then to understand by the claim that aesthetic experience unites perception and its object, especially in the light of the metaphysical assertion that, in aesthetic experience there is a presentiment of the unity of subject and object? Perhaps Dufrenne means to say no more than that in concrete aesthetic experience perception is joined to an object.[8] In any case, the idea of aesthetic experience as a unifying totality within which perception and object are united seems, with its possible metaphysical allusions, as problematic as does the attribution of a semi-independent agency to consciousness.

If what Dufrenne means by aesthetic experience is primarily "what the subject undergoes" or "lives" in the presence of the aesthetic object, we are at the brink of yet another, related potential confusion: both aesthetic experience and aesthetic perception are identified as correlates of the aesthetic object. Are they then co-extensive concepts? As we said, Speigelberg seems to treat them as if they are. Perhaps we can best understand their distinction in the following manner: aesthetic perception is the noetic activity that occasions aesthetic experience, whether aesthetic experience be considered as a unifying totality or as that which the subject undergoes. The Dutch term beleven, as distinct from ervaren (German: erleben/erfahren), both translated with the English

word experience, approximates what I have in mind with the words "undergo" or "live" in the above attempts to circumscribe what Dufrenne means by experience in the locution "aesthetic experience."

We said that Dufrenne distinguishes within aesthetic experience the object and its perception. We also suggested that this perception, aesthetic perception--the only perception appropriate to the work of art--is conceived in terms of the intentional aiming of (the human subject as) an incarnate consciousness. As noesis, aesthetic perception is the precondition for and occasions the appearing and full disclosure of the aesthetic object. Yet the identification of aesthetic perception as the noetic activity, or more broadly, as the subject functioning at work in aesthetic experience is problematic. As we suggested earlier, such a restriction poses difficulties for understanding the experience of literature. It is also problematic in another sense: Dufrenne's identification of aesthetic perception as the subjective activity in the aesthetic experience of the spectator leads to the identification of imagination, understanding, reflection and feeling as moments within aesthetic perception in so far as they play a role within artistic spectation. The term "aesthetic perception" seems to loose functional specificity and the inclusion of these moments within aesthetic perception involves and implies a number of dialectical maneuverings which create internal tensions in Dufrenne's views.[9] The main difficulty is this: can the term "aesthetic perception" be asked to cover the entire range of subject-functionings at work in normative artistic spectation?

It is useful to note that, while Dufrenne highlights in unprecedented ways the role of the body in aesthetic perception,[10] the role of consciousness is pivotal. The main features of its role are as follows. Consciousness is responsible for the initiation and maintenance of a posture of "faithful" perception. It must employ itself "from the start in preserving the purity and wholeness of the sensuous," in maintaining the "vigilant and undivided attention to the sensuous" that is required for the initiation and persistence of an aesthetic experience.(11f.)

Consciousness does this "precisely by neutralizing things that could disturb it and divert it from the appearance."(11)

Consciousness has a second, equally critical function: grasping meaning. Consciousness gives and demands meaning (12, 335ff.) Yet, while consciousness gives and demands meaning it is emphatically not the origin of meaning.(546ff.) Here again we see consciousness treated as if it were a somewhat independent and active agency. But, in spite of these implied or tacit dimensions to Dufrenne's reflections on consciousness, we must note, and with appreciation, that at his best Dufrenne asserts that consciousness permeates all our bodily activities.

Dufrenne's view of consciousness and human experience, in particular his affirmation of the correlativity between subject and object is operative in his view of normative artistic spectation. The primary manifestation of the correlativity principle as it applies to aesthetic experience is the idea of the correlativity of aesthetic perception and the aesthetic object. Dufrenne states, "...this correlation lies at the centre of our work."(lxv) The implications of the understanding of consciousness and human experience epitomized in the correlativity principle for aesthetic experience are especially evident in Dufrenne's understanding of the relation between the work of art and the aesthetic object, the place of performance in human commerce with the arts and in the importance of the spectator and public. Generally speaking, the idea that aesthetic perception and the aesthetic object are correlated leads Dufrenne to highlight the importance of aesthetic perception as precondition to or occasion for the appearance of the aesthetic object, and secondly, it leads him to view the consequent appearance of the aesthetic object as the crux of aesthetic experience. Everywhere the appearance and full disclosure of the aesthetic object are central.

Work of Art and Aesthetic Object

Already in the introduction to the Phenomenology Dufrenne establishes

a distinction between the work of art and the aesthetic object. This distinction is fitly described by Nicolas Tertulian as a "specifically phenomenological" distinction.[11]

According to Dufrenne, in every experience the work of art is already an object. The nature of the intentional aiming is, however, decisive: "...the work of art as present in the world may be grasped in a perception which neglects its aesthetic quality...or which seeks to justify it instead of experiencing it, as the critic may do."(1ii) The aesthetic object is the work of art aesthetically perceived.

In so far as the object, as a correlate of consciousness, is articulated and revealed in accordance with the attitude which consciousness adopts toward it, aesthetic object and work of art are, strictly speaking, distinguishable. In fact the work of art <u>becomes</u> an aesthetic object in the encounter between subject and work. (16)

The word "becomes" suggest a passage from one state of being to another. Yet this impression is softened by the assertions that, in the appearance of the aesthetic object, the work of art achieves its <u>telos</u> and realizes its full being as a work of art (17): the moment it becomes an aesthetic object, the work of art is truly a work of art.(16)

Dufrenne describes the passage from work of art to aesthetic object as a process of "concretion,"(19) a passage from a "virtual being" to a "concrete existence." When the work is not being perceived, thus, when it is not yet an aesthetic object, the work--an empirical reality in the cultural world"--exists only as an idea, or has the "abstract existence" of a "system of signs."(14ff)

From the point of view of the aesthetic object the passage is a passage from "the aesthetic object in the state of the possible, awaiting its epiphany" to its appearance.(14) The passage of the work is not conceived as a temporal process, but rather as a passage from one mode of existence to another. Thus, while the aesthetic object <u>is</u> the work of art as perceived, the two are ontologically not identical.

The Work and its Performance

The passage from work of art to aesthetic object, and hence the appearance of the aesthetic object, requires in some arts--and in a certain sense in all of them(17)--performance. In performance the work is made available for aesthetic perception and can thus achieve its fulfillment as aesthetic object. Performance makes the work available by making it sensuously present before the spectator. Thus performance enables the aesthetic object to appear. The role performance plays in making the work present before the spectator so the aesthetic object is able to appear imposes certain demands on the performance. In making the work present, the performance must present the work in all its sensuous richness so that it will facilitate the unfolding of the work's meaning and the disclosure of its deepseated truth.

The Work and its Public

The passage from work of art to aesthetic object cannot occur without the collaborative presence of a spectator. The collaborative function of the spectator is already implied in the idea that the aesthetic object needs to be perceived in order to appear. The spectator is, in this scheme, the agent of the epiphany of the aesthetic object.

Beyond the necessity of perceiving, or rather, implied in the need for aesthetic perceiving is a task for the spectator: the spectator is responsible for completing and consecrating the aesthetic object. Dufrenne describes this demand with the deliberately loaded term "consecration" (make or declare sacred, holy) as an indication of the aura he wishes to place around the aesthetic object. The spectator must submit to the work, open himself up to it, lay aside all prejudices in order to see the aesthetic object fully unfold before him. This laying aside of prejudices before the aesthetic object raises the spectator above the conflicts and demands that exist on the "vital plane" to a higher, more universal plane and is thus associated with the "humanist

significance" of aesthetic experience.[12]

The spectator contributes to the appearance and unfolding of the aesthetic object as part of a "demiurgic"[13] public. This public has the creative role (65) of filling out more and more of the meaning immanent in the aesthetic object. As a result the aesthetic object has its own history.

Thus Dufrenne's theory of the correlativity of aesthetic perception and the aesthetic object highlights important aspects of artistic spectation. Dufrenne summarizes them this way: "...on the one hand, the work must be fully present, implying that it needs to be performed...on the other, a spectator or, better, a public must be present before it."(17)

General Problematics

The intentional-phenomenological theory of consciousness and human experience carries with it a typical set of problematics, it raises specific philosophical questions. These questions are directly related to the formulation of an initial stand, taken on a fundamental issue. In this case the background to the problematics in question is the stand taken on the nature of consciousness and human experience.

The notion that consciousness is intentional in structure, and in particular, the idea of the object as intentional correlate raises the question of the status of the object. Dufrenne rejects any "psychologistic" or idealistic reduction of the (aesthetic) object to the subject and his (noetic) acts. The object is relative to consciousness without being of consciousness; the object cannot be reduced to a particular appearing in the perception of a human subject (psychologism).(xlix) Neither can it be taken to be a creation of the subject (idealism).(xlix) Dufrenne tends rather in the direction of what he calls realism.(xlix)

Dufrenne's preference for realism represents the affirmation of one component or alternative in a central dilemma of the phenomenological movement. According to C. A. VanPeursen,"...phenomenology in general

can be characterized as an attempt to overcome the idealism/realism dilemma,"[14] a matter which Roman Ingarden has made the center of his Controversy over the Existence of the World. The central issue is the status of "appearances" or "phenomena," that is, the status of that which displays itself "in or to" consciousness.

The method used by phenomenological thinkers to resolve this issue begins by bracketing the question, suspending judgement about the ideality or reality of the appearance. Appearances are accepted as they manifest themselves.[15] For Dufrenne the aesthetic object first manifests itself as an object having an "otherness," an "exteriority" characteristic of the in-itself. Here he draws on an existentialistic ontology where in-itself and for-itself existence are juxtaposed as the two prime modes of existing. Dufrenne's "realism" is to be understood in the light of the above as implying that the aesthetic object has an in-itself existence. Dufrenne hopes in this way to short-circuit any reduction of the aesthetic object to particular appearances. In addition, he hopes to forestall in this manner any attempts to understand the aesthetic object as a subjective construct, something created by the synthesizing activities of the subject. Furthermore, Dufrenne rejects on the same account the theory of intramental objects existing alongside of external objects, a theory that frequently attends the notion of intentionality. His critique of Ingarden's conception of the "purely intentional" existence of the aesthetic object (206ff.) is rooted in the affirmation of the in-itself character of the aesthetic object as well.

Consequently, Dufrenne resists any subordination of the being of the object to consciousness.(16) Though it only makes sense to speak of an object with reference to consciousness, though "the given" is only an object properly so called in the presence of a consciousness that directs itself in the direction of the given, though the object only exists for a consciousness, it is not of consciousness. In other words, while the object only appears in conjunction with the activity of consciousness, it does not owe its being to consciousness, rather, it presents itself to

consciousness as other, exterior, alien.(87f.) The object has the characteristics of an in-itself.[16]

The otherness, the exteriority of the object with respect to consciousness leads Dufrenne to the affirmation of a duality of subject and object. However, because the distinction is made relative to consciousness, and consciousness is the basic point of reference on the phenomenological plane, Dufrenne is compelled to view the duality of subject and object as an unavoidable dichotomy. That is, the opposition between subject and object functions as the point of departure in Dufrenne's perspective. It is, as he himself puts it in a later work, the "fundament," (Jalons) the basic state of affairs. This opposition haunts him just as, in his assessment, it haunts the philosophy of the day. The dichotomy must be surpassed. This compulsion to surpass, to transcend the opposition of subject and object constitutes what Dufrenne himself refers to as his "monistic" orientation. It functions as a prime factor in the metaphysics of being that begins to emerge near the end of the Phenomenology.[17]

Dufrenne's apparent discomfort with the duality of subject and object, the compulsion to surpass or transcend this duality in a metaphysical theory seems to be rooted in the fact that the subject-object relation represents the first presupposition, the primary given, the point of departure for phenomenological reflection. One wonders if the subject-object duality can indeed ever bear that burden without difficulty. One wonders if the duality is not, properly considered, embedded in a larger, more global context: the unfolding dynamic of the universe as a creation, wherein all things are first of all co-creaturely, before being related or opposed to eachother as subject to object.

We noted that the subject-object relation is fundamental to the phenomenological plane because Dufrenne makes consciousness the primary fact on that plane and in human existence. Here is the root of the impasse and to break through it we will do well to look in the direction highlighted by Nicholas P. Wolterstorff, where the person is first of all

regarded as a free and responsible agent who acts.[18]

Dufrennes affirmation of an in-itself status for the aesthetic object in the context of the correlativity of aesthetic object and aesthetic perception raises a related issue: doesn't the notion of a strict correlativity of aesthetic perception and aesthetic object lead to what we might call a phenomenologizing of the aesthetic object and force it into what Joseph Margolis has named an "intermittent existence?" That is, doesn't this correlation imply that the work of art only exists as an aesthetic object when it is present to the spectator as the focus of his (appropriate) intentional aiming? While this would seem to be the case, Dufrenne seems to want to resist this conclusion. Already in his introduction Dufrenne states that the fact of intersubjectivity guarantees that "...there is always someone for whom the object exists as object."(1) Later it becomes evident that the object enjoys a continued existence as well as a gradual unfolding of its inexhaustible meaning by way of an expanding, demiurgic public of spiritual persons.(Chapter 3) But the question persists: does this not come into conflict with Dufrenne's assertion that the aesthetic object only appears when the spectator is in the presence of the work?

NOTES

1. see Chapter 2, p. 17 above.

2. Hans Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method (New York, 1975), p. 59.

3. see Nicolas P. Wolterstorff's paper "Christian Philosophy and the Heritage of Descartes," (unpublished mimeograph), p. 14. Wolterstorff regards Descartes' "giving centrality to consciousness in the application of his theory of knowledge" as "one of his fateful innovations." Walker Percy's comments about the existentialist theory of consciousness in The Message in the Bottle are particularly apt as a foil to Dufrenne's notion of consciousness.

4. Michael Murray, Modern Critical Theory: a Phenomenological Introduction (The Hague, 1975), p. 128.

5. The French reads: "...tout objet se révèlé et s'articule selon l'attitude qu'elle adopte et dans l'expérience qu'elle en fait,..." p. 6.

6. "Soutenance," p. 432.

7. Nicolas Tertulian cites as examples, Nicolai Hartmann in his posthumus Esthétique (1953); Roman Ingarden in his Untersuchungen zur Ontologie der Kunst, Vom Erkennen des literarischer Kunstwerks, and Erlebnis, Kunstwerk und Wert (1960-1970); Lukacs' Esthétique (1963) and Adorno's La theorie esthétique (printed 1970). Vers une esthétique, p. 115f.

8. Dufrenne, "Commentary on Mr. Elliott's Paper," p. 134.

9. see Jean-Claude Piquet, "Esthétique et phenomenologie," Kant-Studien, XLVII (1955-56), 199ff.

10. see Tertulian, p. 117.

11. Ibid., p. 116

12. It is worthwhile to note here the presence of the existentialistic fascination, even preoccupation with transcendence which has led some commentators to spot neo-gnostic tendencies in this philosophical current.

13. The term is aptly used by Jankelivitch in his comments at Dufrenne's thesis defence. see "Soutenance," p.434.

14. C. A. Van Peursen, "Fenomenologie," Christelijke Encyclopedia (Kampen, 1958), IV, 33.

15. Ibid.

16. We must keep in mind that the in-itself character of the aesthetic object does not exhaust its being: it designates only half the story, for the aesthetic object also manifests characteristics of for-itself existence. The aesthetic object is not locked up within the in-itself and the spectator does not stay at the level or in the phase in which he experiences the object as alien and exterior, he proceeds through communication to communion.

17. I am reminded here of Herman Dooyeweerd's statement about the necessity to find an adequate basis or foundation for the subject-object relation. According to Dooyeweerd, "If the immanence standpoint is maintained, it must eliminate from its pre-suppositions the cosmic order of time in which the subject-object relation is founded.... The foundation can then only be found either in a metaphysical concept of substance, or in a transcendental logical synthesis, or in an ethically necessary tension between "nature" and "freedom" in the transcendental "consciousness" itself, or in a common root of subject and object in "being." (my emphasis) A New Critique of Theoretical Thought (Philadelphia, 1969), II, p. 369.

18. see N. P. Wolterstorff's paper, p. 14ff.

CHAPTER 5: THE AESTHETIC OBJECT

In the experience of the work of art that Dufrenne associates with normative artistic spectation and identifies as the aesthetic experience of the spectator, the aesthetic object appears to the spectator as a totality,(138) a whole.(139) This totality is present to the perceiving subject as a sensuous manifold which, in the course of the experience "takes on" a meaning (sens) "with which consciousness can be satisfied."(12) Dufrenne identifies the sensuous as the matter of the aesthetic object (21, 138, 301) or the body of the work (86) and associates the meaning of the aesthetic object with form: "...the meaning of the aesthetic object is immanent to it: it is nothing other than form in the Aristotelian sense."[1]

Dufrenne's elaboration of the structure of the aesthetic object in terms of these two components: sens and le sensible, meaning and the sensuous, and his use of the form matter scheme to describe their respective natures and mutual interrelation are, along with certain secondary themes, of considerable importance to his theory of the aesthetic object and this object's status vis à vis the subject.

Le Sensible

Dufrenne identifies the sensuous as the matter of the aesthetic object. What is involved in this identification and what is achieved through it?

For Dufrenne, the aesthetic object is, first of all, "...the irresistible and magnificant presence of the sensuous."(86) The sensuous manifold, "the verbal and musical ensemble" which one comes to hear in an operatic performance (10) is what is real for the spectator in his aesthetic experience. Here the sensuous is "...no longer a sign, unimportant in itself, but an end."(86)

As sensuous manifold, the aesthetic object has a "materiality," a

"thickness, purity and density," a "plenitude."(87, 89) Furthermore, it is experienced as "radically exterior," as "other" and "alien."(87f.) These features are those features which establish the aesthetic object as an in-itself. In aesthetic experience this manifold takes on meaning or sense. The sensuous manifests itself as being ordered and informed by meaning.

For these reasons, Dufrenne identifies the sensuous as the matter of the aesthetic object. In fact, Dufrenne occasionally identifies the entire being of the aesthetic object with its sensuous "matter": the sensuous is "...the entire reality of the aesthetic object."(227)[2]

Sens

As a result of the vigilant, undiverted attention of a spectator to the sensuous, "...the sensuous takes on a meaning or sense with which consciousness can be satisfied."(12) This meaning "...disengages itself from the perceived" in the aesthetic experience of the work.(12) The meaning that the sensuous takes on is structurally diverse: the full meaning of the aesthetic object ranges across various sorts or aspects of its total meaning. Yet, in spite of this structural diversity, the meaning of the aesthetic object is essentially one: "It (the aesthetic object's meaning) is simultaneously single and multiple."(12; literally, one and multifarious)[3]

With respect to this structural diversity of meaning, Dufrenne distinguishes "aesthetic form" from "intelligible" or "logical" meaning, and these two from "expressive" meaning. All are encountered in aesthetic experience. Expressive and intelligible meaning arise because the aesthetic object, as a formed, sensuous manifold, both represents and expresses.(138) Intelligible and expressive meaning combine in aesthetic experience to constitute the "world of the work."

What do each of these sorts of meaning refer to?

1) Aesthetic Form. The aesthetic form of the work relates to what

Dufrenne identifies in chapter 1 (in the context of his discussion of Wagner's opera Tristan and Isolde) as the unities articulated and composed to form the totality of the work and give the spectator a sense of form: for example, "the unity of the musical phrase, lietmotif or variation,...the unity of a tune like that of an oboe solo ringing out against the silence of the orchestra, the unity of a part of music like the prelude."[4] The aesthetic form is the internal organization and interplay of these unities. It is the movement of a ballet; "the harmonization of sounds together with the rhythmic elements which (music) includes;" in a painting it is the design but also "...the play of colors by which the design is emphasized and sometimes even constituted;"(91) the harmony of colors; the impression which results from a particular arrangement of colors, light, shadow; all that can be called the music of the painting."(141f.) In a poem this aesthetic form is the "...ordering of the verbal material by which language rediscovers its musicality."(143)

Dufrenne identifies aesthetic form as the "initial meaning" of the aesthetic object.(142) It is distinct from "form as contour."(139f.) In contrast to form-as-contour, aesthetic form is not an "external form" generated by an abstract concept,(139) but the form of the sensuous: its organization, a form internal to it,(141) the immediate and immediately perceived internal organization of the sensuous.(90)

The importance of form, so defined, for aesthetic experience and the aesthetic object is considerable.

First and foremost, a "sense of form"(12) is necessary, for "...the sensuous could not be grasped if it were pure disorder, if sounds were only noise, words only cries, actors and sets only shadows and unrecognizable blots."(12) "Perception does not deliver the sensible in its primordial state (l'état brût)."(89, 226) Form orders and unites the sensuous, articulates it into a recognizable manifold, it gives form to (informe) the sensuous. While the "...aesthetic object is first of all, the irresistible and magnificent presence of the sensuous,"(86) "...the sensuous is matter only to the extent that it is given form (informe);

and the qualities of this sensuous matter are tied to the rigor of the form."(89) So, in spite of the fact that the sensuous matter is the object of aesthetic attention, the importance of form is crucial: "...the aesthetic object is an object in which the matter abides only if the form is not lost."(90)

But form not only orders, it gives to the sensuous its éclat, its splendor and brilliance;(91) it manifests the plenitude of the sensuous and the necessity internal to the sensuous:(88f.) it is a quality (vértu) of the sensuous.(91) Thus, by virtue of its internal form, the sensuous manifests a fullness and the "imperious character" that solicits the attention of the spectator, that induces him to be fascinated by the sensuous and loose himself in it,(226) The sensuous is powerful only through form.(91) In this way also, form is very important to human commerce with the aesthetic object.

As principle of organization, form bestows on the aesthetic object an ontological self-sufficiency.(91) This confirmation of the in-itself character of the aesthetic object is an important ontological conclusion for Dufrenne, for it confirms in turn the impossibility of psychologistic reduction or idealistic subjectivization of the aesthetic object.

Form, as the form of the sensuous has been "imposed on the object by the art of its creator."(92) As such, form is controlled by "schemata" (90, Part II) and aesthetic norms,(107) and, as an element of style, form is foundational to the intelligible and expressive meaning of the work.

Dufrenne attributes to form (in the above sense), signification.(138) The signifying power of form can manifest itself in representation or expression. Representation and expression are two aspects or functions of form.(90)

2) Intelligible meaning: Intelligible meaning is associated with "what the work represents," the "represented object" or the "subject" of the work. The work of art "...frequently does represent something: it has

a subject."(130) Representation is a diverse phenomenon that occurs in a number of the arts (and to a certain extent in all of them). In each it can occur in different ways.(311)

The example Dufrenne gives from Tristan and Isolde in the first chapter makes it clear that the presence of an intelligible meaning is based on the power of the (in)formed sensuous to signify or represent something: "...the unity of the decor signifies the bridge of the vessel, the unity of the movements on the set signify the action; finally and above all, the unity of the verbal phrases signify the drama which governs and supports the whole: the story of Tristan and Isolde as presented."[4]

Dufrenne understands this meaning as a meaning in terms of which the sensuous exists only as a means and is essentially unimportant, a meaning that "we must explicate...according to the norms which belong not to the aesthetic but to the logical,"(312, 389) a meaning which "can be extracted" from the aesthetic object "in order to be translated into the language of prose."(143) According to Dufrenne:

> If we wish to understand representation in the widest sense of the term, we must say that there is representation whenever the aesthetic object invites us to leave the immediacy of the sensuous and proposes a meaning in terms of which the sensuous exists only as a means and is essentially unimportant.
> .....
> ...what characterizes representation...is not so much the reality of what is represented as this appeal to concepts: the represented object is an identifiable object which demands recognition and expects an unending analysis on the part of reflection.(312)

Here then, we see the basic character of intelligible meaning and why Dufrenne identifies it as intelligible or logical.

Dufrenne's understanding of the nature of the intelligible meaning of the aesthetic object is foundational to the place Dufrenne assigns to it in aesthetic experience and to its importance in normative artistic spectation.

Dufrenne's assessment of the importance of representation and the "intervention of the subject"(311) is two-sided. On the one hand representation is a trap:(313) what is represented in the work, its subject "often monopolizes all our attention and clouds over the aesthetic experience,"(313) because of its "prestige and our own predelection for grasping it."(313) The spectator becomes preoccupied with comprehension rather than contemplation. In attempting to understand the subject of the work he misses what is essential, namely, the discovery and isolation of the sensuous, which is, as we have seen, "the entire reality of the aesthetic object."(227) This danger is built into representation in so far as representation invites us to "leave the immediacy of the sensuous."(312)

Along with this danger is another: the concern for mimetic values. Once again, from Dufrenne's point of view, this concern diverts attention away from the essential, and consequently poses a threat to genuine aesthetic experience.

Over against these dangers, Dufrenne asserts the positive importance of representation. The represented object fills the important psychological need to have the sensuous be the sensuous of something. Monopolizing attention constitutes the threat. Moreover, the subject can be important for the sake of the form which is given to the work through it, a form by which the sensuous becomes expressive.(123) Thus Dufrenne favours artists for whom the subject is no more than an occasion or pretext:(312) "authentic art refuses to fall back on the subject as a basis for determining aesthetic value."(312)

3) Expressive meaning: The aesthetic object "also signifies...through that which it represents by producing in the perceiver a certain impression, manifesting a certain quality which words cannot translate but which communicates itself in arousing a feeling." In the absence of a dominating preoccupation with the signified meaning, or for that matter, the symbolic import which may attach itself to represented things

(see chapter 4 of the Phenomenology), affective meaning emerges and presents itself to the spectator.

According to Dufrenne:

> ...objects have by themselves, as a result of their own structure, and independent of all the previous experience of the subject who perceives them, certain characteristics of strangeness, terror, irritation, calm, grace and elegance." The aesthetic object has just such a character, a character which we shall be calling "affective." The aesthetic object speaks not only from the richness of the sensuous but through the affective quality which it expresses and which allows us to recognize it without recourse to concepts.(143)

Accordingly, Dufrenne speaks of "affective qualities," "expressive values," "felt qualities," the "atmosphere" the work exudes, its "total effect" or "common affective theme." This expressive meaning "goes beyond what is purely intelligible..."(13) It is a higher form of meaning than the ones already discussed. This higher form of meaning unifies the diversity of elements in the aesthetic object and animates the whole. It binds the diverse elements of a work into a deeper unity than either the aesthetic form or the representational meaning of the work is able to do. It "seals an alliance (using the Tristan and Isolde example once again) among this phrase in the poem, that flight of song, this choreographic movement of the actors, that play of light over the color scheme of the set..."(13)

This form of meaning is present in the way the given is presented,(9) in the way the sensuous is organized. It is "what is represented within form itself:"(143) a certain feeling communicated through the sensuous. "(W)hat the aesthetic object tells me, it tells through the very bosom of the perceived."(14) With these statements Dufrenne gives expression to his notion that expressive meaning is a meaning that is immanent in the sensuous.

The importance of that characteristic of expressive meaning is considerable. In his thesis defence Dufrenne stated that the meaning proper to the aesthetic object is immanent in it. For Dufrenne:

> In the case of the aesthetic object, what is signified is immanent in what does the signifying. While ordinary perception seeks the meaning of the given beyond the given, the aesthetic object does not allow perception to transcend the given. Instead, perception stops and remains precisely in this given, which will not let perception break loose from it.(123)

Hence Dufrenne's preference for expressive meaning above representational meaning or subject matter.

But Dufrenne not only prefers expressive meaning, he gives it priority even over aesthetic form. It is for him the aesthetic object's deepest meaning. The particular constellation of expressive qualities constituting the "atmosphere" of the work, its "total effect," its "common affective theme" is for Dufrenne the selfhood of the aesthetic object. The aesthetic object is "self"-signifying. It does not fully exist, it is not fully constituted, until this atmosphere, this self is grasped. Only then is the aesthetic object lived in it incomprehensible depth, diversity and richness.

The expressive meaning, the common affective theme is, claims Dufrenne, comparable to a "superior and impersonal principle," a "collective consciousness"(168) which informs the whole in all its diversity and is the meaning of the aesthetic object's meaning.

It is clear then that Dufrenne ascribes priority to the expressive meaning of the aesthetic object. In fact, Dufrenne claims the aesthetic object is expressive by vocation.(483) In the process Dufrenne ascribes characteristics to it which set expressive meaning apart from the sensuous and representational meaning and place it on a different level, in a different and higher realm than that of ordinary existence. This is especially clear when Dufrenne claims that the expressive meaning of the aesthetic object is comparable to a superior and impersonal principle. It is also clear from Dufrenne's discussion of form.

Matter and Form

Dufrenne attempts to bind the structural diversity of the aesthetic

object's meaning as outlined above into a unity with the notion of form. Each new aspect of the aesthetic object's meaning is regarded as form relative to the previous dimension.(92) Aesthetic form is "in a sense, the form of form as contour" (external form); logical-intelligible meaning is the "form of this (aesthetic) form;" and the unity of aesthetic form and the form of this aesthetic form, "surpasses itself in expression" which is the "ultimate form of the aesthetic object and the meaning of its meaning."(141f.)

It is clear that this mode of relating the different aspects of the meaning of the aesthetic object has an hierarchical dimension in spite of the fact that the relationships are, phenomenologically speaking, not vertically conceived.

Dufrenne's association of the aesthetic object's meaning with form "in its Aristotelian sense" carries with it an elevation of the meaning disclosed in aesthetic experience to the status of organizing principle for. As such, form is taken to be what grounds the aesthetic object's knowability and gives the aesthetic object its ontological self-sufficiency. (145) Furthermore, form bestows "intemporality," a measure of timelessness on the aesthetic object: form is the factor of truth and immutability in the aesthetic object; it is what appears invincible across different interpretations. (219, 165)

Remarks

We have observed then, the manner in which Dufrenne identifies the sensuous as matter and sense or meaning as form, as well as a few consequences of these identifications. We can speak here of the employment of the traditional form/matter scheme to articulate the internal structure of the aesthetic object: Dufrenne abstracts the meaning disclosed in the aesthetic object from the object's sensuous aspect, identifies it as form, and juxtaposes it with the sensuous as matter and the correlate of form. Dufrenne himself points to the affinities of his "hylomorphism" with that of Aristotle. This affinity

extends to the adoption of the metaphysical function of form as the principle of unity, independence and persistence.

Dufrenne distinguishes his idea of matter from Aristotle's. In order to emphasize the essential foundational role or character of the sensuous, Dufrenne isolates what is essentially an aspectual structure and gives it sub-stance character: that is, a relative ontological independence. Moreover, his association of meaning with form as principle of truth, immutability and intemporality raises the suspicion that the meaning that is an integral part of entities is being overestimated.

The form/matter scheme is co-ordinate in Dufrenne's framework, to the classical existentialist en-soi/pour-soi duality. This duality constitutes the ontological backdrop to Dufrenne's phenomenological enterprise. The fact that the aesthetic object is a hylomorphic totality thus implies that the aesthetic object is a unity of for-itself and in-itself existence. Such a unity Sartre regarded as impossible. So Dufrenne's phenomenological conclusions with reference to the internal structure of the aesthetic object, besides providing important analyses of various aspects of the work of art, have ontological and historical import.

World of the Work and Inexhaustibility

Two additional features of the meaning the spectator grasps in aesthetic experience as Dufrenne conceives it should at least be mentioned to fill in the picture and facilitate a few conclusions.

In its signifying function the aesthetic object does not exist primarily to serve the world (though it stands in relation to the real), rather, it is the source of a world of its own. The world of the work is an interior world,(169) peculiar to the individual aesthetic object, singular,(197) a finite but unlimited totality evoked by the aesthetic object, with its own spatiality and temporality. What is most important here again is the felt quality, the total effect, the affective theme.

Dufrenne consequently shares with Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger (as well as a growing number of more recent theorists) the notion that the aesthetic object projects a world that is internal to it.

The notion that this projected world is finite but unlimited introduces another important theme, namely that in relation to the spectator the object is inexhaustible, its meaning is ontologically and epistemologically incapable of exhaustion of its inestimable richness. This inexhuastibility is a character of the object. Here again, the affective meaning, the expressive depth of the work is the source of the inexhaustibility.[5]

NOTES

1. "Soutenance," p. 432.

2. This identification of the entire being of the aesthetic object with its sensuous matter is problematic: while it cannot be denied that the sensuous aspect of aesthetic objects have characteristics like the ones Dufrenne describes here so acutely, the identification of the being of the aesthetic object with its sensuous aspect seems unfortunate and leads eventually to a view of the aesthetic object as an ambiguous existence ontically.

3. This structural diversity of meaning is not the same as the ontological and epistemological inexhaustibility of the meaning the aesthetic object harbors or the multifarious character of the meaning it accumulates with age and the growth of its public. see 64, 103.

4. see Phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique, p. 42. The Casey translation is badly mutilated here.

5. I am using part of Vollenhoven's formulation of some features of objectivism to concisely capture Dufrenne's meaning. See the Appendix, p. 147.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

What conclusions might we draw from the preceding elaboration of Dufrenne's views as expressed in the Phenomenology?

Recapitulation

Chapter 1 of the preceding elaboration pursues what may have been the deepest motive, the elemental impulse for the writing of the Phenomenology, namely, Dufrenne's urge to vindicate a powerful sense that aesthetic experience provides a foil to an inherited, but existentially haunting Cartesian heritage and to vindicate the presumed discovery in aesthetic experience of a non-rational and privileged access to truth and intersubjective communion. Here one contracts the essential significance of the work within the context of the broader metaphysical concerns which occupied Dufrenne before and after 1953 (see the introduction to Jalons); here one contracts as well its significance within the philosophical-historical context of reflection on the so-called subject-object problem.

The second chapter seeks to determine the specific nature of the endeavor that the Phenomenology represents. It seeks to understand in what respect the work is a "phenomenology" of aesthetic experience; it seeks to square Dufrenne's self-understanding of phenomenological methodology, his own articulation of what that entails, with the concrete and manifest discourse that plays itself out between two hard covers; to place, in addition, the entire complex in the context of phenomenology, understood now as a philosophical current in the troubled stream of history.

A third chapter seeks to identify more precisely the subject matter of the inquiry. What constitutes the phenomenological focus of the work? Can we erase some of the indefiniteness that plagues the expression "aesthetic experience" and so clarify for ourselves what it is Dufrenne is discussing?

The fourth attempts to articulate and examine a basic philosophical theme: the idea of the reciprocity of subject and object, a theme that functions as a ground-motif (not motive) in Dufrenne's entire philosophical enterprise and as the "guiding thread" of the Phenomenology. It gives a glimpse of some of its more striking and productive implications for the aesthetic field.

The fifth chapter explores and discusses a complex of the conceptual results that make up Dufrenne's answer to a specific query in the field of philosophical aesthetics: it seeks to uncover what the application of the phenomenological method to the choosen topic--the aesthetic experience of the spectator ostensibly--brings to light about the (internal) structure of the aesthetic object.

On Spectation

In chapter 3 I said that, essentially what is under consideration in the Phenomenology is normative artistic spectation or normative spectation of art works. Of this Dufrenne gives a nuanced and compelling view, a view distinguished by its detailed description of what is in fact involved and lived when one confronts the work of art and offers it the attention it demands. Sustained again and again by shocks of recognition, the reader becomes aware of previously unthematized and oft neglected sensations experienced in commerce with works of art. This overall sense prevails, even when one begins to notice that the description is tinged by uncongenial contextual categories (eg: en soi/pour soi) and fascinations (eg: transcendence) or straight-jacketed by traditional Aristotelian motifs.

My specification of the precise focus of the work as normative artistic spectation was born out of a need to divest Dufrenne's use of the term "aesthetic experience" of its traditional indefiniteness. Such a specification brings out an important issue: is not the simple equation of aesthetic experience of art-works with what I have called normative artistic spectation misleading? A tacit acceptance of their

co-extensiveness as concepts may lead to some unfortunate conceptual consequences. The concept "aesthetic experience of the work of art" looses its (potential) functional specificity and the term becomes indefinite, encompassing all that occurs in the course of an adequate encounter with the work of art. Also, "canonical" experience of the work may be reduced to a rarified (think of "formalism"), frequently hieratic experience.

The loss of functional specificity is a clear loss. Without it a specific manner of relating as a human being to the world that surrounds us and of which we are an integral part, never clearly emerges and can never truly be affirmed for its own sake and in its specificity and relativity.

I believe it makes good sense to regard "aesthetic" experience as involving a functionally specific mode of standing in a subject-object relation to things. An instructive historical precedent for this is the work of the Russian Formalist Jan Mukarovsky.[1] Rather than understanding the term aesthetic to mean "typical of art," I suggest that the core of "aesthetic" functioning and hence "aesthetic" experience (of whatever sort) lies in consciousness of/attending to/grasping/knowing/apprehending the specific (inter)play of forms and colors in a painting; the specific play of constitutive elements in the telling of a tale, novel or story; the play of tones, forms, colors, sounds and silence in the woods, at a sports-event or in a city-scape. This puts us in the neighborhood of Dufrenne's "aesthetic form." One takes delight in this play of forms, timbres, pitches, musical phrases, sounds, silences, images, words; one is repulsed, or indifferent, amused, impressed or shocked, angered, entranced.... In every case this play has an individuality that can be approached by the application and refinement of "aesthetic categories" and that can be valued as bland or beautiful, etc.

Attentive focussing on the look of the thing, its "semblance" (S.K. Langer), the "verbal-musical ensemble" (Dufrenne, in the case of an opera) is a precondition for apprehension of the work in its

aesthetic dimension; Dufrenne suggests that one's attention must be vigilant and undiverted attention to the given, sensuous manifold.

Keeping this in mind we must certainly say that the experience of the aesthetic dimension of an art-work--understood as a functionally specific mode of standing as a subject over against an object--constitutes only a part of the total experience of the work: it needs to be distinguished from the experience of the work's semantic dimension (whereby the work is enabled to clarify and articulate experience and feelings, shed new light on being, objectify and render inscape intersubjective...)[2] Yet we may also feel inclined and compelled to say on the basis of the above that, whatever unfolds in this functionally specific encounter of a human subject with some object--the apprehension of affective meanings, for instance--is a part of the aesthetic experience of the work. But then we can do so without loosing sight of its functional specificity and without affirming a blanket and a priori identification of aesthetic experience and normative artistic spectation, in fact, now the role of aesthetic experience in encounters with art-works becomes a problem and occasions critical reflection.

Perhaps with this model we can eliminate the paradoxical situation J-C. Piguet has pointed out with respect to Dufrenne's use of the term "aesthetic perception."[3] Characteristic for aesthetic perception, says Dufrenne, is this: aesthetic perception scrupulously remains with the given as perceived. In understanding, imagination and reflection the spectator goes beyond the given as such however. Yet Dufrenne identifies the entire complex of these subjective activities as aesthetic perception.

Because there is clearly more to normative artistic spectation than grasping the work's aesthetic individuality and because aesthetic experience is not confined to the work of art, it seems doubly problematic to arrive at a valid transcendental critique of aesthetic experience and a metaphysic of the same reality by choosing the phenomenon Dufrenne has placed at the centre of his work as a point of departure.

Overestimating

We noted in the introduction that Vollenhoven calls those conceptions objectivistic which, while recognizing the existence of objects and not looking upon their existence as reducible to that of subjects, nevertheless overestimate the fact that subjects are determined, to a degree, by objects. This they do by "seeking the law for the subject on the side of the object." "What is most prominent in objectivism," he goes on to say, "is not a thing or a physical state (aggregaatstoestand) but an object function, or, using an older term, "quality."[4]

It is clear from our discussion in chapter 4 that Dufrenne recognizes the duality of subject and object and resists reducing the object to a derivative existence. This duality of subject and object is affirmed in spite of Dufrenne's preoccupation with their correlativity. Indeed, it is assumed by it.

Dufrenne conceives the object as that component in experience which stands "over against" the human subject as its inevitable correlate and the vehicle of a wealth of meaning which is, through the presence of the object, made available to the subject. For Dufrenne, the object is other-than, that is, distinguishable from the subject, yet it does not exist apart from, that is, independent of the subject. Consequently the object is not a creation of or merely an appearance in the human subject's (transcendental or not) consciousness. As other-than and yet tied-to the subject, the object co-determines any particular experience. "The perceptible, as soon as it is perceived, determines the one who perceives: it grips him and governs his knowledge of the object as to its content and range."[5] (This is not to say that the subject has no determinative role, or only a passive one, for the spectator's taking up of a posture of vigilant and undiverted attention to the sensuous determines from the side of the subject the nature and duration of the experience.)

In spite of the problem associated with its position as fundament

and despite the threat of "phenomenologizing" the object that emerges from Dufrenne's emphasis on correlativity (see chapter 4), the genuine recognition of a duality and inevitable correlation of subject and object has proved its fruitfulness in opening up our understanding of aesthetic experience. Yet the amplified understanding of objectivism Vollenhoven has given us alerts us to the possibility of an overestimation of the determinative priority of the object. And indeed, it seems that the status Dufrenne claims the object normatively has in artistic spectation is inordinate, and precisely because its determinative role is taken to be such that the exercise of the person's free and responsible subjectivity is to be relinquished or at least suppressed.

The determinative priority of the object in aesthetic experience first shows up in the pivotal passage of the introduction where Dufrenne identifies aesthetic perception as faithful perception, as a stance that gives the object the perception it demands. At first sight this emphasis is a healthy one, because it guards against the jaunts of subjective self-indulgence in the spectator's suggestible consciousness that museums often encourage. Dufrenne instead, encourages the full experience of the treasure of meaning available in the work. Yet the term "faithful" contains a hint of the ultimacy which is more clearly evident in Dufrenne's statement that art awaits consecration by a public.(xlvi) Years later Dufrenne uses the phrase "solemn, disinterested and respectful contemplation" to describe the conception of aesthetic experience that dominates the Phenomenology.[6] Veneration of the object permeates his phenomenological approach.

This orientation to the object precipitates the methodological strategy of starting the Phenomenology with a phenomenology of the aesthetic object: "We shall proceed by subordinating the experience to the object instead of the object to the experience."(li) As a consequence, the contours of aesthetic perception, as Dufrenne presents them, are fully determined by the subject's subordination to the object.

More serious, to my mind, is the demand for submission.(27, 29, 45, 51, 57) The object imposes its demands on the subject.(123) Submission and devoted attention allow the aesthetic object to appear and disclose its meaning. Here again we are inclined to affirm an important emphasis, yet the relativity of such a stance before the aesthetic object is not honored because this submission, this devoted and undiverted attention is, again, total--the object demands more--and so suppresses the prerogatives of the subject. This suppression manifests itself most oppressively in an implicit negation of the real and normative function of directional dynamics and a critical distance or reserve in one's aesthetic experience. For Dufrenne the person is, in aesthetic experience, lifted to a more universal plane, a plane on which one transcends the biases, prejudices and differences that take hold on the "vital plane." The person is lifted to a plane on which the aesthetic subject and the aesthetic object are one.

So, to restate, the experience Dufrenne describes under the rubric "aesthetic experience of the spectator"--admittedly a possible experience, and for Dufrenne a lived one-- exhibits and condones a mode of relating as subject to object, as spectator to work of art, which suppresses the prerogatives of free and responsible subjectivity. This is simply the other side of the emphasis on the sovereignty of the object in aesthetic experience. This then is why we said the Dufrenne overemphasizes the determinative priority of the object.

Where lies the origin or metaphysical basis of this overestimation?

Aesthetic experience is, according to Dufrenne, "a communication that ends in communion."[7] When the work of art receives the perception it demands, when it is favored with a "perspicious" perception, the spectator ultimately encounters expressive meaning. Expressive meaning is, as we have seen, identified as the aesthetic object's highest meaning. its highest form, the soul of the work. The subject's apprehension (through feeling) of the aesthetic object's expressive meaning amounts to an intersubjective event: the meeting of the spectator's depth with

that of the object. The spectator becomes one with the object. This communion is the consumation of the experience. Expressive meaning--supra-rational, inexhaustible--is for Dufrenne a preferred realm of meaning, and communion with the aesthetic object on that level is the goal of aesthetic experience.

Expressive meaning is immanent in the perceived. Its existence depends on the reality of "Affective qualities." Affective qualities, affective a priori, are constitutive of objects and available to the subject as virtual a priori. Vollenhoven (and others) would explain constitutive a priori in terms of the concept "object function."

The fact that expressive meanings are regarded as constitutive of the object (and note simply attributed to it by a subject) brings us a toward uncovering the basis of Dufrenne's overestimation of the object's status and significance in aesthetic experience.

A look at Dufrenne's basic metaphysic brings us another step closer. Dufrenne opens the final section of the Phenomenology as follows:

> If we cannot say that man is the exclusive bearer of meaning or that he himself puts into the real the affective meaning disclosed in aesthetic experience, then two consequences follow: (1) the real does not aquire its affective meaning from man; and (2) being calls on man to be witness and not the initiator of affective meaning....
>
> We must try to understand what is insufficient about anthropological exegesis, for which the meaning incarnated in the a priori is invented by the subject and transferred by him onto things. According to this doctrine, the real exists in the image of man, particularly in the image of art, because he perceives or makes the real in this image. If we deny to man the privilege of founding the true and instead found man himself on the true, then we transfer the initiative to being and being becomes meaning itself or, as we would suggest, that a priori which precedes its existential and cosmological determinations and seems to ground both subject and object, man and world. In short, we must try to determine whether meaning--as it is found, or rather lost, in the real (insofar as the real is something other than meaning), and as it is reflected in man, who expresses it in art and discovers it in nature--is, in fact, the ordering principle for nature and man, instead of being projected by man onto

> nature, with the result that man's mission would be to bespeak meaning rather than invent it.
>
> We must admit that meaning has a being--that meaning is being--which precedes both the object in which it is manifested and the subject to whom it is manifested and which appeals to the solidarity of subject and object in order to be actualized. (546f.)

We see then why the object is given the status it has in aesthetic experience for Dufrenne. What is of ultimate concern in Dufrenne's perspective, namely, meaning in the form of object functions or qualities, is available to the subject only because it is first of all incarnate in the object (even if it originates beyond the object). Certainly such a metaphysics leads quite naturally to an overestimation of the normative determinative prerogative of the object. Here then originates the demand for submission, faithful perception, transcending differences and biases of the vital plane, the demand for communion. What is most important, the locus of truth, lies on the side of, or better, is only available in the object.

We could ask at this point if a metaphysics is really, as we intimated, the origin of the overestimation, if it is at bottom a metaphysical position that "leads him astray."

Vindicating metaphysical conclusions that Dufrenne finds congenial is, we said, the ground-motive for his attention to aesthetic experience. Metaphysics is both superstructure--Dufrenne's orientation is phenomenological!--and need. Yet it seems that the experience of the contemporary spectator, an experience Dufrenne affirms and nurtured within himself, in particular, its revelatory potential and the possibilities for intersubjective communion it opens up lies at the basis of the enterprise even more fundamentally, more existentially than what is ostensibly the philosophical ground-motive impelling the effort. An experience thus, that provides an alternative to and a substitute for the kind of communion held out, perhaps under layers of institutional dust and ash, by the Catholic tradition he rejected; an experience rooted nevertheless in the protean possibilities of an open-ended,

unconsumated creation underlies the effort.

We can note, aside from this, additional features of Dufrenne's metaphysics that relate to his valuation of aesthetic experience. For example, communion with the aesthetic object takes place at the level of expressive meaning. As it turns out, expression, the highest meaning of the work of art,plays a central role in Dufrenne's metaphysics of meaning as well. "Expression is the truth which is given before the real."(541) In his capacity to read expression, the spectator has access to the truth of the real. Aesthetic experience, object-oriented and susceptible above all to expressive meaning, thus obtains an important epistemological function as a prefered mode of access to truth.

I have highlighted, however, the problematic character of the status affirmed for the object by Dufrenne in his conception of normative artistic spectation. If the kind of experience Dufrenne identifies as aesthetic experience (with all that it entails and represents in the broader scheme of things) is indeed what we must understand by the term, we are left with a vague and omnivorous phenomenon, and one that involves a willful handing-over of responsible and free subjectivity to a sovereign object. By his symptomatic overestimation of the place of the object, more specifically, expressive qualities, Dufrenne has made aesthetic experience, as others before him have done, an experience of ultimate significance.[8] Fortunately we need not understand aesthetic experience precisely as Dufrenne has. Indeed, we are challenged to propose directions in understanding aesthetic experience that avoid the (systematic) difficulties and (metaphysical) pretension we discern in the understandings of it that are our Western heritage. Thankfully we can benefit in our experience of and discourse about art and aesthetic experience from Dufrenne's indispensible efforts.

NOTES

1. See the collection of translated essays entitled Structure, Sign and Function, ed. and trans. John Burbank and Peter Steiner (New Haven, 1978), especially the second and the third essys: "The Significance of Aesthetics," and "The Place of the Aesthetic Function among the Other Functions." See also the first section of Aesthetic Function, Norm and Value as Social Facts, trans. Mark E. Suino (Ann Arbor, 1970), pp. 1-23.

2. In art-works there is an inextricable and complex interweaving of these functionally distinct and abstractable elements. In addition, the semantics of a work of art is typically structurally affected by a persistent dominance of aesthetic concerns in the making of the work. Thus we can compare and contrast the "language of art" with, for example, the language of art criticism and scientific discourse.

3. See Piguet, "Esthetique et phenomenologie," p. 199ff.

4. Vollenhoven, Geschiedenis, p.238. See Runner's translation, p. 145, (see Appendix following)

5. Ibid., p. 146.

6. Dufrenne, "Commentary on Mr. Elliott"s Paper," p. 129.

7. Ibid., p. 134.

8. See Nicholas P. Wolterstorff, Art in Action (Grand Rapids, 1980), p. 50.

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