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Aesthetic normativity and the expressive perception of nature

Abstract

The notion of a correct appreciation of nature, like the one put forward in Carlson's environmental account, has been rejected by many other authors in the aesthetics of the natural environment. Their critics challenge the idea that only scientific categories can ground the aesthetic appreciation of nature as nature, and they hold that there is not a correct way of appreciating nature. However, they may share with Carlson the idea of correctness under an objectivist paradigm of aesthetic appreciation, according to which correctness means the adequation of the experience to properties of the object. My aim in the article is to claim that it is necessary to endorse an aesthetic standard of correctness that takes into consideration the subjective character of aesthetic appreciation. An aesthetic standard of correctness implies universal assent, or validity for everyone in Kantian terms, in place of an objectivist notion. This notion of correctness permits the inclusion of expressive perception of nature as an essential form of aesthetic appreciation.

Keywords

Expressive perception, Correctness, Aesthetic appreciation, Nature

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1. *The relevant and the correct*

According to Allen Carlson's environmental model, the correct appreciation of nature is that which perceives natural objects and phenomena under the categories of common sense or, mainly, natural sciences. Other models of appreciation, such as the object or the landscape models, consider modes of perceiving and appreciating that do not regard nature *as nature*. The object model takes natural objects in isolation from their environment, which hides the interdependence of every object in an ecological system. The landscape model imposes on the contemplation of nature parameters, like framing and selecting points of view, that belong to the artistic representation of nature, but prevent a full and authentic experience of nature. Basically, the appreciation of nature *as nature* must consider its objects, phenomena, or events, under the 'relevant' categories or "the categories of what something is" (Carlson 1987, 86), otherwise the object is judged as something it is not, and consequently mistakenly. Scientific categories consider natural objects as what they are in Carlson's environmental model. He followed Walton's argument in "Categories of art", which claims that the correct appreciation of artworks requires to be informed by the right concepts, that is, by concepts from art history. A baroque building must be seen, interpreted, and appreciated as baroque, and not, let's say, neoclassical. Otherwise, an aesthetic judgment based on a wrong categorization of the artistic object is not warranted. Similarly, Carlson claims that the aesthetic appreciation of a natural object is correct only in so far as it is perceived under the right scientific categories.

Thus, according to the environmental model, there is a correct way of aesthetically perceiving nature: when the perception is informed by the relevant categories about the thing, that is, when scientific (or common sense) categories inform truly the experience. Consequently, bringing non-relevant categories to the appreciation may be misleading. For example, the so-called 'Claude-glasses' used by artists and nature lovers since the end of 18th Century to enjoy the contemplation of the countryside simulating Claude Lorrain paintings led to the misperception of the real colour, illumination, and profundity of real landscapes.

Carlson's theory has been challenged by different authors, on the basis that scientific cognitivism is not the only correct model of aesthetic appreciation of nature. Among others, Robert Stecker, after rejecting the charge of inadequacy about the object and landscape models of aesthetic

appreciation, and vindicating experiences of nature that escape the environmental model, assesses: “I do not say that they are correct ways of appreciating nature, because it is not clear that there is a standard of correctness to bring to bear here” (Stecker 1997, 394). In the same vein, Malcolm Budd has also objected that there is not a unique way of perceiving nature aesthetically: “there is no such thing as the appropriate aesthetic appreciation of nature” (Budd 2005, 109). On the contrary, it is up to the observer under which categories she chooses to contemplate the object. Freedom is a factum of our aesthetic enjoyment of nature, and, in particular, the scientific consideration of nature does not determine our judgment: “(n)o visible aspect, quality, or structure of a natural item, of its exterior or interior, perceived from any direction or distance, with or without optical instruments, is deemed irrelevant to the aesthetic appreciation of that item by the requirement that it must be appreciated as the kind of natural item it is” (Budd 2005, 109).

Stecker and Budd admit that scientific knowledge may inform perception and appreciation of nature. What they deny is that perceiving the object as belonging to a natural kind is mandatory, or that scientific categories are the only relevant categories of appreciation, if any. However, scientific knowledge may enhance our experience making possible more nuanced, complex, sophisticated appreciation. Learning that glaciers move, that shooting stars are burning meteors, and clouds, concentrations of water drops not only cause admiration but permit us to see nature differently. So, even if it is not the relevant or appropriate way of appreciating nature, scientific knowledge is one secure way to enrich our experience. There are thinner and thicker experiences of nature, and therefore some experiences are better, richer, more sophisticated, or complex than others. And certainly, the aesthetic experience of nature may benefit from knowledge: “(i)f you have the right kind of understanding of nature, you can recruit to your perceptual experience of nature relevant thoughts, emotions and images unavailable to those who lack that understanding” (Budd 2005, 20).

Budd stresses the idea that, contrary to the appreciation of art, in which intentionality plays a fundamental role, the lack of intentionality occupies an essential role in the aesthetic appreciation of nature as nature. That is, while we appreciate artworks as product of human activity, which gives sense to them and obliges us to understand them consequently, nature’s lack of intentionality means, negatively, that there is no need to understand natural objects under any kind of relevant categories.

Since aesthetic appreciation does not aim at knowing scientifically the object or phenomenon, scientific categories are not mandatory. We may consider the shape and colour of the object, its movements, the relation of the elements in the whole, etc. Or we may appreciate the evocative power they may have, independently of the knowledge that we may bring to the experience. Thus, the aesthetic appreciation of nature is essentially pluralistic.

In the philosophy of art, Stecker held that pluralism in literary criticism is related to the different pursuit of the interpretation, the multiple perspectives from which a work may be understood. Pluralism accounts for the multiplicity of interpretations, sometimes incompatible, which could be equally acceptable. Equally, the accounts of aesthetic appreciation of nature mentioned above can be considered at least different acceptable modes of appreciation. An acceptable interpretation may not be the correct interpretation, but simply one that illuminates certain aspects of the work that may be interesting to consider. Freudian readings of Hamlet may be a case in point (Stecker 1997). Together with acceptable interpretations, the correct interpretation is the one that grasps the meaning of the work (understood in intentionalist terms by Stecker¹). Now, aesthetic appreciation of nature is not subject to the constraints of meaning or intentions, therefore, acceptable interpretations or modes of contemplation may also be correct.

It is important to make the difference between relevant and correct modes of appreciating nature. Carlson defends that there is a relevant frame to appreciate nature aesthetically, scientific knowledge. Thus, a correct appreciation must occur within this frame. What other approaches reject is the idea of a relevant frame for the appreciation. In Budd's account, the aesthetic appreciation of nature as nature implies positively to consider the naturalness of the *item* we are observing, that is, it is relevant to appreciate aesthetic properties related with the kind of being that the *item* is. For instance, for living beings, those related to growth, movement, vitality; for mineral *items*, the relation to other natural forces like wind and water². Taking what is a fight for a courtship dance, or the other way round, or vibrant colour for illness instead of maturity will make appreciation derail. So, Budd's conception of aesthetic experience does not rule out the possibility of error in the appreciation of

¹ Intentions are part of the work meaning together with conventions "that are not canceled by what the artist successfully intended to do" (Stecker 1996, 174).

² See Budd 2005, 22 ff.

nature. Neither a formalist account needs to deny the possibility of correctness in the aesthetic appreciation of nature: "Aesthetic judgment about nature might claim objective correctness despite being category-independent". (Zangwill 2001: 211-2). Zangwill's formalism is realist about aesthetic properties, and consequently, aesthetic judgment about aesthetic properties of nature may be right or wrong, depending on the correct discrimination of them. The beholder may be mistaken about the quality of the movement, structure, and properties she is appreciating. What she takes for slowness, maybe careful movement; what she considers elegance, be fragility. Provided that aesthetic properties are considered objective, a claim may be made for the adequateness or inadequateness of every appreciation.

The formalist, the pluralist, or the environmental accounts adopt an objectivistic model of aesthetic judgment after which a standard of correctness is possible. So, even for pluralist accounts, for which there is not a unique kind of relevant categories, correctness is not ruled out. The experience may be correct or incorrect, whatever the difficulty of deciding which frame is relevant in a certain situation to appreciate the object. In a certain context, it may be relevant to judge nature by its scenic value, according to the landscape model, in other by its sublimity or its beauty according to a formalist or a picturesque frame, in other cases, the environmental model may be preferable, and for most of the time, pluralism is an open option. There may be not relevant categories for aesthetic appreciation, but more or less adequate experiences. The scientific knowledge seems to be quite relevant to the appreciation of the flysch on the Basque coast at Zumaia, as a natural phenomenon that may evoke thoughts of time and natural history, of the power of seas and tides, and the movement of geological plates. Besides, judgments of a formalist character may be appropriate to appreciate the flysch as a post-minimalist landscape in which seriality and individual variability make the experience outstanding. Perhaps arguments from the environmental model are more convincing in conservationist debates, but even in this context, arguments about the scenic beauty or from the landscape model of appreciation may be relevant and convincing (Saito 1984).

In sum, the apparent lack of a standard of correctness for the aesthetic appreciation of nature refers to the plurality of perspectives from which natural items (objects or phenomena) can be considered: belonging to a natural kind or as an arrangement of colours and shapes, in a moment or extended in time, visually or multimodal, observed in the distance or proximity, in isolation or within their environment, static or in

movement, etc. This plurality points to the simple fact that there is no science of aesthetic appreciation, no determined perspectives, no limited scope, and no methodology for the aesthetic appreciation of nature. But, in spite of this, the mentioned approaches may share an objectivist interpretation of aesthetic appreciation, according to which every experience may be correct on the basis of its adequateness to the properties of the object.

A special case of categories or representations directing or influencing our appreciation is of those coming from art. It is special because contemporary environmental aesthetics is at pains to detach itself from the philosophy of art and picturesque modes of appreciation. However, artistic landscapes influence very often our perception of nature. And according to a pluralistic perspective, there is no reason for avoiding this source of information. Painting, photography, filmed landscape in fiction or documentaries as well as poetry and literature constitute an important collection, which make us sensitive to certain properties of the environment, and which orientate our aesthetic attitude. I will come later to the role that art has specifically upon expressive perception. But now it is important to consider that also artistic representations may play a role in the correct appreciation of nature as nature: helping us pay attention to details and nuances that may be otherwise overlooked and adopt unusual perspectives that permit an enhanced experience of the environment.

I come now to those cases where aesthetic appreciation is linked to subjective elements such that the object's features cannot be determined independently from the subject's mental conditions. I aim to consider a standard of correctness for aesthetic appreciation when the aesthetic experience is considered in its proper subjective character. So far, I have briefly mentioned the appeal to standards of correctness by approaches that, in favour or against the existence of relevant criteria for aesthetic appreciation of nature, may consider this standard in objective terms. For the mentioned authors, the impossibility of a unique standard of correctness arises from the impossibility of considering the object under just one right perspective, scientific, historic, or perceptual. While Carlson defends scientific cognitivism, Zangwill aesthetic formalism, and Stecker and Budd are pluralistic about the possible ways from which the object may be appreciated. But all of them think in terms of an objective standard of correctness, to the extent that the experience aims at making justice to the object (or its properties) as it is, independently of the subject.

2. Subjective aspects of the perception of nature

In what follows I will defend the possibility of a standard of correctness for the aesthetic appreciation of nature in which the subjective character of the experience is unavoidable. I will therefore maintain that the validity of the appreciation does not rest primarily in the adequate representation of the features of the object but in the rightness of the experience itself. And I will consider that the validity of the experience is aesthetic, that is, that it aims to be valid for everyone. In a Kantian line, provided the disinterestedness and communicability of the experience general validity can be claimed. The experience is disinterested in the sense that it is not instrumental, and it is communicable in the sense that it can be made intelligible to others. Besides, since the experience is communicable it must recognisably represent the object. Therefore, the subjective character does not refer to an idiosyncratic mode of perceiving, feeling, or thinking about the world, but to the personal character of an experience established by the activity of the subject with the occasion of the perception of an object. There are some aspects to take into consideration to describe the subjective character of the appreciation of nature:

1. The main one has been suggested in the former section: the aesthetic subject is essentially active in the way she constitutes the object of appreciation. The perception of the object under scientific concepts, artistic demands, or any other practical considerations is not mandatory. As said before, the subject of an aesthetic experience may perceive the object of her appreciation as a member of a natural kind or not, as a living being or as a particular arrangement of colour and shape, in certain relations with other objects or isolation, and so on. She chooses the perspective, arranges the different elements of the scene into a whole, and, eventually, she brings to the perceptual experience the categories and representations, which help to set up the object of the experience. And nevertheless, the fact that the object is constituted in the experience does not imply that it is made up or a product of the human invention. The object of an aesthetic experience is real; the activity of the subject arises from perception, and significantly it culminates in perception too.

The constitutive activity is intentional but need not be entirely conscious. Concepts, images, memories, emotions, and so on may permeate involuntarily the experience. They fuse to sensual properties in the perception of the object. In this manner, the contemplation of a rocky, pale purple mountain, at the sunset in summer, against the crystal blue sky may be permeated by knowledge of the mountain, images of Cézanne

paintings, and a sense of permanence and sublimity. The experience would certainly be different if the goal were to climb, to take a picture, or inform about its orientation, height, or fauna. In these cases, the properties to pay attention to and the relevant information to bring about will be determined by the activity or the purpose of the observation. The difference between aesthetic and other sorts of experience lies precisely in the disinterestedness with which the object is considered, and consequently the freedom that characterises the election of elements that take part in the experience. Since the experience is disinterested, without instrumental purpose, there are no determined features of the object that should be considered as necessary or relevant information to be brought to the foreground or, to the contrary, eluded. Now, in the previous example, the subject feels that beliefs about the mountain, Cezanne's works, sensual properties, and atmospheric light together with thoughts about nature permanence and human transience are suitably bonded in the perceptual experience.

2. Together with the basic activity of constituting the object of appreciation other subjective aspects of aesthetic appreciation should be considered. Subjectivity is pointed out by Stecker when he confesses that the most rewarding experience of nature is for him that which relates the object to the routines of his personal life: "...the trout I see is the trout I have caught and will clean, whose inside is so beautiful as is outside, which I will eat with fiddleheads or morels that I have picked near the stream where the trout lived, in the woods where one can also see a trillium and marsh marigolds..." (Stecker 2005, 393). I assume that the experience, directly personal, is nevertheless aesthetically valid. The object, let's say, the trout, belongs to an entire experience, in which it is connected with the environment – the stream and the flowers – in order not so much to make justice to the interconnection of beings in the ecosystem, but especially because they are integrated into the experience, bound to the subject's perceptions and actions, and eventually with his life. Stecker's fragment underlines – in a Deweyan line – the interconnection of beauty with personal experience, and the aesthetic with the daily.

3. I want to address now aspects of aesthetic appreciation in which personal affective states contribute still more deeply to the experience. When the subjective character cannot be eluded, because the personal quality of the experience comes from emotional states influencing less clearly the intentionality of the experience, that is, the constitution of the object, but are specially linked to the characteristic phenomenology of aesthetic experience. In the context of the aesthetics of the everyday,

Haapala (2005) points at familiarity with a given environment as bringing an aesthetic quality to our everyday life. In particular, familiarity, essentially related to personal history, marks experiences of the environment with a sense of belonging and being in the world. And obviously, the opposite feeling of strangeness that characterises, for instance, the experience of living or visiting new places is also relative to the person.

4. Finally, the expressive perception of nature also exhibits personal character, and it occupies a prominent place in the aesthetic appreciation of nature. I want to examine here how emotion and perception relate to each other to consider the normative character of this experience. In the above-quoted fragment, Budd claims that knowledge enriches the repertoire from which you may recruit content for your perception: “you can recruit to your perceptual experience of nature relevant thoughts, emotions, and images...”. Now, which emotions are relevant for the aesthetic appreciation of nature? Again, there are two ways of approaching the problem: one, considering that emotions are relevant to the extent that they do justice to the object, that they are responsive to features in the object. The second way to account for how emotions are relevant to aesthetic appreciation is to consider their contribution to the richness of the experience itself: to consider how emotions, and affective conditions generally, shape the quality of the whole experience.

The relevance of the emotions in the first sense may refer, for instance, to their role in the discrimination of the object’s features. Especially their role in the discrimination of response-dependent properties, but that are taken to belong to the object, to be objective. A standard of correctness about the emotional responses in the aesthetic appreciation of nature may be established without much difficulty. In this sense, Carroll (2001) held that being moved by nature contributes to her aesthetic appreciation. Actually, to a correct aesthetic appreciation, provided that the emotions are correctly aroused, and for that reason, adequate to the object. For Carroll, landscape properties such as “grandeur” and “openness”, for instance, may correctly provoke in us feelings of “exhilaration” and “serenity” (Carroll 2001, 374ss). These responses are correctly aroused, and they may enter our aesthetic appreciation of the environment. In this way, emotions seem to be convenient modes for the assessment of reality. Fear alerts from danger, vertigo from highness, and let’s admit for the sake of the argument that serenity aroused by the vision of open horizons is adequate for evolutionary reasons. The open landscape makes me feel serene.

Now, an argument is required to explain how these adequate feelings are turned over the environment and so contribute to an aesthetic experience of the landscape, as of a serene landscape. The arousal account claims that the environment prompts adequate emotional responses on the beholder. But for these responses to be constituents of the experience, they need to be 'recruit' into the experience. After a feeling has been adequately aroused by the object, a posterior move by the subject is required to bring the feeling to the experience. The feeling needs to be closely connected to the perceptual experience of the object, otherwise both experiences – one visual; the other, affective – remain separate. Besides, the fact that feelings are correctly aroused does not render the experience of the environment aesthetic, hence not aesthetically correct.

A usual way of addressing the problem consists in considering that the feeling prompted by the object somehow returns to the experience of the object or the scene. And that can be resolved in different ways: in Carroll's example, the aesthetic experience might be something like the perception of the open landscape entertained with serenity. The perception has changed in the sense that the content is not openness that has aroused a feeling, but something like a serene perception of the landscape's openness. An alternative manner to understand that the feeling (serenity) is somehow passed onto the landscape so that the landscape itself is perceived as expressive of the feeling (as serene), may be similar to that claimed by Matravers' (1998) in his arousal theory of musical expression aiming to avoid the double experience heresy. According to this model, the object prompts a feeling in the subject, who under its influx changes the previous perception of the object. In the first solution, the environment's features are perceived with a sentiment, and in the second solution, it is the landscape itself that has turned to be expressive.

Two questions arise here concerning the correctness of the experience: the feelings are deemed adequate to the object because they seem adequately prompted by properties of the environment. But neither the adequacy of the feeling to the object nor the perception of the object under the influx of that feeling render the perception of the environment as expressive of the corresponding emotion an adequate experience. Fear could be adequate in a certain environment, but, in the first case, perceiving the environment with a feeling of fear does not make the perception adequate (or aesthetic, obviously). In the second case, the feeling *per se* does not make correct a possible consequent perception of the landscape as ominous and grim, for instance. It may happen, but it does not follow. The casual explanation may serve as the genesis of expressive

perception, but it does not make the expressive perception of the landscape adequate. Why should the property that dispositionally makes me feel serene be perceived as serenity in the landscape? However, my aim here is not to challenge the causal account of the expressive perception of nature, but to account for the expressive perception when emotions may have not been aroused by properties of the landscape, but enter the experience from the subject activity, or have a completely subjective character.

3. Aesthetic correctness in the expressive perception of nature

That belief influences perception and that perception is cognitively penetrated is commonly accepted, and it is assumed as commonplace by the theories in environmental aesthetics. Besides, in the last decades, affective science pays more attention to the influence of emotions on attention, memory, and perception. Emphasis is made on how emotions 'distorts' reality perception – in opposition to the rationalist view of emotions mentioned in the previous paragraph. For instance, some experiments have found a correlation between differences in the mood of the observers and their perception of the slant of a hill: "Those in the negative mood group estimated the hill to be steeper than those in the positive mood group" (Riener 2011, 179). It seems that in neutral conditions we also tend to overestimate the highness of mountains, but on top of that being in a mood or other make bigger differences in the assessment of their properties. From an objective standard of correctness, it might be quickly generalized that emotions 'distort' the perception of reality. Now, since emotions take an important part in life, it may be asked precisely how the world would look to a mind without sentiments, to a merely cognitive perception. It may be the case that "...it is only a piece of theory, an epistemological presupposition, that leads us to think that there is available a neutral description drained of emotion that fits the original perception we have of such subjects" (Wollheim 1974, 95).

In what follows I will try to show how perception permeated by emotion may aim to aesthetic universal validity.

In the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* Wittgenstein stated: "The world of the happy is quite another than that of the unhappy." (6.43) It is an unexpected sentence in the book, but not surprising in every day, non-

philosophical, contexts³. In particular, that emotions influence our vision of the world is commonplace. What is more difficult to assess is how the world of the happy is different from the world of the sad. This is probably a wrong question for Wittgenstein because the world of the happy and the world of the unhappy are entirely different; in a sense, they are different worlds. For the world is the totality of the facts (1.1.), and the facts do not change depending on the happiness of human beings. To this issue a metaphorical answer is common: human beings tend to see the world dyed by emotion, or with coloured glasses. We see *la vie en rose* when happy, and grey if we are sad. The world does not change with our mood; the facts that can be represented in propositions are the same, but the appearance of the world is different: the world appears to the happy different than to the sad.

The psychological tendency to see the world coloured by emotion also plays its part in the aesthetic appreciation of nature. But here it is important to distinguish between this tendency to see the world affected by mental states – something that goes for most of the time unnoticed and takes part of our daily life – and appreciating nature for how she appears expressive of emotions to us. It is to the latter phenomenon that I come now, because independently of our mental states sometimes nature in itself looks as if closely tied to emotions. This experience is the expressive perception of nature. Now, it is likely that the fact that we may experience the world as expressive is linked to the fact that emotions and moods permeate our perceptions colouring the world. This is something that a theory of emotions like Wollheim's, which aims to be a piece of a whole theory of mind, aims to explain. He explains the difference as follows: "With the first kind of experience, the emotion flows from us to what we perceive... With the second kind of experience, the emotion flows from what we perceive to us, and it is in consequence responsive to how the external world looks" (Wollheim 1987, 82)⁴.

According to Wollheim's, in the first kind of experience we project our emotions onto the external world, while in the second kind, we perceive nature expressively as something that could support the projection of an

³ It is not so surprising, if it is properly understood, because it is not that things are different, different the facts in the world for those that are happy, but rather that happy and unhappy people dwell different worlds, their entire world is different.

⁴ Freeman (2011) has commented on Wollheim's metaphor of emotions colouring the world, as responding to the role of emotions in two different realms: the practical-ethical, and the contemplative-aesthetic.

emotion: “When some part of nature is held to correspond to a psychological phenomenon, this is because it is perceptible as being of a piece with that state or as something *on to which we might have or could have projected the state*” (Wollheim 1993: 154 my italics). I do not want to stick here to the psychoanalytic analysis made by Wollheim accounting for the origins of expressive perception. In a weaker form, we may claim that perceiving nature expressively is to perceive it as it would be perceived by someone under the influx of emotion. So that if under the influx of emotion we come to see the world dyed, in expressive perception, a landscape, a view, some object or part of the environment may strike us as possessing the appearance it would have to someone in a mood or under the influx of emotions. For the rest of the paper, I will try to put forward a notion of correctness for the expressive appreciation of nature, or the phenomenon of finding nature expressive of inner states. For it is in the expressive experience of nature where normativity can find a place. In these cases, the perception of expressiveness in natural environments is a case of aesthetic appreciation, and I would say a ubiquitous one.

Art and literature represent or describe so often nature expressiveness, that I am not going to insist much in the description of the phenomenon. Constable or Cézanne’s pictorial landscapes represent nature expressiveness, same as Ansel Adams photographs, and natural expressiveness serve in movies as a scenario to human passions. Poetry gives linguistic expression to the experience of the expressiveness of nature: daffodils in Wordsworth’s poem move in “sprightly dance” and “a poet could not be gay / in such a jocund company.” In the same way, in Sappho’s fragment nature looks like the proper inner of the poet: “Love shook my heart / Like the wind on the mountain / rushing over the oak trees”. And in well-known flamenco song “sorrow” is a “sand desert”.

Wollheim’s account of the expressive perception of nature is still the most complete and complex – and the most criticized as well. Two features characterize expressive perception according to his account. First, a feature of its phenomenology: contrary to Carroll’s conception⁵, in which the experience is meant to be affective, here the experience is deemed to be mainly perceptual: expressive perception is a kind of perception, rather than an emotional response to properties of the environment. In expressive perception we find sensual and atmospheric properties of the environment to be expressive of emotions. In other words,

⁵ Budd (2001) also challenges Wollheim’s account on the charge that in the appreciation of nature emotions are to be felt to enter the experience.

emotion is perceived in the environment. However, perception is not neutral but possesses an emotional overtone. Perceptual and emotional elements integrate into a single experience: “Expressed emotion and perception fuse” (Wollheim 1987, 82). The second feature is about the intentionality of the experience. Wollheim claims that the object of expressive perception is correspondences, understood as a particular connection between some part of the environment and an emotion. Correspondence in nature is said to be “the relation that holds between some part of the external world —a scene— and an emotion of ours which the scene is capable of invoking in virtue of how it looks” (Wollheim 1987, 82). So, it is not that some part of the external world arouses an emotion in the spectator, provoking an affective experience, but rather that the look itself evokes the emotion. The environment is found to correspond to an emotion.

The relation of correspondence between the environment, or part of the environment, and the emotion is a particular one, one of ‘matching’, in which an external object is perceived as ‘going with’ or ‘of a piece with’ the emotion. The three idioms point to the idea of normativity: expressive properties of the natural world are sensual properties that the subject of the experience finds matching, going, or being of a piece with the emotion, that is, adequately connected to it. We ascribe expressiveness to the sky, a mountain, poplars on a river's bank, or the wind over the oaks for their appearance. It is to their light, colour, shapes, sounds, movement that we would appeal in case we should be responding for our attitude. Besides, the most idiolectic wording by Wollheim, “being of a piece with”, suggests the inseparability of the two elements: the sensual and the affective.

Yet despite the above, Wollheim claimed that contrary to the interpretation of expressive artworks, where a standard of correctness is required, there is no standard of correctness for the expressive perception of nature. While the artist's fulfilled intentions operate as that standard for artworks, and since there is no meaning and no interpretation needed in front of nature, the perception of expressiveness in nature is not subject to any standard of correctness. The reason is that expressive perception is not mandatory, that is, we are not compelled to see expressively the environment. While failing to notice expression in the line of a poem or in a painting is an error, as it is failing to acknowledge expression in a face, there is nothing wrong in perceiving nature devoid of expressiveness.

Wollheim's argument also relates to an objective standard of correctness. Usually, a standard of correctness is invoked as a criterion to select among possibilities. Truth and falsity are the standard of validity for beliefs, as adequate representations of states of facts. Equally, the perception will be correct if the propositional content involved is true, or when it induces a true belief. It is alright to perceive nature without traces of emotion, let's say, objectively. Beliefs based on that perception will be true. But truth and falsity do not serve to discriminate among expressive visions or between expressive and not expressive perceptions of nature. When perceiving nature expressively we do not come to change our beliefs about how the world is. It is the same view, the same scene, or natural object. Even if the intentionality of the expressive perception is correspondences, we are not persuaded to change our beliefs about the object found corresponding to emotions. Neither the content of the experience is propositional⁶. So, we have two kinds of experience of the same object— one cognitive, the other expressive – and they are incompatible and incommensurable. The two experiences are of the same state of facts, but only the cognitive one can be correct, in the sense of leading to a true belief or having propositional content, under an objective standard of correction.

Now in contrast with Wollheim's prevention, a standard of correctness for expressive perception in aesthetic terms, that is, according to an aesthetic standard, is defensible. The expressive perception of nature responds to a sense of normativity different from the perception of facts or the perception of nature under the influx of emotion. In both cases, emotions, like expectations, desires, or interests take part of the background that configures our objective perception: it may alter the representation of reality (as the experiment about the perception of slant shows) or, to the contrary, it may make us sensible to features otherwise overlooked. But those states or dispositions penetrate involuntarily and causally the experience. In these cases, the environment will be judged (truly or falsely) as being literally and objectively as it is. On the contrary, in the expressive perception of nature, the content of the experience is not propositional, nor we aim to state something about the world.

Expressive perception possesses the same active character that the constitution of the object of aesthetic experience in any case. The subject

⁶ In Pérez Carreño (2017) I claimed that the content of the experience is metaphorical. In this paper, I just propose poetry and art as suitable representations of the expressive perception of nature.

brings to an experience of the external world the emotions that she finds adequate. There is no other link between nature and emotion but the fact that the subject perceives certain properties in nature suitable to express the emotions. That is, she has a sense of correctness, equal to the one which makes her arrange different elements in a whole, to frame a view or to enjoy certain objects, movements, or natural processes. It is a sense of correctness in which things are felt to fit well in an experience that may be expected from everyone, or what Kant called aesthetically or subjectively universal⁷. In contrast with cognitive experiences, the validity is based on the universal assent to how the world is represented in the experience.

So, the aesthetic standard of correctness must be located in something previous to the creation of a belief or a statement about the world. But it must be located at a level at which a primitive standard should also exist to undergo valid cognitive perceptions, that is perceptions where things are rightly related to constitute facts. Only after an experience which is felt to be right in itself, concerning the way in which things relate to each other or to the subject in space and time, may an objective standard of correctness be formulated. An experience of things prior to the perception that something is the case, for instance, that it is raining, or that we are getting wet from the rain. Hence, prior to the perception of something which can be asserted.

Thus, the correctness of expressive perception does not rest in the ascription of emotion to the natural environment, but in a more basic sense of correctness about the perception of sensual properties and emotions as being of a piece. Now, in which sense may an emotion be adequate to sensual properties or sensual properties be suitable for certain emotions? What is the reason why we find certain views and no others expressive or perceive *correspondences*? The answers to these questions may be somewhere between the depths of the mind and the modelling of culture. Between the psychological tendency to dye emotionally the world and the expression of emotions in language and art.

For some authors, expressiveness in nature would be conventional. It may be understood that certain artistic representations, found histori-

⁷ Cf. Kant 1977, § 6, 125: "Folglich muss dem Geschmackurteile, mit dem Bewusstsein der Absonderung in demselben von allem Interesse, *ein Anspruch auf Gültigkeit für jederman*, ohne Objekte gestellte Allgemeinheit anhängen, d. i. es muss damit *ein Anspruch auf subjective Allgemeinheit* verbunden sein" (my italics).

cally and for whatever reason, expressive of inner states, turn to be schemas under which we see nature expressive. In that way, in the last chapter of *Art and illusion*, Gombrich expanded on the schemas that guided expressive perception of nature in western landscape and culture: mythological baroque landscape and rural Dutch landscapes, representing opposite expressive modes of seeing nature that Constable came to integrate into his romantic landscape. But how could art do the trick were not a previous capacity allowing us to perceive landscapes bound to emotions and, more to the point, recognizing certain works as successful representations of nature soaked by emotions? After all, art "...may be described as the forging of master keys for opening the mysterious locks of our senses to which only nature herself originally held the key..." (Gombrich 1977, 304).

For Wollheim, projection is a quite arbitrary mechanism that language and art tend to stabilize so that some properties and objects seem better suited to the projection of certain emotions than others. Indeed, expressive perception is the deepening and cultivation of the tendency to perceive the world coloured by emotion, as it looks different for the happy and the unhappy. The communication of this experience, hard to do in a philosophical paper and ordinary life but carved during centuries in language and through art, has moulded and stabilized expressive perception.

However, a standard of correctness for expressive perception is neither the perception of nature under artistic schemas, nor perception penetrated by expressive language. Quite the reverse, it is the psychological tendency to perceive nature permeated by emotion, which wants to be communicated in expressive terms and artworks. Public assent is the recognition of the communicability of the experience. Beyond the intersubjective approval of the expression of this experience, no other objective evidence warrants its correctness. Contrary to Wollheim's scepticism, the experience of nature dyed by emotions is already subject to normativity. Only so can the artist trust that her work is understood as expressive. For expressive perception is not idiosyncratic or capricious, but it appeals to intersubjective assent dependent on the intelligibility of the experience itself. And because of that, the experience finds support in the use and understanding of emotional terms in ordinary language and poetry, and in artistic expression and expressive understanding most generally⁸.

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