

This paper aims at an initial formulation of some thoughts arising from a reading of Schopenhauer and Münsterberg. Since much of what each writer has to say about art rests on the assumption that each of the fine arts has a "nature" or "essence" and that there are states called "aesthetic pleasure" and "aesthetic attitude," I want for the purpose of this initial formulation to suspend any sceptical ^{doubts} ~~reservations~~ about whether these ^{states} ~~entities~~ even exist to begin with. That is, for the time being, at least, I want to be able to push the views of Schopenhauer and Münsterberg as far as they can go on their own terms, postponing the consideration of the terms themselves until another time.

It would be helpful first of all to try to sum up Schopenhauer's philosophy of art in a nutshell. He "defines" art as the setting-apart of an object from the conditions of space, time, and causality, in such a way that the perception of an Idea is facilitated. By severing an object's ties to our practical and scientific interests, art calls attention to a pure "what," as opposed to a "whence," a "whither," a "where," or a "how." An Idea is to be taken in the Platonic sense, with two qualifications:

perhaps that is hindsight. Does he "define" art?

1. Schopenhauer's view on the means of facilitating the perception of Ideas is poles apart from Plato's. For Plato, art gives us only a second-rate copy of Ideas, and thus is more a distraction from them than ^{an} ~~a way~~ of access to them.

2. For Schopenhauer, Ideas are representations or objectivities,

varying in grade, of the will or world in-itself.

One way in which Schopenhauer characterizes the "nature" of each of the arts is according to the grade of Ideas or objectivity of the will that each art makes accessible to perception. Beginning with architecture, which makes accessible the range of Ideas of lowest grade, all of the arts can be classified in correspondence with ranges of Ideas of increasing grade: sculpture, painting, poetry and drama.

Art places us in the "aesthetic attitude" by detaching objects from all reference to space, time, and causality, reference that ultimately concerns us practically and scientifically. Geniuses can apparently place themselves in this attitude by contemplating an object in mere perception, but the normal run of men requires an artistic transformation of objects to remove unwanted distractions. This attitude, which Schopenhauer calls "willess knowing," is also characterized by the experience of an "aesthetic pleasure." The source of this pleasure is attributed entirely to the form of knowing for architecture, or the way of access to the lowest grade of Ideas, but is attributed increasingly to the Ideas themselves as one gains access to higher grades of Ideas by means of the other arts. I take it that as an art gives access to each higher grade of Ideas, not only does the source of aesthetic pleasure shift, but its quality improves. There is, therefore, rather than one undifferentiated aesthetic pleasure, a hierarchy of aesthetic pleasures matching the hierarchy of grades of Ideas perceived by means of the arts.

Music seems to stand apart from the other arts, in that it does not make Ideas or objectivities of the will accessible to

perception, but is rather a direct copy of the will itself.

Music is distinctive not only because it does not correspond to any range of Ideas, but because it most easily puts us into the aesthetic attitude. Furthermore, it seems that the aesthetic pleasure peculiar to music, by not being associated with any grade of objectivity of the will, is beyond the hierarchy of the aesthetic pleasures peculiar to the other arts and in a class by itself.

Now a stab can be taken at the ways in which Münsterberg's theory of film relates to Schopenhauer's philosophy of art. The comparison can be oriented not only by the question whether Münsterberg "psychologized Schopenhauer," but by the question whether Schopenhauer, had he lived into the twentieth century, could have "aestheticized Münsterberg."

Münsterberg sums up his theory of film on page 82:

The photoplay shows us a significant conflict of human actions in moving pictures which, freed from the physical forms of space, time, and causality, are adjusted to the free play of our mental experience and which reach complete isolation from the practical world through the perfect unity of plot and pictorial appearance.

It looks as if the film, like any other art except music, facilitates the perception of a range of Ideas. That is, the film, through the means outlined elsewhere by Münsterberg, detaches certain phenomena - human actions in conflict - from the conditions of space, time, and causality or from ties to our practical and scientific interests, in such a way that

perception is given access to the Idea otherwise concealed by them. In other words, the film, as an art, puts us into the aesthetic attitude and enables us to perceive an Idea.

The Idea to which the film gives us access is the Idea of man at the highest grade of objectivity of the will - human actions in conflict with each other. Put another way, the film and the drama, as arts, enable us to perceive the same Idea. Why are they not the same art, or why is the film not a poor copy of the drama? The answer lies in the different ways in which each of these arts presents dramatic events. While drama offers the audience cues that detach the events presented from any practical and scientific interest, the way in which these events come to life on the stage is never completely freed from the conditions of space, time, and causality. Even after theatrical cues have placed us in the aesthetic attitude, we are still faced with a "second-order" conditioning, by space, time, and causality, of the dramatic events presented on the stage. Schopenhauer gives the impression that drama completely frees the presentation of events from at least space and causality. But he discusses the character of the drama as read rather than as performed on the stage, and so perhaps is blind to the second-order limitations of space, time, and causality on the drama that Münsterberg calls attention to.

Film, by contrast, is capable of completely liberating dramatic events from the limitations of space, time, and causality. Does the possession of this capability mean that the film is better able than the drama to give us access to the same Idea? It would seem so, but Münsterberg denies that

interesting point

film represents an improvement on drama in this or any other respect.

If the Idea that the film gives us access to implies an affinity with the drama, the way in which the film gives us access to an Idea or presents dramatic events implies an affinity with music. Music does not give us access to any Idea, of course, but is a direct copy of the will itself. Nor does the way in which the film "musically" presents dramatic events at all resemble the musical accompaniment to action in the opera. The affinity between film and music lies in the fact that a film can present dramatic events as completely shaped by the viewer's mind, by "playing on the keyboard" of its operations:

But we come nearer to the understanding of its true position in the esthetic world, if we think at the same time of that other art upon which we touched, the art of musical tones. They have overcome the outer world and the social world entirely, they unfold our inner life, our mental play, with its feelings and emotions, its memories and fancies, in a material which seems exempt from the laws of the world of substance and material, tones which are fluttering and fleeting like our own mental states. (pp. 72-73)

Moreover, if the film is an analogue of music's free play on the keyboard of the mind, then the film is bound by the same aesthetic necessities of unity and harmony as music. (p. 80)

Münsterberg's comparison of film and music leaves open the question whether the film is a direct copy of the will, or, as Schopenhauer puts it, "an unconscious exercise in metaphysics in

which the mind does not know it is philosophizing." Perhaps the film could be said to copy the will even more directly than music, in so far as the play of the former is independent of time as well as of space and causality (I am not referring to a comparison of film images and musical notes, both of which run in a direction of temporal succession, but to the power of the play of film images to take the mind forward or backward in time).

The film, therefore, in so far as it can be comprehended in the terms of Schopenhauer's philosophy of art, is characterized by a combination of dramatic and musical capabilities. Film shares with drama the power to facilitate the perception of the highest grade of the will's objectivity, at the same time as it shares with music the capacity to copy the will itself directly. We are now brought to the sort of aesthetic pleasure one can expect to experience in viewing a film. If the film has the sort of mixed "nature" indicated by Münsterberg's theory, then there seem to be two candidates for the kind of aesthetic pleasure appropriate to viewing a film. One kind of aesthetic pleasure, whose source lies in pure willess knowing, can be ruled out, for this type of aesthetic pleasure arises only in the experience of architecture. But the film viewer can expect to experience both of the other kinds of aesthetic pleasure - that taken in the experience of drama or in the perception of the highest grade of Ideas, and that taken in the experience of music.

Münsterberg does not seem to accept Schopenhauer's views on aesthetic pleasure, however. This is not to say that

Münsterberg does not admit the existence of an aesthetic pleasure specifically experienced in the presence of works of art. He agrees with Schopenhauer that such a pleasure is experienced, and is characterized by a disinterestedness not associated with "sensual" or "practical" pleasures. But for Münsterberg, aesthetic pleasure is undifferentiated, it does not vary in quality with the kind of art experienced. In other words, the aesthetic pleasure we take in a work of architecture is of the same sort as that taken in viewing a drama or a film. Furthermore, though aesthetic pleasure is not associated with practical or scientific interest, works of art must continually arouse some sort of interest or desire for us to experience aesthetic pleasure. Münsterberg's condition for aesthetic pleasure - one of continual arousal and satisfaction of desire - seems quite opposed to Schopenhauer's - one of willess knowing.

To conclude, Münsterberg seems to cast his theory of film in the terms of Schopenhauer's philosophy of art, with three important qualifications:

1. The film is capable of facilitating the perception of the highest grade of objectivity of the will - the Idea of man - more easily than drama, but Münsterberg refuses to admit that film is an improvement over drama in this respect.

2. The film is capable of copying the will itself more directly than music, but Münsterberg refuses to admit that film is an improvement over music in this respect.

3. The nature of aesthetic pleasure for Münsterberg is much simpler and more subjective than ~~that~~ it is for Schopenhauer.