

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Wittgenstein and Heidegger against a Science of Aesthetics

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Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's objections against the possibility of a science of aesthetics were influential on different sides of the analytic/continental divide. Heidegger's anti-scientism leads him to an alētheic view of artworks which precedes and exceeds any possible aesthetic reduction. Wittgenstein also rejects the relevance of causal explanations, psychological or physiological, to aesthetic questions. The main aim of this paper is to compare Heidegger with Wittgenstein, showing that: (a) there are significant parallels to be drawn between Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's anti-scientism about aesthetics, and that (b) their anti-scientism leads both towards partly divergent criticisms of what I will call 'aestheticism'. The divergence is mainly due to a broader metaphilosophical disagreement concerning appeals to ordinary language. Thus situating the two philosophers' positions facilitates a possible critical dialogue between analytic and continental approaches in aesthetics.

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**Keywords:** Wittgenstein; Heidegger; Brentano; Nietzsche; scientism; psychologism

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## I. Introduction

It should be obvious to anyone who has taken an interest in Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's discussions of aesthetics that there are various philosophically significant parallels to be drawn between their stances against a science of aesthetics. Nonetheless, the growing comparative scholarship on the two thinkers' overall philosophical outlooks has not yet, to the best of my knowledge, undertaken a detailed comparison of their anti-scientism in aesthetics.<sup>1</sup> This paper

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<sup>1</sup> A comparative account of the two philosophers' aesthetics is given in Stephen Mulhall, *On Being in the World: Wittgenstein and Heidegger on Seeing Aspects* (London: Routledge, 2014), 156–95. The relevant debates in the literature also include a comparison of their views of the relationship between philosophy and science; see Taylor Carman, 'What Science Leaves Unsaid', in *Wittgenstein and Heidegger*, ed. David Egan, Stephen Reynolds, and Aaron Wendland (New York: Routledge, 2013), 133–45. Works by Wittgenstein referred to in this paper are abbreviated as follows: *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology: Preliminary Studies for Part 2 of 'Philosophical Investigations'*, vol. 1, ed. Georg Henrik von Wright and Heikki Nyman, trans. C. Grant Luckhardt and Maximilian A. E. Aue (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), abbreviated as LW I; *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. 2, ed. Georg Henrik von Wright and Heikki Nyman, trans. C. Grant Luckhardt and Maximilian A. E. Aue (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), abbreviated as LW II; *Wittgenstein's Lectures:*

will show that both Heidegger and Wittgenstein are concerned about attempts to establish a science of aesthetics, and the relation that such a science would hold to psychology and physiology. Thus what follows is first of all a historically minded attempt to compare Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's points of view. Having shown that they are partly in proximity, I will argue that Wittgenstein's view of the mismatch between the relevant ordinary ways of speaking and the limited vocabulary of aesthetics is at odds with a type of linguistic essentialism presupposed by Heidegger's focus on unearthing the conditions of possibility for aesthetic concepts without recourse to their use in ordinary language.

In the course of demonstrating the above, we shall see that the parallels between Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's concerns in aesthetics relate to their responses to (different) debates concerning the relation between psychology and philosophy. Both Heidegger's and Wittgenstein's philosophical predecessors (including Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, and Edmund Husserl) were, arguably, reacting to the rise of experimental psychology as a discipline distinct from philosophy.<sup>2</sup> The problem of demarcating between the two had been central in philosophical debates at the turn of the twentieth century. Such debates were not simply part of the background in both thinkers' philosophical development, but also of concern throughout their careers. Heidegger's work was, from its outset, concerned with extruding 'psychologism' from a version of philosophy that is purified from it. Similarly, Wittgenstein crucially distinguishes between philosophy and psychology throughout his work (even in those later instances where the work involves a kind of philosophical psychology, for example in his *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*).<sup>3</sup>

Given the significance of the debate over psychologism, I will begin this paper by briefly outlining Franz Brentano's view of aesthetics as a 'practical' discipline dependent upon psychology, as well as Husserl's anti-psychologistic response to Brentano. I will show these to have been, at least in part, the conceptions of a science of aesthetics to which Heidegger was responding. They are involved in Heidegger's criticism of the reduction of the work of art to an object of aesthetic appreciation, which furthermore includes an account of the artwork's resistance against psychologistic or physiologistic reductions. Wittgenstein, who was responding to a different Anglophone debate over aesthetic psychologism, also took a critical stance towards attempts to explain aesthetics psychologically. Having discussed Wittgenstein's anti-scientific stance in aesthetics, I will finally demonstrate that there is a certain tension between Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's contrasting approaches to what I shall call 'aestheticism' (defined as the view that the work of art is reducible to an object of aesthetic experience).

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*Cambridge 1930–1933; From the Notes of G. E. Moore*, ed. David G. Stern, Brian Rogers, and Gabriel Citron (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), abbreviated as M; *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics and Religious Belief* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), abbreviated as LC; Ludwig Wittgenstein and Friedrich Waismann, *The Voices of Wittgenstein: The Vienna Circle*, ed. Gordon Baker, trans. Gordon Baker et al. (London: Routledge, 2003), abbreviated as VW.

<sup>2</sup> See Martin Kusch, *Psychologism: A Case Study in the Sociology of Philosophical Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Omar W. Nasim, *Bertrand Russell and the Edwardian Philosophers: Constructing the World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> See Alessandra Brusadin, 'Wittgenstein's Criticism of a "Science of Aesthetics" and the Understanding of Music', in *Wittgenstein on Aesthetic Understanding*, ed. Garry L. Hagberg (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 281–84. Different subsequent versions of anti-psychologism were developed partly in an attempt to interpret Wittgenstein. See Stina Bäckström, 'What Is It to Depsychologize Psychology?', *European Journal of Philosophy* 25 (2017): 358–75. For an overview of Wittgenstein's critical encounter with psychology throughout his work, see Peter M. S. Hacker, 'Prologue: Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Psychology as a Critical Instrument for the Psychological Sciences', in *A Wittgensteinian Perspective on the Use of Conceptual Analysis in Psychology*, ed. Timothy P. Racine and Kathleen L. Slaney (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 10–27.

The main aim of this paper is to compare Heidegger with Wittgenstein, rather than systematically defend their worth for contemporary aesthetics. In particular, what I aim to show is that, (a) there are significant parallels to be drawn between Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's positions with regard to what I will call 'aestheticism', and that (b) Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's brands of anti-scientism in aesthetics nonetheless lead them towards partly divergent criticisms of 'aestheticism'. In particular, I will show how a Wittgensteinian broadening of the vocabulary of aesthetics by appeal to ordinary language clashes with Heidegger's effort to see what underlies the central terms of modern aesthetics.

Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's lines of influence, within aesthetics as in philosophy more generally, have tended to lead towards different sides of the analytic-continental divide. By drawing parallels between their brands of anti-scientism, while also making explicit their particular points of divergence, this paper can hopefully facilitate future critical dialogue between the divergent traditions influenced by each thinker.

It would be useful, at the outset, to clarify some points of terminology. This paper discusses Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's 'anti-scientism' in aesthetics, or, interchangeably, their rejection of 'aesthetic scientism'. The term 'scientism' has been employed towards different ends in different contexts, and as a result can be quite vague. It is not commonly employed as an emic term. Rather, broadly speaking, it is used as an accusation, involved in a kind of boundary-policing concerning the misuse of scientific methods. 'Scientism', for the purposes of this paper, is employed against varieties of attempts to apply the methods of empirically minded, experimental disciplines to disciplines in which such methods are deemed (by the accuser) to be irrelevant. More specifically, I will be looking at attempts to study aesthetics in a psychological or physiological manner, which is broadly speaking what I have referred to as 'aesthetic scientism'. This paper more narrowly employs the phrase 'aesthetic scientism' in a way which can be broken down into two distinguishable elements: 'aesthetic scientism' here means the view that aesthetics can somehow be (a) causally explained by, or (b) reduced to, either (i) psychology, or (ii) physiology (*via* psychology). Note that (i) is what is often referred to in this paper as (aesthetic) psychologism; 'psychologism', like 'scientism', is a term that has been put to manifold other uses. Both Wittgenstein and Heidegger, as I will show, are concerned with (i) and (ii), insofar as they are critical of psychological or physiological attempts to study aesthetics. In this sense, they are both opposed to 'aesthetic scientism'. However, as we shall see, Wittgenstein explicitly focuses on criticising (a) (without directly being concerned with (b)), while Heidegger explicitly targets (b) (without specifically addressing (a)).<sup>4</sup> I construe 'aesthetic scientism' in order to cover both (a) and (b), thus aiming to show that the two philosophers have different, but parallel, objections to this position. Both Wittgenstein and Heidegger are also involved in wider criticisms of scientism more broadly construed, to which this paper will refer, though it is primarily concerned with the narrower sense.<sup>5</sup>

Further terminological clarification needs to be given here concerning the notions of a 'science of aesthetics' and of aesthetics as a discipline. When I claim that both Wittgenstein and Heidegger object to either of those notions, I do not mean to say that they generally reject the possibility of any type of systematic study of aesthetics. Rather, as we shall see, they

<sup>4</sup> It could be argued that Wittgenstein's critique of (a) also extends to (b), because from a systematic point of view a rejection of (a) implies a rejection of (b). In other words, a demonstration of the impossibility of providing causal explanations for aesthetic phenomena *a fortiori* precludes the psychological or physiological reduction of aesthetics. I note the distinction here to highlight a difference in emphasis between the two philosophers, important from the perspective of textual analysis. As I show in what follows, this difference in emphasis connects to broader divergences, Wittgenstein's focus being on language, as opposed to Heidegger's ontological focus.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Jonathan Beale and Ian James Kidd, eds., *Wittgenstein and Scientism* (London: Routledge, 2017).

have something more specific in mind. In Wittgenstein's case this is straightforward: when he explicitly rejects the possibility of aesthetics as a science, he is referring to the scientific conception of aesthetics outlined above (in (a)), that is, the idea that aesthetics may, purportedly, be causally explained by psychology and physiology. In other words, for Wittgenstein the very idea of a 'science of aesthetics' is an example of what I have called 'aesthetic scientism'. In Heidegger's case, as we shall see, things are slightly more complicated, since Heidegger's talk of aesthetics as a discipline derives from Brentano's and Husserl's conception of aesthetics as a discipline dependent on some prior inquiry. To further analyse this, I will now turn to Brentano's account of the relation between psychology and aesthetics.

## II. Heidegger's Historical Background: Brentanian Aesthetics and Psychologism

At its birth in the 1870s, the new academic discipline of experimental psychology promised to offer an innovative scientific method for studying the human mind. Among the consequences of this severing of psychology away from philosophy was a crisis with regard to philosophy's self-conception. Experimental psychology was not strictly delimited, rendering it unclear what was excluded from becoming its object of study. At the end of the nineteenth century, it seemed possible that psychology could provide empirical ways of finally solving what had traditionally been purely philosophical problems.

One of the first attempts to delimit experimental psychology's explanatory power was famously offered by Franz Brentano.<sup>6</sup> Brentano made a well-known distinction between two types of psychology: genetic and descriptive.<sup>7</sup> The former would experimentally study 'psycho-physics',<sup>8</sup> that is, the reduction of mental processes to physiological biochemical processes from an objective, third-person point of view. The latter, which Brentano also calls phenomenology,<sup>9</sup> would describe mental phenomena from a first-person point of view. Brentano thought that descriptive psychology, in the way he formulated it, would be in a position to give a scientific account of the 'practical' disciplines of philosophy – aesthetics, logic, and ethics.

According to Brentano, qua practical discipline, aesthetics is not yet a science because it cannot itself provide the justification for the norms it produces concerning the correctness of taste and the production of the beautiful.<sup>10</sup> Aesthetics can, Brentano argues, acquire scientific status only through being correctly connected with a prior descriptive psychological study.<sup>11</sup> Seen from the point of view of Brentanian descriptive psychology, an aesthetic judgement is a particular evaluative feeling directed towards a 'mental presentation' of a phenomenon. According to Brentano's descriptive psychology, there are two processes that take place in aesthetic judgement: the first is the presentation of the object to our consciousness, while the second is the presentation to our consciousness of the evaluation that the first presentation is beautiful (or that it is ugly). This second step involves a kind of

<sup>6</sup> The earliest systematic attempt to apply experimental psychological methods to aesthetics comes in Gustav Theodor Fechner, *Vorschule der Ästhetik* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1876).

<sup>7</sup> Franz Brentano, *Descriptive Psychology*, ed. and trans. Benito Müller (London: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 137–42.

<sup>10</sup> See Wolfgang Huemer, 'Experiencing Art: Austrian Aesthetics between Psychology and Psychologism', in *Values and Ontology: Problems and Perspectives*, ed. Beatrice Centi and Wolfgang Huemer (Frankfurt: Ontos, 2009), 267–88.

<sup>11</sup> 'And similarly one could show most easily for aesthetics and every other philosophical discipline that separated from psychology it would have to wither like a branch that is detached from the trunk' (quoted in *ibid.*, 269).

meta-presentation, that is, a presentation of an aesthetic valuation that is about the original presentation. This descriptive psychological account can function as a ground on which the norms put forth by the discipline of aesthetics rely. Thus, according to Brentano, the science of aesthetics is built on the foundations laid by the prior scientific investigations of descriptive psychology.

Brentano's work, among various other *fin-de-siècle* attempts to use psychology in investigating traditional philosophical problems, became the target of a vehement attack instigated by his student, Edmund Husserl. Despite the serious objections to 'psychologism' which propelled Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen*<sup>12</sup> to the centre of the *Psychologismusstreit* in 1900,<sup>13</sup> Husserl followed Brentano in conceiving of aesthetics, logic, and ethics, as practical or 'normative' disciplines.<sup>14</sup> In other words, like Brentano before him and Heidegger after him, Husserl thought that aesthetics relies on its grounding in some prior discipline. At the same time, however, Husserl's project replaced Brentano's grounding of the normative philosophical disciplines in descriptive psychology with a new non-psychologistic grounding in what (after Brentano) he calls phenomenology. Though logic is Husserl's primary concern in the *Logische Untersuchungen*, aesthetics is also treated as a normative discipline in need of grounding in some prior form of knowledge (which, for Husserl,<sup>15</sup> is achieved by phenomenology through a quasi-Platonic intuition of essences).

The Husserlian project of developing an anti-psychologistic phenomenological grounding for the philosophical disciplines is also one of the starting points of Heidegger's work.<sup>16</sup> The avoidance of biologism, anthropologism, and psychologism forms a crucial part of the introduction to *Sein und Zeit*.<sup>17</sup> It is indeed the danger looming in the fusion between psychologism and a form of biologism that constitutes the backdrop of Heidegger's understanding of the pitfalls of aesthetics.

### III. Heidegger's Overcoming of Aesthetics

In 'The Origin of the Work of Art',<sup>18</sup> Heidegger's discussion of artworks is at its root an attempt to oppose a particular reductionist account of artworks. The particular kind of reductionism that Heidegger addresses allows us to slip to a further chain of reductions. According to Heidegger, the first step that makes the subsequent chain possible is one that involves the relation between art and aesthetics:

Almost as soon as specialized thinking about art and the artist began, such reflections were referred to as 'aesthetic'. Aesthetics treated the artwork as an object, as indeed an object of *αἴσθησις*, of sensory apprehension in a broad sense. These days, such apprehension is called an 'experience'. The way in which man experiences art is supposed to inform us about its essential nature. Experience is the standard-giving source not only for the appreciation and enjoyment of art but also for its creation. Everything is experience. (OWA, p. 50)

<sup>12</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 2 vols, trans. John N. Findlay (London: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> See Kusch, *Psychologism*.

<sup>14</sup> Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, 2:95.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:86.

<sup>16</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Die Lehre vom Urteil im Psychologismus: Ein kritisch-positiver Beitrag zur Logik* (Leipzig: Barth, 1914). See also Kusch, *Psychologism*, 121.

<sup>17</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996), 42–47.

<sup>18</sup> Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', in *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1–56. Hereby abbreviated as OWA.

Here Heidegger defines aesthetics as the particularly modern and specialised philosophical subject which takes a certain type of experience (and, after Hegel, the particular type of experience that can be induced by art works) as its object. This, as Heidegger points out, is a historically contingent form of understanding of what art is, and only exists within a particular form of Western culture in the modern age. This understanding of art, Heidegger argues, is derivative from a particular early modern philosophical conception of subjectivity and objecthood. In Heidegger's understanding of the history of Western philosophy, modern aesthetics is born from the Cartesian reconfiguration of the philosophical significance of the subject.<sup>19</sup> Heidegger thinks that the modern advent of aesthetics means that the work of art is, problematically, reduced to the type of experience that can be studied by aesthetics: '[An] essential phenomenon of the modern period lies in the event of art's moving into the purview of aesthetics. That means that the art work becomes the object of mere subjective experience.'<sup>20</sup> Modern philosophy, after Descartes, opens up the possibility of seeing the work of art in terms of aesthetics, and thus in terms of subjective aesthetic experience. This reduction is presupposed by the further chain of reductions which Heidegger discusses. The aesthetic reduction of the artwork may be followed by the reduction of aesthetics to psychology (in the vein of Brentano). From there onwards the path is paved for the further reduction of psychologistic aesthetics to physiology, a reduction which Heidegger discusses in relation to the work of Nietzsche.<sup>21</sup>

Seeing the work of art as reducible to subjective aesthetic experience presupposes, and thus is only made possible by, a certain way of thinking about what *things* are, as discussed in the early sections of OWA. There Heidegger argues that modern aesthetics relies on some of the following particular metaphysical conceptions of a thing: i) as something that can be captured in terms of substance and accident, the latter being correlated with propositions of subject-predicate form (OWA, pp. 5–7), or ii) as the unity of a manifold of sense-data (OWA, pp. 7–8), or iii) as something that has form and content (OWA, pp. 8–12).<sup>22</sup> The metaphysical distinction between form and matter is, Heidegger notes, 'the conceptual scheme deployed in the greatest variety of ways by all art theory and aesthetics' (OWA, p. 9). Thus, according to Heidegger, an aesthetic approach to the work of art necessarily involves a reduction of its object to the type of object that *can* possibly be studied by aesthetics. In this sense, modern aesthetics is no longer capable of thinking about the *thing* it studies,<sup>23</sup> but rather talks of its various reductions (for example, of 'aesthetic experience', or of the 'aesthetic stance' a subject takes towards the object of aesthetic appreciation). Heidegger's positive account of the work of art is one which does not fall *within* aesthetics, but which rather attempts to find some more 'primordial' working of the artwork which is *presupposed by* aesthetics.

But what exactly does Heidegger take 'aesthetics' to be? In order to understand this, we need to go beyond the vague mention of its relation with subjective experience outlined above. Clearly Heidegger does not consider aesthetics as a viable candidate for the role of first philosophy, given that it is portrayed by him as deriving its conceptions of thinghood from prior exercises in metaphysics. (This is why Heidegger distinguishes his own musings

<sup>19</sup> But see R. Matthew Shockey, 'Heidegger's Descartes and Heidegger's Cartesianism', *European Journal of Philosophy* 20 (2012): 285–311.

<sup>20</sup> Martin Heidegger, 'The Age of the World Picture', in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Garland, 1977), 116.

<sup>21</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 1, *The Will to Power as Art*, trans. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper, 1991). Hereby abbreviated as NWP.

<sup>22</sup> Heidegger thinks of the distinction as primarily metaphysical, insofar as it is a general conception of a thing; it is subsequently applicable to a variety of specialised fields, from logic and epistemology to aesthetics.

<sup>23</sup> It is unable to think this because 'the way in which aesthetics is disposed, in advance, to view the artwork stands within the dominion of the traditional interpretation of beings in general' (OWA, p. 18).



about the work of art from what usually falls under the topic of 'aesthetics'.) In this, Heidegger is responding to Brentano and Husserl, agreeing with their attempt to demonstrate that aesthetics requires grounding in a prior discipline:

The term 'aesthetics' is formed in the same manner as 'logic' and 'ethics'. The word episteme, knowledge, must always complete these terms. [...] The word 'aesthetics' is formed in the corresponding way: *aisthetike episteme*: knowledge of human behavior with regard to sense, sensation, and feeling, and knowledge of how these are determined. [...] What determines man's feeling, hence aesthetics, and what feeling comports itself toward, is the beautiful. The true, the good, and the beautiful are the objects of logic, ethics, and aesthetics. Accordingly, aesthetics is consideration of man's state of feeling in its relation to the beautiful; it is consideration of the beautiful to the extent that it stands in relation to man's state of feeling. (NWP, pp. 77–78)

Notice here that, for both Heidegger and Brentano, aesthetics (like logic and ethics) is unquestionably a discipline dependent on prior investigations. This priority is ascribed by Brentano to 'descriptive psychology', that is, to an investigation of mental phenomena in general that is presupposed by the investigation of aesthetic mental phenomena in particular. Brentano's aesthetics thus presupposes an account of 'presentations', or of the intentionality involved in aesthetic experience (which, as mentioned earlier, is analysed in terms of the directedness of a feeling of approval or disapproval towards a 'presentation'). Heidegger's critique of Husserl's anti-psychologistic rendering of Brentanian accounts of intentionality involves digging beneath the description of cognitive states such as 'intentionality' to uncover pre-cognitive states such as 'comportment'.

Thus Heidegger's critique of aesthetics in fact presupposes the possibility of its Brentanian reduction to psychology. Once we define the 'aisthetike episteme' as 'the relation of feeling toward art and its bringing-forth' (NWP, p. 78), then the road is paved towards its reduction to psychology. Furthermore, once this path is tread on, then why should the psychologist be limited to giving first-person descriptive accounts of the relevant 'aesthetic' feelings? Is there something to prevent the further reduction of a descriptive psychological aesthetics to a genetic account of brain states or other bodily states involved in aesthetic feelings (now reduced to psychological states)?

In his attempt to interpret the work of Nietzsche, Heidegger confronts a rival interpretation which sees Nietzsche as defending the reduction of aesthetics to physiology. Thus, in this rival interpretation, Heidegger finds a way of presenting a possible defence of this reduction.

In the brief work *Nietzsche contra Wagner* (1888) Nietzsche says (VIII, 187): 'Of course, aesthetics is nothing else than applied physiology.' It is therefore no longer even 'psychology,' as it usually is in the nineteenth century, but investigation of bodily states and processes and their activating causes by methods of natural science. [...] In] knowledge of art as 'physiology'; art is delivered over to explanation in terms of natural science, relegated to an area of the science of facts. Here indeed the aesthetic inquiry into art in its ultimate consequences is thought to an end. The state of feeling is to be traced back to excitations of the nervous system, to bodily conditions. (NWP, p. 91)

As Heidegger sees it, at the end of a process which begins with a reduction of art to aesthetic experience we have the result of what Nietzsche calls a 'physiology of art'. The way in which Heidegger presents the rival interpretation of Nietzsche's account of physiology brings it closer to what Brentano calls 'genetic psychology'. As Heidegger clarifies:

When Nietzsche says 'physiology' he does mean to emphasize the bodily state; but the latter is in itself always already something psychical, and therefore also a matter for 'psychology'. The bodily state of an animal and even of man is essentially different from the property of a 'natural body', for example, a stone. Every body is also a natural body, but the reverse does not hold. On the other hand, when Nietzsche says 'psychology' he always means what also pertains to bodily states (the physiological). (NWP, p. 96)

In other words, Nietzschean physiology, according to the rival interpretation presented by Heidegger, should be seen as a physicalistic reduction of psychological states. And thus, by extension, Nietzsche's aesthetics is meant to be interpreted as a kind of physiology of art.

Heidegger's strategy in his commentary on Nietzsche is, peculiarly (and for various reasons that exceed the bounds of this inquiry), not to argue against the physicalistic reduction of aesthetics, but rather to argue that Nietzsche himself never intended to appear as its proponent. Heidegger's undertaking involves an interpretation of Nietzsche's predecessors in aesthetics, namely Kant and Schopenhauer. In the Nietzsche lectures, Heidegger's intention is to show that Kant's aesthetics is essentially anti-psychologistic.<sup>24</sup> Heidegger blames, instead, Schopenhauer for misreading Kant in a psychologistic manner.<sup>25</sup> Nietzsche's conception of the possibility of a physiology of art relies, in turn, on Schopenhauer's misreading. Heidegger thus complexly thinks that he has demonstrated that Nietzsche's critique of Schopenhauer's version of Kantian aesthetics turns out to be harmonised with what Kant had originally intended to say (NWP, p. 111). Furthermore, Heidegger presents Nietzsche's position in a way that is at least partly harmonised with the position he will take up concerning the topic in OWA.

Whether Heidegger is correct or not in his interpretations of Kant, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche matters little for the purposes of this paper. Perhaps more crucially, what is missing from Heidegger's endeavour is a clear argument against the possibility of a physiology of art. In place of such an argument, what Heidegger does offer is a genealogy of a conception of the physiology of art. The genealogy is given as a way of convincing his reader that Nietzsche, interpreted correctly, overcomes the crude psychologistic or physiologistic reductionisms.

If what is sought after is something that more closely resembles an argument against reductionism in Heidegger's work, then the place to look is OWA. The transcendental argument we find Heidegger developing there does not, however, attack psychological or physiological reductionism in aesthetics, but rather something even more fundamental. I shall hereafter refer to Heidegger's target, namely the aesthetic reduction of the work of art, by using the (perhaps awkward) term 'aestheticism'.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Here he relies on his previous unconventional interpretation of Kant's relation to metaphysics. See Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997). Heidegger unconventionally interprets Kant's aesthetics in a manner which exempts it from the overall Heideggerian critique of modern aesthetics. See Ingvild Torsen, 'Disinterest and Truth: On Heidegger's Interpretation of Kant's Aesthetics', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 56 (2016): 15–32.

<sup>25</sup> Appelqvist has shown that Wittgenstein's commentary on aesthetics also involves a Kantian conception of aesthetic normativity. See Hanne Appelqvist, 'Wittgenstein on Aesthetic Normativity and Grammar', in *Wittgenstein in the 1930s: Between the 'Tractatus' and the 'Investigations'*, ed. David G. Stern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 209–23. Thus, interestingly, both figures could be seen as working out different renditions of a broadly speaking Kantian aesthetics. Schopenhauer is a point of divergence: as opposed to Heidegger's rejection of Schopenhauer's interpretation of Kant's aesthetics, Schopenhauer's views influenced Wittgenstein's overall outlook, including his views concerning aesthetics. See Hans-Johann Glock, 'Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein: Language as Representation and Will', in *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer*, ed. Christopher Janaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 422–58.

<sup>26</sup> By using this term I mean to suggest a parallel with 'psychologism', rather than any association with the movement in favour of 'art for art's sake'.



What Heidegger has to say about aesthetics relies on his previous work, for example in *Being and Time*, where he had developed a sustained critique of specialisation in philosophy and science that is a consequence of Western metaphysics. Heidegger's thesis (derived, to a large extent, in critical dialogue with the Brentanian conception of science discussed above) claims that any specialised field of study into one particular type of being must somehow rely on a prior understanding of Being in general. Such an understanding is necessarily presupposed by each type of specialised inquiry into some being, though it may not be provided by the enquiry itself. This leads Heidegger to content that in order to enter into modes of questioning about beings, these specialised forms of inquiry are required to become oblivious to fundamental questions about Being in general. A forgetfulness of the ground from which they stem is necessary for their existence.<sup>27</sup>

In OWA, Heidegger applies this overall approach to aesthetics, which is a specialised way of studying one particular type of being (and, as such, an outgrowth of Western metaphysics). Heidegger's conviction seems to be that aesthetics, *qua* specialisation, reduces the work of art, which exceeds its field of study, to the type of entity which can become an object for aesthetics. In this reduction, aesthetics has to forget about everything in the artwork that cannot become its object of study. Heidegger thinks that aesthetics thus becomes oblivious of the most fundamental workings of the artwork. The work of art is not primarily an object for aesthetics, but something altogether different.

For Heidegger, what specialised enquiry (whether in the guise of aesthetics, psychology, or physiology) into the artwork fails to capture has to do with a particular relation between artwork and truth. Heidegger, as is well-known, sets aside the traditional philosophical conception of truth as *adequatio rei et intellectus*, replacing it with a view of truth as a process of disclosedness.<sup>28</sup> In OWA, he traces this back to the Greek notion of *alētheia*, which he (questionably) interprets etymologically as 'the unconcealment of beings' (OWA, p. 16). According to Heidegger, works of art involve this process of unconcealment, which precedes and exceeds any aesthetic reduction.

As Heidegger would later point out, his project in OWA should be understood as an attempt to *overcome* the Western tradition of philosophical aesthetics, which is in turn seen by Heidegger as an aspect of his overall project of overcoming metaphysics.

The question of the origin of the work of art [...] stands in the most intrinsic connection to the task of overcoming aesthetics, i.e., overcoming a particular conception of beings—as objects of representation. The overcoming of aesthetics again results necessarily from the historical confrontation with metaphysics as such. Metaphysics contains the basic Western position towards beings and thus also the ground of the previous essence of Western art and of its works. Overcoming metaphysics means giving free rein to the priority of the question of the truth of being over every 'ideal', 'causal', 'transcendental', or 'dialectical' explanation of beings. The overcoming of metaphysics is not a repudiation of philosophy hitherto, but is a leap into its first beginning, although without wanting to reinstate that beginning.<sup>29</sup>

In other words, what Heidegger is concerned with in his discussion of aesthetics is a way of digging toward some original primordial essence of the work of art.<sup>30</sup> Reaching toward this

<sup>27</sup> Note here that this concern for grounding is connected to Brentano's and Husserl's concerns for the descriptive phenomenological grounding of the 'practical disciplines'.

<sup>28</sup> See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 204–20.

<sup>29</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 396.

<sup>30</sup> See Matt Dill, 'Heidegger, Art, and the Overcoming of Metaphysics', *European Journal of Philosophy* 25 (2017): 294–311.

origin is only possible once aesthetics is overcome. Furthermore, the retrieval of this origin of the artwork is somehow related to his overall project of overcoming metaphysics. The reduction of the artwork to an object of aesthetic experience is also its subsumption under a particular metaphysical conception of things and of beings. The origin of the artwork is something non-metaphysical (in Heidegger's sense), which he would elsewhere call a 'saving power'.<sup>31</sup> What he calls *alētheia*, the process of unconcealment that the artwork allows for, is not graspable in terms of aesthetic experience. Rather, the entire field of aesthetics forgetfully covers over some original aspect of artworks that Heidegger seeks to indicate in his attempt to overcome aesthetics.<sup>32</sup>

The above is the (negative) gist of Heidegger's transcendental argument against aesthetics. The argument is transcendental in the following sense: what aesthetics leaves out in the reduction of the artwork to aesthetic experience is, according to Heidegger, also what makes aesthetics as a discipline possible.<sup>33</sup> The condition of possibility for aesthetics is the work of art which precedes aesthetics. The artwork exceeds its reduction to an object of study for aesthetics.<sup>34</sup>

Brentano had pointed to psychology as grounding aesthetics. Nietzsche had discussed the possibility of physiology as grounding psychology and hence aesthetics. Heidegger, by contrast, reverses this process of grounding. He undertakes this reversal by pointing to a specific process at work in the artwork itself as that which makes aesthetics possible. Heidegger does not ask us to give up on aesthetics, but simply to see that aesthetics is: (i) a historically situated, modern way of thinking about art, and one among many possible others, (ii) a discipline that is dependent on a prior understanding of the work of art, (iii) a reduction of the work of art that does not exhaustively account for its workings, and (iv) a discipline that is somehow more viable once (i), (ii), and (iii) are acknowledged as part of its self-understanding. Given (i)–(iv) above, though, there is nothing that prevents Heidegger from accepting the scientific reduction of aesthetics to what Heidegger, via Nietzsche, calls a 'physiology of art'. Though his criticism consists in showing that aesthetics relies on a reduction of the artwork to an object of aesthetic experience, there is nothing in it that says why, once the reduction is acknowledged as partial, it is impossible to reduce aesthetics, *qua* reduction to an aesthetic experience (rather than the work of art itself), to (physiology *via*) psychology.

#### IV. Wittgenstein's Objections against a Science of Aesthetics

Like Heidegger, Wittgenstein is also clearly concerned with the question of the relation between aesthetics and psychology or physiology. Yet, unlike Heidegger, as we shall see in what follows, Wittgenstein has some good arguments against the possibility of attempting to explain aesthetic experience (rather than the work of art) psychologically. We have already outlined the Brentanian and Nietzschean positions that Heidegger's critique targets. In Wittgenstein's case it is less obvious whose work he has in mind when he rejects the possibility of a science of aesthetics.

<sup>31</sup> See *ibid.*, 296–97.

<sup>32</sup> It should be noted that the positive account of the artwork that follows Heidegger's negative attitude towards 'aestheticism' remains incomplete. For example, Heidegger nowhere clearly states exactly what type of artwork he has in mind as relevant to his project, and scholars disagree as to how we should envisage such artworks (see, for example, *ibid.*).

<sup>33</sup> Here I choose to call aesthetics a (practical) discipline in order to allude to Brentano's and Husserl's conception of its dependence upon something prior. Part of this conception, as I have shown, is carried over into Heidegger's work.

<sup>34</sup> Note that whereas the notion of an artwork is central to Heidegger's account, Wittgenstein says almost nothing about the subject in his remarks on aesthetics.

One of Wittgenstein's targets seems to have been his younger self (M, pp. 327–65, 358–59): as a student in Cambridge, he had conducted a series of psychological experiments investigating the role played by rhythm in musical appreciation.<sup>35</sup> The experiments employed 'a machine that did not stress any notes' (M, p. 359); however, when playing certain rhythmic patterns, the subjects would hear an accent that was not given by the machine.<sup>36</sup> Yet despite this 'moderately interesting' result, Wittgenstein mentions that he was disappointed by the experiment's failure to explain the aesthetic question which he wanted to approach (M, pp. 358–59). His subsequent remarks on aesthetics seem to describe why someone might be tempted to undertake such experiments, and why they will inevitably fail to address one's aesthetic puzzlement.

Aside from reproaching his own failure to appropriately connect aesthetics with psychology, his discussions of aesthetics from the 1930s seem to have been responding to a 1932 Aristotelian Society Symposium on 'The Limits of Psychology in Aesthetics'.<sup>37</sup> In particular, Wittgenstein directly addresses Helen Knight's causal account of aesthetics which he criticises while discussing the relation of psychology to aesthetics in his lectures (M, p. 348).<sup>38</sup>

The above clarifies that Wittgenstein and Heidegger enter into different contexts of debate over, and consequently have different concerns about, the relation between aesthetics and psychology. Nonetheless, Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's standpoints in aesthetics both involve different types of objections against aesthetic scientism. This should be clear to anyone who looks at Wittgenstein's 'Lectures on Aesthetics' (LC, pp. 1–36),<sup>39</sup> where he very directly challenges a particular interpretation of the type of definition of aesthetics that Heidegger had also discussed (under the heading of 'aisthetike episteme'): 'You might think Aesthetics is a science telling us what's beautiful – almost too ridiculous for words. I suppose it ought to include also what sort of coffee tastes well' (LC, p. 11).<sup>40</sup> The reason that it would be ridiculous to think of an *aisthetike episteme* (that is, an aesthetics *qua* science) is precisely because when we are talking about aesthetics what we are engaged with is not a scientific enterprise (see also M, p. 342). According to Wittgenstein, we are misled into thinking that aesthetics offers scientific explanations by expecting aesthetics to involve accounts of causes and effects. The background assumption with which Wittgenstein is working (and which already places him at least partly at odds with Heidegger) is, of course, that getting out of this particular fly bottle we find ourselves trapped in involves examining our ordinary employment of language. The language employed in aesthetic descriptions might often superficially seem alike to that employed when offering causal explanations, and this is what tempts us into thinking of aesthetics as something that may possibly become a science. Yet closer inspection of the employment of language in the relevant cases serves to dissolve this superficial similarity to causal language. In other words, Wittgenstein seeks to show the attempt to offer causal justifications for our aesthetic evaluations to be a product of this misuse of language. Thus Wittgenstein hopes to cure his audience of the temptation to think of aesthetics as scientific.

<sup>35</sup> Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (London: Vintage, 1990), 49.

<sup>36</sup> See also *ibid.*, 50.

<sup>37</sup> Louis Arnaud Reid, Helen Knight, and C. E. M. Joad, 'Symposium: The Limits of Psychology in Aesthetics', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* S11 (1932): 169–215. See M, p. 324n51.

<sup>38</sup> See also Appelqvist, 'Wittgenstein', 216–18.

<sup>39</sup> M also consistently denies the relevance of psychology to aesthetics (pp. 335–60).

<sup>40</sup> For a recent extended discussion of the ramifications of this remark, see Severin Schroeder, "'Too Ridiculous for Words': Wittgenstein on Scientific Aesthetics", in Beale and Kidd, *Wittgenstein and Scientism*, 116–32. Compare here with Heidegger's view of the demise of modern aesthetics: 'for us today, the beautiful is the relaxing, what is restful and thus intended for enjoyment. Art then belongs in the domain of the pastry chef. [...] We must provide a new content for the word "art" and for what it intends to name.' Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 140.

There are some elements in the language employed by aesthetics that allow us to confuse it with the employment of language in explaining causation. Wittgenstein offers a number of illustrations of the ways in which aesthetic sentences might superficially appear alike to causal explanations. One of his examples is that of designing a door: 'You design a door and look at it and say: "Higher, higher, higher ... oh, all right." (Gesture) What is this? Is it an expression of content?' (LC, p. 13)<sup>41</sup> It may be tempting to imagine that we are here involved in a type of aesthetic explanation when we think that the moving upward of the door's boundary, or its reaching the 'correct' positioning, is somehow a *cause* of one's content, or, conversely, the *cause* of the removal of one's prior discontent. Wittgenstein argues, in the sequence of examples that he discusses, that further investigation dissolves the mistaken impression that we are dealing with causal explanations, and that these causal explanations are somehow relevant to aesthetics.<sup>42</sup> The correct way to talk about 'correctness' in the prior example would not be to talk of the door's position as a *cause* of discontent. In his 1933 May Term lectures (M, p. 336), Wittgenstein clarifies this analysis of 'correctness' by employing the example of musical harmony: when we talk about the 'correctness' of a note within a sequence of notes, we do not refer to the psychological state that is 'caused' by it, but rather something pertaining to the relations between the notes, a kind of musical grammar.<sup>43</sup> The psychological study of what feelings the note might cause in a subject (that is, the type of study which Wittgenstein had attempted in his experiments about rhythm) would simply not be a study of harmony.

In both the example of the door and that of harmony, the confusion was due to the introduction of the word 'cause' into a context (that is, the relevant language game) where it was not useable. Wittgenstein's emphasis concerning this matter changes between 1933 and 1938. The 1933 lectures appear to still allow that the term 'cause' may be applicable to those cases where what is sought is a psychological explanation (M, p. 342), for example, over whether the door caused me to have a certain feeling. In the 1938 lectures, as we shall see, the separation between the feeling and the purported 'cause' of the feeling is rendered even more explicit.<sup>44</sup> While in 1933 Wittgenstein simply states that 'the one thing we are interested in Psychology is causal connections' (M, p. 342), the 1938 lectures further question the viability of psychology as 'a mechanics of the soul' (LC, p. 29) drawing up causal connections. In both cases, contrary to Brentano and Heidegger, Wittgenstein simply assumes that psychology is an experimental search for causal explanations. Only in the latter case does Wittgenstein question the explanatory extent of such an enterprise.

Nonetheless, however we construe the role causal explanations play in psychology, it is clear that to apply the term 'cause' in attempts to respond to an aesthetic question would be to misapply it: 'In these cases the word "cause" is hardly ever used at all. You use "why?" and "because" but not "cause"' (LC, p. 14). Noticing its misapplication allows us to correct the mistake, and thereby also corrects the misapprehension of aesthetics as a kind of not-yet-scientific enterprise.

<sup>41</sup> M (pp. 337, 340, 347–349) also discusses the same example of designing a door (as well as those of writing a good musical accompaniment and selecting wallpaper; p. 340). On a biographical aside, it might illustrate the seriousness of this remark to recall here that Wittgenstein's own practice as a designer for his sister Gretl's house involved his demanding that the ceiling be remade so that he could move it by three centimetres. See David R. Cerbone, 'Dwelling on Rough Ground: Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Architecture', in Egan, Reynolds, and Wendland, *Wittgenstein and Heidegger*, 253.

<sup>42</sup> See also Schroeder "'Too Ridiculous for Words'", 128–30.

<sup>43</sup> See also Appelqvist, 'Wittgenstein'.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, the discussion of completely different feelings that occur while listening to the same minuet at different times (LC, p. 29).

As our above discussion shows, this scientific misapprehension of aesthetics is tied to a particular brand of psychologism that Wittgenstein vehemently opposes:

People often say that aesthetics is a branch of psychology. The idea is that once we are more advanced, everything – all the mysteries of Art – will be understood by psychological experiments. Exceedingly stupid as the idea is, this is roughly it. Aesthetic questions have nothing to do with psychological experiments, but are answered in an entirely different way. (LC, p. 17)<sup>45</sup>

Notice that, in contrast to Heidegger, the question of the relation between aesthetics and psychology that Wittgenstein addresses is not directly that of the *reducibility* of aesthetics to psychology.<sup>46</sup> Rather, more specifically, Wittgenstein is concerned with the language in which questions are posed and answered. Wittgenstein attempts to cure us of the type of misunderstanding about the nature of aesthetic questions that occurs once psychological experiments are thought capable of providing answers to them. Given Wittgenstein's construal of psychology as a search for causal mechanisms,<sup>47</sup> his divorcing of aesthetic descriptions from psychological explanations revolves around a discussion of the different roles played by causal explanation in either case.

Wittgenstein notes that the kinds of questions posed by aesthetics (of the type, for example, that answer the question 'why?' as previously noted) are of a completely different type than those involved in psychology. Someone could respond to the question 'why did Jones like artwork *x*?' with some particular causal account that attempts to ultimately explain Jones's aesthetic response by appeal to neurological facts about the activity of Jones's brain (LC, p. 20; M, p. 342). One could even give the answer in such a way as 'might enable us to predict what a particular person would like and dislike' (LC, p. 20). One could repeat an experiment, such as playing a piece of music at a laboratory to different subjects under some particular drug, in order to get a statistical result regarding the effect of the music (LC, p. 21; see also M, pp. 358–59).<sup>48</sup> This could result in a list of 'concomitant causal phenomena' (LC, p. 17) or mechanisms that explain why human brains respond in such and such a manner to this particular piece of music. Yet that would not be an answer to the real question that had been posed. When one asks 'why' in this case, what is sought after is not information about an underlying psychological or physiological mechanism that determines one's aesthetic preferences and judgements. A causal explanation simply does not provide an answer to the aesthetic question that had been posed.

Thus neither Wittgenstein's nor Heidegger's accounts preclude the possibility of conducting psychological experiments which could give an informative account of the causal mechanisms involved in the perception, response to, creation of, and other interactions with, works of art. Indeed, Wittgenstein still thinks there remains something of interest about his own experiments on rhythm after removing the expectation that they will explain away the related aesthetic puzzlement (M, p. 359). Wittgenstein, like Heidegger, however, shows that a psychological attempt at offering a causal explanation for the experience of a work

<sup>45</sup> Wittgenstein repeats his ridiculing remarks on the idea of the reduction of aesthetics to psychology in the following lecture, where he says it is 'very funny – very funny indeed' (LA, p. 19). Perhaps Wittgenstein is involved in self-ridicule here directed at his own failed experimental attempt to respond an aesthetic question (see M, pp. 358–59).

<sup>46</sup> Wittgenstein has, nonetheless, been interpreted as arguing against psychologistic reductionism (see, for example, Brusadin, 'Wittgenstein's Criticism', 284).

<sup>47</sup> See also M, p. 342.

<sup>48</sup> Wittgenstein's experiment, though similar, as far as we know, did not involve the use of drugs.

of art would be completely unrelated to some significant aspect of that experience. What is needed, in both Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's view, is a clear separation between the task at hand when doing psychology and physiology (that is, that of providing causal explanations), from some task involving significant interactions with works of art (whether those be the aesthetic responses described by Wittgenstein, or the alētheic participations in artworks described by Heidegger).

### V. Wittgenstein and Heidegger against 'Aestheticism'

At first glance, Wittgenstein and Heidegger may appear to differ on one significant issue: whereas Wittgenstein appears content to invoke a separation between 'aesthetic' and 'psychological' questions (as falsely construed), Heidegger wants to show how the work of art exceeds its *reduction* to an 'aesthetic experience'. Thus, given our exposition of their thought so far, Heidegger's and Wittgenstein's accounts, though parallel up to this point, might falsely appear divergent in the following manner: while Wittgenstein's account appears primarily directed against aesthetic psychologism (or any other form of aesthetic scientism), Heidegger's main emphasis lies on overcoming what I have previously called 'aestheticism' (that is, the reduction of the work of art to an object of aesthetic experience).<sup>49</sup> However, a closer look at Wittgenstein's commentary on aesthetics might allow us to account for the 'aestheticism' which Heidegger diagnoses and criticises. Wittgenstein's few remarks on this topic show how 'aestheticism' is a product of specific limitations of the vocabulary of aesthetics. In what follows, I am primarily concerned with demonstrating that Wittgenstein can indeed be read as having a response to 'aestheticism'. A secondary concern, which I shall address in the two final sections, will be to show that a series of objections to Heidegger's critique of 'aestheticism' can be developed from the perspective of Wittgenstein's *elenchus* of 'aestheticism'.

Both Wittgenstein and Heidegger agree that aesthetic theories have not been of much relevance to the artworld. As we have seen, Heidegger advocates the view that a proper understanding of the work of art only emerges once we overcome 'aestheticism'. According to Heidegger, the reductive and incomplete character of aesthetics allows us, within its bounds, to discuss only a very small aspect of artworks. It is thus no wonder that

the innumerable aesthetic considerations of and investigations into art and the beautiful have achieved nothing, that they have not helped anyone to gain access to art, that they have contributed virtually nothing to artistic creativity and to a sound appreciation of art. That is certainly true, especially with regard to the kind of thing bandied about today under the name 'aesthetics'. (NWP, p. 79)

The question whether Heidegger's critique of 'aestheticism' is correct or not in its above condemnation would require further proof that Heidegger does not provide.<sup>50</sup> It is clear, however, that his condemnation is made in view of the goal of expanding the ways in which we can meaningfully relate to and discuss artworks. It is such an expansion which is required for

<sup>49</sup> Even had it been so, this would nonetheless be a mere difference in emphasis rather than a substantial disagreement, since on this point the two positions are clearly not mutually exclusive.

<sup>50</sup> Unless, that is, it is assumed that Heidegger is here implying that aesthetics, by virtue of being an outgrowth of Western metaphysics, simply bars access to the work of art by rendering it into an object of aesthetic appreciation. If this basic Heideggerian thesis is accepted, it may follow that any *a posteriori* examination of aesthetic investigations into art is inevitably bound to prove that they are unable to contribute anything to its creation or appreciation. Yet if this is Heidegger's claim, then it is clearly a false one, given that debates in aesthetics have demonstrably influenced and shaped the history of artistic creativity (even in the cases of the examples of art Heidegger discusses).



the enterprise of overcoming aesthetics and metaphysics by reaching towards the original 'saving power' of the work of art. By way of such an expansion, Heidegger thinks that his own brand of philosophical thinking would be allowed to achieve more than philosophers' discussions of art as aesthetic experience have hitherto achieved. Based on his negative account of 'aestheticism', Heidegger's own positive discussion of the relation between art and *alētheia* is meant to provide such an account, that is, a non-metaphysical way of speaking of artworks that might help us gain access to, appreciate, and even create works of art. This is what the project of overcoming aesthetics aspires to.<sup>51</sup>

We have seen that Wittgenstein has a similar account of how causal explanations provided by a psychological science of aesthetics would not adequately respond to our aesthetic puzzlement. The motif here appears similar to what we find in Heidegger in that, for both thinkers, a science of aesthetics offering psychological or physiological causal explanations would be looking in the wrong direction and thereby fail to relate to the phenomenon in question.

Wittgenstein further notices that the kinds of terms usually employed in philosophical discussions of 'aesthetics' are, in fact, not those terms that we are accustomed to using in our ordinary discussions surrounding artworks: 'It is remarkable that in real life, when aesthetic judgements are made, aesthetic adjectives such as "beautiful", "fine", etc., play hardly any role at all. [...] The words you use are more akin to "right" and "correct"' (LC, p. 3; see also M, p. 340). This view, one which frames the discussion of aesthetics and art in LC, can be interpreted as at least partly accounting for the phenomenon of aesthetic discourse's irrelevance to the appreciation or creation of artworks that Heidegger observed. In this, I argue, we find the Wittgensteinian construal of what with Heidegger I had called 'aestheticism': it is nothing other than an unjustified restriction of the vocabulary employed when talking of artworks only to those terms traditionally discussed by philosophical aesthetics (such as 'beautiful', 'ugly', 'fine', 'sublime', and so on).<sup>52</sup> Misleadingly, the terms which philosophical aesthetics primarily discusses are evaluative terms rather than, for example, regulative terms such as 'correct' or 'right' (as in the abovementioned quote). Thus, oblivious to the multitude of terms we ordinarily employ,<sup>53</sup> philosophical aesthetics focuses on terms largely irrelevant to ordinary usage (for example, in our responses to art). Whereas aesthetics is a complex field, philosophers in the grasp of 'aestheticism' artificially oversimplify it.

Wittgenstein has a related point of criticism arrived at through his analysis of the employment of language in philosophical aesthetics. When debate in aesthetics narrowly focuses on terms such as 'beautiful', it presupposes a kind of essentialism concerning their definition. In other words, what is commonly sought in traditional philosophical discussions of beauty is a necessary and sufficient definition of the term that is applicable to its use in all contexts. Yet, as Wittgenstein painstakingly points out in his analysis, we use such terms 'in a hundred different games' (M, p. 335), in various manners which defy any essentialist attempt to reach a univocal definition.

As Wittgenstein points out from the outset in LC (p. 1), aesthetics is thus traditionally misunderstood as being more narrow and simple than it should be understood to be once

<sup>51</sup> See Dill, 'Heidegger'.

<sup>52</sup> Note that in this Wittgensteinian construal the question is not that of the reducibility of one discipline to another (as found in Brentano, Husserl, and Heidegger), but rather about the limitations and confusions of the relevant vocabularies.

<sup>53</sup> This type of forgetting has obvious parallels with Heidegger's critique of reductionism. However, whereas Heidegger objects to reductionism for forgetting something about the work of art, Wittgenstein's objection has to do with language.

correctly conceived.<sup>54</sup> To show that an expanded vocabulary (including, for example, regulative, in addition to evaluative, terms) enters into the domain of aesthetics would entail extending it much further than the philosophical tradition's conception. The overall framework in which Wittgenstein proposes this is an attempted therapy for the philosophical predilection for simplification. One example of the temptation to simplify is that which takes place when the complexity of aesthetic language is narrowed down to the limited vocabulary employed by debates in philosophical aesthetics. The broader view Wittgenstein has in mind is one which affirms the complexity of the interwoven phenomena at play in what we call aesthetics. These are neither limitable to the kind of vocabulary usually employed in traditional philosophical debates about the 'beautiful' or the 'sublime', nor are they eventually explainable via tracing causal connections. Aesthetic questions relate to broader questions about human understanding, which are distinguishable from the types of causal investigations of mental states involved in psychology.<sup>55</sup> The negative remarks Wittgenstein has to offer by way of therapy from oversimplifying 'aestheticism' look toward a positive account which embraces complexity. This account culminates in seeing aesthetic questions as inextricably connected to broader cultural phenomena (a position that is not far from Heidegger's view of artworks as tied to 'world' and 'earth').<sup>56</sup>

In partial agreement with Heidegger, Wittgenstein's appeal to the complexity of an expanded aesthetic vocabulary shows that the problem with 'aestheticism', construed as the arbitrary preference for a limited aesthetic vocabulary, would be its irrelevance to our ordinary ways of speaking about artworks. If one were to imagine a person that is, for some reason, restricted to speaking only in aesthetic terms, it would become apparent that their discussion of artworks would not go very far. It might, perhaps, go deep into questions of defining the terms (within a given context), or deciding when to apply a term correctly or not. It is easy to see that this kind of discursive game will soon become very remote from any discussion about actual artworks, which explains the irrelevance of aesthetics to the artworld (as diagnosed by Heidegger).

## VI. A Wittgensteinian Critique of Heidegger's Remedy for 'Aestheticism'

In Wittgenstein's case, the remedy for linguistic 'aestheticism' does not involve, like in Heidegger's case, a further shift away from our ordinary ways of speaking. According to a Wittgensteinian diagnosis, we should steer away from Heidegger's temptation to express what has been inexpressible in the terms employed by aesthetics by using an obscure philosophical terminology that attempts to dig beneath aesthetic terms. Heidegger, for example, claims that 'form' and 'matter', as employed in aesthetics, are only manifestations of a prior working of the artwork which he sees as a clash between 'world' and 'earth' (OWA, pp. 22–38). From

<sup>54</sup> For a more detailed account of the significance of aesthetics to the later Wittgenstein's overall conception of philosophy see William Day, 'The Aesthetic Dimension of Wittgenstein's Later Writings', in Hagberg, *Wittgenstein on Aesthetic Understanding*, 3–29.

<sup>55</sup> See Brusadin, 'Wittgenstein's Criticism', 288–91. For a comparison between Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's related conceptions of the understanding as an ability, see Joseph K. Shear, 'Understanding as a Finite Ability', in Egan, Reynolds, and Wendland, *Wittgenstein and Heidegger*, 163–78. Note that Shear's suggestion that Wittgenstein's anti-Cartesianism is anti-psychologistic, while Heidegger's focus against Descartes is ontological also concerns their divergence of focus regarding aesthetics. Whereas Heidegger's overcoming of aesthetics falls under an overcoming of metaphysics, Wittgenstein's main concern is to provide a therapy for the view that (aesthetic) understanding consists in some underlying mental state.

<sup>56</sup> Like Heidegger, Wittgenstein holds that, in Schroeder's words, 'what gives substance and significance to our appreciation of art, what makes it more than a superficial liking, is the way it is anchored in a specific culture, a way of life defined by its customs and manners, its moral values, its religious and political beliefs' (Schroeder, "Too Ridiculous for Words", 122).

Wittgenstein's perspective we can see Heidegger as seeking a remedy for our limited aesthetic vocabulary in an essentialist treatment of particular terms central to aesthetics.<sup>57</sup>

There are three interrelated criticisms against Heidegger's position that can be made from Wittgenstein's perspective:

- A) Heidegger's position presupposes an essentialist (in the Wittgensteinian sense outlined above) understanding of the aesthetic terms he seeks to dig beneath. This, as Wittgenstein shows, fails to address one of the basic problems faced by 'aestheticism', namely its lack of acknowledgement that the terms it discusses have manifold uses in different games. Heidegger's essentialist attempt to ground aesthetic terms in something that precedes them presupposes that the terms are univocal in all contexts of use (and thus always preceded by the prior terms). Wittgenstein's examination of the ordinary uses of aesthetic terms is meant to show such essentialism to be untenable. Here Heidegger is making a similar (but clearly not the same) mistake to that made by his targets:<sup>58</sup> as Wittgenstein shows, essentialism about the definition of aesthetic terms is presupposed both by the modern philosophical tradition in aesthetics, and by the scientific attempt to reduce the aesthetic term to a bundle of feelings.
- B) Furthermore, by choosing to ground aesthetic terms in prior terms, Heidegger is incapable of remedying the problem of the limitations of aesthetic language (as opposed to ordinary language applied to artworks). In other words, Heidegger's transcendental project – which sees 'world' and 'earth' as conditions of possibility for 'form' and 'matter' (OWA, pp. 22–38), or a process of *alētheuein* as a condition of possibility for aesthetic experience (OWA, pp. 32–50) – merely 'deepens' the restrictive manner of speaking involved in aesthetic language.<sup>59</sup> Thus Heidegger does not overcome the limitations of the vocabulary that the philosophical tradition discussed under the banner of 'aesthetics'.
- C) It seems that the attempt to go beyond aesthetic language by 'deepening' our ways of talking of artworks is in fact prompted by the very strictures that aesthetic language imposes. In other words, Heidegger's opposition to aesthetics is based on a diagnosis of its reductive nature, and furthermore on the incompleteness of this reduction. A Wittgensteinian critic might say that the seeming incompleteness involved in reductive 'aestheticism' is nothing other than a linguistic restriction, that is, that aesthetics appears reductive only insofar as it has restricted our ways of talking about artworks. The effort to dig beneath aesthetic language in order to find what underlies it provides no remedy for this restriction – rather it is founded upon it.

## VII. Responses to the Critique?

The threefold Wittgensteinian critique developed above presupposes the validity of appeals to ordinary language, and the later Wittgenstein argues that there is no higher court to which philosophers may meaningfully appeal. Contrary to Heidegger, Wittgenstein specifically

<sup>57</sup> Mulhall (*On Being*, 156–95) develops a Wittgensteinian critique of Heidegger along these lines.

<sup>58</sup> Note that there is a basic discrepancy between Heidegger's position and the rest of the positions targeted by the Wittgensteinian critique developed here. Whereas other targets may have not wilfully transgressed the rules of ordinary language, Heidegger may have knowingly done so. I shall return to the problem which arises by the possibility that Heidegger may refuse to accept the *elenchus* based on ordinary usage, which also applies to (B) and (C).

<sup>59</sup> It should be mentioned that (B) works without rejecting the transcendental project in general, but only its particular failure to overcome the restrictions on aesthetic language. (This is noteworthy since Wittgenstein's work could be interpreted as involved in an enquiry into conditions of possibility.)

argues against probing deeper to look at whatever is thought to underlie our ordinary employment of language. A common problem faced by criticisms that rely on appeals to ordinary language is a difficulty in finding traction with opponents who are dissatisfied with such appeals.<sup>60</sup> We have seen that Wittgenstein's critique of aesthetic scientism relies on the assumption that his target had imagined that they are abiding by the rules of ordinary language, and that they will thus pay heed to Wittgenstein's discovery of their misuse of ordinary language.

Such a strategy might not work against a philosopher who wilfully ignores the rules of ordinary language. This appears to be precisely what the later Heidegger does. Contrary to Wittgenstein, Heidegger's later thought turns towards a highly critical position concerning the concealing function of mere *Gerede* within ordinary language. Indeed, the positive direction which the later Heidegger's negative critique of aestheticism points to is that of the power of *alētheuein* involved in poetic (in Heidegger's special sense), as opposed to ordinary, language. The former, as opposed to the latter, can unconceal, as all artworks do, something fundamental about the world. Thus, due to a disagreement concerning the metaphysical significance of ordinary language, an impasse seems to have been reached.

There are roughly speaking two responses (only very briefly sketched here) to the objection available to those who would seek to defend Heidegger's response to 'aestheticism'.<sup>61</sup> One possible path to follow would be to deny that Heidegger's employment of language is such as is targeted by Wittgenstein's critique. This would require showing how Heidegger's seeming linguistic essentialism, or his emphasis on the poetic aspect of language, is not in truth a product of some blatant disregard of the rules of ordinary language. Such an interpretation of Heidegger would have to explain why he uses language often simply reminiscent of traditional metaphysics, suggestive of reaching towards something more fundamental that appearances hide. In other words, the goal would be to show that Heidegger does not simply, confusedly, and unknowingly, 'run up against the bounds of language' (as Wittgenstein himself claims in his few direct references to Heidegger).<sup>62</sup>

A second response might instead involve an admission of the abandonment of the rules of ordinary language, and attempt to offer some justification thereof. Heidegger departs from ordinary language precisely with a view towards reaching beyond it towards something which the Wittgensteinian critic seems to prohibit *via* her appeal to the ordinary usage of language. A Heideggerian response to the Wittgensteinian criticism outlined above might argue that some valuable insight is lost due to the latter's strictures on the meaningful employment of language. This opens the way towards a number of possible Heideggerian objections to Wittgensteinian aesthetics (though developing such arguments would be a task best left for another paper.)

Notice, here, that there arises a certain discrepancy between the Wittgensteinian argument and the possible Heideggerian responses. In the options outlined above, a Heideggerian defence would need to address the content of Wittgenstein's remarks, either by justifying itself in reference to the strictures of ordinary language, or by rejecting those strictures. By contrast (like various 'analytic' objections against 'continental' philosophy) the Wittgensteinian argument works by simply investigating particular cases in which the language is misused,

<sup>60</sup> See Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), Part II.

<sup>61</sup> A third possible response, which for the sake of brevity I shall not further discuss, would be to challenge the interpretation of Wittgenstein that would lead to the argument developed above.

<sup>62</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, 'On Heidegger on Being and Dread', in *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, ed. Michael Murray (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978), 80; see also LVW, pp. 69–77.

instead of carefully examining the content and overall purpose of the philosophical theories employing the language. This almost question-begging peculiarity, coupled with the above discussion, can help demonstrate how the Wittgensteinian argument can lead to the impasse we have been discussing (of a type which has often characterised the divide between 'analytic' and 'continental' philosophy).<sup>63</sup> It can function as an excuse for those already convinced of the validity of appeals to ordinary language to ignore work by the opposing camp. At the same time, it can remain unheeded by those who are convinced of the merits of transcending ordinary language in order to reach something significant beyond it. As demonstrated above, the Wittgensteinian *elenchus* based on ordinary language quickly leads to questions which concern different metaphilosophical and methodological preferences. Both philosophers have elaborate justifications, for appealing to ordinary language in the later Wittgenstein's case, and for the (poetic) leap away from it in Heidegger's later work. The task of critically examining these contrary justifications remains beyond the bounds of this paper, which limits itself to pointing out the *aporia* that can be reached by the parallel critiques of scientism in aesthetics.

### VIII. Concluding Remarks

Further appreciation of the various other significant parallels between Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's overall outlooks, which any critical examination of their disagreements needs to keep in mind, also remains beyond the bounds of this paper. Suffice it to say that to note their divergences concerning ordinary language is not to say that their overall philosophical projects are not otherwise aligned. This paper has shown their positions in aesthetics to be surprisingly close, and to involve parallel criticisms of what I have called 'aesthetic scientism'. And though their methods for doing so are divergent, it should not be forgotten that, as our discussion has shown, both philosophers ultimately occupy the same side of the debate by rejecting 'aestheticism'. It has already been mentioned that their rejection of scientism and aestheticism has various parallel consequences in their overall positive views in aesthetics, with both thinkers seeing artworks and our responses to them as inherently connected to some cultural background. This connects to overall parallels in their philosophical outlooks, e.g. in Wittgenstein's later conception of shared forms of life, which may partly overlap with Heidegger's concern about Being-in-the-world.

In this light, though the Wittgensteinian critique developed above may not finally be convincing to some Heideggerians (and it is very likely that analogous Heideggerian objections to appeals to ordinary language might similarly not convince Wittgensteinians), it is useful in allowing us to clarify, compare, and historically situate Wittgenstein's and Heidegger's positions. As outlined above, Wittgenstein's approach may be used to indicate that Heidegger is closer to the modern aesthetic tradition than his own rhetoric suggests. As our analysis has shown, Heidegger decries modern aesthetics for its reductionism, while at the same time failing to convincingly argue directly against the reduction of aesthetics to psychology or physiology. Instead, he shifts his focus towards the conditions of possibility for aesthetics, ultimately presenting no reason for abandoning a kind of revised aestheticism (or any further type of reductionism) which acknowledges such conditions of possibility. Wittgenstein's examination of ordinary linguistic usage avoids, though perhaps not unproblematically, focusing on conditions of possibility. Given an acceptance of appeals to ordinary language, which opponents (and of course, Heidegger is only one among many) might resist, Wittgenstein shows us how to expand our oversimplified conception of aesthetics, while also arguing against the

<sup>63</sup> See Andreas Vrahimis, *Encounters between Analytic and Continental Philosophy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013).

possibility of an aesthetic scientism. Comparatively situating the two philosophers' positions allows us to see that the basic divergence of the conclusions reached by their critique of aesthetic scientism relies on a different view of appeals to ordinary language. This acknowledgment helps to clarify some of the conflicting conceptions of aesthetics in either thinker's line of influence, and thus can facilitate critical dialogue between them.

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The author has no competing interests to declare.

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