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"Life is a passacaglia"

With its countless cultural variations based on and laid over the endlessly repeated bass melody of evolution, life is a passacaglia.

As an evolved species that reached its modern form 30,000 BP or earlier in the late Pleistocene, we members of the species *homo sapiens* share the same perceptual, affective, and cognitive systems. These not only register the way the world is, they organize our engagement with the world in ways that reflect our common interests and concerns. We want and need the necessities first for survival and then for raising children to an age at which they too can raise children to maturity, this being the measure of our successful evolutionary adaptation. That is, we seek and value fresh air and clean water, food, shelter, companionship, stimulation, cooperation and all the other means to survival and reproductive success. (I allow, of course, that there is some cultural variability in what counts as food and on what foods can be eaten, and similarly for many of life's patterns and situations.) Our shared biology and the way the world is together dictate that the tunes to which different cultures dance are variations on an underlying, pan-cultural theme, which is the human condition. Moreover, because we are deeply self-reflective and profoundly social, we are fascinated by the motives, patterns, and dynamics driving

human interaction. We are mesmerized by pride and prejudice, crime and punishment, by love, jealousy, justice, revenge, compassion, trade, betrayal, peace, and violence. And again, despite a plethora of surface social differences in the ways such human characteristics are manifested, the universality of these human vectors is readily apparent. Notwithstanding the undeniable impact of local cultural and environmental factors on the organization of life within different societies, other humans are never entirely alien or opaque to us because we inhabit a single world and share a common biology, with the result that we inevitably experience the same joys, fears, challenges, and desires.

Narrative and representational arts often feature these common themes of human existence and teach lessons in life at no expense to the audience beyond their imaginative involvement.¹ As well, we are absorbed by presentations of strong emotions, and these can be apparent in the sounds of music and in decorative arts as well as in more directly mimetic art forms. As one would expect, the attraction of art that deals with universal aspects of human experience and basic emotions transcends the boundaries of culture. The tragedies of the ancient Greeks are no less powerful and meaningful now than in the past, and are cross-culturally accessible also, as are, for example, the Hindu Ramayana and Mahabharata epics. Meanwhile, all cultures elaborate stories of ghosts, adventure, lost and found love, heroism, exploration, endurance, friendship, trust, and the like.

Many universal human preferences are the product of our ancestral evolution. We evolved to like sweet and fatty foods, for instance, because they were nutritious and hard to come by in the late Pleistocene. We preferred landscapes offering distant views that showed signs of water and life, as well as concealed places that could be used for shelter and as lookout points. We found bodily and especially facial symmetry attractive in

members of the other sex because it signals health, which in turn indicates fecundity. More generally, the markers of sexual attractiveness functioned as predictors of the health of potential offspring. In general, we valued prototypicality, but were also drawn to specimens that are unusual without thereby qualifying as deviant.² It is possible to discern the basis for a proto-aesthetic in these judgments, a biologically conditioned propensity to find some things naturally beautiful or appealing and others ugly or scary. And this tendency comes to us as part of our biological endowment, however we overlay it with traditions of cultural refinements.

Artists are able to take and exploit the aesthetic inclinations just described. For example, artistic designs featuring symmetry are claimed to inherit the beauty and appeal attached to symmetry in evaluating the bodies of potential sexual partners.³ And by recreating and stylizing visual and other patterns that are attention-grabbing in nature, such as eye-like circles, the artist invests her work with interest.⁴ Because we are evolved to focus on the patterns in question, we are drawn to them not only in the art of our cultural homeland but also in the exotic art of other cultures.

Artists can also create universally attractive works by structuring these in ways that chime and resonate with our perceptual, affective, and cognitive systems. To help us negotiate the world and make sense of human action, we are programmed to seek pattern, regularity, and closure, to separate subject from ground, to be curious about what is new and different, to look for signs of intention and meaning, to explain the present in terms of the past, and so forth. Artworks draw attention to themselves by stimulating these dispositions in ways that are interesting and satisfying. And, according to Kathleen M. Higgins, this applies as well to those art forms that can be abstract, such as music.⁵ Music

sounds like meaningful, expressive utterance, its progress seems purposeful and characterful (despite often defeating or postponing the most obvious continuations), it weaves patterns of movement in acoustic space that recall human action and provoke bodily engagement from the listener, and it generates complexly repetitive formal structures that usually achieve unity, balance, and closure. As Higgins concludes: "These structural quasi-universals for pieces of music suggest that there are at least some elements of very foreign music that will strike the listener as familiar. Like the processing universals on which they are based, they offer a way into alien music, encouraging further exploration" (p. 503).

From its origins in eighteenth-century Europe, traditional aesthetic theory described aesthetic properties as central to the appreciation of both nature and art, and characterized these properties as primarily formal, as considered for their own sakes, and as directly available to perception, even for the person who had little or no understanding of the nature, origin, or function of the perceptual object that displays them. Aesthetic properties are experienced with pleasure or displeasure, and what presents them is evaluated accordingly. The characteristics previously described as captivating and motivating our perceptual, affective, and cognitive systems sound very much like aesthetic properties and, like Kant, evolutionary psychologists explain the appeal (or lack of appeal) of such features as arising from our finding the manner in which they arouse our faculties as pleasing (or as displeasing). I have suggested that our ability to recognize ancient art and non-Western art as such, despite our exclusion from the art worlds and art traditions in which they were created, probably depends on the salience within them of aesthetic properties.⁶ I proposed that it is to be expected that cultures begin with art that is

appealing in part because of its aesthetic features, even if symbolic and other more culturally encoded meanings are also present at the outset and become dominant later.

Another evolutionary account of art's significance emphasizes the way it depends on patterns of mutuality and synchronicity that are present in the baby's earliest interactions with its mother and goes on to explain how art takes its power and value from the way it amplifies and "makes special" rituals and other social patterns, experiences, and conventions that already have adaptive value in that they create the kinds of mutually supportive communities in which humans can prosper.⁷ Art's contributing in this way to human flourishing can be apparent to cultural outsiders as well as initiates, as is evident from the attractiveness to foreigners of elaborate religious festivals in foreign lands.

Finally, there is the theory that, just as beauty signals health, the activity of artists also has value as sexual display.⁸ In particular, we admire virtuosity and skill, and the arts provide abundantly for the demonstration of these. Moreover, in lavishing his talents on an apparently worthless activity, the artist exhibits the superiority of his fitness over others who must struggle to survive. Because virtuosity is typically shown in the manner of dealing with art's media, and because the possibilities and intractabilities of media, such as marble, ice, lead, pigmented water, the voice, and the body, do not depend on the media's cultural locations, we can all see and appreciate skilled artistic achievements. And even where art depends on technologies that are not always widespread, such as particular musical instruments, anyone who can observe how they are made and manipulated already is able to recognize the skills they call forth.

I have suggested many ways a universal aesthetic could be grounded. Most of these, though different, are not opposed. The arts could serve many overlapping and multilayered purposes; those of the West surely do. And to the extent that these purposes are threads used in weaving the cloth of human life, their artistic significance may be accessible to all.

I.

The philosopher Arthur C. Danto has sometimes expressed skepticism about alleged aesthetic universals. He suspects that, rather than rediscovering Pleistocene landscape aesthetics, the émigré Russian artists Vitaly Komar and Alexander Melamid have confirmed the global distribution of Western calendars by demonstrating cross-cultural preference for certain landscape features in art.⁹ As well, he has also queried the notion that aesthetic properties derive their import and appeal without reference to the art traditions and artistic acts in which they are generated.¹⁰ I have supported this view, suggesting that culture-free, "naked" aesthetic properties are thinner in content and scarcer than aesthetic theory would lead us to predict.¹¹

Despite what I have written earlier about the universality of some aesthetic features, I think this view is basically correct. There may be universal aesthetic qualities, patterns, and processes that are grounded in trans-cultural aspects of human existence and evolved biology, but it is easy to exaggerate inappropriately the significance of these. The point is not only that the larger part of art can be concerned with complex symbolic and semantic content, as well as riddled with cross-textual allusions, references, and

repudiations to which the cultural outsider is blind. In addition, what is universal can be inflected by its cultural setting, so that its significance can no longer be read straightforwardly. Take this deliberately crude example: if higher pitch naturally correlates with increased tension, middle C will be relaxed relative to much higher notes. That tells us nothing about the tension associated with middle C, however, if some societies or musical genres treat middle C as the highest note available for use and others employ it as the lowest.¹² For the former group it will be highly tense and for the latter as relaxed as possible. Here is another example: if the color spectrum ranges from hot at the red end to cold at the violet, one cannot know the temperature of green until one knows also what ranges of the spectrum are available for employment in art. Green is hot in a range from violet to green and cold in one from green to red. It may be that the range prescribed for the artist's use is settled by socially arbitrary, contingent decision and practices.

For these reasons I am unimpressed by criticisms brought against my position by James C. Anderson. He writes: "Can we not conceive of a work of art that is such simply in virtue of aesthetic properties it shares with natural objects? ... Many, perhaps most, works of music rise to the status of art ... in virtue of their pure aesthetic properties. This explains the fact that music, from rock to classical, can be aesthetically appreciated without any knowledge of the properties the work has in virtue of 'its location within an art-historical tradition of [music].' These properties include rhythm, tone, and melody."¹³ Anderson goes on to suggest that such basic features generate expressive properties that do not presuppose the concept of art (or art traditions). "That would be the case only if

such properties were, in every case, conventional *and* the conventions involved were specific to the art world" (p. 77).

I disagree with most of these claims. I have discussed the background listeners should bring to their appreciation and understanding of music, maintaining that, though they do not require formal training, to identify the work that is their target and then to comprehend it deeply, they need to know about its genre, about styles and conventions of the time, about related and similar pieces, and so on.¹⁴ I have even compared the kinds of appreciation appropriate to classical and rock music in these regards.¹⁵ And I have explained above how universally recognized features can be structured by arbitrary conventions in ways that affect their import. So I question Anderson's final claim, that recognition of the expressiveness of properties does not require the perceiver to contextualize them with respect to an art-historical tradition. As a result, I doubt what is implied by his view, that expressiveness is always cross-culturally recognizable.¹⁶

Let us not explore the theories concerning how music is expressive. Assume that music's expressive power depends on the listener's perception within it of movement and of its flux of tensions and relaxations. And assume also (but implausibly) that emotions are expressed in much the same way from culture to culture. Now, there are many ways movement and the flux of tension can be generated in music, and they differ from culture to culture, but let us consider only music's melodic character. Movement and tension within this depend on the scale used and the hierarchical weighting of tones within it, so melodic expressiveness must also be a function of these factors. Finally, also suppose (what is nearly true) that all cultures hear octaves as equivalent, use scales of 5-7 notes, and include some unequal intervals in their scales. Still, there are a huge number of

possibilities. Even for the scale of white notes on the piano, there are the twelve church modes, the melodic minor scale, and the major scale. It takes children years, rather than months of exposure to internalize the most common Western scale structures.¹⁷ Listeners at home with the major scale can find medieval modal music based on exactly the same notes difficult to hear appropriately; they do not experience the cadential finality and resolution of double-leading note cadences, for example.

Hundreds of differently tuned scales and a variety of modal treatments for each of these are found in the musics of other cultures. Listeners unfamiliar with these musics can have the greatest difficulty in hearing them in terms of their governing principles, and as a result, cannot easily recognize their expressive quality. Western listeners faced for the first time with Japanese *kabuki* or the subtle inflections of Indian *ragas* have trouble making any sense musically of what they hear (unless they mishear the music simply in terms of the Western principles they know), let alone in correctly identifying its expressive character. Expressiveness in music is not a "pure" aesthetic property. Indeed, hardly any musical properties are. Timbre perhaps qualifies, if any do, but notwithstanding orchestral pointillism in some impressionist works and *Klangfarbenmelodie* in some dodecaphonic pieces, the expressive and structural potential of purely timbral qualities is limited.¹⁸

I accept that the musics of different cultures sometimes are based on similar scales and organizational principles, with the consequence that the music of the one may be surprisingly accessible to members of the other. I agree that there also has been considerable mutual interaction, influence, and hybridization between the musics of many cultures over a very long period. But I deny that music is pan-culturally transparent.

Some musics are comparatively more transparent than others, but none is completely so and others are (for most Westerners) considerably opaque.¹⁹

I guess that Anderson mistakes what is familiar in his mother music for what is natural, and thereby regards what he finds to be transparent as perceptible across cultural divides. But there are respects in which the organization of music is no more natural than is the semantics of a language (even if it is natural that all societies have both language and music). No one with English as her mother tongue is likely to be so crass as to believe that everyone in the world must understand her, so long as she speaks loudly and clearly enough. Music, I claim, is not different. It might be true that music comes closer to being a universal language than any other candidate, but even so, it indisputably falls short.

II.

I have argued that there is likely to be much that is universal to art and to the ways we perceive it. I have also suggested that what is universal can interact with impositions and conventions that are arbitrarily cultural, with the result that its import is altered or disguised. It is too early, though, to concede that only those initiated into the art world within which a work is created are familiar with the "atmosphere of theory" that, according to the philosopher Arthur C. Danto, would allow them to identify the work and its artistically significant features.²⁰ We are forced to that conclusion only if a person could learn the art-relevant conventions and histories of another culture by steeping herself in it, much as those who are born to it are immersed in it. By contrast, if it is easy

to recognize many of the relevant conventions, and if this can be done from the outside as it were, or by dipping only a few toes into the topic culture, the outsider's grasp of what is universal takes her quickly to an appropriate (though partial) understanding of the nature of artworks that are foreign to her. She may need to acknowledge the "atmosphere of theory" that envelopes them, but perhaps she is positioned to do this merely as an interested cultural tourist. This is the view I defend in this section.

How long does it take to become as habituated to a foreign culture as its natives are? Years at least, possibly decades. And surely it would take as long to become a connoisseur of their most sophisticated arts. Consider poetry. For the fullest appreciation, one would have to have a complete mastery of the language, so that one could follow its most subtle and arcane uses, follow novel jokes, word plays, metaphors, and so forth. As well, one would need a profound knowledge of its canonic poems, poetic forms, the goals of its poets, and the functions of poetry within the society, along with intimate familiarity with all that its poetic works might mention or allude to, such as the other arts and the society's history, religions, ideals, institutions, paradigms, class or caste structure, mores, and so on. And the relevant skills and knowledge must be so deeply ingrained that they come unbidden to inform the experience of the poem as it is directly encountered, not wielded self-consciously in an attempt to deduce after the fact what appreciating the poem most likely is like for those with the deepest appreciation of its art.

Recall, though, that our question is one about whether a foreigner can recognize and minimally appreciate the art of another society, not what it takes to be an expert. And note also that only a minority within the culture might qualify or aspire to be authorities on its arts, even if all have been raised from childhood to have a working grasp of its

artworks and art practices. Cultural outsiders plainly lack the background and experience that is necessary for connoisseurship, but perhaps they can get by with much less—indeed, with the kind of cultural grounding that can be achieved in weeks rather than years—when it comes to identifying at least some foreign artworks and recognizing their most artistically salient features.

The art audience in the West has had to come to terms with quite radical stylistic revolutions in its own history, for instance, in the shifts to impressionism and cubism in painting, or in the move to atonality and serialism in music. Though some people claimed to find these departures incomprehensible (and even offensive), that was surely an exaggerated reaction, and more often indicates a failure to see the artistic *point* of what was done than a failure to see what was done as such. Take cubism after its "academic" phase: despite the departure both from a fixed viewpoint and from vanishing-point perspective, it is not so difficult, after all, to see what is represented within a cubistically fragmented perspective. It seems to me that the split image perspectivalism used in paintings and carvings of the Amerindians of northwest America is similar in being easily mastered by those not familiar with it. The same applies to the vertically distorted perspectives in Chinese paintings, the frequent departure from perspectively "correct" spatial relations in medieval art, and "plan" perspectives in ancient Egyptian art. Their depictive import is soon laid bare. Likewise, one does not have to be a genius to observe that the iconography and proportion of much figurative south-eastern Asian art derives more directly from the puppets of the shadow puppet play than from "life."

When we turn to sagas, literature, dance, and drama, the opportunity for foreigners to follow the plot line is equally obvious. There are many ways the action can

be obscured for outsiders—spatial disposition and temporal sequence can be distorted, it might not be possible easily to tell the gods and abstract forces from the humans, the animals, and nature, and, anyway, it might be culturally inappropriate for outsiders to draw those distinctions as they would do normally. Nevertheless, dramas enacted by and about people inevitably focus sometimes on themes that are humanly unmistakable in their significance—love, ambition, murder, bigotry, and the rest—even if they are contextualized and stylized differently from society to society. These universal narrative themes were mentioned earlier. And their recognizability and appeal surely explain why the novels of V. S. Naipaul, Selma Lagerlöf, Kawabata Yasunari, Carlos Castañeda, Naguib Mahfouz, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Leo Tolstoy, and other great authors from all corners of the earth find a global audience when translated.

I have suggested that music is not always transparent in the way that Anderson proposes, but neither do I regard it as inevitably opaque to foreigners. In an experiment conducted by David Huron in Ohio in 1999, Balinese and American musicians were compared in their ability to predict the continuations of 35-note Balinese melodies that were unknown to them.²¹ As expected, the Balinese listeners were much more certain and accurate predictors than the American listeners, but the latter, who were near the theoretical limit of "cluelessness" at the beginning of the melody, adapted rapidly over its course. Though the most successful American musician was worse than the least successful Balinese musician, on average the American musicians performed much better than chance. "Either the American musicians were able to adapt quickly to the unfamiliar music, or they were able to successfully apply intuitions formed by their extensive experience with Western music—or both" (p. 55).

This suggests that exposure to a musical style based on a very different scale and modal system can lead to a working understanding of its melodic syntax within a surprisingly short period.²² In this case, exposure alone apparently can lead musicians from one social background to bootstrap their way into alien-sounding music without immersing themselves for years in the culture from which the music derives. In other words, even if musical universals are tweaked by culture with the result that all elements must be appropriately contextualized if their significance is to be appreciated, that process of tweaking might be decoded with comparatively little effort.

We cannot communicate with the cave painters of the ancient past, but in other cases the process of learning the basics of another culture's art can be facilitated and accelerated by asking the locals or by reading about it. Tourist guidebooks usually contain essays that are extremely helpful and enlightening on the features, principles, and aesthetic ideals of indigenous art forms, and local artists are frequently happy to talk about what they do and why. Again, my point is about how accessible these sources are and about how far we can get by using them. The road of the would-be connoisseur is a long and arduous one, but the path of the aspiring dilettante is mercifully very much shorter and easier.

III.

My claim is not that all art can be recognized for what it is by foreigners. In the rarified world of avant-garde Western fine art, much of what is offered could not be experienced under the appropriate, art-characterizing descriptions by people lacking prior experience

of recent Western fine art. The same is true, I suspect, in other traditions that have become extremely symbolic, stylized, or self-referential. An example is that of the "dot" paintings of the Australian aboriginals of the western deserts. It would be very unlikely that a foreign viewer could infer in these paintings the mapping of ancestral lands and mythical histories, even through prolonged inspection, without resort to the commentary of cultural insiders.

Nor is my conclusion that foreigners can fully understand another culture's art merely by peeking over the fence that protects its boundary. The best artists in all cultures produce complex works richly layered with meanings to which only those who share their art traditions, forms of life, and ways of thinking are positioned to appreciate deeply.

My contention is this more modest one: because of what is universal in human nature and art, and because of how comparatively easy it can be to learn what is necessary to penetrate the veil culture lays over these, foreigners can often acknowledge art that is alien to them by achieving a crude and partial, but nonetheless genuine and informed, understanding of it.

This conclusion, though qualified, is sufficiently strong to challenge Danto's claim that only cultural insiders who are swathed in the relevant atmosphere of theory can experience a culture's art as such. Either the appreciation of foreign art does not require awareness of the atmosphere of theory that encompasses the given culture's art world. Alternatively—and this is the option I regard as more plausible—the cultural tourist can quickly inhale the atmosphere of theory the foreign artwork presupposes. In which case,

cultural insiders are not the only ones who have the atmosphere-inspired awareness that allows them to identify and appreciate the culture's art.

If the firsthand recognition of art as such presupposes the observer's awareness of an appropriate atmosphere of theory, then the atmosphere of theory that surrounds art in at least some foreign cultures either is familiar because it is universally shared or can be soon penetrated without first undergoing large-scale cultural conversion through immersion.²³

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ See J. Tooby & L. Cosmides, "Does Beauty Build Adapted Minds? Toward an Evolutionary Theory of Aesthetics, Fiction and the Arts," *SubStance* 94/95 (2001): 6-27, Patrick Hogan, *The Mind and Its Stories: Narrative Universals and Human Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), and Joseph Carroll, *Literary Darwinism: Evolution, Human Nature, and Literature* (London: Routledge, 2004).
- ² On the evolved response to landscape, see Gordon H. Orians & Judith H. Heerwagen, "Evolved Responses to Landscapes" and Stephen Kaplan, "Environmental Preference in a Knowledge-Seeking, Knowledge-Using Organism," in *The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture*, eds. J. H. Barkow, L.

Cosmides, & J. Tooby (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 555-79 and 581-98. This collection is hereafter abbreviated "AM." See also Bernhart Ruso, Lee Ann Renninger, & Klaus Atzwanger, "Human Habitat Preferences: A Generative Territory for Evolutionary Aesthetics Research," in *Evolutionary Aesthetics*, eds. E. Voland & K. Grammer (Springer Verlag, 2003), pp. 279-94. This collection is hereafter abbreviated "EA." On the equation of beauty and symmetry, see Vilayanur Ramachandran & William Hirstein, "The Science of Art: A Neurological Theory of Aesthetic Experience," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 6, June-July (1999): 15-51 and Randy Thornhill, "Darwinian Aesthetics Informs Traditional Aesthetics," in EA, pp. 9-35. On beauty as honest signaling for fitness, see A. Zahavi & A. Zahavi, *The Handicap Principle: A Missing Piece of Darwin's Puzzle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), Thornhill, "Darwinian Aesthetics Informs Traditional Aesthetics," and Uta Skamel, "Beauty and Sex Appeal: Sexual Selection of Aesthetic Preferences," in EA, pp. 173-200. On the attractiveness of prototypicality, see Colin Martindale, "Cognition, Psychobiology, and Aesthetics," in *The Foundations of Aesthetics, Art, and Art Education*, eds. F. Farley & R. Neperud (New York: Praeger, 1988), pp. 7-42 and Patrick Hogan, *Science, Literature, and the Arts: A Guide for Humanists* (New York: Routledge, 2003). The peak shift effect, in which we favor what is unusual but not aberrant, is considered in Ramachandran & Hirstein, "The Science of Art" and in Michael R. Cunningham & Stephen R. Shamblem, "Beyond Nature Versus Culture: A Multiple Fitness Analysis of Variations in Grooming," in EA, pp. 201-37.

- ³ See Steven Mithen, "Handaxes: The First Aesthetic Artifacts," in EA, pp. 261-75 and Eckart Voland, "Aesthetic Preferences in the World of Artifacts—Adaptations for the Evaluation of 'Honest Signals?' Selection of Aesthetic Preferences," in EA, pp. 239-60.
- ⁴ See N. E. Aiken, *The Biological Origins of Art* (Westport: Praeger, 1998), Christa Sütterlin, "From Sign and Schema to Iconic Representation. Evolutionary Aesthetics of Pictorial Art," in EA, pp. 131-70, and Thornhill, "Darwinian Aesthetics Informs Traditional Aesthetics."
- ⁵ Kathleen M. Higgins, "The Cognitive and Appreciative Impact of Musical Universals," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 60 (2006): 487-503. For a review of theories claiming either that music is adaptive or that it is an offshoot of behaviors that are, see Ian Cross, "Music and Cognitive Evolution," in *Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, eds. R. Dunbar & L. Barrett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 649-67.
- ⁶ See Stephen Davies, "First Art and Art's Definition," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 35 (1997): 19-34, "Essential Distinctions for Art Theorists," in *Art and Essence*, eds. S. Davies & A. C. Sukla (Westport: Praeger, 2003), pp. 3-16, and "Non-Western Art and Art's Definition," in *Theories of Art Today*, ed. Noël Carroll (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), pp. 199-216. This collection is hereafter abbreviated "TAT."
- ⁷ See Ellen Dissanayake, *What Is Art For?* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), *Homo Aestheticus: Where Art Comes from and Why* (Seattle: University of

Washington Press, 1995), and *Art and Intimacy: How the Arts Began* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000).

- ⁸ Geoffrey Miller, *The Mating Mind: How Sexual Choice Shaped the Evolution of Human Nature* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), Mithen, "Handaxes: The First Aesthetic Artifacts," Denis Dutton, "Aesthetic Universals," in *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, eds. B. Gaut & D. McIver Lopes (London: Routledge, 2005), second edition, pp. 279-91.
- ⁹ See Arthur C. Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) and "How Can It be the 'Most Wanted Painting' even if Nobody Wants It?" in *Painting by Numbers: Komar and Melamid's Scientific Guide to Art*, ed. J. Wypijewski (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1997), pp. 124-39.
- ¹⁰ See especially Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981). But see also his *The Abuse of Beauty: Aesthetics and the Concept of Art* (Chicago: Open Court, 2003), where Danto writes that beauty is an aesthetic property we recognize immediately and independently of the way we conceptualize the dependent object. This is true of beauty both in nature and art, he holds. He mentions an apple orchard, Motherwell's Spanish elegy paintings, and the Vietnam War Memorial as all possessing beauty (pp. 96-102). He also observes that we can immediately see that some paintings are ugly (pp. 86-93).
- ¹¹ See Stephen Davies, *Definitions of Art* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

- ¹² In a sonata for unaccompanied flute, middle C would be the lowest note available. In a sonata for unaccompanied contrabassoon, middle C would be one of the higher and more strained notes to be played.
- ¹³ James C. Anderson, "Aesthetic Concepts of Art," in TAT, pp. 65-92; the quotation is from pp. 76-7.
- ¹⁴ Stephen Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), "Musical Understanding and Musical Kinds," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52 (1994): 69-81, "Musical Understandings," in *Musikalischer Sinn: Beiträge zu einer Philosophie der Musik*, eds. A. Becker & M. Vogel, trans. Matthias Vogel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2006), 25-79.
- ¹⁵ Stephen Davies, "Rock versus Classical Music," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 57 (1999): 193-204.
- ¹⁶ Empirical data on the cross-cultural recognition of musical expressiveness is limited and equivocal. Most studies include Western music, though the non-Western participants in the experiments typically have had a long exposure to Western culture and music through TV and the radio and are therefore not the novices the experiments require. Also, most studies use decontextualized, brief musical extracts and are methodologically suspect in other ways. One of the more plausible studies is by Laura-Lee Balkwill & William Forde Thompson, "A Cross-Cultural Investigation of the Perception of Emotion in Music: Psychophysical and Cultural Cues," *Music Perception* 17 (1999): 43-64.
- ¹⁷ See M. W. Andrews & W. J. Dowling, "The Development of Perception of Interleaved Melodies and Control of Auditory Attention," *Music Perception* 8 (1991):

349-68, C. L. Krumhansl & F. C. Keil, "Acquisition of the Hierarchy of Tonal Functions in Music," *Memory & Cognition* 10 (1982): 243-51, M. P. Lynch & R. E. Eilers, "Children's perception of Native and Non-native Musical Scales," *Music Perception* 9 (1991): 121-32, B. A. Morrongiello & C. L. Roes, "Developmental Changes in Children's Perception of Musical Sequences: Effects of Musical Training," *Developmental Psychology* 26 (1990): 814-20, and J. A. Sloboda, *The Musical Mind: The Cognitive Psychology of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

- ¹⁸ Kant distinguished the merely agreeable from the aesthetic. The latter produces pleasure by activating free play between the imagination and the understanding, whereas the rewards of the former are merely sensual. If, as seems likely, timbral qualities are usually appreciated simply in terms of their sensuous surfaces, a traditional theorist might deny that they count as genuinely aesthetic properties.
- ¹⁹ See Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression*, pp. 326-9.
- ²⁰ Arthur C. Danto, "The Artworld," *Journal of Philosophy*, 61 (1964): 571-84. He writes: "To see something as art requires something the eye cannot de[s]cry—an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld" (p. 580).
- ²¹ David Huron, *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation* (New Haven: MIT Press, 2006), pp. 47-8, 53-5.
- ²² Note that indirect evidence of the operation of underlying universals in the musical reactions of the two groups is indicated by the fact that, though the Americans did poorer than the Balinese, they were more certain of what happens next at the same points where the Balinese were more certain of what happens next.

²³ A longer version of this paper appeared in Italian in *Rivista di Estetica* 35 (2) (2007): 129-146; trans. Luca Angelone.