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THE METHODOLOGY OF ART  
(CRITICAL/RATIONALIST AESTHETICS):  
PROJECT OF A NEW PHILOSOPHICAL DISCIPLINE

**A b s t r a c t.** This essay presents a project of a new discipline — the methodology of art. By analogy with the methodology of science, the task of the new discipline would be to investigate art as a cognitive activity, in particular, art’s cognitive method. The justification and closer description of the project takes the form of a table comparing the four types of cognition — the exact sciences (interpreted along the Popperian model), the humanities, the methodology of art and art — in terms of their object, method, format of knowledge, relation to truth, ways of justifying beliefs, the possibility of constructing experiments and the like. In the conclusion the essay offers some comments on the “artistic” mode of cognition. The main thesis of the article concerns the need and possibility of rational reflection upon art conceived of as a non-scientific mode of exploration of the human psyche.

The present paper outlines a project of a new philosophical discipline — the methodology of art *alias* critical/rationalist aesthetics. The former name indicates an analogy between the new discipline and the methodology of science, the latter expresses the project’s indebtedness to the philosophy of Karl R. Popper, for whom the two adjectives — “critical” and “rationalist” — were synonymous and defined the essential characteristic of all scientific investigation.

A scientific (or philosophical) discipline is defined in the first place by its subject (including the aspect by which the subject is examined), method and purpose. The methodology of art would have art, in so far as art is a cognitive phenomenon, for its subject. In particular, it would be occupied with the “artistic” method of cognition. Its status would be that of a philosophical discipline, offering reflection on art conceived of as a mode of cognition (hence it would enjoy the

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status of a meta-cognitive discipline). The method of the methodology of art would in principle be the method of philosophy: critical discussion of various stances and arguments (reconstructing their hidden assumptions, explicating their implications, examining their logical coherence, but also, whenever feasible, confronting them with “empirical data”). Its aim would be to explore the cognitive aspect of art in a systematic way, also, possibly, to formulate in this respect some guidelines for artists, art recipients or scholars.<sup>1</sup>

Among the specific issues which the discipline might explore, one might enumerate the object of artistic exploration (e.g. internal vs external reality), the status (e.g. certain, hypothetical, probable) and format of knowledge obtained *via* art (e.g. conceptual, propositional, experiential; subjective insight vs objective model of reality), justification of this knowledge (e.g. falsification or confirmation with reference to the personal life experience of a recipient of art or the aesthetic experience itself), the quality of “artistic” cognition (e.g. rational, empirical, general), an artwork’s affinity to scientific experiment, applicability of the concept of truth to art, the phenomenon of interpretation (its aims, rules, possibility in the light of art’s notoriously ambiguous and contradictory nature), aesthetic categories (e.g. beauty, harmony, ugliness) and their contribution to cognition obtained *via* art, the presence of cognitive progress in art (e.g. accumulation of “artistic” knowledge, evolution of the “artistic” method, keener self-awareness of the recipients of art), the creative process (viewed as a cognitive process in terms of interaction between the mind of the artist and the work of art) as well as the act of reception (viewed as a cognitive process in terms of interaction between the mind of the recipient and the work of art), the categories of art that should be distinguished with reference to art’s cognitive function (e.g. verbal and non-verbal, representational and non-representational, fictional and factual). Some of these issues are briefly discussed further down in the paper, while the list is obviously not intended as complete.

As regards the distinction between the methodology of art, the humanities and art criticism, basically, examining the same object, they would approach it in diverse ways. In particular, the methodology of art would not comprise either interpretation or evaluation of any specific works of art or the record of their

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<sup>1</sup> As regards its contribution to humanistic scholarship (e.g. literary studies), the methodology of art might provide certain interpretative guidelines (e.g. contradiction located within an interpretative hypothesis falsifies it unless it can be demonstrated that the contradiction derives from a contradiction located within the artwork; a work of art should be viewed together with the responses it has generated; the significance of a work of art should be assessed with reference to the insight into the human mind that it has occasioned).

reception. The task of describing, evaluating and presenting the work of art to the public belongs in the first place to art criticism (literary, theatrical, musical and the like). As for the humanities, they might comprise (apart from disciplines such as history or linguistics) a general theory of art<sup>2</sup> as well as all sub-disciplines examining in detail specific forms of art (e.g. narratology, prosody or the theory of counterpoint), supplemented with critical (in the Popperian sense of the word) descriptions and interpretations of individual works of art (even though the scholarly status of interpretations might be doubtful, the exclusion of any consideration of meaning would in effect render all studies of art nonsensical), and, finally, supplemented with the history of art: an attempt to describe systematically and to comprehend art's evolution, the current state of affairs included (without passing any moral or aesthetic verdicts, the humanities might note certain regularities, such as the rise of art's "self-consciousness" in postmodernism). Neither art criticism, nor the humanities need in their investigation of art be limited to art's cognitive aspect, to the exclusion of art's decorative, therapeutic, communicative, entertaining, commercial or any other aspects. In contrast with the methodology of art, their approach is comprehensive. One might also note here that, provided that one accepts the idea that art need not be limited to a collection of works of art but should be perceived in broader terms as works of art taken together with the processes of their creation and reception, both art criticism and the humanities (i.e. the disciplines concerned with art) should be viewed also as part of art; their status, in other words, would be dual: part scholarly, part artistic.

The proper scholarly environment for the new discipline would further be constituted by the methodology of science (the two might perhaps cooperate when investigating the methods of art and science, e.g. their use of experiment), cognitive studies on consciousness, psychology, anthropology, evolutionary theory of the mind, naturalistic theory of art and possibly many others.

Last but not least, one should consider the possible threat that the methodology of art might pose for the freedom of art. The methodology of science does not seem to have affected science badly, so the risk should not perhaps be exaggerated. Alternatively, to prevent any undesirable effects of that kind, one might deliberately resign from the normative approach within the discipline. Some interaction between the methodology of art and art might at the same time be inevitable. *Nota bene*, according to Popper, art (together with other objectified products

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<sup>2</sup> Alternatively, this general theory of art might be viewed as a prerogative of aesthetics — a traditional philosophical discipline (not to be confused with the critical/rationalist aesthetics proposed here).

of the human mind, which constitute world 3) may be used by man in the process of self-creation, since it not only helps man develop his/her mental faculties, but has also helped man become a self-conscious being (*Knowledge and the Body-Mind Problem...* 140-142; *Unended Quest* 229-230). This property of art invites the question whether critical aesthetics should only monitor or also try to control the transformation of human mentality that may be achieved *via* art; whether this kind of control would be feasible (world 3 being to a large extent autonomous, it might make little sense to try and predict, let alone direct its future course), desirable/ethical (and if so, what values should be selected as fundamental for the programme of such control).

The present paper is written in the form of an annotated table which compares and contrasts four cognitive enterprises: natural science (the 1<sup>st</sup> column), the humanities (the 2<sup>nd</sup> column; both natural science and the humanities are presented by and large along the Popperian model of science),<sup>3</sup> the methodology of art, i.e. the postulated discipline (the 3<sup>rd</sup> column), and art itself (the 4<sup>th</sup> column), discussed here above all as a mode of cognition (i.e. in the way in which art might be studied by the methodology of art). The table is followed by a couple of closing remarks concerning art as a mode of cognition.

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<sup>3</sup> The presentation of natural science and the humanities is based on my discussion of the possibility of adopting the Popperian model of science in the disciplines concerned with culture, cf. Teske "The Methodology of the Humanities...". Also when discussing art, I will rely on Popper's approach (which I tried to reconstruct in the same article), whereby a work of art is conceived of as an empirical (real) though essentially immaterial object belonging to world 3 or, more precisely, as an objectified product of the human psyche.

**THE HUMANITIES, CRITICAL/RATIONALIST AESTHETICS AND ART — A POPPERIAN APPROACH**

DISCIPLINE <sup>i</sup>	NATURAL SCIENCE	HUMANITIES	RATIONALIST AESTHETICS	ART
	<p>a model of scientific investigation, taken as a point of reference for the presentation of the humanities, aesthetics and art — all of which are discussed here as cognitive enterprises</p>	<p>comprising a number of disciplines, such as history (political and cultural, history of science), linguistics, but also the disciplines concerned with art (history of art, literary studies, musicology, etc.)</p>	<p>conceived of as a methodology of art (a philosophical discipline analogous to the methodology of science, constructed on the assumption that art as a mode of cognition may be viewed as analogous to science)</p>	<p>conceived of as a cognitive activity, without implying that cognition exhausts art's nature; art's origin, in particular, might be subordinate to the rules of sexual and natural selection, its original aim being related to survival and reproduction (of individuals and species or genes); still art appears to have evolved and can now satisfy various human needs, the need for cognition included</p>
STATUS	EMPIRICAL SCIENCE	EMPIRICAL SCIENCE/ART (the status of the disciplines concerned with art is dual: scholarly and artistic) <sup>ii</sup>	PHILOSOPHY (having an empirical object, critical aesthetics contains at the same time elements of empirical science)	ART
<p>DEMARCATON CRITERION (which legitimizes the classification of a given cognitive activity as SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY OR ART, AS RELEVANT)</p>	FALSIFIABILITY (empirical falsifiability)	<p>partly FALSIFIABILITY (empirical and logical falsifiability), partly RATIONALITY OF DISCOURSE (a looser constraint applicable to interpretation) — these help certify the humanities as scholarship: to certify the disciplines concerned with art as art the demarcation criterion is their being a response to art</p>	FALSIFIABILITY (empirical and logical falsifiability)	<p>ORIGINAL USE OF AESTHETIC FORM TO EXAMINE/ CONVEY MEANING and VALUES as regards works of art; RELEVANCE (i.e. being essentially related to a work of art) as regards the processes of their creation and reception</p>

	<b>NATURAL SCIENCE</b>	<b>HUMANITIES</b>	<b>RATIONALIST AESTHETICS</b>	<b>ART</b>
<b>AIM(S) <sup>iii</sup></b>	COGNITION, viewed also in terms of problem solving, and practical aims: technological progress, improving man's living conditions, etc.	COGNITION; other, more practical, aims possible (e.g. in applied linguistics) but untypical	COGNITION (perfecting art as a mode of cognition possibly included)	MULTIPLE AIMS: COGNITION AS WELL AS MODIFICATION OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS, DECORATION, COMMUNICATION, THERAPY, SOCIAL INTEGRATION, ENTERTAINMENT, etc.
<b>OBJECT OF COGNITION</b>	THE NATURAL WORLD (world 1, in Popper's terms); including man as part of nature	CULTURE <sup>iv</sup> (world 3) and man as distinct from nature (transcending it) and creating culture  (As regards studies of art, the recommended approach should be holistic, including examination not only of individual works of art but also their creation and reception, taking into account all possible aspects, not only the cognitive one).	ART AS A COGNITIVE ACTIVITY (i.e. an aspect of an element of world 3)	THE HUMAN MIND (world 2) first of all, but also the mind's interaction with the environment — the external world (in particular, its social and cultural aspects)
<b>METHOD of assessing the value of hypotheses (justification of convictions)</b>  (According to Popper, it is the method of justifying hypotheses that matters, the methods of their formulation being by and large uncircumscribed).	<b>CRITICISM:</b> TRIAL AND ERROR IN GENERAL and in particular the procedure of FALSIFICATION: HYPOTHESES DERIVED FROM THEORY TESTED IN EXPERIMENTS, THE RESULTS of which are PRESENTED IN MATHEMATICAL LANGUAGE; CORROBORATION, as well as assessment of the relative value of hypotheses in terms of their explanatory power, simplicity, etc.	<b>CRITICISM:</b> TRIAL AND ERROR, CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF HYPOTHESES; since experiments are possible (esp. thought experiments) but untypical of the humanities, THE PROCEDURE OF FALSIFICATION consists mostly in checking whether a given theory corresponds well with the available "empirical data" and whether its argumentation is logically correct	<b>CRITICISM:</b> TRIAL AND ERROR, CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF HYPOTHESES; since experiments (esp. thought experiments) are possible but untypical of philosophy, THE PROCEDURE OF FALSIFICATION consists mostly in checking whether a given theory corresponds well with the available "empirical data" and whether its argumentation is logically correct	IT IS DEBATABLE WHETHER THE METHOD OF ART INCLUDES THE CRITICAL ELEMENT  Essentially, art offers opportunities for new experiences and uses for this purpose original aesthetic form in highly imaginative ways. Reactions art provokes are subjective and holistic (emotional, perceptive and intellectual, all at once). They may have cognitive significance. The element of justification might be located

	NATURAL SCIENCE	HUMANITIES	RATIONALIST AESTHETICS	ART
<p>RELATION TO TRUTH (truth is defined here in terms of the classical correspondence theory)</p>	<p>TRUTH (about nature) IS THE IDEAL AIM of scientific cognition but, as Popper states, there being no criterion of truth, science, even if it finds truth, cannot know it (what science can know is that it is moving towards truth) <sup>v</sup></p>	<p>TRUTH (about culture) IS THE IDEAL AIM of scholarly cognition but, as Popper states, there being no criterion of truth, the humanities, even if they find truth, cannot know it (what they can know is that they are moving towards truth)</p>	<p>TRUTH (about the method of art/art taken as a mode of cognition) IS THE IDEAL AIM of cognition in this discipline but, there being no criterion of truth, critical aesthetics, even if it finds truth, cannot know it (what aesthetics can know is that it is moving towards truth)</p> <p>As a discipline concerned with methodology, aesthetics describes, analyzes, tries to justify the method of art; it might also try to improve this method and thus also relate to truth.</p>	<p>either in the processes of art creation and reception (cf. the modifications introduced into the original project by the artist or the initial interpretive hypotheses rejected later by the recipient of art), or beyond art proper, in man's detached, conscious reflection on aesthetic experience. There is no need to prejudge this issue here. (See also the closing remarks).</p> <p>TRUTH (about the human psyche) IS THE IDEAL AIM of artistic cognition</p> <p>This truth is, by and large, personal. <sup>vi</sup></p> <p>No criterion of truth seems available here, as elsewhere.</p> <p>Art (taken as a store of knowledge, not a mode of cognition) may sometimes offer an illusion of truth. Errors may happen in all cognitive activities but, art being partly irrational, this kind of deception might be more frequent and more difficult to disclose.</p> <p>Art may also be (intentionally) abused to manipulate people (cf. kitsch, propagandist or pop art), more easily than e.g. science, but the phenomenon of abuse is endemic in human culture, not specific to art.</p>

	<b>NATURAL SCIENCE</b>	<b>HUMANITIES</b>	<b>RATIONALIST AESTHETICS</b>	<b>ART</b>
<p>FORMAT OF KNOWLEDGE OBTAINED</p> <p>The concept of "knowledge" is here taken not in the strict meaning of true and justified beliefs (there being no criterion of truth and no foolproof method of either verification or falsification of any hypotheses, knowledge in the strict sense does not seem available).</p>	<p>A MODEL OF REALITY combining description and explanation; more specifically, scientific knowledge takes the form of universal (or statistical) LAWS noting regularities in natural phenomena and offering causal explanation thereof</p>	<p>A MODEL OF REALITY combining description and interpretation ("explication" of meaning); more specifically, humanistic knowledge takes the multiple form <sup>vii</sup> of 1) a CORPUS OF IDIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION, including INTERPRETATIVE HYPOTHESES (the scientific status of this component of the humanities seems debatable), and 2) a set of PROPOSITIONS defining REGULARITIES (these need not be universal laws) observable in cultural phenomena and offering, where possible, intentional (possibly also functional) <sup>viii</sup> explanation thereof</p>	<p>A MODEL OF REALITY combining description and explanation (and, in addition, possibly also normative prescriptions); more specifically, knowledge in critical aesthetics might take the dual form of 1) theory of art taken as a mode of cognition, entailing intentional (possibly also functional) explanation (see endnote viii) and 2) GUIDELINES for artists and art recipients (if the discipline is treated as also normative)</p>	<p>THE FORMAT OF KNOWLEDGE IN ART IS MULTIPLE: 1) most typical seems NON-PROPOSITIONAL, EXPERIENTIAL, KNOWLEDGE, personal INSIGHT gained through experience of art (either in an act of creation or reception of art); this knowledge/insight might be partly translatable into propositional knowledge;</p> <p>2) some kinds of art may also be used to transmit propositional knowledge (historical experience of a given community, scientific information taken from science, moral beliefs, etc.) presented as explicit (e.g. verbalized) ideas or translated into the work's form (strictly speaking, this is art used to communicate ideas rather than explore reality, though from the point of view of an art recipient the difference in some cases might be negligible). Cf. the closing remarks on art as a mode of cognition.</p>
STATUS OF KNOWLEDGE	HYPOTHETICAL, CORROBORATED <sup>x</sup>	HYPOTHETICAL, CRITICALLY EXAMINED	HYPOTHETICAL, CRITICALLY EXAMINED	HYPOTHETICAL, mostly PERSONAL, POSSIBLY UNJUSTIFIED
MODE: RATIONAL VS IRRATIONAL; EMPIRICAL VS THEORETICAL	MOSTLY RATIONAL (but not exclusively so when it comes to formulating hypotheses); * EMPIRICAL	MOSTLY RATIONAL (but not exclusively so when it comes to formulating hypotheses); EMPIRICAL (though the	MOSTLY RATIONAL (but not exclusively so when it comes to formulating hypotheses); PARTLY EMPIRICAL	BOTH RATIONAL AND IRRATIONAL, BUT NOT ANTI-RATIONAL, i.e. not directed against reason; (art is irrational in so



NATURAL SCIENCE	HUMANITIES	RATIONALIST AESTHETICS	ART
<p>“rational” means here possessing an in-built critical mechanism;  “empirical” means here “dealing directly with an element of reality” and may be contrasted with the speculative or deductive approach of e.g. metaphysics or logic and mathematics, respectively)</p>	<p>empirical material consists in the main of meanings and values and is in its essence not directly accessible to the senses)</p>	<p>(philosophy is not in its entirety empirical but the methodologies of science and art seem exceptional as each has an empirical object, science and art, respectively)</p>	<p>far as a work of art is in principle uncircumscribed by the rules of logic or any other rules, e.g. the rule of verisimilitude; further, it is not obvious that art has an in-built critical mechanism; still it might be argued that an element of criticism is in fact present in the processes of creation and reception of art and that this justifies art’s claim to rationality; also, art broadens man’s experience of life supplementing it with aesthetic experience and in the case of fictional, representational art also with vicarious life experience, and with information about other people’s as well as one’s own mind, furthermore: it offers all kinds of ideas for reflection, as such it does appear a rational cognitive project); <b>EMPIRICAL</b> (art as a cognitive venture has an empirical, though immaterial, object, i.e. world 2) (It might also be important to remember in this context that art both examines and transforms human consciousness; this kind of interaction might possibly be less typical of other cognitive activities).</p>

	<b>NATURAL SCIENCE</b>	<b>HUMANITIES</b>	<b>RATIONALIST AESTHETICS</b>	<b>ART</b>
<p><b>EXPERIMENT</b> (taken broadly as creating either an artificial situation or an artefact for cognitive purposes, i.e. with a view to broadening experience available in natural, matter-of-course circumstances)</p>	<p><b>CRUCIAL ELEMENT OF RESEARCH, PLANNED TO TEST (AND DETERMINED BY) A HYPOTHESIS, PART OF THE PROCEDURE OF FALSIFICATION</b>  (Scientific experiment consists in creating artificial conditions in which a phenomenon under investigation may be reduced to a number of factors that can be relatively easily manipulated and examined).</p>	<p><b>(THOUGHT) EXPERIMENTS POSSIBLE BUT UNUSUAL OF THE standard scholarly procedure</b>  In the disciplines concerned with art the aim is to examine the existing artefacts (as well as the process of their creation and reception). It does not seem possible with reference to art to make predictions to be tested in experiments, or reduce the complex phenomenon of art to isolated factors artificially controlled in the laboratory.</p>	<p><b>EXPERIMENTS POSSIBLE</b>  Especially when examining the process of the reception of works of art and formulating methodological guidelines, experiments might theoretically be possible, though by analogy with the methodology of science most arguments will probably be based on historical material.</p>	<p><b>IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF ARTISTIC EXPLORATION:</b> <b>WORKS OF ART ARE EXPERIMENTS<sup>xi</sup> WHOSE MEANING IS REVEALED WHEN THEY ARE EXPERIENCED IN THE PERSONAL CREATIVE ACT OF THE ARTIST AND PERSONAL RESPONSES TO ART OF ART'S RECIPIENTS</b>  Unlike the scientific experiment, the artistic one is spontaneous (not formally subordinate to a prior hypothesis),<sup>xii</sup> produced in the process of interaction between man and the work of art (as well as other elements of reality).<sup>xiii</sup></p>
<p>The problem of CONTRADICTION</p> <p>The problem is dual and concerns the appearance of contradictions in an object under investigation and within cognitive disciplines. The possible presence of contradiction in an object under investigation may complicate the procedure of falsification.<sup>xiv</sup></p>	<p><b>ABSENT FROM THE OBJECT EXAMINED BY SCIENCE</b>, hence if it appears in a theory/thesis or between a theory and "empirical data" (an observational report, to be precise), it IS A SIGN OF AN ERROR WITHIN THE THEORY (thus it is an important element of the procedure of falsification)</p>	<p><b>DEPENDENT ON THE DISCIPLINE EITHER ABSENT FROM OR POSSIBLY PRESENT IN THE OBJECT UNDER EXAMINATION</b>  IN STUDIES OF ART, IN PARTICULAR, CONTRADICTION MAY APPEAR IN THE OBJECT UNDER EXAMINATION; A THEORY WHICH IS SHOWN TO CONTAIN A CONTRADICTION SHOULD BE TREATED AS FALSIFIED ONLY WHEN IT IS PROVED THAT THE CONTRADICTION DOES NOT SIMPLY REFLECT A CONTRADICTION INHERENT IN AN ARTWORK (thus the procedure of falsification is complicated)</p>	<p><b>BASICALLY ABSENT FROM THE OBJECT UNDER EXAMINATION (THE METHOD OF ART)</b>, hence if it appears in a theory/thesis, or between a theory and "empirical data," it IS A SIGN OF ERROR IN THE THEORY</p>	<p><b>MAY BE FOUND IN THE OBJECT UNDER EXAMINATION</b> (in the contents of the human mind, not in the mind as such<sup>xv</sup>); <b>POSSIBLE IN ART ITSELF</b> in some varieties of aesthetics (artistic styles) highly popular (in postmodernist art, for instance, comparable with the aesthetic principle of harmony in the classical style).</p> <p>Contradictions present in art (works of art), unlike those in science, need not be treated as signs of error; they may well be part of art's method (asking</p>

	NATURAL SCIENCE	HUMANITIES	RATIONALIST AESTHETICS	ART
PROGRESS	THERE IS MUCH PROGRESS in EXPLANATIONS OF NATURE offered by science, witness the ever more accurate predictions in physics, growing unification of the sciences, advanced technology.	THERE IS PROGRESS in the humanities: DEEPER UNDERSTANDING of language, history, art (but there is little obvious evidence of this progress unlike in the natural sciences; the issue may be perceived as controversial)	the discipline postulated here does not exist; there is no progress to be noted here yet	<p>questions, generating new experiences, representing the contradictory nature of human experience, etc.).</p> <p>As regards the procedure of falsification taking place in the process of the reception of a work of art, the most important is the contradiction between the interpretation of life offered in the work and the recipient's view of the matter.</p> <p>THERE IS PROGRESS: GROWING SELF-AWARENESS of man, of individual creators and recipients of art, that might also be somehow reflected in the state of the whole civilization (there is no obvious evidence to support this statement and it may be perceived as controversial)</p>

<sup>i</sup> The list of disciplines is not supposed to be exhaustive (there are other basic kinds of science, such as mathematics and logic or the social sciences; there are also many other philosophical disciplines such as metaphysics, the theory of cognition or the methodology of science). I juxtapose only the four selected disciplines so as to bring out certain cognitive elements that art and the humanities appear to share with science (indicating also the relevant differences between them), and so as to explain why the methodology of art, conceived of as a philosophical discipline (complementary with the methodology of science), might help define the proper domain and method of art, art criticism and the humanities.

<sup>ii</sup> The humanities should best be perceived as empirical disciplines investigating the realm of culture. The artistic status of the disciplines concerned with art, a consequence of their being a response to art, hence also (if one accepts the broad definition of art) part of it, cannot, I think, be denied. Even though elements of philosophy can probably also be found in the humanities, I am unwilling to recognize them officially as part of the humanities so as to keep the distinctions, in so far as this is possible, clear.

<sup>iii</sup> One might note here a certain difference between the aims of art and of the other cognitive enterprises under discussion, in which results obtained in the process of research may find practical application, i.e. in which aims other than cognitive have traditionally been dependent on the primary cognitive aim (this might apply also to the methodology of art postulated here). In art, by contrast, non-cognitive aims are realized independently of the cognitive aim. It might further be noted that quite possibly cognition is not in its original essence an impractical activity undertaken in the name of the idealistic search for truth but one of the strategies serving genes — their survival and dissemination (or else the survival and propagation of individuals and species in the more traditional variant of the evolutionary theory; cf. the theory of Konrad Lorenz), which, however, does not preclude the possibility that rational and free creatures might transcend this early biological determination of cognitive activities.

<sup>iv</sup> According to Popper's view of the humanities, they should examine objects of world 3 as, first and foremost, objects of world 3 and not as objects that might provide us with some insight into world 2 (*In Search of a Better World* 165). This seems reasonable: world 2 (human consciousness) is examined scientifically by psychology (one of the social sciences) and artistically (by art). At the same time, however, it does not seem possible to totally ignore the human mind in the humanities: if art is a mode of exploration of the human psyche, then investigation of art will obviously need to refer to the human psyche as well.

<sup>v</sup> Attempts have been made to replace the abstract ideal of truth (defined in classical terms as correspondence between the content of a proposition and a state of affairs) with a more modest, testable and serviceable concept requiring correspondence between ideas and observable reality. However, such attempts might close scientific investigation in a vicious circle, the concept of observability being determined by theory (cf. the discussion of Van Fraassen's concept of "empirical adequacy," which obtains when all consequences of a theory referring to directly observable objects are true, in GROBLER 294-7).

<sup>vi</sup> Personal does not mean here "less true" or "entirely relative to the individual artist or art recipient." It merely indicates that the aesthetic experience and hence also the knowledge gained in contact with art (but not the meaning inherent in the work of art) may vary and be relevant to a particular individual (and not to others). The distinction between the meaning inherent in a work of art and the meaning experienced by an individual in contact with the work is problematic, and this is not the right place to analyze it in detail. Here I merely wish to emphasize that the aesthetic

experience though highly individual may be discussed in terms of truth. Consider, for example, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's individual (subjective) response to the music of J. S. Bach. The poet said that listening to this music, he felt as if inside himself "the eternal harmonies were conversing with each other, as this might have happened in God's bosom short before the creation of the world" (cf. "die ewige Harmonie sich mit sich selbst unterhielte, wie sich's etwa in Gottes Busen, kurz vor der Weltschöpfung, möchte zugetragen haben," qtd in KLEBMANN 91). Some people might find in these words an adequate description of their own response to Bach's music; others might not. The point is that the words constitute either a true or false description of Goethe's own experience and that they are true or false (as the case may be) in an objective (absolute) way.

<sup>vii</sup> In fact, the format of knowledge obtainable in natural sciences need not be homogenous either, but compared with the humanities specific distinctions seem less significant there. In the humanities, where general laws are few and far between, it seems more important to emphasize the collection of specific information about works of art (each of which is in principle highly individual) as well as the distinct sphere of interpretations (hypotheses concerning the meaning of artworks), to which the procedure of falsification may not easily be applied, whose scholarly status therefore is uncertain.

<sup>viii</sup> Following Grobler (249-250), I employ here the approach and terminology offered by Dennett in his book *Kinds of Mind*. The author distinguishes three stances: physical, design and intentional, which offer causal, functional and intentional explanations, respectively. All three are justified and their choice should be dictated by the circumstances. With reference to art the most obvious kind of explanation is intentional (referring to the artist's intentions), however, also functional explanation might be useful (i.e. an explanation which assumes that the object in question has a design and its operations may be predicted on this basis, DENNETT 27-29).

<sup>ix</sup> When discussing the format of knowledge, justification of knowledge and its status, it is important to remember that in the Popperian model no theory/thesis may be conclusively verified (proved to be true). The critics of the Popperian model point out that for a different reason (methodological rather than logical) no theory/thesis may be conclusively falsified either (cf. chapter 6 in Chalmers). This, however, is not to say that their value is therefore unspecified; there are various criteria that help compare competitive theories/theses such as their explanatory power, simplicity, testability. Theories/theses which are accepted into the corpus of knowledge are those that have been corroborated, i.e. critically examined, subjected to various tests and, though in principle falsifiable, not falsified in the process (not proved to be wrong).

<sup>x</sup> Cf. Popper's opinion about the irrationality of science as regards the context of discovery: "... my view of the matter, for what it is worth, is that there is no such thing as a logical method of having new ideas, or a logical reconstruction of this process. My view may be expressed by saying that every discovery contains 'an irrational element,' or 'a creative intuition,' in Bergson's sense. In a similar way Einstein speaks of the 'search for those highly universal laws . . . from which a picture of the world can be obtained by pure deduction. There is no logical path,' he says, 'leading to these . . . laws. They can only be reached by intuition, based upon something like an intellectual love ('Einfühlung') of the objects of experience'" (*The Logic of Scientific Discovery* 8-9).

<sup>xi</sup> Alternatively, one might refer to artworks as "tools," though the word seems less adequate, inviting associations with repairs (specific problems to be solved, defects to be removed) and standard procedures (tools are rarely of unique design, to be used once only), whereas art is imaginative, unpredictable in its effects and uncircumscribed in its construction, i.e. it displays features which seem to be nicely captured by the word "experiment." (Another option is to speak of art as a means of cognition and thus not to prejudge the possible analogy between science and art).

<sup>xii</sup> Artistic experiments are devised by artists, conducted by art recipients on themselves and commented upon by critics. Though they do not in principle seem subordinate to any prior hypothesis (in particular, one that would be consciously and explicitly formulated), one might note, especially in modern art, for example in contemporary British literature, a growing cooperation between theory and artistic practice, i.e. between scholarship and art (cf. also dodecaphony, a slightly different case — the academy not being involved — in which the theory formulated by composers clearly preceded their musical compositions).

<sup>xiii</sup> Artistic experiment might perhaps be comprehended as a “controlled” occurrence of an unusual phenomenon that prompts a search for a theory capable of explaining it as more or less natural and, if the theory be found, justifies it (the theory); i.e. with reference to the abductive procedure formulated by Peirce as alternative to inductive and deductive reasoning (cf. GROBLER 102). The concept might apply to art’s method as 1) art seems to confront the recipient with unusual phenomena (cf. the artistic requirement of originality), 2) artistic experiments do not seem subordinate to any prior hypotheses (this, however, might be mere appearance).

<sup>xiv</sup> A detailed discussion devoted to the question of contradiction in art, art’s cognitive function and the humanities can be found in my essay “Poznawcza koncepcja sztuki i metodologia nauk humanistycznych wobec sprzeczności w dziele sztuki.”

<sup>xv</sup> This matter does not seem obvious, though. One may definitely experience simultaneously various polar emotions (love and hate, for instance), but this does not count as contradiction (cf. Popper’s examples of contradiction in nature, *Conjectures and Refutations...* 329). In the Popperian interpretation of contradiction (one object exemplifying and at the same time not exemplifying a certain property), contradiction cannot be found in the human mind as such: one may not both suffer from a mirage and not suffer from it. However, in the content of human conscious experience, especially of someone under stress or suffering from mental disorder, this may well be the case, e.g. one may both consider oneself guilty of a crime and not guilty of a crime.

## ART AS A MODE OF COGNITION — CLOSING REMARKS

Art, taken as a cognitive activity, is ultimately concerned with truth, not with beauty or any other traditional aesthetic categories such as ugliness, tragedy, humour, intricacy and the like, though these might be relevant as qualities which may evoke certain reactions (such as elation, repulsion, desolation, amusement, puzzlement or catharsis). When approaching any cognitive activity, it is helpful to distinguish the context of discovery and the context of justification. As regards art, the context of discovery might perhaps be defined in terms of six basic artistic modes of operation, which in various periods of our civilization might have gained or lost in their relative importance:

1. Adventure of self-exploration: this category seems most relevant and perennial, and consists in art's ability to offer infinite opportunities for extending one's real life experience. Artistic experiments challenge one's habitual view of reality by confronting one with man-made objects (artefacts), some of which (i.e. works of fiction) additionally offer vicarious life experience. By registering and reflecting upon one's reaction (perceptual, intellectual, emotional) to the work of art, one gains self-knowledge; example: *The Life of Pi* by Yann Martel (the novel which tests the reader's credulity) or *The Sleeping Beauty* project by Taras Polataiko (which tested the recipient's readiness to risk an obligation of marital relationship with a stranger).

2. Stimulation: a phenomenon characteristic especially of the present times, art which aims merely to provoke the recipient (this mode might be classified as a variant of the former "adventure of self-exploration mode" with the aesthetic component either absent or radically minimized); example: *Merda d'Artista* by Piero Manzoni or *4'33''* by John Cage.

3. Personal testimony: ever since the ancient times art has been used as an aesthetic expression of the artist's first-hand experience (imaginative experience included). The expression might entail documentation of social environment, yet the most precious seems the presentation of intimate emotional and perceptual experiences, either direct (e.g. in autobiographical fiction, self-portrait), or, more often, indirect (as when the artist's experience is attributed to a character or translated into the theme of the fuge). The artist's testimony, if accepted as reliable, adds to the recipient's knowledge of other human beings and of oneself (as one is naturally tempted to compare the artist's experience with one's own); example: *Treny* by Jan Kochanowski (as regards the sorrow of a bereaved father) or *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* by Jeanette Winterson (as regards the discovery of one's lesbian orientation in a conservative religious milieu).

4. Store of knowledge: some kinds of art may present beliefs (not necessarily true and justified – the word “knowledge” may, therefore, be misleading) on any subject whatsoever for the recipient’s reflection; example: *Waterland* by Graham Swift as a source of information about eels or *The Union Street* by Pat Barker as a source of information about working class women in the Britain of the mid ‘70s.

5. Instruction/edification: the category seems relatively outdated nowadays but in the past the artist was often presumed to know the truth or speak on behalf of someone (or some institution, the authorities) that claimed to know the truth, often so as to persuade the recipient to act in a specific way (didactic, religiously or politically committed artworks belong to this category); example: *Everyman* (instructing the audience about the wrongness of sinful life) or *The Trilogy* by Henryk Sienkiewicz (a lesson in patriotism). Incidentally, this use of art has little to do with cognition, though it may affect the recipient’s state of awareness; in fact, it may well verge on manipulation and be considered abusive.

6. Alteration in the forms of cognition: certain genres of art may permanently affect our perception of reality by modifying our “categories of knowledge” (John 338-339; it is worth noting that John voices certain scepticism as to whether the process should really be regarded as cognitive); example: films which have taught their audience that uneventful scenes full of vivid objects may be full of meaning (Hollander, qtd in John 338-9) or fiction which, by describing in a highly plausible manner thoughts and emotions of characters, has taught readers new standards as regards knowing another human being (Cohn, qtd in John 339).

Not all kinds of art may operate in the six modes enumerated above (some of the modes might be available only to representational or/and verbal art). Conversely, one work of art may simultaneously employ more than one of the modes, and definite distinctions between them may sometimes be difficult to draw (esp. with reference to modes 1 and 2, or modes 3, 4 and 5). Out of the six modes only those discussed in points 1-3 truly refer to “artistic” exploration of reality, i.e. cognition; points 4-5 are concerned with transmission of information (i.e. with education rather than exploration), though admittedly they contribute to the change in the recipient’s image of the world (i.e. the change they effect is of a cognitive character). Finally, as regards ideas that can be part of a work of art, these may either be formulated explicitly (as propositions) or translated into the presented world (the fictional world acting as a model of empirical reality) or else expressed by means of the form of the work (cf. Teske, *Philosophy in Fiction* 21-22, 52-53). The three kinds of expression might be employed in various cognitive modes (1-5).



The above discussion concentrates on the methods in which new (emotional, intellectual or sensual) perception of reality, new insights, ideas, etc. can be gained as a result of contact with art. However, for this kind of experience to count as truly cognitive (aiming at truth), it needs some kind of critical evaluation (though not necessarily one so strict and systematic as that demanded by science), and this is where the context of justification comes into the foreground. The question is whether there are (internal to the work of art) any means of justification of the cognitive content either inherent in the work of art or available to the artist and the art recipient in the process of interaction with the work. Popper, whose philosophy of science and art constitutes the framework of the present considerations, refused to concede that art might perform the critical function (though he insisted that it should not be reduced to expressive or communicative functions, performing also the descriptive function; cf. Teske, "The Methodology of the Humanities..." 290-292). Indeed, one may argue that the aesthetic experience, in order to be cognitively productive, should subsequently be subjected to reflection. In other words, although the change in awareness may happen without man's awareness, it might not under such circumstances merit the epithet "cognitive" (cf. John's suggestion that we should distinguish between "learning from art and the more inclusive category of being influenced or changed by art," 330). In other words, the aesthetic experience may need to be supplemented by critical reflection external to the aesthetic experience. Alternatively, one might say that the problem is one of definition. If one defines art as a body of artworks, then indeed there is little space in art for epistemic criticism. If, however, one agrees on a broader definition, one which includes not only works of art but also the creative and receptive processes, and in particular the responses that artworks generate (in laymen, other artists, art critics and scholars), then perhaps the element of criticism might be located in art criticism and scholarship (which in this approach should be viewed as internal to art). Finally, one may also try to situate the element of justification in the aesthetic process interpreted along the more conventional lines, i.e. as limited to the work of art and the aesthetic experience. In her essay "Art and Knowledge" John suggests that while the knowledge that might be obtained *via* art cannot easily be justified by reference to the artist's authority, as suggested by some authors, the aesthetic experience gained in contact with an artwork and the personal knowledge of the recipient of art might well serve this purpose (333-335). Though personal in character, this kind of assessment could perhaps count as an intuitive form of falsification. It definitely involves critical examination of ideas and rejection of those that have failed the test. An element of criticism might also be

found in Popper's interpretation of the process of artistic creation, in which the artist examines critically the work s/he creates with reference to the original project, which itself undergoes various modifications (cf. Teske, "The Methodology of the Humanities..." 292-294).

This brief discussion of art taken as a mode of cognition complements, I hope, the cursory and often fragmentary information on the subject presented in the table. Even so, it remains merely a sketch, documenting a need for a more systematic research on art that might be conducted within the methodology of art.

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METODOLOGIA SZTUKI (ESTETYKA KRYTYCZNA/RACJONALISTYCZNA):  
PROJEKT NOWEJ DYSCYPLINY FILOZOFICZNEJ

Streszczenie

Artykuł przedstawia projekt nowej dyscypliny – metodologii sztuki. Jej zadaniem, przez analogię do metodologii nauk, byłoby badanie sztuki jako aktywności poznawczej, w tym przede wszystkim poznawczej metody sztuki. Próbą uzasadnienia i bliższym opisem tego projektu jest zestawienie w postaci tabeli czterech typów poznania: nauk ścisłych (przedstawionych tu zgodnie z modelem Popperowskim), humanistycznych, metodologii sztuki i sztuki. Zostały one porównane pod kątem m.in. przedmiotu, metody, formatu uzyskiwanej wiedzy, relacji do prawdy, trybu uzasadniania przekonań czy możliwości stosowania eksperymentu. Artykuł kończą uwagi na temat trybu poznania, jakim posługuje się sztuka. Główną tezą artykułu jest potrzeba i możliwość racjonalnej refleksji nad sztuką pojętą jako nienaukowa forma badania świata psychiki.

*Streściła Joanna Klara Teske*

**Key words:** art, cognition, methodology, science.

**Słowa kluczowe:** sztuka, poznanie, metodologia, nauka.