
Global Aesthetics and the IAA/AIE

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I am very grateful to my friend and colleague Professor Lars-Olof Åhlberg for giving me this opportunity to speak here and have a chance to sketch some issues relating to contemporary aesthetics.¹ Since I am currently the President of the International Association for Aesthetics I thought offering some views on this issue from the perspective of this organisation may not be inappropriate.

My first direct encounter with the International Association for Aesthetics began twenty years ago when I took part in the IXth International Congress for Aesthetics in Dubrovnik in 1980. It was my first opportunity to meet and listen to a series of philosophers and aestheticians whose works I have read or whom I knew by reputation. The congress itself was somewhat hectic and for me its main import was to meet personally a number of aestheticians from around the world, with many of whom I have remained in regular contact over the following two decades. Since then international congresses for aesthetics have taken place in Montreal, Nottingham, Madrid, Lahti and Ljubljana, with each of them being different, dependent upon the local organisers, their cultural setting and tradition, and the aestheticians, philosophers and others they viewed as important and relevant for their own aesthetic tradition. Viewed from the perspective of these four- and, later, three-year intervals, it appeared as if aesthetics each time almost reinvented itself: each of these gatherings had a very strong local flavour; often, also, the majority of participants at one congress would never be seen at another, this being sometimes true also of some of its main organisers.

This last feature is usually not encountered in other academic disciplines, which tend to be more uniform, and whose active members tend to partake in most of

1. This lecture was delivered on 30 May 2000 in the Department of ALM, Aesthetics and Cultural Studies at Uppsala University.

the events of their international associations. There are many reasons why this is different in the case of aesthetics.

The first is that the International Association for Aesthetics certainly isn't the only international organisation devoted to aesthetics. There is an International Association for Empirical Aesthetics, which brings together psychologists and other professionals interested in more empirical research into art and aesthetic phenomena. While the IAA/AIE tends to be oriented mainly towards philosophical aesthetics, in the organisation devoted to empirical aesthetics a philosophical perspective on aesthetics and its subject-matter isn't the main issue of discussion, nor are philosophy, philosophical aesthetics and the arts and literature the main academic background of its members. These are mostly psychology, education and sociology instead, with these disciplines determining the more empirical, experimental, and quantitative, even laboratory research goals and hence the interests of its members. Another international organisation is one that has a very similar name, i.e. International Society for Aesthetics. There also exists a series of other international organisations and associations, the orientation and interests of which depend upon local, regional or personal interests. Such are organisations devoted to semiotics, *la poïétique*, etc., and last but not least, philosophy proper, which in the past considered aesthetics as an integral part of philosophy.

The second cause for the ever-changing aesthetics landscape, when viewed from the vantage point of international congresses, is its strong dependency upon local cultural circumstances. Since art is its predominant subject, in some parts of the world this implies a strong link of aesthetics with local culture and related phenomena. In Central and Eastern Europe art and culture tended to be strongly associated with national issues, so culture designated mainly national culture, and was linked to national political issues. The introduction of socialism in this area resulted in previously inexistent connections and similarities or, in other cases, in the dissolution of such connections. Take, for example, cultural and academic links and exchanges between Hungary and Cuba which would, in any other circumstances, probably be unthought of; the severing of such links between East and West Germany, or the influence of Chinese political ideas on Albanian culture and philosophers (with this influence in the sixties and seventies existing of course also in other places, in Paris, for example). In the former Soviet bloc countries aesthetics tended to be regarded as "science", the reason for this being, on the one hand, to delimit it from possible or real ideological connotations and, on the other, the continuation of the Central and East European tradition of treating the hu-

manities – under the strong influence and in accordance with the broad German notion of *Wissenschaft* – as equals of natural sciences.

At such congresses – and other similar reunions – a “diplomatic immunity” was granted to representatives of various philosophies and hence aesthetic theories, be they differences among them based on theoretical or political considerations. Aesthetics in the eighties still seemed a very academic discipline, i.e. one that was concerned with notions of beauty, the essence of art and, generally speaking, with an often uninformed view of contemporary art. Too often an aesthetician knew much about aesthetics and its history, but somewhat less about art and its history or its present.

Until the eighties aesthetics successfully avoided poking its nose into issues raised by the ongoing debates about postmodernism, Critical Theory, poststructuralism, deconstruction, or psychoanalysis. It was only when it became completely impossible to avoid these themes and when other disciplines of the humanities, such as comparative literature, language departments, sociology, the newly-born cultural and gender studies and even art history (which was another rather traditional area of the humanities), etc. entered this academic arena, that aesthetics began to change. Before, it used to be a discipline devoted mainly to historical issues of its own self or of its subject-matter, which meant either natural or artistic beauty, this mostly meaning traditional or classical art and the renderings of nature it offered. Within the German cultural space the interaction between philosophy, aesthetic ideas and art was facilitated by the tradition going back to the Romantics, Hegel, Nietzsche and by philosophers such as Theodor Adorno or Ernst Bloch, for example, who undisputedly were philosophers, although the latter two avoided the notion and the term “aesthetics” for it denoted for them a philosophical discipline and hence a part of a philosophical system which both wished to avoid. It was thus all right to use the adjective, as in “aesthetic theory”, but inappropriate to use the notion of aesthetics except when relating to the artists’ theory, as when relating to “surrealist aesthetics”, for example. I shall speak a little later briefly of two concrete cases; those of Critical Theory and postmodernism and their relation to aesthetics, as presented in some of the international congresses.

In France aesthetics turned from a central realm of philosophical discussion in the forties and fifties into an increasingly isolated endeavour, with the few exceptions being the legacy, in the sixties and seventies, of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (his untimely death occurred in 1961), and the work of an active member of the IAA/AIE, Mikel Dufrenne, perhaps that of Olivier Revault d’Allonnes; and a few oth-

ers. In recent years some authors, such as Luc Ferry and Gérard Genette have resuscitated aesthetics, while much other research under the name of aesthetics falls under “special aesthetics”, and is devoted to theatre, music, and other artistic genres. In France, as in much of Germany, it was structuralism and its critique of phenomenology and traditional philosophy and its systems that criticised and finally, with the aid of post-structuralism, almost delegitimised aesthetics, and notions such as the artwork, art, and creativity. A special segment of activities related to aesthetics is the so-called “*la poïétique*”, initiated in the seventies by René Passeron and devoted to the study of creativity, with art representing the exemplary case thereof.

In my opinion aesthetics in the Anglo-American cultural space is being transformed from a previously almost exclusively analytical one into a plethora of trends, the most distinct ones – beside the traditional analytical one – probably being pragmatist and environmentalist aesthetics. It is nonetheless true that so far as I can judge, aesthetics, especially in the United States, is increasingly turning into the usual global mixture of different theoretical discourses which are devoted to issues as varied as Kant, on the one hand, and soap operas, on the other.

Similar observations apply to the rest of the world, with issues being raised there being dependent mostly upon cultural influences that are exerted by the great cultural and philosophical traditions and by local circumstances and their requirements and possibilities. An interesting feature of contemporary philosophy and aesthetics is the very frequent coexistence of very disparate orientations within a small cultural space such as that of Latin American countries, Australian, Canadian, Central European countries or some northern European ones: where a few decades ago an exclusive orientation reigned, we find today a plenitude of theories, philosophical orientations and interests, each of them pursuing a dialogue with similar individuals large distances away, while at the same time not being interested in or ignorant of academic activities taking place under the name of the same or a very similar academic discipline or activity much closer. Such a situation is not, as it would seem at first glance, dependent upon intellectual ignorance or short-sightedness. More probably the reason for it lies in the rapid transfiguration of the humanities, aesthetics and philosophy included, wherein a disciplinary designation by itself tells little of its actual content.

A tendency which is probably unique to the present moment of the history of aesthetics and may be regarded as a parallel to the influx of non-philosophic or untraditional theories into aesthetics, is the way in which many cultures which previously tended to accept and assimilate European and perhaps American phil-

osophical and aesthetic theories, have in the last decade or so began to dissociate themselves from them and started to develop their own indigenous ones, these being devoted either to those related to the former or completely different and dissociated from them. This is especially true of Japanese, African and even Russian aesthetics. In the last case this is predominantly due to political changes occurring after 1989 and the subsequent discrediting of Marxist theories which were then replaced with the other Russian tradition, i.e. that of the pre-October period, with a special emphasis being put on Russian pre-twentieth century religious philosophy, mysticism, etc.

In the other two mentioned cases – I could mention some others, the Korean or the Chinese, for example – what is being developed is theory which accentuates its indigenous cultural specifics, and does so at the expense of the previous predominance of Western philosophy and aesthetics. An example of an African step in this direction was the paper presented by Yacouba Conate from the Ivory Coast at the international congress of aesthetics in Ljubljana. Conate noted two features of the Western approach to African art, the first being ignorance of the names of the artists (at the expense of their works which are thereby treated as ethnological and not artistic artefacts) and, secondly, the belittling view Hegel (one could also mention Kant in this context) had of Africa and its cultural possibilities.²

A different and more elaborate argument concerning the same issue is offered by the Japanese aesthetician Sasaki Ken-ichi. He thus begins his 1998 book by writing: “I lived through a real critical change in my philosophical life in Maastricht.” (In the nineties Sasaki used to teach occasionally in the Van Eyck Academy in Maastricht.)

I awoke to myself. If it is exaggerated to speak of “awaking to myself”, I at least noticed my cultural background. This awareness brought me to a radical turn in my aesthetics concerning its orientation and methodology.

Most Western people do not know that philosophical study in Japan is almost completely oriented towards Western philosophy. It is in this climate that I have long been engaging in an investigation of Western aesthetics, just like most of my colleagues. The remarkable thing is that we Japanese do not study Western philosophy as a hetero-culture but as a universal culture, a conviction

2. Cf. Yacouba Conate, “Art, Philosophie et Modernité: L’Afrique en Effet”, *Filozofski vestnik (XIVth International Congress of Aesthetics. Proceedings, Part II, ed. Aleš Erjavec)*, vol. XX, no. 2 (Ljubljana 1999), 37–47.

which itself comes from Western philosophy. Even under this orientation, our cultural identity is not completely silenced: it pronounces itself in the choice of certain topics, in stressing special notions, in giving a particular kind of interpretation, and so on. However, this characteristic voice remains unnoticed in most cases, because we believe profoundly in the universality of the philosophy we are doing.³

Sasaki then approaches topics specific to or typical of Japanese culture and environment: anti-urban culture in Japan, nature, townscape and landscape, or the unique features of visuality in Japanese culture.

Let me now return to the International Association of Aesthetics and its distinguishing characteristics. As I mentioned earlier, I would like to discuss a concrete analysis I made some time ago in which I tried to discern the role played in aesthetics by Critical Theory and postmodernism, i.e. two notions fairly established in the humanities and social sciences since the late seventies. I have taken into consideration only a decade and a half, basing my analysis on the papers presented in the international congresses for aesthetics from Dubrovnik to Lahti. The Ljubljana congress occurred when the notion of postmodernism had already lost much of its significance or become very generally accepted, so it didn't seem to me to warrant a discussion here.

The period of fifteen years may not seem to be a very long one, but it nonetheless allows certain generalisations concerning the topics and issues raised at such gatherings. All the usual suspicions in regard to such an endeavour are as valid as ever: as already noted, at such congresses a random group of people gathers, the organisers have different criteria for including or excluding certain papers, the venue of the congress influences its cultural framework and the national or regional character of participants – and so on. But, then, cannot we argue just as justifiably that similar, if not equal limitations, apply to many other events on various symbolic markets, such as publishing, university curricula, etc.? They perhaps apply to a lesser extent, but the difference is, I hope, not substantial enough to make an endeavour such as the one intended completely meaningless. On the other hand, I think that a sketch of the mentioned changes concerning the presence and the influence of Critical Theory on aesthetics may be illuminating and may also reveal some broader features relevant to aesthetics and its present and future status.

3. Sasaki Ken-ichi, *Aesthetics on Non-Western Principles. Version 0.5* (Maastricht: Jan van Eyck Akademie 1998), 3.

It is rather obvious that aesthetics, as presented at these international congresses, was, on the one hand, dependent upon the history of the IAA/AIE (the English and French of its official title themselves pointing to the historical frame of this organisation) and, on the other, on the intrinsic developments of art and, especially, philosophy.⁴ It is especially this latter aspect that is of interest to me, for it reflects better than the former a more global and more objective situation concerning the issues aestheticians over the world have found relevant or at least of interest.

One striking feature of world aesthetics as presented through the mentioned congresses and concurrent publications is the slow dissolution of national traditions and of traditions of the "philosophical empires".⁵ The extant mixture, intertwining and interdependence are so much more noticeable since they only became discernible about a decade ago. Since the IAA/AIE has been, to a certain extent, dominated by the analytical tradition, which is far removed from the critical one, this is perhaps not so striking after all. There is an underlying reason for this preponderance of analytical aesthetics: it is mainly this tradition which retains the belief that works of art as well as (other) aesthetic phenomena are to be analysed and theorised *per se* and not dissolved within society, intertextuality, discourse, and so on, a consequence of this being that it is only within this tradition that the main object of discussion is the notion of "art". These two strongly interrelated specific features predestine analytical aesthetics to be to a certain measure, even today the hegemonic aesthetic position. Analytical aesthetics is one of the few contemporary traditions that still subscribe to many of the prerogatives of traditional aesthetics.

A series of topics that arose in recent years have caused a reorientation in the interests of many aestheticians. Modernity, postmodernism and politicised avant-garde art are just a few issues which have necessitated a less rigorous and less specialised approach of contemporary aesthetics. It may have been the emergence of structuralism in the sixties that commenced the slow disintegration of traditional philosophy and its various "disciplines". The challenge initially offered by struc-

4. Some illuminating information about the history of the IAA/AIE may be found in older issues of *Revue d'esthétique*, *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, and *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. Especially useful are *Revue d'esthétique*, nos. 1-2 (1972); Richard Shusterman's article "Aesthetics between Nationalism and Internationalism", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51:2 (Spring 1993); Grazia Marchianò, ed., *Le grandi correnti dell'estetica novecentesca* (Milano: Guerini 1991), a series of similar recent publications in the U.K., U.S. and elsewhere and, finally, the *IAA/AIE Newsletter*.

5. Cf. Shusterman, "Aesthetics between Nationalism and Internationalism", 161.

turalism appeared not to concern aesthetics to any significant extent: instead of attacking it, it bypassed or ignored it, leaving it seemingly unscathed and unperturbed. It was hence the emergence of poststructuralism and especially of what has been loosely called "Critical Theory" which effected (and also revealed) a more substantial change within aesthetics. In this respect aesthetics shared the destiny of academic philosophy. Of this it was a "branch", "discipline", a "part" or, in Paul Valéry's memorable words, it inhabited "a wing of the palace called philosophy". It was probably postmodernism which played the role of the catalyst for the more recent reevaluation and reorientation of aesthetics. Postmodernism, from its inception in the writings of Charles Jencks since 1975 to those of Lyotard, Habermas's critique from 1980 on of the historical reality this term denoted and the ensuing polarisation between those "for" and "against" postmodernism, conflated two important topics which resisted a pure and simple disciplinary distinction into general philosophy, on the one hand, and aesthetics, on the other. The first topic, that of modernity and postmodernity or the postmodern, could have been deemed to be predominantly a philosophical one, with the other, that of postmodernism and modernism controversy, being seemingly mostly of concern to aesthetics. Nonetheless this patently was not so, for both issues really formed an almost inseparable whole. A similar observation was of course already explicitly made by the authors of the Frankfurt School and even thinkers such as Heidegger. The reconsideration of modernity emerged in its most striking form from a reconsideration of art (the avant-garde one included) and then spread not only into general artistic practice where it resulted in the postmodern detachment, but also into what would previously have been called ontology, general philosophy, epistemology, gnoseology, and so on. It also denigrated the division and the hierarchy of disciplines inherent to academic philosophy.

There is no need to mention that the beginnings of such a procedure are to be found not only in Derrida's early works, but already in Marx. It is not this history which is my concern here; I only wish to point out that at least in continental Europe, and elsewhere where an influence of the continental tradition can be encountered, this whole line of thought, starting inconspicuously with structuralism, overtly continuing with poststructuralism of the seventies (which already showed a visible influence on aesthetics by, at least, preventing it to continue as if nothing had happened with its emergence) continues with contemporary postmodern and Critical Theory which are effecting a considerable influence on what has formerly been a series of separate traditional aesthetic traditions (the German, the French and the Anglo-Saxon, for example).

It is not my aim to define either post-structuralism (which is basically an English name for theory arising from France) or Critical Theory (which is basically a mixture of various approaches and theories concentrating upon issues of class, gender and race and historically arising from the Frankfurt School⁶). What I am interested in is the influence of authors as diverse as Walter Benjamin and Michel Foucault who today often continue to exert an unprecedented authority upon traditional philosophical disciplines, aesthetics included. One of the consequences of the current reconfiguration of the realm of philosophy (and this reconfiguration is certainly not limited to philosophy alone, as witnessed by the case of history, art history, anthropology or cultural studies) is the elimination of the previous distinct hierarchy among various "branches" of philosophy, aesthetics being one of these. The critique aimed at master narratives effected also a greater equality and tolerance amongst various theoretical and philosophical discourses, an aim and a practice well illustrated by the incredible amount of interest and commentary generated by Benjamin's works and his way of presenting issues, many of which could hardly ever become a topic for philosophical or aesthetic discussion in the recent past. Much of this may have to do with the fleeting fashion. Nonetheless, ideas and methods developed and employed by authors of the Frankfurt School as well as by the more recent ones who concentrate not on *aesthetics* but on *aesthetic issues*, has gained not only recognition, but influence within the aestheticians' community worldwide. This observation applies to a different extent in different countries and has therefore by no means a universal value. As I shall show in this short presentation of the changes which in this respect occurred in the last decade and a half at the IAA/AIE congresses, the presence of the Critical Theory has rapidly grown, a phenomenon which may be worthy of further consideration.

At the Dubrovnik congress in 1980 nobody wrote⁷ about modernity, postmodernism or issues such as the aesthetic effect or feminist theory, in spite of some of these topics already becoming common currency elsewhere. An interesting question was put forward by Stefan Morawski in his intimations on the "end of aesthetics".⁸ In it he referred to Herbert Marcuse and Adorno and, although defending aesthetics against its critics who proclaimed its death, ended his paper with

6. Max Horkheimer was the first to use the term in 1937 in his essay "Traditionelle und kritische Theorie".

7. I am relying here on the published proceedings of the congresses.

8. Stefan Morawski, "Razmišljanja o 'kraju estetike'", in Milan Damjanović, ed., *Stvaralaštvo i ljudski svet. Physis-Techne-Poiesis* (Belgrade: Rad, 1983), 38-44.

a cryptic admission that art and aesthetics may be losing their struggle against a complete loss of meaning. Most of the papers which questioned aesthetics, Morawski's included, did so within the framework of what I would call the "Duchamp effect", that is, within the boundaries set up by Duchamp's ready-mades and the challenges they offered to traditional artworks, bringing us hence to the issues raised by Arthur Danto in regard to Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*,⁹ in other words, to the issues which concern mostly the neoavant-garde art and its attack upon the institution of art.

In 1984, at the Xth International Congress for Aesthetics in Montreal, Kant emerged as one of the more frequent points of reference. (This trend then continued at the next congresses.) Adorno, Walter Benjamin and Habermas were also topics of various papers, but mostly within the context of historical scholarly studies, or appropriated into a different cultural tradition. Marc Jimenez spoke of Adorno's "negative aesthetics" and rightfully conceded that "Adorno's aesthetic theory [...] records one of the most characteristic tendencies of contemporary aesthetic discourse: the tendency of its dissolution as an element of a closed theory, as an appendice to a developed global system or as its extension."¹⁰

If in Montreal Joseph Margolis criticised deconstruction (and was one of the few to say anything about concurrent philosophical and theoretical developments outside of the narrow sphere of aesthetics), then in 1988 at the XIth International Congress for Aesthetics in Nottingham postmodernism became a topic of various papers. In practically all cases (and the same was true of its evaluation at the next congress in Madrid) postmodernism was received favourably. It is not impossible that in this way aestheticians also implicitly showed some of their frequent uncritical acceptance of everything proclaimed to be "art", a feature common to much of recent traditional aesthetics which practically abandoned normativity and settled for a purely descriptive approach (such as that of the institutional theory of art). Needless to say, Benjamin remained not only a frequent reference, but also the topic of various papers. Adorno was defended against Peter Bürger's cri-

9. Cf. Arthur Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), esp. vii–viii and 208.

10. Marc Jimenez, "L'esthétique négative", in Peter McCormick, ed., *The Reasons of Art/L'Art a ses raisons* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1985), 167.

11. See Lambert Zuidervaart, "Normative Aesthetics and Contemporary Art: Bürger's Critique of Adorno", in Richard Woodfield, ed., *XIth International Congress in Aesthetics. Proceedings* (Nottingham: Nottingham Polytechnic Press 1990), 242–245.

tique¹¹ and was the other main figure from the Frankfurt School to warrant a separate presentation.

It was the process, the development of tendencies as described by Jimenez in Montreal in 1984, which characterised the next congress, that in Madrid in 1992. This comes as no surprise since the topic of the congress itself had to do with modernity. Quite a few papers were devoted to postmodernism, and again to Adorno, Walter Benjamin and avant-garde art. Another feature of the Madrid congress was the abundance of papers devoted to the visual arts and architecture and hence to less general topics, something that distinguished this congress from the previous three. It is also in this respect that the presence of a "critical" approach was strongly felt, an impression strengthened by the plenary papers by Norman Bryson and Hal Foster.

At the Lahti congress in 1995, it was mainly the topics of the symposia, devoted to cultural identity, the body and to feminist aesthetics, which witnessed to the consciousness that such issues became increasingly relevant for contemporary aesthetics. They pushed aesthetics further away from the recently dominant traditional (and what appeared to be almost eternal) aesthetic issues towards new questions and onto less trodden paths.

Aesthetics as presented and practised at various congresses has needed a surprisingly long time to accept as relevant issues raised by poststructuralism, Critical Theory and postmodern theory. As Jimenez observed in 1984 in connection with Adorno's theory, the latter's approach was becoming increasingly common within contemporary aesthetics. It appears that in this respect aesthetics was hesitantly sharing the destiny of other disciplines of the academic philosophy. As far as one can judge from the present perspective, although this tendency may have caused it in recent years to lose some of its analytical rigour, it has also effected a greater respect for contemporary art and a less generalising discourse which is, within the contemporary cultural framework, becoming increasingly obsolete in the eyes of many.

A feature of Critical Theory, be it Adorno's or Terry Eagleton's, is first of all to oppose aesthetics "as an element of a closed theory, as an appendice to a developed global system or as its extension," to use Marc Jimenez's words. Although this feature of Critical Theory is bound to be opposed by traditional aesthetics, it is perhaps not its only essential characteristic. This would equally be the concept of mediation, the Hegelian notion that every phenomenon is historically and socially mediated, a view also causing natural beauty to be supplanted by art as the point of reference for any aesthetic theory. Aesthetics hence not only ceases to be

a “branch” of philosophy but becomes the *activity* of philosophising on art, instead of being a transparent meta-discourse applied equally validly on natural and artistic beauty.

The consequences of integrating Critical Theory into aesthetics in its traditional sense, be it that of systematic philosophy or that of the analytical kind related to the concurrent art history of the Vienna School, may today appear less questionable than a decade ago, although the two arise from opposing philosophical frameworks. Where they differ is the value attributed to what is often called “metaphysics”, but could just as well be designated as traditional philosophy; where they probably agree is that philosophy is a continuous activity and hence a form of practice (although such an admission in itself would perhaps witness to a certain anti-traditionalism). It is this latter feature that has until now made possible what already in Lahti became a productive interaction between the two, for it enabled aesthetics to rejuvenate itself instead of persisting within the increasingly narrow areas of certain arts, losing sight of broader issues or degenerating into generalising totalisations, the validity of which is spread as thin as they are broad.

If this were a short overview of some of the issues relevant for aesthetics as an increasingly global phenomenon but concerned with its past, what can be said of its future? Our next two congresses will be in Tokyo (in 2001) and Rio (in 2004), respectively. At first sight this would seem to denote a further “de-Europeanisation” of aesthetics, although most probably changes will not be swift or very pronounced. First of all, because especially in Latin America the European continental tradition is almost as influential as in Europe itself and, secondly, because the relation between various Asian or Eastern philosophical and aesthetic theories and the European or Western ones is still that of coexistence and only rarely that of fusion. When a synthesis of the two occurs, then we shall witness real and profound changes extending from culture to aesthetics. And finally, it is difficult to see how aesthetics, in spite of its numerous, and sometimes contradictory or, at least, disparate historical designations, can cease being a typically European endeavour. It is the Western conceptual framework that, so far, has determined the contours of any aesthetics, and other conceptual frameworks had to adapt themselves to it. A profound change will be necessary to change this, for it can only be done – as far as I can foresee – by drastically changing the extant meanings of aesthetics or, the second option, discovering, rediscovering or reinterpreting the legacy and the on-going theoretical activities of non-Western aesthetic ideas and theories in ways vastly different from the past or present ones.