

Colin Lyas

**Simo Säätelä: *Aesthetics as Grammar – Wittgenstein and Post-Analytic Philosophy of Art***  
 Department of Aesthetics,  
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Scandinavia enjoys a well earned eminence in aesthetics. It was, therefore, an honour to meet that I should have been asked, earlier this year, to act as opponent in the doctoral examination of Simo Säätelä. Dr. Säätelä's work had already made a considerable impact on me (as indeed, in a more strictly physical sense had Doctor Säätelä, he being an active participant in a football match in which I broke two ribs). I welcomed the chance to see something systematic and large scale from him. That the examination was to take place in Uppsala was an additional delight. In 1968, at the very outset of my career, Frank Sibley, Eva Schaper and I had come to the great international aesthetics conference held in that beautiful and ancient city. There, too, were to be found friends whose work I have long respected, such as Göran Sörbom and Lars-Olof Åhlberg.

I had had no experience of public doctoral disputation, the English preference being for some more private and cloistered inter-

rogation. It seemed to me, however, that, if the disputation were to be truly public, the audience should be fully involved, and that the only way to ensure this would be to explain why I thought Dr. Säätelä's work to be important and also to explain, at various stages of the examination, the background to the various points that I wished to make about it. It was later represented to me that I might like to give my remarks a wider airing in the pages of this journal, and that provides the occasion for the following remarks. Dr. Säätelä's dissertation was published in book form in 1998 as *Aesthetics as Grammar* by the Department of Aesthetics at Uppsala, and it is to that edition, available from that department, that I refer in the following comments.

I began with something that I am more than willing to repeat, namely that this work is a fine introduction to the issues which surround the application of the insights of the later Wittgenstein to issues in aesthetics. Not only is it an introduction to the general topic of aesthetics as practiced in the spirit of the later Wittgenstein, but to one or two more particular issues it is an *exemplary* guide. I have in mind here, for example, the discussion, from page 138 onwards, of the controversial notion of the "primitive reactions" which, it is often said,

underlie and give sense to our talk, whether that talk be about art or causality or persons.

That said, I must stress this is not merely an introduction to Wittgensteinian aesthetics. It is a vigorously combative attempt to harness the insights of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, and to harness also the work of those, such as Cavell and Tilghman, who have been illuminated by those insights, to the task of understanding aesthetics.

My comments on that programme fall into three groups. First there is a ringing endorsement of the rectitude and power of Säätelä's demolition work on the influential accounts of art offered by, among others, Arthur Danto. Second, there is a more minor cavil about Säätelä's discussion of one particular issue in aesthetics, namely, the issue of causality. Third I express a worry about Chapter Four, in which Säätelä draws the various strands of his argument together and makes notable suggestions as to how we should respond to questions about the nature of art, particularly when those questions arise in the context of problems about the *avant garde*.

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First, the endorsement: Säätelä, to my mind wholly rightly, sets himself in opposition to a line of thinking

about art that terminates in the views of Arthur Danto. Central to that is what, following Säätelä, we might call Danto's "method of indiscernibles". Take an ordinary Brillo pad box. This is not art. Take now the Warhol Brillo box exhibited in a gallery. This *is* art. Since the two are, set side by side, indiscernible, what makes one of them art cannot be anything, as Danto puts it, that the eye might descry. So what makes one of the objects into art must be the *atmosphere which surrounds it*, or, more precisely, *the interpretation* that we give the object. Hence Danto's conclusion that a work of art is a real object plus an interpretation. That, in turn, is part of a more general view of how something gets a meaningful status assigned to it. Thus, for example, on Danto's account, a meaningful action is a basic action, some bodily movement, plus an interpretation. And, on Davidson's account, a meaningful utterance is a string of sounds to which an interpretation has been assigned. As Säätelä points out, all these views hang together, and sometimes explicitly so, as when Danto says "To see an art work without knowing that it is an art work is comparable in a way to what one's experience of print is before one learns to read" (quoted by Säätelä, op. cit. p.75).

Danto's account goes with a superficially plausible ac-

count of aesthetic puzzlement. When someone is puzzled about the artistic status of some new products this is because he or she has not understood the *theory* under which those new objects were produced and in terms of which they should be interpreted as art. Thus, post impressionist works seemed anomalous to certain of their contemporary viewers because they were approached under an obsolete artistic theory, which Danto calls the "Imitation" theory (IT). In fact they should have been approached under what he calls the new "Real" theory (RT).

Säätelä brings two sorts of objections to this. First there are the more minor, though still weighty ones. Thus he correctly points out that from the fact, even if it were a fact, that something which is not a work of art, a Brillo box, becomes a work of art by having an interpretation placed on it, it would not follow that Rembrandt's *The Night Watch* can plausibly be said to become a work of art because someone imposes an interpretation on something which would otherwise be devoid of artistic status. Leaving aside for the moment the question who does the interpreting, there is still the question: What uninterpreted what would, in that latter case, be transfigured by an interpretation into a work of art?

The most likely candidate is "that set of colours and shapes on that two-dimensional surface". This is the "basic thing" that gets interpreted into the work of art *The Night Watch*. Now things become complex. For, first, we must simply resist the assertion that the description of *The Night Watch* as a set of lines and colours is somehow and self-evidently more basic than the description of it as a work of art called "*The Night Watch*". To see this we need only consider any Brillo box. Presumably referring to this as a Brillo Box is, on Danto's account, to employ a less basic description than would be used were to talk of it instead as "that set of visual, tactile properties instantiated in that three-dimensional space". However, the situation is quite the other way round. As Quinton long ago observed, it is only having *first* learned to recognise things as Brillo boxes, or whatever, that we get ourselves into a position in which we can *learn* to abstract, *by a special effort*, those kind of descriptions that Danto would have us think to be more basic. But then, we don't begin with those basic descriptions and then add further interpretations in order to end up with the familiar world of Brillo boxes and works of art. On the contrary, we have to make a special effort to see our basic familiar world of objects in terms of the

more esoteric Danto physicalist descriptions.

It is true, as Säätelä with great argumentative force points out, harnessing to that end Wittgenstein's remarks on seeing aspects, that we can only see boxes and works of art if we are possessed of, and are able to apply, a certain conceptual apparatus. That is the truth in Danto's assertion that we can only see art if we are enfranchised citizens of an art world. But it does not follow from that that we *interpret* what we see in order to make our world. We simply see what we can't help seeing.

But I think that Säätelä wishes to make a more fundamental objection to a whole line of thought that ultimately descends from Davidson's pernicious talk of interpretation. On that account even native speakers, hearing the utterances of their fellow language users, interpret those utterances in order to assign a meaning to them. They do so by applying a theory (the word Davidson uses to describe what underlies the ability to interpret) to the sounds that they hear.

An immediate objection to this is related to what has just been argued. We simply don't hear the utterances of our fellow language speakers as strings of meaningless sounds to which we have to apply an interpretation. (We don't even, contrary to something

Wittgenstein seems to say about hearing Chinese, hear the words of a language we do *not* understand in that way).

The objection goes deeper, however. For grant the Davidson/Danto picture, according to which I hear sounds and then apply an interpretation to them which assigns to them a meaning. How am I supposed to do this? Well, I hear the sounds phonetically associated with the word string "the cat sat on the mat". I hypothesise, say, that they mean . . . Well what? How do I represent to myself what they mean? Do I call before my mind the word string "the cat sat on the mat"? But how do I know what *that* means unless I interpret it. And so on *ad infinitum*. As Bob Sharpe has memorably argued, matters become even more absurd if this is posited as the way in which a child operates with language, so that its first ventures are akin to those of an infant Galileo, forming theories in order to make sense of the sounds with which it is bombarded.

Precisely that problem with Davidson's talk of interpreting sound strings applies to Danto's talk of interpreting physically described complexes as works of art. How is this to work? Well, someone looks at some such complex and says "shall I call this a work of art?". However, we can't simply dub anything a work of art

and make it so merely by that act of dubbing. For as many, most notably Wollheim and Cohen have observed, the act of dubbing something “art” had better not be unmotivated. For someone who performs the institutional act of dubbing is always open to the question “Why did you call *this* a work of art?”. That as Tilghman and Säätelä have argued, invites someone to say how this case relates to other things which we already recognise to be works of art. If the dubber can’t do this, the suspicion will always remain that the term work of art has become homonymous.

I have long thought that whole tradition which talks of understanding as a matter of interpretation to be suspect and its influence on the understanding of language, human action and art to be deleterious. It is worth reading Säätelä for a demonstration of how deeply the roots of this error go and what has to be done to extirpate it.

## II

I come now to two matters on which I am less certain that Säätelä is on firm ground. One is more minor, but not without its interest, since it has to do with a clearing up that is long overdue both in philosophy generally, and in aesthetics

in particular, of the vexed notion of causation.

Let us begin by noting that Säätelä is emphatic that the aesthetic has to be understood in terms of *reactions*. But he is equally emphatic that the reactions that are involved do not involve *causal* relations. And about that I am far less clear.

The fun starts when Wittgenstein speaks of the reactions upon which aesthetics is founded as kindred to “pulling ones hand away from a hot plate”. Säätelä remarks that “Wittgenstein seems to be saying that an aesthetic reaction is more or less like a causal reaction or reflex” (op. cit., p. 169). But, as Säätelä notes, Wittgenstein also rejects any account, like that given by emotivists, which gives some causal account of aesthetic response as an “exceedingly stupid idea”. Säätelä, too, endorses this. “The question does not concern cause and effect”. And he says that Wittgenstein undermines “the very idea of a causal approach”. In aesthetics we are dealing with reasons and not causes. As Wittgenstein says: “there is a ‘why?’ to aesthetic reaction not a ‘cause’ to it”. Here there is a nice little tangle of issues.

I think first we should get it clear why exactly one might want to deny that causes are at issue when one is talking about aesthetic reactions. What I think Säätelä

does not clearly enough bring out is that this argument is directed by Wittgenstein solely against causal accounts which construe the notion of cause along *Humean* lines. (Hild Leslie has pointed out to me that in his earlier and some middle work Wittgenstein probably thought that this was *the* proper analysis of the notion of causation, coming only relatively later to claims that the notion of cause embraced a cluster of ideas). Against causation, analysed as Hume analysed it, anticausal accounts of aesthetic reaction can be made to seem compelling.

Consider this point. I say of a pianist: "He used too much left hand". It is tempting to think of this as expressing a feeling which is caused in me by hearing the too-muchness of the left hand. What would it involve to apply a Humean account of causation to this?

In a classic passage Hume writes:

Suppose two objects be presented to us... It is plain that, from the simple consideration of one or both of these objects, we shall never... be able certainly to pronounce that there is any connection between them.

On this view cause and effect are *separate occurrences*. From what we know of one thing we can deduce nothing about how it will affect anything else. The most we have is

the evidence of past conjunctions. On that account the claim to know that, say, the varying positions of the moon cause alterations of the tides, could not, it seemed to Hume, depend on the observation of a general connecting link between the moon up there and tidal movements down here. All we have is the facts, first, that the moon appears in a certain place, then (temporal succession) that the tides move a certain way, third, that the two events occur reasonably together (contiguity), and, fourth, that this keeps on happening (constant conjunction).

If cause and effect must be two separate things, then in the musical case I cited, one of the things, the cause, is the too-muchness of the left hand. The other, the effect, is a feeling of displeasure in the viewer. One objection to this is that aesthetic cause and aesthetic effect become two entirely distinct existents that just happen to go together. But, then, a cause (say, the rendering of some piece of music within the hearing of a listener) which has the effect of underwhelming someone, might equally well be succeeded without any oddity, by a quite different effect, so that a hearing of an Oasis song might on a future occasion produce overwhelming awe in Dr. Scruton. Moreover, the same effect might on another occasion be produced by a different cause, as the

same headache might be caused now by sinusitis, now by sun stroke. In aesthetics the consequence would be that the experience we had on hearing a minuet could as well be produced by swallowing a pill. But our instinct is to think that only *this* particular minuet could yield *that* particular aesthetic experience. That is related to another Wittgensteinian thought, namely that aesthetic experience is not simply occasioned by its object: it is directed upon that object. It is, for example, the experience one has when attending to an object in which there is a modulation here and a rallentando there. Were that experience merely the effect of a Humean cause then it could remain the same even were the cause to change, in which case we would again have the absurdity of saying that sitting on a drawing pin might produce the experience of attending to a modulation here and a rallentando there.

That raises a more interesting difficulty with the causal account. Suppose I construe the assertion that there was too much left hand as the claim that an effect, an experience of aesthetic displeasure, is caused by the too-muchness of the left hand. Here two points need to be made.

First, whether or not there is a causal story, such a story is not the one wanted by someone who can't hear what another hears,

even though possessed of the same well functioning discriminatory apparatus. We don't help that person by telling some sort of Humean causal story of why she or he can't hear. We help by various kinds of training and talking. Suppose I say that at a particular point in Strauss's *Im Abend* there is a sense of upward release. If you can't hear this, I don't give you causal explanations. I might simply point to the effect I want you to hear. And there is no gap between what you hear and your hearing it that allows a Humean account to get started.

Cioffi (cited, *op. cit.*, p. 169) goes instructively wrong here. He argues: suppose I am uneasy about a door and, on being asked why, say "because it is too low". You raise it and it *still* doesn't look right. That, according to Cioffi, disconfirms an hypothesis about the source of my aesthetic discomfort. Actually it needn't. Even if I am still uneasy when it is made higher, that is compatible with my being right that it was too low. But even if I did withdraw the reason I gave for my dissatisfaction, I cannot see why this is explicated in causal terms. It is not that the explanation of a feeling of dissatisfaction (the effect) is explained by seeing that a door is too low (the cause). For the feeling of dissatisfaction and the seeing that the door is too low are one and the same. I could not coherently say

that although I have the same feeling of dissatisfaction, I now see that the cause is that the door is too wide rather than too low. For in no longer seeing that the door is too low I do not have the same feeling of dissatisfaction.

That is the essence of the case that Säätelä, following Wittgenstein makes against the causal account. But all that does is to show that, operating with a Humean account, it is difficult to make sense of the notion of aesthetic responses. But it is a far cry from that to saying that causality is not involved at all. Indeed, there is one overpowering reason why we should think of causation with respect to art and especially with respect to music, a reason which underlies the perennial attraction of the arousal theory. For one has to be *moved* by music and the kind of moving involved is not one that we can will. Experiencing music is something that happens to us and not something that we do. Wittgenstein, who was most critical of causal analyses in aesthetics nonetheless located the springs of aesthetics in *reactions*, using examples chosen as if to emphasise their involuntary nature, which is said to be “analogous to taking my hand away from a hot plate”.

Consider, too, cases in which one is *overwhelmed* by a piece of art. The history of the phenomenon is well chronicled. And

although the other arts have this power, it is in music that one is likely most often to experience it. That power seems to me to be pre-eminently a causal power. When we are overwhelmed, we cannot help what happens to us. In spite of himself, what Lawrence memorably called, “the insidious mastery of the song” seized him and his manhood was lost in a flood of tears. But if that is so, then a central experience of art is, contrary to what Croce suggested, one in which we are assailed from without and carried away. And that seems at odds with his restriction of art to what he calls “the serene realm of artistic intuition”, that is to expression conceived as placing us outside the causal flood of “blind mechanism”.

Part of the problem with this is that the analysis of the notion of causation is in a mess. We know the Humean account will not do, yet we struggle to find a better. Wittgenstein was I think clearly aware of this. The *Tractatus* did have a Humean view of causation. That I think persisted into the next stage of his work. But he later took a more sophisticated view. Given this, it is misleading to speak as if Wittgenstein turned his face against any causal account of aesthetic response. Nor would he have been wise to do so. For we simply are, and involuntarily, moved by music. It has causal ef-



fects. True it may require understanding if these effects are to occur, and some have spoken as if this were a reason to deny causality. On a Humean account that might be so. But we are not stuck with that sort of account. Here there is a lot of work still to do.

### III

That brings me to the main hesitation I have about Säätelä's argument. In expressing it I do not wish to deny anything that Säätelä says so much as ask whether, for all the light it throws, if it throws its beam wide enough to illuminate art.

Let us start with what is triumphantly argued against Davidson and Danto: we have to *see* the art in a thing. To see the art in a thing is to react to it in various ways, the possibility of those reactions in our forms of life being constitutive of the possibility of there being art at all. So, as Tilghman has compellingly argued, if the plain man cannot see Duchamp's *Fontaine* as art, it will not help to tell him about a theory that would allow him so to designate it. He has to be brought to *see* that a certain repertoire of reactions would be appropriate to that thing.

So far, so good. But then I feel pressing on me the question: "and what is it *exactly* to respond or to react to something as a work of

art? What is it to see the *art* in it and *what is seen in it when that is seen?*" For there ought, ought there not, to be ways of characterising reactions which allow us to say that *this* is a candidate for the title response to something as a work of art" and *this* isn't.

Säätelä certainly thinks so: remarking that we can contrast the aesthetic attitude to a flower's opening with a scientific one. We have to be "impressed by an occurrence in a certain way", he quotes Wittgenstein as remarking. But what does "a certain way" amount to?

The question, for me, crystallises around the very point that Tilghman rightly makes central: when someone, honestly willing to give the experimental (Beuys), or what is simply the different (rap, say), a go, and can't get it, *what is she or he missing*. Tilghman and Levinson in their different ways get the *general* form of the answer to this absolutely right: what he or she is missing is an ability to *see* how *this thing* exemplifies the sorts of things one has *already* been led to cherish in the art which already moves one. Thus, for Tilghman the problem is not one of saying what terms one might use to express one's aesthetic reactions and which are therefore constitutive of aesthetic response. The problem is seeing

how those terms apply in this puzzling context.

Then the insistent question returns: what are the terms that are to be used to articulate what is constitutive of the response to art. Tilghman includes "poetic, dramatic and musical values (see Säätelä op. cit., p.247)". He speaks of the "usual habiliments of art (ibid. p.246)" and remarks "we have at our disposal a fund of characteristically artistic features - skill in execution and composition, subject matter and expressive treatment and so on" (ibid, p.246). Then we are offered "formal arrangements... interesting colour relationships... texture worthy of attention... symbolic... (ibid., p. 253)". Again we are given "beauty, a celebration of some aspect of life, a view of the world". For Tilghman the task is, rightly, to get someone who is puzzled to see that these things can be found in the objects that cause puzzlement.

Now we need to distinguish three claims.

One, which I think Tilghman makes and Säätelä toys with, is to say that certain new and puzzling phenomena will never be such as that we find features of the kind that Tilghman has instanced in those objects. That will amount to a rupture in the developing history of art.

But, second, as opposed to things that Tilghman has said, I

do not see how it can ever be foreclosed that we may come to see in that which puzzles us continuities with that which has already moved us. I tried to show how this might happen with something like *Fontaine* in my *Aesthetics*.

Third, Säätelä worries here that there is a danger of conservatism. If we insist that art criticism must be a matter of helping us to see the sorts of things we saw in our previous art in the new puzzling phenomena, then we foreclose on the possibility that the new phenomena might be doing new things which have to characterised by the use of different terms from those hitherto deployed. Here I make two observations.

First, as a matter of fact, even their most ardent advocates do *not* say new things about the new phenomena. I ask my reader to think what new terms of aesthetic approbation have been introduced in the last fifty years which would not have been found in the previous 1,500?

Second, Säätelä envisages the possibility that the kinds of concerns which emerge for us might mean that art ceases to be of interest. Thus at the end of his work he writes: "Perhaps the dial of European painting has reached midnight - and perhaps night is near for music and literature as well". That brings me to a final set of comments.

## IV

From Tilghman's various writings we distilled a set of features he thought exemplified by the talk in which we expressed our present interests in art – it being a matter of puzzlement to his plain man how these features were to be found in the more or less *outré* examples of the new art. If we examine some of these features, dissatisfactions of various sorts among the cognoscenti of the new might soon emerge.

First some of the features that Tilghman cites, for example beauty and form, might indeed be likely to strike some of the more *avant garde* as the fag end of a certain high culture. I do not see that Tilghman need be notably shaken by this. It is, I suppose, on one popular Wittgensteinian view, not necessary to say that all art has to exemplify all of the features we find art-relevant all of the time. Indeed a plausible history could be constructed according to which art oscillates between the formal and the non formal, the more formal now being temporarily out of fashion.

Next, confronted with Ben Tilghman's list of features, we may note that some of these are to be found *both* in things which are art and things which are not art. Aesthetic terms, like form, delicacy of colour, elegance, apply to flow-

ers as much as to flower paintings. So we have as yet no indication of what makes something *art*. And now things become very interesting. For Säätelä, I think entirely rightly, stresses that something which is art has to be *made*. That is a necessary condition for something's being art. This is dealt with on p.197-8 where he writes "the most important features that the concept of art bring with it is that we can meaningfully talk about a creator".

Now consider this: leaving established that "being made" is a necessary condition for something's being art Säätelä can now claim that we can apply to art terms which have to do with the *style* or *meaning* or *intention* or the *execution of the intention to make*. On that account the properties which art shares with nature become more peripheral to it as art. That a colour in a painting is delicate becomes an *art-relevant* property only because it is a property of something which, on other grounds, has been deemed to be art.

Now we have built the mind of the artist into the work. So, Säätelä says, endorsing McFee and others (see Säätelä, *op. cit.* p.198), the most important feature that *a work of art* brings with it is that "we can meaningfully talk about a creator and thus about the details of the work as intended and as cru-

cial, as the results of aesthetic choices and decisions”.

The word “aesthetic” is interesting here. For it suggests this interpretation of the passage: the interest in elegance, say, as a feature of a work of art stems from the fact *not* that it is a value property that art shares with nature, but from the fact that its presence represents a *correct choice by the artist*, and so represents her or his artistry. We are aware, say, that *that* line was *deliberately placed* so in order to produce *this* aesthetic effect and so displays such features as skill, economy, perceptivity, wit or whatever, these being the kinds of value features that belong to the work *qua* work of art.

All that is true, but it simply does not take us far enough. For it makes what is *central* to a work of art, the way in which we admire the facility with which an artist manipulates the material in order to produce *aesthetic* effects. Thus when a certain point in the 21st piano concerto Mozart dextrously avoids a mawkish descent into the minor key, we delight both in the ingenuity and tact with which, for aesthetic ends, that descent is avoided, and we enjoy, too, the aesthetic beauty of the resultant sound.

But this does not go far enough. For in focussing as Säätelä does, on the artistic manipulation of material for *aesthetic* effect, the

account leaves out something that Säätelä continuously stresses as much more central to the power and importance of art. This is variously put. We are told that “works of art make a deep impression on us, strike as important” (op. cit., p.235) where this has to do with the way in which art can “speak to the human condition” or “the importance that art might have in human life” (ibid., p.247).

Somewhere here we seem to be confronted with something deeper than a delight, great and important to us as that might be, in the manipulation of material purely for *aesthetic* effect. What this is is hinted at in something that Säätelä cites from Tilghman, who wants to understand the contrast between appreciating something as correct and being struck by the tremendous in art as corresponding to a distinction between aesthetics and art.

Under “aesthetics” Tilghman includes such matters such as design and arrangement of lines, shapes and colours in the visual arts; rhyme, meter, alliteration in poetry; tonal relations, harmonies, and so on in music, etc. and he writes, therefore, that “to appreciate a thing and find it correct... is pretty clearly to restrict oneself to these aesthetic properties of things”. He adds, however, that “by art I want to understand something that can be of great

importance, that can have significance and meaning, and that can have depth". Moreover there is talk of the way in which we find important and deep those works with which, as Wittgenstein put it, we can "resonate".

What are we to make of all this? Let us begin with another passage from Tilghman which Säätelä does not quote. Tilghman first quotes Wittgenstein:

Only an artist can so represent an individual thing as to make it appear to us like a work of art... . A work of art forces us – as one might say – to see it in the right perspective but, in the absence of art, the object is just a fragment of nature like any other (*Culture and Value*, p.4).

Tilghman then adds:

To see an object in the right perspective is surely to see it as having a certain spirit or expression, but the world certainly does not force us to see it in the right perspective; in fact it is doubtful whether there is a right way of seeing the world. There are, of course, ethically preferable ways of seeing it – as happy rather than unhappy, for example – but how we see it let up to us. A work of art, by contrast, shows us things as seen by someone else and thus does not leave its vision up to us, but forces us, as we might say, to see those things as the artist did (Wittgenstein: *Ethics and Aesthetics*, p.52).

One thing I find here is this thought. Art can seem *illuminating* to us. We can feel that a work says something that we, too, have inchoately felt. When that happens we do indeed resonate with the work, and when that which is *expressed* for us is something deep and important to us, then we will feel that the work is deep indeed.

And now, at last, I have used the word "expression". For the force of all this is that a work of art can be expressive, both in the sense that it articulates for us, as Tilghman says, a view of the world and, moreover, in helping us express what we have felt in such a way as to make us resonate with the work. And since, as Wollheim has argued, those expressive mechanisms are connected with things central to the economy of our psychological lives, with ways we come to terms with our loves and hates, that account like no other, gives us a demonstration of the importance of art.

Säätelä does not discuss expression as such, save for a repetition of Passmore's canard that Croce's aesthetics was "dreary and pretentious nonsense". Yet the notion that a work of art may get its importance from the fact that it expresses things with which we may resonate lurks in all that Säätelä says when he tries to explain how the importance of art may surpass its aesthetic importance.

This is no place to embark on a further defence of expression theories so I conclude with three comments.

First, any account of art that links it to the notion of expression is four-squarely in accord with Wittgenstein's writings. What emerges time and again from the remarks in *Culture and Value* is the view that works of art are important because of what they express and are judged in accordance with whether what they express does or does not harmonise with the lives of those who encounter them.

Second, immense damage has been done in this area by careless invocations of notions like family resemblance and denials of the possibility of talking about essence. That leads to suspicions that anyone who says that art is, at bottom, a matter of expression, violates the rules of the Wittgensteinian game. Here I make only two observations. To begin with one cannot, as Dick Beardsmore has powerfully argued, begin with the assumption that the notion of family resemblance is clear. In fact, as I argued in my book, it would seem that there are understandings of the notion of family resemblance which are compatible with the belief that essential features of something can be found. (After all, from the fact that games need have nothing in common it does not follow that games of rugby have

nothing in common). To that I add that Wittgenstein, as far as I can see, never denied the possibility of talking about essences. What he denied was that certain ways of thinking of meanings as essences were quite unhelpful. (The notion of the meaning of a world as stemming from an essential mental process of understanding, for example). But the often quoted phrase "essence is expressed by grammar", far from denying that talk of essences is intelligible, seems to me to say just the opposite. It says "talk of essence if you wish, but think what you are saying". Why then, in accordance with that oft quoted tag, should one not say that the "grammar" of the term "art", the way we employ that term, the way it fits into our lives, reveals something we might think of as essential in the sense of "central" to art?

Third, a closer attention to the possibility of expression in art would have helped Säätelä to deal rather more elegantly with the problem that he raises at the very end of his book - when he raises Kundera's possibility that "the dial of European painting has reached midnight" adding that "perhaps night is near for music and literature as well". He then continues: "Wittgenstein himself is suggesting something like this when writing (in 1930) about 'the disappearance of a culture'". Wittgenstein writes:

“in times like these genuine strong characters simply leave the arts and turn to other things and somehow the worth of the individual man finds expression. Not, to be sure, in the way it would at a time of high culture”.

Säätelä remarks that this does not entail the disappearance of the arts. Rather it might be that what are called the “high arts” become irrelevant, and the values which were once embodied might there find their home now in so-called popular or mass culture. That seems to me to be entirely possible. But I think the matter can be even more strongly put. If a world of art by definition expressively articulates how it is with a person now, in the environment and the situation in which he or she finds his or her home, and is to speak to people who are similarly located, then two things must be true. First, art *cannot* vanish as long as there are human beings. For those beings, their very psychology demands the expressiveness we find in art. Second, art both must and must not change. First, in so far as the art of the past was created by beings like us, we can find ourselves in it. But to the extent that the condition of our lives changes, so there will be the need to find some expressive mechanism to make art concretely ours now. Those who bemoan the fact that this isn’t being done ought to be

asked, first, whether they have confused that claim with the claim that this is not being done in the old ways. And, second, those who talk of the death of art ought to be asked how they can prove a difference between the claim that at the moment great expressions are not being produced in mass culture (which I think is simply untrue) with the claim that they never will be again.

A parthian shot. One thing I bless Simo for. There are those who think that the important question is What is art?, where this can be asked without asking why art is important to us. Well, I concede the institution theory this: it is true that if someone can get something into a gallery, most people, even those who think it to be rubbish or who don’t understand it, will be happy enough to have it called “art”. But what that shows us is how little we have understood when we have learned to call something “art”. What in the end we want to know is *why art is important to us* and how the *avant garde* things which puzzle us possess that importance. It is because his work focusses so centrally and instructively on that question and approaches it with such imagination, scholarship and seriousness that Säätelä, to return to my beginning, adds a new chapter to the distinguished story of Scandinavian aesthetics.