Developmental Stages in Children's Aesthetic Responses

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For some time we have been trying to identify developmental stages in children's responses to paintings. This article is primarily a description of our findings to date. Although the findings are still tentative, the line of thought presented might nevertheless be of interest to readers of this journal. A few explanatory remarks seem necessary before we present our findings, though we keep them to a minimum here in order to save space for the descriptive material.

The responses of individuals to paintings differ on many dimensions. Our central problem has been to discover which of these many kinds of differences are cognitive-developmental in character. In looking for answers we have had in mind a parallel with the work of Piaget, Kohlberg, and Selman: we were seeking a cognitive-developmental account of aesthetic response. One motivation was a conviction about the autonomous character of aesthetic experience, i.e., a belief that it is *sui generis* in an important sense. Aesthetic experience is not moral experience, just as morality is not science. Many philosophers have regarded these three as basically different modes of experience.[1] This suggests, to a cognitive-developmentalist, that each of the three will have its own developmental history, distinct in the way that Kohlberg's stages of moral judgment are distinct from Piaget's stages of scientific

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thought. We have, therefore, *not* tried to apply to thinking about the arts the stages described by Piaget or by Kohlberg; to do so would be to treat paintings as if they were objects for scientific or moral analysis. Rather, we have tried to treat paintings as aesthetic objects, and to uncover stages of response to specifically aesthetic objects.

Of course, a young child is far from clear about what is "specifically aesthetic," just as he is not clear about what makes a matter moral or nonmoral. This distinction develops over time; what changes is the kind of thing the child finds to be relevant or irrelevant in his experience of an aesthetic object as such.

This developing sense of relevance has an essentially normative character, since it determines what does and does not count in an aesthetic response. It is therefore clear that the sense has a cognitive and judgmental aspect to it, and that the stages are stages of aesthetic judgment. But it seems equally clear that the sense also has an affective and experiential aspect, since to find something relevant in an aesthetic experience is to respond to it with some feeling. What develops affectively is not so much the power of feeling (all children have that), but the power of feeling relevantly, i.e., in the direction of increased complexity, subtlety, and responsiveness. We think, therefore, that these stages are stages of aesthetic experience, as well as of judgment. The cognitive sense of relevance, as it develops, structures experience into qualitatively different stages.

There is, as we believe our descriptions will amply illustrate, both a positive and negative aspect to this development. On one hand, the child becomes more aware of, and responds to more features of, the aesthetic object than previously; what was not noticed at an earlier stage, or was thought to be irrelevant, now becomes important. On the other, many considerations relating to the total child/painting situation are thought important at an earlier stage which are discounted, or found irrelevant, at a later stage.

This immediately raises normative questions, since the implication is that each such change is in the direction of what is relevant in an aesthetic response. In fact, any developmental scheme implies a normative conception of the end state to which development leads. In our case, we must be able to give an account of the kinds of features of aesthetic objects found to be relevant in the aesthetic experience of sophisticated adults. This, of course, is primarily a matter for the philosophy of art, or at least of art criticism; all we can do here is

point to the tradition on which we have relied. That tradition says that what is finally found to be important about a painting (considered as an aesthetic object) is its appearance — whatever is phenomenally available to the perception of any qualified observer. Our understanding of what this means has relied heavily on the work of Monroe Beardsley.[2] At the adult level, it may sometimes be difficult to decide whether a particular quality meets this criterion (e.g., the faint sadness of a line); but with the earlier stages with which we have been working, it is usually not difficult. For example, the following are not sufficient reasons for judgment: "It's my favorite color"; "It took a long time to paint"; "I disapprove of boxing and people hitting each other." Further examples abound in what follows. In any event, our attention is on the earlier stages; we have not attempted to provide a detailed description (let alone a justification) of the "end state," and simply appeal to the work of Beardsley and his followers for this. Our interviews did not go beyond high school, and it seems likely that most people have not reached the last stage of aesthetic development by that time.

Before we describe these stages, it might be helpful to draw attention to one other theme that lies behind them. This psychological consideration has guided us throughout. Role-taking, or "perspective-taking," is a mechanism that is thought to lie behind most cognitive-developmental schemes. The general notion is that children start life egocentrically, unable to take the perspective of any other person, and that much of mental development depends on the gradual acquisition and elaboration of this ability in its various forms. Each consecutive stage in our scheme requires an advance in perspective-taking ability. Whenever possible, our descriptions are written in such a way as to make this clear.

Methodology

We showed three large reproductions of well-known paintings to individual students from grades one through twelve (thirteen from each grade), and asked them questions relating to the topics discussed below. The usual precautions were taken to make the child feel at ease and to point out that the situation involved no right/wrong answers. The topics and questions were prepared and practiced in advance, but the discussions were loosely structured in order to allow further exploration of points as it seemed desirable. The paintings were, for the first six grades, Klee's *Head of a Man,* Picasso's *Weeping*

Woman, Renoir's *Girl and a Dog;* for the last six grades, Bellows's *Dempsy and Firpo,* Picasso's *Guernica,* and Marc Chagall's *Circus.*

Analysis of the transcripts was done in two steps: sense units were identified and assigned to one of our topics; then each unit within a topic was assigned to a stage. This latter was done without knowledge of grade level. We began with descriptions of topics and stages, but the process of matching these with the data obliged us to modify and sophisticate our descriptions, and in some cases to scrap them and start over. It also caused us to see various inadequacies in the interviews themselves. However, holding descriptions stable and taking random samples, we obtained over 90 percent inter-judge reliability among the three of us on both operations.

Having assigned sense units to stages, we went back to the transcripts to match stages with grade levels. Where a student had several sense units on one topic and those units were not all scored at the same stage, we assigned the student to the highest stage reached within the topic. The following table gives the average stage level of the thirteen students in each grade for each stage, and demonstrates a satisfactory directionality for the stages. The apparent regression in the *Subject-matter* and *Color* topics between grades 6 and 7 we attribute largely to the use of different reproductions, which elicited slightly different kinds of information. We do not regard these figures as a kind of proof; only longitudinal studies could approach that status.

TABLE I. Average Stage Score for Each Topic by Grade Level.

Grades	Semblance	Subject Matter	Feeling	Artist's Properties	Color	Judgment
1st	1.0	1.0	0.9	1.6	1.5	1.2
2nd	1.0	1.1	0.9	2.0	1.5	1.7
3rd	1.0	1.2	1.0	1.9	2.0	2.0
4th	1.0	1.2	1.0	2.0	1.9	1.8
5th	1.2	1.5	1.0	2.0	2.0	1.9
6th	1.7	1.8	1.0	2.1	2.0	2.0
7th	1.7	1.3	1.5	2.4	1.4	2.2
8th	2.0	1.3	1.2	2.3	1.8	2.0
9th	2.5	1.6	1.9	2.9	2.3	2.6
10th	2.8	1.8	2.1	2.8	2.5	3.3
11th	2.4	2.2	2.1	3.2	2.4	3.0
12th	2.9	2.5	2.3	3.6	2.8	3.1

TOPICS AND STAGES

We were able to identify six topics that revealed developmental levels. A topic is a coherent unit of discussion on which students were able to offer opinions and reasons for opinions. Although there appear to be logical relations between topics, we have not worked these out, because our data did not seem sufficient to provide a worthwhile empirical backing. Therefore, we are unable to speak of aesthetic stages in general, that is, stages across all topics. Any attempt to generalize in this way now would tend to shut off further research interest, rather than to stimulate it. So we present the topics one by one, and the stages within them.

We do not think we have identified all the important topics, or stages within topics. We are limited by our ingenuity and our data. In particular, it seems evident at times that there must be stages both earlier and later than the ones described. Since we did not interview preschool children or high school students, we have no data for them. In some cases it is quite clear that there must be an earlier stage than the ones we report; for example, in our first topic, all the children we interviewed already understood that paintings can refer to something by pictorially representing it. We assume that this is an idea which must be learned, though we have no data on how or when this happens.

Topic 1: Semblance

The first topic we call Semblance. This is meant to cover the range of possible views concerning how and whether a painting refers, or what makes it a picture. We were able to distinguish three stages for this topic, which we describe below, with a few examples.

Stage 1, Semblance. The concept dominating this first stage is the idea of representation. It is presumably a new achievement, which distinguishes this from an earlier stage. We know from studies of children's drawing activities that for the very young a scribble is a scribble, a line is a line, a color is a color. There are no pictures; paintings are not "about" anything. In our first stage the idea of picturing by representing is taken for granted, and attention is focused more on the subject matter than on anything else.

Paintings represent objects by portraying their important features, both what can be seen and what is known to be true about them: a person's head must have two eyes, a nose, a mouth; a hand must not have six fingers. Representation is considered item by item; the whole may or may not be distorted or out of proportion. The chief demand

is that the painting be comprehensible. Often this is articulated as the demand that things look "real," or like they are "supposed to." We call this the stage of schematic realism. Examples:

Q. Is this the way you'd expect a painting of a weeping woman to be painted?
A. No.
Q. Why?
A. When someone cries that's not how he looks. The other eye is supposed to be over here, not there.
Q. What do you think the artist should have done differently?
A. Put the eye over here, put another finger on that hand.
(Boy, 2nd grade)

Q. How can you tell a good painting from a bad painting?
A. You can tell what it is if it's a good painting. (Girl, 4th grade)

Q. Is this a good thing to paint a painting about?
A. No.
Q. How come?
A. Because it doesn't look good.
Q. Why doesn't it look good?
A. Cause it doesn't look like a man should look. (Girl, 2nd grade)

Stage 2, Semblance. The new distinction achieved at this stage is that between schematic and visual realism. Paintings are still required to represent, and to look "real"; but what is to be represented is the visual appearance of objects, rather than simply what is known about them. This amounts to a more precise set of expectations, which we called "photographic realism." This change requires a degree of decentering because it takes account of what can be seen by anyone. The shift can best be illustrated from our discussions of Picasso's *Weeping Woman.* The youngest students objected to the placement of two eyes on one side of the face and the fact that the eyes looked like "boats," yet they usually did not object to the hands. While the hands are quite contorted, they do have five fingers and fingernails like hands are "supposed to."

Q. What about the eyes?
A. They're weird and they shouldn't both be on the same side.
Q. What about the hands?
A. They're okay.
Q. Do you think the artist should have done them any differently?
A. No, they're okay. (Boy, 2nd grade)

Older students began to object that, although the hands had five fingers and fingernails, they weren't like "real" hands:

Q. What about the hands?
A. They're weird.
Q. Is there anything he should have done differently?
A. Made the hands look like real hands. (Girl, 6th grade)

Q. What about how he made the hands?
A. The fingers are weird cause they don't go like a real hand. (Girl, 6th grade)

Other examples of Stage 2:

Q. How can you tell if a painting is a good painting?
A. Everything is exactly how it looks and stuff. It's got background and the dog is exactly like a dog. (Girl, 5th grade)

Q. How could the artist have improved this painting?
A. He could have made the people more life-like; you can tell they are people but they aren't very life-like. (Girl, 10th grade)

Q. How could the artist have improved this painting?
A. Make their faces look like real faces instead of shapes. (Boy, 7th grade)

Stage 3, Semblance. The demand for "realism" is dropped, except in cases where the painting seems to require it. Otherwise various styles and degrees of abstraction and distortion are accepted. There is increased awareness of, and tolerance for, a variety of kinds of painting, intentions of the artist, and responses of the viewer. The criterion for deciding how paintings should picture objects is usually inferred from the painting as a whole. For example, the artist's intention is often appealed to, or a genre, however vague; e.g., "modern art." Again, this seems to require an advance in perspective-taking, since it acknowledges the possible multiplicity of intentions, points-of-view, or responses to an object.

Q. What do you think the artist should have done differently?
A. He could have made it more real, if he wanted to, but for this kind of painting, I think it's good. (Girl, 8th grade)

Q. Would this be a better painting if it were more realistic?
A. I think it is better the way it is, abstract, or even more so, in a way. This relates to the total confusion of the situation. (Boy, 12th grade)

Q. Would this be a better painting if it were more realistic?
A. No, I don't think so. If he's trying to show his feelings and if this is what his feelings are then this is the way the painting should be. (Girl, 10th grade)

Q. Would this be a better painting if it were more realistic?
A. I don't think so, because photographs will capture action but I think

the artist tried to go inside of the action, and I think a simple photograph or reproducing it on a painting just reduces the effect of what this tries to do. (Boy, 12th grade)

Topic II: Subject Matter

This topic includes all views on the kind of subject matter that is appropriate or acceptable in a painting, where "subject matter" means what is referred to or pictured. The first topic (Semblance) concerned how paintings refer; this concerns what is referred to. Though we found we could make this distinction quite reliably, there is a close parallel between the stages in the two topics. In each we found three stages, and conjecture that there is an earlier one for which we had no evidence.

Stage 1, Subject Matter. At this stage, the character of the subject matter dominates the response to a painting. The child thinks paintings should be about pleasant, interesting, and customary subjects; they should be about happy rather than sad things, and it is better if there is some action going on. There is an implication that appropriate subjects are a matter of common consensus: that it is obvious that people prefer pleasant to unpleasant subjects, and that everyone will agree what is pleasant. We take this to be a sign of relative egocentricity.

Q. Is this a good thing to paint a painting about?
A. Not that good.
Q. What do you think artists should paint about?
A. The ocean and trees and pretty things. (Boy, 2nd grade)

Q. What do you think painters should paint about?
A. Happy things and pretty things. (Girl, 2nd grade)

Q. Is this the kind of thing you'd expect an artist to paint about?
A. No, cause I sometimes look at sad paintings and I get tears in my eyes, and I just want things to come out all right. I don't like sad things.
Q. Is it good to paint about things that are sad?
A. No, I like paintings to be nice and not about sad things.
(Boy, 3rd grade)

Stage 2, Subject Matter. The range of suitable subject matters expands to include much that was previously thought unsuitable — in particular, sad, nostalgic, and unpleasant subjects. However, violent, cruel, or tragic items are still rejected, often on moral grounds. The moral grounds are not always clear; "most people wouldn't like that" is a reason for rejecting a subject. There is also a more explicit appeal to what other people like and dislike.

Q. Is this a good thing to paint about, a girl and a dog?
A. Yeah.
Q. Why?
A. Cause . . . I like animals.
Q. It's a good thing to paint about animals?
A. Yeah.
Q. What if this were a sad painting about an animal, like the dog was hurt or something bad had happened to him? Would that be a good thing to paint a painting about?
A. Yeah, cause it would show that dogs get hurt . . . it would show that animals get hurt.
Q. What if it were about something mean, like someone being mean to an animal?
A. I wouldn't like that.
Q. Would that be a good thing to paint about?
A. I don't think so. (Boy, 5th grade)

Q. Is boxing the kind of subject that you would expect people to paint about?
A. No, because it's portraying violence and I don't think many people like that. (Girl, 10th grade)

Q. Is this the kind of thing you'd expect an artist to paint about?
A. Sort of, but not this way, because people don't like to look at it. This is a sad picture, they look at it, not as something to relate to but they look at the parts all mangled, and people don't want to look at that. When parts of the body are missing people don't like to keep that in their mind. Most war pictures are painted about people who have just been shot and are laying on the ground, but this picture has people all in different pieces and it's not how most war paintings would be painted. (Boy, 10th grade)

Stage 3, Subject Matter. Good art can be made of any subject, including the violent, cruel, and tragic. Moral objections are finally dropped as irrelevant to art. Appropriateness of subject matter is determined by considering various criteria, e.g., the viewer's responses or the reality of the theme. There is a much greater awareness of the variety of attitudes possible toward any subject matter. In addition, what is referred to is often formulated as something more abstract than before; "winning and losing," "sadness at war."

Q. Is this the kind of thing you'd expect an artist to paint about?
A. Yes, because I think that a circus has overtones on life. In a sense it represents life and is also a chance to get away from life. It offers the painter a wide range of possibilities; whatever meanings he's trying to get across, he can probably take a circus and find a place to use those ideas. (Boy, 12th grade)

Q. Is this the kind of thing you'd expect an artist to paint about?
A. Yeah, for someone who has lived through an experience. I wouldn't

expect someone who has read about it, but for someone who was in the town and for him to come out and to paint something like this, I wouldn't think him off his rocker because in an abstract way it's captured all the feelings and expressions and things that went on in that time. (Boy, 11th grade)

Q. Do you like this painting?
A. I like it because wars are sometimes necessary. I think there are other ways to solve things, I think since I was born I can remember war going on with one country or another and it is a fact and I would buy it because it represents it and the people. (Girl, 12th grade)

Q. Is war the kind of subject that you would expect people to paint about?
A. I think war is a real life situation, war is one of the largest events in history. When they write about history books, one of the main things is war, which tells a lot about the whole world situation. It's not necessarily a good topic but one that many artists would be concerned with. (Boy, 12th grade)

Topic III: Feelings

The key question in this topic is: What kinds and sources of emotions are influential in the aesthetic response? As already indicated, we assume that the aesthetic response includes affective components, but that affect may be more or less clearly based on the aesthetic object. Again, we were able to distinguish three stages.

Stage 1, Feelings. Here the child focuses on particular characters in the painting one at a time and attributes feelings to them. In doing this he is guided as much, or more, by the overt subject matter as by the expressiveness of painting. He uses stereotypes and implies that others have motives and feelings similar to what his own would be. He does not see subtle, complex, or ambiguous feelings.

This is an advance on the stage that we presume to precede it. The child focuses on the painting itself and is guided by what he sees far more than previously. He is not prey to arbitrary associations, and he distinguishes more clearly what he sees from what he is reminded of. Nor does he project his own feeling into the painting so freely. If asked how the painting makes him feel, he usually identifies the feeling attributed to a major character.

Q. What kind of feeling would you say is in this painting?
A. Hatred.
Q. Why's that?
A. Because they are fighting.
Q. Is that the main feeling or are there other feelings?
A. I think that's the only one.

Q. What feeling do you get when you look at this painting?
A. The feeling of hatred, like out to kill. (Girl, 8th grade)

Q. What kind of feeling would you say is in this painting?
A. People are having fun.
Q. What feeling do you get when you look at this painting?
A. Like the people in the background are enjoying the show, and the food that they are eating. (Girl, 8th grade)

Q. What kind of feeling would you say is in this painting?
A. Like someone at a circus.
Q. Is it a happy feeling or a sad feeling?
A. These people up here look like they are having a good time.
Q. Is there one or many feelings in the painting?
A. There can be more than one feeling.
Q. What other feeling is there?
A. You can see someone looking at someone else.
Q. What feeling do you get when you look at this painting?
A. They look like they are happy. (Girl, 7th grade)

Stage 2, Feelings. The distinction between one's own feeling and that attributed to characters in the painting is made explicit at this stage. The child's feelings often derive from prior views of subject matter — interest, moral disapproval, boredom, personal sympathy, etc. This feeling rests on a new understanding that different people may respond in different ways to the painting, and that one's own feelings may not be shared by everyone. Although attention is still on individual characters, rather than on the painting as a whole, there is greater tolerance of ambiguity of feeling both in oneself and in the painting.

Q. What kind of feeling would you say is in this painting?
A. Excitement, because all of the people around the ring are cheering him on.
Q. Would you say there is one or many feelings?
A. There's probably many.
Q. What other feelings would you say are there?
A. These other people here are afraid because they are scared something is going to happen to that guy. He might hurt himself.
Q. What feeling do you get when you look at this painting?
A. Emptiness really, like if I were to go to one of those fights, I'd probably be bored stiff. (Girl, 10th grade)

Q. What kind of feeling would you say is in the painting?
A. Well, sadness and gloom on one side and roaring emotion on the other.
Q. Which one do you think is the strongest?
A. The roaring emotion, because everybody is cheering the guy that knocked the other guy down into the stands.

Q. What kind of feeling do you get when you look at the painting, what emotion?
A. I feel sorry for the guy that's falling over, and I feel sorry for the guy underneath too. (Boy, 9th grade)

Q. Well, what kind of feeling comes across from the painting?
A. Well, sort of a happy feeling if you like circuses, but I hate circuses.
Q. What kind of feeling do you get when you look at the painting, what emotion?
A. I don't get feelings out of the picture; I don't enjoy pictures like that. (Girl, 11th grade)

Stage 3, Feelings. Stage three generalizes beyond the feelings of individual characters to the emotional impact of the painting as a whole. Respondents may or may not adopt the point of view of the artist, speaking of the artist's feelings or intentions. Similarly, they may adopt the point of view of the universal spectator. This seems again to require advances in perspective-taking abilities. The distinction between respondents' own and others' feelings is very clear, and respondents can set aside their own feelings as prejudices when they are not relevant. Feelings are seen as complex and particular.

Q. What kind of feeling would you say is in the painting?
A. Well, I think he's sort of mocking the circus with this, and without the head, and a few of these things like that. (Boy, 11th grade)

Q. What kind of feeling would you say is in the painting?
A. Like I said, some would say violence, but I would say anticipation.
Q. Anticipation of what exactly?
A. Well, it's a battle of physical prowess and you fight it out to the end and one is beaten and one has made the better showing. I'm not happy about it, I don't like to see people hurt. It's not that, it's just that if you're a boxing buff that's what you want to see, and that's what he's got down here. (Girl, 12th grade)

Q. What kind of feeling would you say is in the painting?
A. Confusion and fear.
Q. Why do you get that?
A. Because you don't know what it's about. You look at all of the mouths and they are trying to scream; this person over here looks like she is looking for light and doesn't know where to go; and this guy here in the corner, he's screaming like let me out.
Q. What feeling do you get when you look at this painting?
A. In a way, it's very strange because I wish I could help. I wish something like that wouldn't happen. Maybe Picasso was trying to get his point across saying why do you do this? Look what it does to the people, look what happens. It makes you feel like you are guilty almost, like this is your doing. (Girl, 12th grade)

Topic IV: Color

Here we looked more particularly at color, an element of the medium itself. The basic question shaping this topic is: What is it about color that is pleasing? Or, what constitutes goodness of color in a painting? Children seem to find this perhaps the most readily intelligible and easily answered question ("Are these good colors? What makes them good colors?"); their answers fall into three rather clear levels. We tried to do the same thing with other particular aspects of painting, especially with form, but could not get worthwhile results. More work with topics of this kind is merited.

Stage 1, Color. Young children appear to respond very directly to color. On the one hand they delight in color itself, relishing colorfulness and preferring bright, gay, distinct colors. They say that color is better than no color (i.e., black and white), and that more colors are better than few. They have strong preferences for some colors over others. Brightness is preferred to dullness. These preferences are very egocentrically based. "It's a good color" means much the same as "I like the color"; a situation sometimes summed up in the phrase, "It's my favorite color." The term "favorite" seems to indicate a relation between the color and the individual that does not acknowledge the presence of others. It names a quality of the color as most important, i.e., "being-my-favorite," which is inaccessible to others, can't be seen by them.

Young children do not look closely at particular patches of color: they seem content to recognize the color rather than to realize its qualities in the particular instance. It is red, not this particular patch of red that is a favorite. It is as if the general color word acts as a kind of prejudice that short-circuits the need for closer scrutiny of individual patches. Although children are very responsive to color at this stage, paradoxically, they do not individuate them very well.

When children were asked how they could tell "good colors," typical responses included: "I look at 'em," "They're bright and they show up," "They're my favorites."

Q. Which painting do you like best?
A. This one.
Q. The Klee? Why?
A. It has more colors. This one has more colors too.
Q. Which do you like best?
A. This one has more colors [Renoir] and this one [Klee] doesn't have green. (Boy, 1st grade)

Q. What do you think about the colors? [Renoir]
A. I like 'em.
Q. Why?
A. Cause they're bright colors. (Boy, 1st grade)

Q. What do you think about the colors?
A. I think it should be colorful. (Boy, 1st grade)

Q. What do you think about the colors?
A. I don't know, I don't like 'em.
Q. How come?
A. They're all dark and they don't look good.
Q. What would have been better?
A. If they looked like this [Renoir]. It needs to have a lot of colors. (Boy, 2nd grade)

Stage 2, Color. At this stage, there is a new sense of appropriateness for color. This sense is clearly dependent on the notion of realistic representation discussed in the *semblance* topic. Colors are good if they are appropriate to the subject represented. Vocabulary at this stage included "real," "right," "proper." Some typical responses to the question "What makes these colors good?" include:

'Cause there's dogs that color and dresses that color.

'Cause when you look at a real person like that you think that's what it would look like.

Well, you know, it's just like if it wasn't a painting it would really look like that.

There was little doubting how one tells that a color is realistic, or what things really look like, or who is to decide such matters. It seemed taken for granted that everyone would think the same, that the colors of things are obvious and indisputable. This implies continued stereotyping and is similar to the assumptions in our first stages of *subject matter* and *feelings.*

One noticeable difference from the first stage is that a painting might have "too many" colors — as several children said of the Klee:

A. It's got weird colors, too.
Q. What's weird about the colors?
A. Too many colors on the face. (Girl, 6th grade)

Q. What do you think the artist should have done differently?
A. The face should be just one color.
Q. Why?
A. Cause faces aren't really a whole bunch of colors. (Girl, 2nd grade)

Stage 3, Color. At the third stage there is a fuller sense of appropriateness of color: color should be appropriate to the whole painting,

to its mood, or theme, or the intention of the artist. This includes the appropriateness of realism, where to be realistic is the intention of the artist. What is new is the view that colors can express emotion or mood directly, without the necessity for realism in every case. This view did not emerge clearly in our sample until the late high school years.

Q. What do you think about the colors in this painting?
A. I think it fits it really well. Like, it is not a realistic painting, it is kind of an entertaining painting and he chose his colors very entertaining. They draw attention to what you want to see here; he makes those brighter, different. (Boy, 12th grade)

Q. What do you think about the choice of colors for this painting?
A. I like them because when you think of war, you think of everything being dark and gloomy, but if it had to be changed I think I would make them darker because when you think of death, you think of darkness. (Girl, 12th grade)

Q. What do you think of the colors that were used for this painting?
A. I thought they were a good choice, not real sharp black and whites, mostly a grey, and it seems to bring out the darkness and the fury and panic and death. (Boy, 12th grade)

Topic V: The Artist's Properties

This topic deals with children's views of what it takes to be a good artist. We asked what an artist would need to paint a good painting, and, in particular, what would be difficult about it. We call the topic the artist's "properties," because the first stage does not answer in terms of personal qualities at all. The development through the four stages of this topic most obviously reveals an increasing ability to see the painting from the point of view of the painter, and a growing awareness of the importance of the affective and emotional in art.

In one sense, this topic is further removed from actual paintings than the others, since it is overtly about artists. However, the artists involved are not usually particular people, but are generalized, as in: "Anyone who painted this painting . . ." Moreover, the topic is clearly normative, since it refers to qualities needed to paint a good painting.

Stage 1, Artist's Properties. Young children mentioned only physical items as necessary to paint a good painting. Characteristic responses include:

A brush and paint and some water to get the paint out of the brushes.
Lots of colors and a paint brush.
Just a paper and paints to color it.

The implication seems to be that anyone who has the physical equip-

ment could paint well. When children at this stage were asked which paintings would have been hardest to do, they chose the largest paintings, those with most colors and objects represented in them, and those where there were small spaces to put colors.

Stage 2, Artist's Properties. At the second stage, attributes of the artist himself were dominantly mentioned. While these are personal qualities, they are not really individual; they involve such qualities as manual skill, perseverance, patience, hard work. Time is also frequently mentioned. It is assumed that the harder a painting is to do, the better it is. This amounts to admiration for craftsmanship, which has often been thought to be the beginning of aesthetic appreciation.

Q. Why would this painting be hard?
A. They'd have to try really hard to get the drawing right and it might take a month to draw one thing. (Girl, 4th grade)

Q. What does it take to paint a painting like this? [Klee]
A. It takes time and you really have to work at it. (Boy, 2nd grade)

Q. Which do you think would be the hardest painting to paint?
A. The first [Renoir] because it would be hard to get the colors in it and it has a lot of details. (Girl, 6th grade)

Q. Would the Renoir be harder or easier than the Klee?
A. Harder because it has more things in it and it's real. (Boy, 5th grade)

Stage 3, Artist's Properties. At stage three, children distinguish mental from other abilities as essential. An artist has to know what to do, to know what things look like, and be able to think up subjects for paintings. Often this means having seen the reality and noticed carefully how things look; other times it means thinking carefully about the subject and how to represent it. There is a stress on the cognitive, rather than the experiential or affective, results of these activities.

Q. What do you think it would take on the part of the artist to paint this picture?
A. He had to study for a long time I guess. He had to go to a lot of concerts, a lot of ballets to learn the forms and he had to study the people who were doing it. Just things like that, he'd have to know a lot about it. (Boy, 9th grade)

Q. What does it take to paint a painting like this?
A. A lot of effort.
Q. Would it be hard?
A. The drawing of it would. You'd have to study people a lot to be able to do it. (Girl, 9th grade)

Q. What do you think it would take on the part of the artist to paint this picture?

A. Well, he probably went to a circus and sort of imagined from some of the things that were seen, and I think he probably saw a guitar and made an animal out of it, from the animal in the circus, and he sort of departed things like the body from her head, and made different things out of the original picture. (Girl, 8th grade)

Q. What do you think it would take on the part of the artist to paint this picture?

A. I'd say a lot of thought and a lot of imagination, the way he doesn't paint all of the people realistic, they are just all distorted, their hands and faces and I think that's a part of it which shows confusion. (Boy, 9th grade)

Stage 4, Artist's Properties. At this last stage, affective qualities are picked out from other, more cognitive qualities as essential to the artist. Experience is necessary more because it has affected the artist than because it gave him ideas or knowledge. Creativity, meaningfulness, or talent is largely a matter of feeling.

Q. What do you think it would take on the part of the artist to paint this picture?

A. He'd have to experience almost every one of those feelings that's represented by different animals and things, in order to capture it like he has, because he's done a good job as far as the animals and the woman, plus he would have to have been there. He probably would have been against the people who were bombing.

Q. How do you get that?

A. If he was for the bombers then he would have made the people look small and weak and very scared and showed it as them being the people in trouble, whereas I get the impression from this as being for them and relating to what they felt. (Boy, 11th grade)

Q. What do you think it would take on the part of the artist to paint this picture?

A. I think the person that painted it must have gone through a lot of suffering.

Q. How can you tell?

A. Just the expression on people's faces, they look helpless. (Girl, 12th grade)

Q. What do you think it would take on the part of the artist to paint this picture?

A. It seems like he can kind of remove himself from the whole situation and he kind of sees the war in a way and shows the uselessness of it and the agony that people experience and the destruction, and in a way, it gives the feeling of how useless it all is. (Girl, 12th grade)

Q. What do you think it would take on the part of the artist to paint this picture?

A. I think if he was there during the bombing I think he is a man that has a lot of fear, and horror inside of him. (Girl, 12th grade)

Q. What do you think it would take on the part of the artist to paint this picture?
A. The artist probably have to have been there when it happened, and he might have lost somebody close to him, because it looks like it's all about death and destruction. (Boy, 11th grade)

Topic VI: Judgment

We call the last topic "judgment." It includes all kinds of reasons offered for an aesthetic judgment; in other words, anything that is counted as a reason for claiming "this is a good painting." In a way, this topic is different from the others in that it can provide a kind of synopsis of any of them. Any view classified in a previous topic can reappear here, reinterpreted as a reason for judgment. This topic is, therefore, at a level different from the others, and is more comprehensive. We have hesitated to include it because of its nonparallel character, but retain it for two reasons. First, it is the culmination of the others, rather than a repetition; it is a focal point, not just another section. Aesthetic experience naturally leads to, includes, and rests upon aesthetic evaluations, though these are not always explicit. Aesthetic experience possesses its own normative structure, and it is the development of this, as filtered through the abilities of children, with which we are centrally concerned.

Second, aesthetic experience, as a separate topic, contains some new distinctions. For instance, in no other topic is it clear (although it may be implicit) that the youngest children cannot tell the difference between judgment and preference. In the first stage, the meanings of "I like this painting" and "I think this is a good painting" are indistinguishable. We interpret this again as early egocentricity. This attitude is importantly different from the relativism of the fourth stage, where it may be claimed that, for example, "This is a good painting" *means* "I like this painting." In the first case, the distinction at issue is overlooked or ignored. The second presumes the distinction, just because it is a denial of its importance or meaningfulness. It is a reaction, perhaps, to the intermediate stages in which the distinction is first learned and taken for granted; but it is not a return to the first. It is, rather, an advance over the previous stage, in terms of diminished egocentricity and greater relevance to the aesthetic object.

Stage 1, Judgment. In the first stage, reasons for judging a painting to be good were based directly on personal preferences. Judgments were often idiosyncratic or dogmatic, or both. Children could not distinguish preference from judgment, e.g., they used "I like it" inter-

changeably with "It's good." We did not get many cases of this behavior.

Q. Do you think this is a good painting?
A. Yeah.
Q. Why?
A. I just like it. (Boy, 1st grade)

Q. Which do you like the best of the three paintings?
A. Probably this one.
Q. The Renoir? Why?
A. Cause I like pets. I have one dog, one bird, two cats, and a horse. (Boy, 4th grade)

Stage 2, Judgment. The main criteria for judging paintings at this stage are the amount of time and effort it took; the manual skill involved; the amount of detail; the degree of realism achieved. Such criteria implicitly acknowledge the experience of others, because they appeal to features that are not idiosyncratic but are thought to be there for anyone to see. They constitute a lever by which to create the judgment/preference distinction and are a milestone of decentering in aesthetic experience.

These criteria are taken for granted, not argued for. Characteristic reasons for judging a painting good:

The colors mainly make it good.

It's done very carefully.

It has good colors and things look right.

He made the outlines just right.

It looks like the real thing.

It has lots of good details.

It has a lot more things in it and it would be harder to draw and put everything in it.

Another example:

Q. Would you say that you like this painting or you don't like this painting?
A. I like this one a lot because I like boxing, and I like the way they made these guys, showing their muscles so it looks real.
Q. Would you say that this is a good painting or it's not a good painting?
A. Yeah, because their faces look real. They've got shading in them and he knows how to draw faces and bodies well. (Girl, 7th grade)

Stage 3, Judgement. The criteria for judgment expand and change at this stage; of primary importance is whether a painting is expressive. This is sometimes thought of as cognitive ("conveys a message")

and sometimes affective ("expresses an emotion"). Stage two criteria of skill, effort, and realism are retained only as instrumental to these effects. What is expressed is often vaguely conceived, but it is assumed that the message or emotion is unambiguous.

Q. Now this is more realistic and you said you don't like it?
A. I don't like the subject matter and feeling. That Dempsey painting may be doing what it's supposed to do, I mean it's a really popular painting, it's been around and it's supposed to make you hurt. I mean a painter is supposed to arouse an emotion whether it's negative or positive, but I don't like it. (Boy, 12th grade)

Q. Considering all three of these paintings, which one would you say you like the best?
A. The boxing one [Bellows] because it just looks better. It's something you would know about. These others aren't very ordinary.
Q. Considering all three of these paintings, which one would you say is the best painting?
A. This one [Picasso].
Q. Why?
A. Because they put a lot of meaning in it and it just expresses a lot. (Girl, 9th grade)

Q. Considering all three of these paintings, which one would you say you like the best?
A. Probably this one, because of the color.
Q. The circus one?
A. Yeah, I like the colors . . . there's a lot of different things going on, and in it there's something about life and everyone is happy.
Q. Would you say that this is a good painting or it's not a good painting?
A. I like it but I wouldn't say it's a good painting, because there's too many things going on . . .
Q. Considering all three of these paintings, which one would you say is the best painting?
A. The Picasso, because it's really showing something, and it stands out for showing fear. (Girl, 10th grade)

Q. Would you say that you like this painting or you don't like this painting?
A. I don't like it.
Q. Why?
A. It's good for what he's feeling. It's a good painting for after war, but I just don't like it.
Q. Can you tell me why?
A. It's not something you'd like hanging in your room, it's not a very happy picture.
Q. So you're saying you don't like it because it's not happy?
A. Well, it is just ugh!
Q. Would you say that this is a good painting, or it's not a good painting?

A. I think it's a good painting because it shows all of his real feelings. If you look at it you can tell what his real feelings are.
(Girl, 10th grade)

Stage 4, Judgment. The distinguishing feature of this stage is that the criteria for judging are seen as depending on the circumstance: the artist's intention, the beholder's response, or the genre or style to which it belongs. The emphasis is still on expressiveness, but how, what, and whether something has been expressed is a matter for interpretation. Sometimes stage two criteria (especially of realism) apply, because of the artist's intention, or genre considerations. This behavior seems to constitute an advance in perspective-taking ability in that it is no longer assumed that everyone will interpret a painting in exactly the same way. The result is sometimes what we can call "relativism" with respect to aesthetic judgments; i.e., the view that "It is a good painting" means "I like it," or "The artist likes it." This is not always so. There is also the view, for instance, that a painting is good if it is exactly as the artist intended it to be. We do not suppose that this is the final stage of aesthetic judgment, but it is the last one we could distinguish.

Q. Would you say that you like this painting or you don't like this painting?
A. Yeah, it's OK. It would be nice for a tourist to see, like Muhammad Ali, if he comes in and he could picture what happened.
Q. Would you say that this is a good painting or it's not a good painting?
A. In a way yes and in a way no. Like some older people might not enjoy it because it would take a violent act to do this and why can't they just be nice? And some younger people would say, it's all right and if you want to go fight, then go fight, and they'd say this guy is strong because he won the crown. (Girl, 7th grade)

Q. Would you say that this is a good painting or it's not a good painting?
A. Well, the artist has talent obviously. As far as talent goes I can say that it's good, but as far as — I can't say too much for his style.
Q. You say he obviously has talent. What shows you that?
A. Just some of these pictures, the heads, the details. It's just like music, you may not like country western music, but you can say he has talent. So he obviously has talent but I don't like it. (Boy, 12th grade)

Q. Would you say that you like this painting or you don't like this painting?
A. I don't think I like it because, I think — not because it scares me, I think that has a little to do with it — but I don't like the way it was done.
Q. You just don't like it?

A. Yeah. It could be because it bothers me.
Q. Would you say that this is a good painting or it's not a good painting?
A. I think it's a good painting because he portrays emotion. It's like a poem, if you don't like it, it's just a bunch of jumbled words unless it has meaning to you. This would have meaning. (Girl, 12th grade)
Q. Would you say that you like this painting or you don't like this painting?
A. I really don't like it.
Q. Why don't you like it?
A. It's something that doesn't interest me and it's sort of abstract. I wouldn't mind having it to sort of sit back and try and interpret it.
Q. Would you say that this is a good painting or it's not a good painting?
A. I think that depends on the artist, like what point he was trying to get across. It's good if he accomplished that and if he didn't then it's bad.
Q. So you'd say you would probably have to know what the artist intended?
A. Yeah. (Boy, 10th grade)

Conclusion

We have presented our findings to date as descriptively as our admittedly interpretive framework allows. A cognitive-developmental approach along these lines is very plausible. We do not think we have identified all of the topics and stages of the development of aesthetic response; rather, we think of the foregoing account as a stimulus to further research. Our work needs corroboration and suggests a great number of further questions. It is in hopes of stimulating such research that we offer the above. And while it would appear that a scheme like this has many possible implications for educators, clearly it would be premature to seek them out now.

Notes

1. For example, see Michael Oakeshott, *Experience and Its Modes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933); or P. H. Hirst and R. S. Peters, *The Logic of Education* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), ch. 4.
2. Monroe Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1958).