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A Suggestion Concerning the Development of Aesthetic Experience in Children

I

IN THIS PAPER[1] I want to discuss the possibility of constructing a cognitive-developmental theory of the aesthetic experience of children, somewhat parallel to the work of Kohlberg on the development of the moral judgments of children.[2] Such a theory would focus on the child's experience as he responds to works of art, rather than as he creates them, and it would undertake to trace the cognitive elements that underlie such experience. The assumption is that these cognitive elements determine, to a significant extent, the kind of aesthetic experience that is possible at the time. The descriptions of these elements would have to be stated in terms that make it clear both in what way the aesthetic responses of children and of adults differ, and why these differences are relevant to their aesthetic character. I shall first explain why such a theory seems plausible to me, and then illustrate it by discussing some of the distinctions it would make.

This is not a new idea. Although developmental psychologists as a group have not in the past been very interested in development in the arts, the question of aesthetic development has been approached in several different ways, and interest in the area has grown recently. People in the psychoanalytic school have looked at the development of the practicing artist, and have studied individual artists.[3] There has been a good deal of study of the developing abilities of the average child in making art, especially painting and drawing.[4] James Mark Baldwin had a theory of development that included an aesthetic stage,[5] and both Piaget, and Werner and Kaplan have touched upon it *via* their studies of the development of the use of symbols.[6] The most direct and recent approach has been by Howard Gardner,[7] who is interested not only in symbol use in general, but particularly in those uses that constitute art; and not only in the child as a practitioner of art, but also as a responder to it. He also has a useful review of the literature.

Nevertheless, the cognitive-developmental approach has not been explored in any coherent and thorough-going way. There are a number of reasons for this, and Gardner has a discussion of the difficulties and dangers inherent in any such attempt.[8] The first temptation, which Gardner is most concerned to warn against, is simply to import the Piagetian stages into the aesthetic realm, and to apply them to the way children think about art objects. The work of Machotka,[9] which I shall presently re-

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view, is the best example of an attempt to do this. I do not believe this approach could take one very far. The approach is inadequate, not only because it is hard to believe that the abilities to deal with concrete and with formal operations, which mark the chief stages of the development in the child of scientific thinking, are the most important events in the development of aesthetic experience, but because it is not sufficiently radical: it does not take seriously the autonomy of aesthetic experience. Its effect is to treat aesthetic objects as if they were just any kind of object in the world. But in fact they have a distinctive status as aesthetic objects; aesthetic experience is not a kind of scientific experience, nor is aesthetic judgment a kind of scientific judgment. There is virtual unanimity on this among philosophers, and, unless they are all wrong, it seems there should be a correspondingly distinct developmental history to be investigated. If aesthetic judgments and experience are *sui generis* a developmental account of them must have its own categories and definitions. The same can be said, of course, of moral judgments, and perhaps also of religious ones.

This does not necessarily mean that aesthetic development is unrelated to development with the Piagetian tasks. Whether it is or not cannot be decided in advance of the facts. It may be that the latter is necessary for the former; it cannot be sufficient, because some experience with the arts (how much and of what kinds we do not clearly know) is also necessary. Most importantly, the one cannot be used to define the other.

It may be thought that a difficulty with speaking of a distinctive aesthetic development in the child is that it ignores important distinctions *within* the arts. It implies that development with the different arts is all of one kind, to be described in the same terms; and ignores the differences between the various art forms and media, the different kinds of skills they call for, and the uneven development of individuals with respect to them. These differences might suggest that there is unlikely to be some unitary development underlying the arts as a whole; perhaps rather there is a separate development with respect to each art form. My response to this is that it depends first of all on what terms we use to conceive development (and secondly, of course, on the facts that are discovered). To repeat, it seems to make sense to speak of aesthetic experience and aesthetic judgments, and to do this is not to pick out any particular art form or medium. I assume, therefore, that the development I shall describe applies potentially to all the arts; but also that it requires a serious engagement with each art for its actuality. Shortage of time alone would account for its unequal unfolding in individuals across the arts. There is also the fact that in our culture there is very unequal exposure of individuals to the arts. Moreover, compared with questions of morality, many people do not encounter the arts frequently, nor do they debate questions having to do with the arts very often.

A further obstacle to a cognitive-developmental theory lies in the view that what is distinctive about the arts is their power to engage feeling, and that therefore a cognitive theory is inappropriate. If there is a development to be found here, such a view might hold, it will be a development of affective abilities, and talk of cognitive elements or structures will miss this. I take this to be, in various forms, a commonly held view. Gardner himself lends it credence with his distinction between the "audience member" and the "critic," though this distinction is adopted for another purpose.[10] The point of this objection lies in a view of the relation, or perhaps I should say lack of relation, between cognition and affect; and it is with this assumption that a cognitive-developmental approach would have to take issue. I assume that cognition and affect are importantly interactive in the experience of both the child and the adult. Affect is certainly important in aesthetic response; but what develops is not just the power of feeling. The young child already has that. It is the power of relevant feeling that develops. This is what aesthetic development is the development *of:* the ability to respond relevantly to a work of art as an aesthetic object. This ability rests on a cognitive achievement, as the word "relevant"

makes plain. And for this reason I speak of the development of both aesthetic judgment and aesthetic experience as part of a single story. It is not helpful to study, as is sometimes done, children's judgments in isolation from whatever else children have to say about their experience of the work in question. When one tries to articulate that experience, one reveals (of course not perfectly) what kind of thing one thinks is relevant about the work. What one thinks of this will affect what one looks for in it, hence what one sees, and what one responds affectively to. And no doubt the reverse relation also holds: what affects one in a work will influence what one thinks is relevant to say about it, and will provide possible reasons for judgments.

There is no need to believe there is a one-to-one relationship between these two elements, i.e., between what affects one, and the reasons one gives for judgments. The limits of self-awareness and the poverty of language make this unlikely, especially with children. But given also our capacities for stereotyping and overlooking, it is equally unlikely that there is no connection at all. Thus, to anticipate a little, if one thinks it relevant to say of a patch of color that it is one's favorite color, one is not likely to look at it closely enough to notice variations of tone and hue. Or, if one's major vocabulary for praise and dispraise lies in the range dominated by the concepts of "beautiful" and "ugly," how can one be anything but confused by, say, Beckett's plays, or Picasso's *Guernica?*

In fact, a cognitive-developmental theory requires a varying discrepancy between what affects one and what one can articulate. As in the areas of moral and scientific development, such a discrepancy is the motive force behind development. When one begins to be affected by new kinds of things in works of art, there is a strain to revise what one thinks can relevantly be said about them; and when the two are more in equilibrium, one is at a relatively stable stage. "Relevant" here again means aesthetically relevant; that is, relevant to a response or judgment concerned with the work as an aesthetic object. It is precisely this sense of relevance that develops. One might even call it a theory of aesthetic relevance, though it is not, of course, a self-conscious or articulated theory. This formulation is intended to stress the parallel with the development of scientific and moral judgments in the theories of Piaget and Kohlberg.

How does one get at such a "theory" if it is not articulate? In just the way Piaget and Kohlberg have done it. One looks at the judgments made and the reasons given by children concerning particular works of art, and tries to reconstruct what lies behind them. This is not, one might add, very different from what the philosophers of criticism have tried to do with the language of critics, though of course both groups work at a higher level of sophistication.

Finally, perhaps the most important obstacle to constructing a cognitive theory of aesthetic development has been simply the difficulty of conceiving the terms in which to couch it. Before one can profitably discuss his judgments and reasons with children, with an eye to reconstructing implicit cognitive structures, one needs some conception of what to look for. This conception, as I have said, must rest on a view of what is distinctive about aesthetic experience across the arts, and also of what is relevantly different about the experience of the child and the adult. It is chiefly to this difficulty that what follows is addressed. I try to give some idea of how a theory such as I have discussed would run, in what terms it would be couched, and what kinds of facts it would pick out as relevant. It is professedly speculative, though it takes note of such known facts as are appropriate and available. However the data that it calls for have not yet been developed. The point of this is to make clearer what kinds of data to look for.

II

First, I shall look briefly at some of the facts a theory of aesthetic development would have to explain.

A number of studies of the aesthetic judgments or preferences of children, have been undertaken for various purposes, though most of them have not been guided

by developmental considerations. Two important exceptions are the studies by Machotka[9] and by Gardner,[10] Winner, and Kircher.[11] Machotka deduced several hypotheses from the nature of the Piagetian stages of formal and concrete operations, all of which his findings tended to support. He reasoned that the interest in realism, and the use of criteria related to it, which is commonly remarked in children, should appear with the advent of concrete operations (around the age of 7). His argument was that to judge a painting in such terms requires a comparison of the painting as a picture with the appearance of the objects depicted in the outside world. In fact he found that reasons having to do with realism did first appear at about seven years, and that their number grew steadily until they peaked at about eleven years. He also reasoned that references to formal qualities, such as balance, harmony, and contrast, should first appear with the advent of concrete operations, and increase in frequency thereafter. This also appeared to be correct. Before age seven, reasons having to do with subject-matter and with color predominate. The overwhelming importance to young children of subject-matter in paintings is often commented on in the literature, and is variously described: as, for example, an interest in an abundance of detail, and as a failure to take note of the nature of the medium. Gardner, Winner, and Kircher, who questioned children closely about their conceptions of art, also found that their results "mirror Piagetian trends" in a general way, but with some reservations. They add at least two interesting facts about opinions in the adolescent years. Only at that time do they find the opinion that art requires native ability, talent, or genius, as opposed to simply hard work or skill. Also at this time there is a kind of relativism in judgments, which the authors tend to see as a return to the relativism of the early years, which had been interrupted by a period of increasing respect for the criteria of realism and the authority of experts.

It is worth noticing that the similarities between the attitudes of the very young and of adolescents, or of adult artists, have struck a number of observers as significant, and from some points of view it appears anomalous. Both groups are more disposed to accept abstraction and distortion than the intermediate group. Both are less conventional in their preferences, less rigid in their approach. This, combined with the unalloyed enjoyment of young children, especially in the making of art, and the frequent excellence of their products, have at times and in some circles led to the view that the normal history is one not so much of development as of decline. Our schools and the character of society at large have been variously blamed for this.[12]

Child[13] discovered that when making choices between pairs of works college students distinguish preference from judgments of aesthetic value, but that children in grades one through five do not. For the latter group there appears to be no difference between liking a work and judging it good.

Finally, there are some suggestive findings concerning the expression of emotions. Bullough, studying the judgments of adults, and following him Myers and Valentine,[14] distinguished four common kinds of reasons for judgments:

> *Objective:* remarks about the content of the work, the grouping, etc;
> *Subjective:* remarks about the effect of the painting on oneself ("the picture makes me smell the sea and hear the waves").
> *Associative:* remarks about what one is reminded of, or made to think of; *Character:* remarks about the character or the emotional qualities seen in the work itself.

Bullough and Valentine tended to see these as types of judgment related to types of character in people, but clearly it is possible to look at these categories as potentially forming a developmental sequence. Moore[15] attempted to do this, hypothesizing that the fourth category above would come last, developmentally. His results showed indeed that the youngest children gave the most "objective" reasons (dominance of subject-matter), and that the oldest gave the most "character" reasons. Both Child and Machotka made a distinction that seems related to that between the second and third categories above and the

fourth. Child tried to distinguish between what he called sentimental and emotional responses. He found that the first were most characteristic of elementary school children, but unfortunately he had poor inter-judge reliability with the second. Machotka distinguished reasons relying on "empathetic identity" from those referring to the "global" character of the work; the latter appeared in his sample only after the age of twelve.

How might a developmental theory explain these and other facts? I shall offer a suggestion that distinguishes four stages in the development of aesthetic experience, each founded on an underlying cognitive structure. This structure consists in the way in which the aesthetic qualities of an object are conceived. The variable is the location as between persons and the object of these qualities. Thus, by way of guiding summary, children at the first stage speak as if these qualities lie in an egocentrically close relation between the self and object. At the second stage, children conceive them as residing in the satisfaction of a specific set of rules. At the third stage, account is taken of a wide variety of possibly conflicting sets of rules, and authority for judgments lies either in the artist's intentions or with the individual and characteristic response. Finally, at the mature stage, aesthetic qualities are thought of as qualities of the object itself, being in principle publicly accessible and based on the perceptual or intentional aspects of the object.[16] With respect to judgments, one might summarize these stages by reference to the notion of rules: the first stage has in effect no rules; the second has a clear set of rules; the third has many and conflicting sets of rules and falls back either on the artist's intention or on some form of relativism; the fourth has principles of relevance, to wit, that aesthetic qualities are public and are based on the perceptual or intentional aspects of the object. With respect to experience, the central thread to these stages is the passage from a highly egocentric response to a response that is highly sensitive to aesthetic qualities as such, i.e., to a power of highly relevant and subtle feeling.

Stage one

We know that the young child (let us say to about age seven) is heavily influenced by subject-matter and by pleasing colors, does not distinguish clearly between art objects and natural ones, nor between liking and judging, and that he is heavily idiosyncratic in his preferences. What must we stress to make sense of this situation? We may say that his experience is already aesthetic in character, because he does have preferences, often very strong ones, for the various appearances of things. Were it not so, development could never get off the ground, for one could not instill this capacity to delight in appearances. But it is important to add that his experience is confusedly aesthetic, just as at this stage it is also confusedly moral and confusedly scientific. Perhaps the central fact is that the child at stage one does not distinguish the pleasure due to the appearances of things from the pleasure due to other features of his experience, and this influences the way he attends to the aesthetic object.

An illustration may help. A child, aged five and a half, was discussing a reproduction of the Currier and Ives *Preparing for Market*, a rather detailed scene of farm life. He volunteered that he liked it very much, and, when asked why, he said that it was because it reminded him of his cowboy hat. Of course, there are no cowboy hats in the picture, nor any cowboys. Presumably he was reminded of his hat by something in the picture, probably the horse; and it appears that what he was reminded of was quite as relevant and important a part of the experience as what he actually saw. In the context it seemed clear he did not make this distinction; he did not delight in two things, the painting and the thought of the hat. There were not two elements in the experience for him, nor in his response. The pleasure of thinking about the hat was all one with the pleasure of seeing the painting because the thinking was all one with the seeing.

In the same conversation, the child could not distinguish between judging that the painting was a good one and saying that he liked it. The two questions were as one to

him. Usually, of course, adults speak as if to call a painting good is to say something about its qualities, with which others could sensibly agree or disagree; whereas to say that one likes a painting is to say something about oneself, with which it is not often sensible to disagree. One might argue that most adults are wrong in this, and produce a subjectivist theory of evaluations, such as that "this is a good painting" means "I like this painting", and so on. But it is unlikely that the child has any such theory. To deny the public reference of "good" here would require him to distinguish between his experience of the painting and other people's experience of it, and this distinction does not appear to influence him either. We cannot say, for example, that he has made the mistake of thinking that his hat is in the picture, though he behaves that way. He has simply not considered, or taken note of, whether others would see what he sees, and whether consequently their experience would be similar to his. And this distinction is related to the previous one, i.e., that between what one sees oneself and what one is reminded of. The child speaks as if, though we cannot say he thinks it, others would be reminded of their cowboy hat just as they would also see a horse.[17]

A more complicated case is that of a girl, somewhat older. She said, in effect, that she liked the same painting because, if she were to live on the farm in the picture, she would like it. This remark, taken in context, shows that she had responded more relevantly than the boy. She had attended more closely to the painting, had looked at most of its detail, and had responded to its quiet, peaceful character. But she had also projected herself into the farm, and did not distinguish the pleasure of imagining herself living on the farm from that due to the appearance of the painting. In this she is like the first case, but the example allows us to formulate the missing distinction differently. We can say in this case that she confuses the appeal of the representation with the appeal of the objects represented. Her response is dominated by the subject-matter because she responds to a picture of a farm much as she would to the sight of an actual farm. This seems to be connected with the previous confusions in that the appeal of a representation as such is more likely to be based on what anyone could see whereas the appeal of the object represented is more likely (and in this case is) based on private and idiosyncratic associations.

My point, then, is that there are three connected distinctions that are usually taken for granted in adult experience with art, and are not made by children. At this first stage they confuse what is perceptually present with what is not, liking with judging, and the appeal of subject-matter with that of representation as such. The failure to make these differentiations is the key to understanding children's responses at this stage. It is also evident that the ability to make these distinctions is related to Piaget's notion of egocentrism, and to the child's increasing ability to role-take, i.e., to adopt the point of view of another. Sorting these confusions out has profound affective consequences, though doing so is clearly a series of cognitive achievements.

I think we can describe the kind of understanding that underlies the aesthetic experience of children such as the two I have cited, at least in part, in terms of the notion of "favorites." Imagine a child younger than these two. He finds himself surrounded by objects, the public character of which is unclear, and some of which are felt as attractive or the reverse. This appeal of objects lies in the undifferentiated space between self and object; i.e., it will depend to an unknown and unquestioned degree on one's mood, imagination, history, etc., as well as on the object itself. This would be an uncertain and perhaps uncomfortable state, because the attractions of objects would be unpredictable. The child seeks therefore an understanding of the situation that will predict these felt attractions; and this understanding will bring additional stability to his experience because it will to some extent determine it. A number of children have said to me that they liked a painting because it contained their favorite color, or because its subject was a favorite, and I think this form of speech is common among children. To take this language seriously (and I admit there is a problem in individual cases as to how

seriously to take it), consider two people, both of whom find a patch of red in a painting particularly attractive. The adult will say something like: look at the rich saturation of the color, the subtle relations with what surrounds it, the variations within it—will speak of qualities that others might also see in the painting itself. But the child says: red is my favorite color. Being-my-favorite-color is not a public character of the patch, but, we must assume, it appears in the experience of the child and influences his response. Of course such qualities may appear in adult experience, too, but when one is trying to respond relevantly to an aesthetic object one disregards them. One does not allow them, as it were, to influence his response. In the case of the child, it short-circuits the experience. No doubt he is also affected by the rich saturation of the color, and so on. But once the child has decided that red is his favorite color, he sees red-as-his-favorite-color, and this cuts short further realization through attention to the particular qualities of the red in question. He has a tendency to respond to all reds in the same way, to stereotype them. The explanation creates an expectation that reds will be attractive, and allows more confident choices to be made without the necessity of scrutiny. It is a partly self-fulfilling prophecy.

This use of the notion of "favorites" marks a degree of decentering, in that it locates the attractiveness of objects in some aspect of the world—in their being-a-favorite. But it retains a great deal of egocentricity in that the aspect is defined as a peculiarly close relation with oneself, a direct and unique relation that ignores the existence of others and their possible perceptions. This is a main source of irrelevance in aesthetic response.

Stage two

A further stage can be characterized by the use of what I shall call rules, and what might be called conventions. The theory of favorites is abandoned, we may suppose, because it begins to conflict with the facts of perception and of social life. The child begins to notice the differences between reds, and at the same time begins to find it implausible that a color should please oneself and not another. This arbitrariness becomes apparent as the child develops with respect to role-taking, and begins to imagine other people having feelings and perceptions similar to his. The source of the attraction is then located more publicly in the object, such that it can be available to anyone who looks for it. Such a location is achieved by means of a rule; for a rule (as I shall use the term here) applies to everyone in principle, whereas the notion of favorites does not. The idea is that what really counts about a work of art is to what extent it satisfies a certain kind of rule. The attraction of the object lies in this satisfaction, and hence anyone can see it. This is a limited but real step forward in decentering. I shall mention three major kinds of rule that seem to be important at this stage: rules of "realism," rules of form, rules of subject-matter.

We have seen that between the ages of roughly seven and twelve children are increasingly concerned with questions of realism, and use this in effect as a criterion for evaluation of art. This criterion, loose and flexible as it undoubtedly is, can be conceived as an implicit set of rules to which paintings are expected to conform. There does not seem to be much doubt that this is a very important influence on elementary school children in Western cultures. Whether this is true only of Western cultures, I do not know. It is possible that any relatively coherent set of rules concerning style that is supported by a culture would have the same psychological function I am claiming for "realism" in ours. "Realism" is not important in many traditions of art. There is also the point that there is no obvious parallel with respect to music, and the application of "realism" to literature is not wholly clear. On the other hand, though it would seem ethnocentric to assert it, it is possible that there is something about the notion of "realism" that makes it particularly appropriate to this stage. It does, for example, relate in a straightforward way, psychologically speaking, to the notion of representation, which is acquired just before this stage. Furthermore, "realism" does not imply a particular clear and specific set of rules,

even in our culture,[18] and it may be that different cultures can support different interpretations of it. It would be an interesting question to explore. The same remarks might be made, *mutatis mutandis*, about my other two categories of rules—rules of form and rules of subject-matter.

What I call rules of form are evidenced by the kinds of remarks documented by Machotka, among others. Children of elementary school age tend to comment increasingly on formal matters: questions of balance, harmony, contrast, repetition, grouping, and so on. Such comments can be regarded as an appeal to a set of rules in my sense; an object is to be judged good insofar as it is balanced, etc. The key feature is that such rules direct attention away from idiosyncratic response toward qualities that can be noticed by anyone who looks, i.e., the observable satisfaction of certain conditions. The use of rules in this way seems to be logically required if one is to learn to distinguish judgment from preference. One will be able to judge those things good that satisfy the rules, whether or not one likes them. Naturally one will in general like the things that satisfy the rules, and respond positively to the qualities picked out by them. If not, it is hard to see how the rules could get adopted. But one's potential response will be broader than this: there will also be various private likings and associations which can be picked out as irrelevant only because of the rules adopted. This is a considerable advance in the sense of relevance. No doubt it also brings about a tendency to make judgments that we think are too rigid, and to rely on authorities overmuch, but it is a mistake to see this as a regression or a decline in aesthetic abilities. One of the virtues of this analysis is to construe the apparent rigidities of childhood as a positive and necessary step forward.

The acquisition of these two kinds of rules, however inarticulate, also helps to drive a wedge between the appeal of the subject-matter and that of the representation as such. At this age children can talk of the difference between a good horse poorly painted and a poor horse well-painted. But this particular tension is not resolved at this stage. The appeal of subject-matter *per se* continues its tyranny for a long time. For there is another set of rules adopted at this stage that determines what kinds of things are appropriate subject-matter for art. The nature of these rules is harder to indicate than is that of the previous ones; nevertheless it seems clear enough that expectations concerning aesthetic subject-matter are more conventional and less whimsical than at the earlier stage. They include sea-scapes, for example, in various moods, but not oil-slicks; handsome soldiers, but not Goya's *Execution of the Fifth of May*. In general, they include the pretty, the picturesque, the nostalgic, the magnificent; the most general praise word becomes the "beautiful." They exclude the ugly and the painful; the most difficult problem is the tragic. The subject-matters that are most acceptable are those that invite a whole and unhesitating response, where there is no difficulty to be mastered, and no repugnance to be overcome. I think this is the distinction Child intended between the "sentimental" and the "emotional." My description is meant to include the kind of violence that is frequent in, for example, children's literature, or television cartoons. In these cases, I would argue, the response is still unhesitating, and the effect is not painful or tragic. This is because children respond very much in terms of heroes and villains, and these works are shaped to encourage this. The children identify with the hero, and the violence happens to the villain, or at least to one with whom they do not identify. Hence there is no repugnance to be overcome in their response. Such a formula conspicuously does not cover, say, *King Lear*, or *Death of a Salesman*. The point about identification applies also to painting. Children at this age do not admire, say, Picasso's *The Old Guitarist*, let alone his *Guernica*. The general point, in spite of these difficulties, seems hardly surprising. Some of the perennial interest in the fact of tragedy is due to it. There is an air of oddity to the fact that people like tragic art only because it is obvious that all of us at some stage would

have rejected it. A developmental theory of aesthetic response should account for this fact.

Stage three

A third stage, beginning at preadolescence, comes about with the realization that there may be many alternative sets of rules by which works can be judged. The child, who has heretofore thought realism to be the natural but difficult goal of art, is confronted with paintings that deliberately distort or abstract. In many cases he can no longer think that these are failures to achieve realism, and they call for different criteria. A common resource is to use the notion of the artist's intentions: that when one knows what the artist was trying to do, one also knows what to look for and what to count as relevant. One might almost call this the stage of the "intentionalist fallacy." There is a much better understanding that the artist might try to achieve many different kinds of effects, and while this is liberating, it is also confusing. One such child, for instance, was confused by Klee's *Head of a Man*, but did not simply reject it as the younger children did. He said:

> This one here, I'm not too sure. I'm not too sure what it means. You know, what he was trying to say, what feeling he was trying to put down. I'm confused . . . I don't know what I'm supposed to be looking for. It's not that I really don't like it, it's O.K., but I don't know what he's trying to say.

There is here an unwillingness to condemn a work because it does not conform to the obvious rules; and instead an awareness that there might be another set of rules which would make all the difference ("what I'm supposed to be looking for"). This set of rules seems to depend on what the artist intended to do with his work. The effort therefore is to identify with the artist rather than simply with a main character in the work. This seems to represent a further and more difficult step in the decentering process, one which would require multiple role-takings where there is more than one main character in a work.

Coherent with this move to identify with the artist is the view that art is to be seen as the expression of emotion, and hence as very personal. As the extract shows, this is also given importance at this stage. The expressive qualities of art become central to response, contrasting with the rather formal approach of the previous stage. The expression of feeling and the consequent need to imagine oneself into the mind of the artist may well come to be more important in response than the question of technique and skill. Associated with this is the view I have mentioned, that the artist requires originality or genius rather than just hard work or skill.

Again related to this, there comes a stress on the variety of possible intentions and the idea of genres and different kinds of art. At this stage, children will sometimes multiply "kinds" at great length in the effort to accommodate the artist's intentions, as for example, distinguishing many kinds of popular songs, and refusing to talk about or evaluate a song just as music. This is one of the entry points for what Gardner calls relativism in judgments. For if there are indefinitely many kinds of works, any work may be good of its kind; and if one doesn't like a work, it just may be that he doesn't like that kind of work. If he sees little in it, maybe he doesn't understand what the artist was trying to do. The fault may lie with the artist or the responder, and one can't be sure which it is. In this way there is a reluctance to accept negative value judgments, but not necessarily positive ones. This looks like a loss of the preference/judgment distinction achieved in the previous stage, and an abandonment of the notion of relevant reasons for judgment. It is so ambiguously, because positive judgments are still possible, and because this is in a sense the obverse side of the intentionalist fallacy. It is rather that the reasons for judgment have switched to a more flexible but less accessible place either in the individual affective response, or in the artist's intention. They are still not located in the aesthetic object itself, but neither are they truly abandoned. It is the implicit reference to the variety of possible intentions of the artist, or of possible responses of the viewer, that makes this a much less egocentric affair than the earlier stages.

I confess that this third stage is less clear

than the two prior. This is partly because it is more complex, and partly because the judgments and reasons of the relevant age-group have been studied less than those of earlier ages. There is also the difficulty of assigning any indication of the normal age at the upper end of this stage, since there are good reasons for thinking that many adults do not develop out of it. The parallel of this with what happens in Kohlberg's scheme of the development of moral judgments, however, lends it plausibility. It will be remembered that a relativist view of moral judgment often appears in his scheme with the realization that one's society's code of morality is only one of many possible and competing codes.

Stage four

I shall say little about the fourth and last stage in this developmental scheme. I do assume, of course, that there is one. I take the philosophers of criticism to have been engaged in the discussion of the exact nature of that stage for a long time, and there would be little point to my trying to add to that discussion here. However, it is implicit in the scheme I have outlined that this last stage is not relativist with respect to judgments, and that it regards as relevant grounds for judgments only those qualities of the art object that are based on what is in principle perceptual or intentional, and is publicly accessible.[16] I take this stage to be the end point of development because it marks the end of the decentering process, by locating aesthetic qualities firmly in the aesthetic object itself and not in some more egocentric relation.

It remains only to speak briefly of what is assumed by the notion of stages in what I have said. I have said nothing regarding the question whether the stages I have described are simply mileposts marking qualitatively different but continuously connected points in development, or whether they are relatively separate plateaus joined by brief transitional periods; nor whether or how the responses of individuals may scatter over these stages. At present I should prefer to regard them as heuristic devices. I have proposed a series of advances in a sequence that seems central to the development of aesthetic experience; and hope that their description will enable a more thorough investigation of the facts to take place.

[1] I should like to acknowledge the help given me in the writing of this paper and the discussion of issues related to it by Milton Meux of the University of Utah, and by Howard Gardner and David Perkins of Project Zero, Harvard.

[2] See, for example, Lawrence Kohlberg, "Stage and Sequence; the cognitive-developmental approach to socialization," in D. Goslin (ed.), *Handbook of Socialization* (Chicago, 1968).

[3] See, for example, Otto Rank, *Art and Artist* (New York, 1932).

[4] See, for example, Lowenfeld and Brittain, *Creative and Mental Growth* (New York, 1970), and R. Kellogg, *Analyzing Children's Art* (Palo Alto, Calif., 1969).

[5] James Mark Baldwin, *Thought and Things*, Vol. III (London, 1911), esp. parts 4 and 5.

[6] Piaget, mostly in *Play, Dreams and Imitation* (New York, 1962), and H. Werner and Kaplan, *Symbol Formation* (New York, 1963).

[7] Howard Gardner, *The Arts and Human Development* (New York, 1973).

[8] Gardner, op. cit., pp. 304–310, 323–329.

[9] Pavel Machotka, *The Development of Aesthetic Criteria in Childhood*. A doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 1961; and "Aesthetic Criteria in Childhood: Justifications of Preference," *Child Development*, 37, 4 (Dec., 1966), 877–885.

[10] See Gardner, op. cit., pp. 323 and 324.

[11] Gardner, Winner and Kircher, "Children's Conceptions of the Arts," *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, forthcoming.

[12] For example, Herbert Read, *Education Through Art* (New York, 1958).

[13] Irvin Child, *The Development of Sensitivity to Esthetic Values* (New Haven, 1964).

[14] Summarized in C. W. Valentine, *The Experimental Psychology of Beauty* (London, 1962), pp. 53–57, 123–135, 203–208.

[15] Barry Moore, "A Description of Children's Verbal Responses to Works of Art in Selected Grades," *Studies in Art Education*, 14, 3(Spring, 1973), 27–34.

[16] This formulation is based on the work of Monroe Beardsley; specifically on "Aesthetic Theory and Educational Theory," in R. A. Smith (ed.), *Aesthetic Concepts and Education* (Urbana, Illinois 1970), p. 9. His influence is also present in the conception of the fourth stage to which the development leads, and in what is said about the use of the artist's intentions as a criterion for interpretation and judgment.

[17] For an interesting account of what is known of children's abilities to take account of the perceptions of others, see John Flavell, "The Development of Inferences about Others," in T. Mischel (ed.), *Understanding Other Persons* (Totowa, New Jersey, 1974).

[18] For a brief summary of different views on what is "realism," see J. M. Kennedy, *A Psychology of Picture Perception* (San Francisco, Calif. 1974), Ch. 3.