posed stages of development. Parsons would do well to extend his observations to students whose understanding of art is being formed by these substantive art programs, so that their experiences also can be reflected in the conception of developmental stages. Otherwise a doubt will persist that the hypotheses have been constructed on a measure of what children in minimal programs are *accustomed* to doing in response to art, rather than on a measure of what children are *capable* of doing.

Whatever questions might arise concerning the present configuration of Parsons's developmental stages and its immediate applicability to the practice of art instruction, the work is commendable for its many passages of masterful and lucid explication. Like other attempts to chart the pathways of cognitive development, Parsons's work will attract spirited debate, especially among the educational theorists and practitioners who stand as likely prime beneficiaries of a workable developmental account. To the extent that readers can suspend their participation in the developmental debate surely being generated by this work, they may enhance their appreciation of the work taken as a more general account of aesthetic experience. In the philosophical aspect of his achievement, in the process of making sense of his accumulated interviews, Parsons gained many insights into the labyrinthine ways that we grow in our understanding of art; these insights have a value that is independent of their placement in a proposed developmental sequence. *How We Understand Art* is a work distinguished by the refinements of its philosophical reflection.

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Assumptions about Art and Artworld: A Response to Critics

I am pleased to respond to the reviews printed above.

My book advances a new account of aesthetic development. As DiBlasio notes, that requires a "hybrid philosophical-psychological mode" of operation. The point is that any developmental account must rest on assumptions both about the domain and about psychological development; in this case about the nature both of art and of mind. In *How We Understand Art*, I tried to articulate the more important of my assumptions, but not in order to argue for them. I wanted to present my account of development as clearly and simply as possible, and there were complications enough in that. I wanted the reader to understand what the necessary assumptions were but not to be diverted from the main point into a debate about them.

These assumptions, which we would normally call philosophical, are necessary if one is to talk about aesthetic development. The task requires it, because one is tracing the interaction of art and mind. Perhaps they are also necessary for "the more familiar forms of psychological research con-

cerning the perception of art," though there their importance is not usually so obvious. It seems most useful in writing, therefore, to state one's assumptions as clearly and openly as possible, even where the purpose is not to argue for them. This allows the reader to understand when his disagreements are with basic assumptions and when with other aspects of the research. I make these points because the comments of at least two of my reviewers are based on their adoption of different assumptions about the nature of art, and they don't say this or state what their own assumptions are.

There are perhaps three basic assumptions at issue here, all of them having to do with the domain. I will briefly indicate what they are before relating them to the reviewers' remarks. I should say, incidentally, that in my view none of my assumptions is idiosyncratic or esoteric, but that they are quite traditional among philosophers. They are not innovative, and I think this fact lends a certain strength to the account of development that is based on them. Nevertheless, it is true that any of them may be disagreed with.

The first is what one might call a hermeneutic assumption. My account assumes that an artwork is a significant or meaningful, rather than a pretty, object and than an appropriate aesthetic response to it requires a grasp of its significance. In this respect my work can be said to be part of the recent "cognitive" approach to art. It differs somewhat in emphasizing the interpretive character of cognition in the arts; that is, in supposing that to grasp the significance of an artwork is to re-construct its meaning, rather than simply to recognize it. This re-construction is an active affair that requires a framework of concepts within which to operate. I call these interpretive frameworks "stages" and claim that they are developmentally acquired by individuals. In my book I refer to various discussions of interpretation, especially to the work of Habermas.

A second assumption has to do with the social and public character of interpretation. I assume that meanings are culturally shaped and, in particular, that it is the artworld that gives shape to the meanings of artworks. I treat aesthetic development as the progressive entry into an artworld. The "artworld" is a familiar enough concept, pointing to that coherence, or part coherence, of meanings, institutions, traditions, and artworks within which we make sense of art. An artworld is historical in nature; dynamic, collective, and vitally related to the culture of which it is a part. Every culture has an artworld, as it has a moral world and a scientific one. In our case, it is the Western artworld—large, amorphous, and full of factions. Each child born to a culture must enter its artworld by re-constructing its understandings for himself or herself; and the degree to which he does so is the degree to which he becomes a member of it. I portray that reconstruction as a progressive awareness, an increasing grasp of meanings, a

greater interpretive adequacy, and a gradual expansion of the self into ever wider personal horizons, until one is a full-fledged member of the artworld and understands it from the inside, as a member of a community of people who understand art in much the same way and regard the culture's artworks as their own. That is why, incidentally, I speak of "we" and not "they," in spite of many objections. The story of cognitive development is a story of the development of the sense of "us," of an interpreting self coming to belong to an interpretive community. In speaking of the artworld in this way, I referred in particular to Danto.

A third assumption is that art has a particular function in the economy of mind, an essense or nature that defines it. I assume that art serves to articulate our inner needs and desires, to give shape to our hopes, fears, ideals, and sense of self. Its meanings are interpretations of our common and possible nature, serving to communicate what otherwise we could not imagine. This is a traditional view in aesthetics that I call the "expressionist" view and refer in particular to Collingwood. It is because I assume art to have a particular function (again, rather than being just a pleasurable or technical activity) that I can portray a final stage of development that goes beyond simple membership in an artworld to a position of autonomous and responsible criticism. This is the "post-conventional" stage in the developmental literature, first suggested by Baldwin, ignored by Piaget, picked up by Kohlberg, and developed by Habermas. This stage alone can account for individual creativity and for social advance in different domains and allow cognitive developmental theories to be more than theories of socialization. It permits development to be understood as the gradual creation of an autonomous self that is no longer governed by either biology or society, though it is shaped by both.

My reviewers, in different ways, raise questions about one or another of these assumptions. I will address the Goldsmith and Feldman review first. The criticisms they make stem from different opinions about all three of these assumptions. But they also make a number of points on matters where we don't disagree, and it is unclear to me why they do so. I will first briefly mention one or two of these nondisagreements.

Goldsmith and Feldman say much about the concept of stage and the difference between Piaget's understanding of stage and a more contemporary one. I see no disagreement here. We both construe stages, as do most contemporary cognitive developmentalists, as residing more in the domain than in the person. Stages are commonly available structures of thought rather than psychological structures of the individual, characterizations of typical ways of speaking and thinking. As Pariser notes, I agree with Goldsmith and Feldman about this. The same is true of the relation of ages and stages. Goldsmith and Feldman call this a "problem" in my book. But I have exactly the same view that they do, and say so in the book. Age and

stage are loosely related, and this is because stage is affected by a number of factors, including the amount and quality of instruction in the domain. I would have thought this, too, is a matter of widespread consensus. Similarly, Goldsmith and Feldman explain some differences between Piaget and Kohlberg which are noncontroversial, but to what end I am not sure.

The issue on which we do disagree has to do with "universal" and "nonuniversal" domains of development, a distinction for which Feldman is well known. Because I do not refer to this distinction, Goldsmith and Feldman call my account outdated and claim that it has unnecessary weaknesses. I do think that the distinction is a useful one in some cases, and that Feldman has elsewhere demonstrated its utility.[1] But I do not think the aesthetic is a "nonuniversal" domain of human development. Goldsmith and Feldman think it is "a clear case." Had I agreed with them, I would have cited Feldman's work. Since I do not, I did not cite it. It seems plain that this difference of opinion rests on different assumptions about the nature of the aesthetic, which they do not discuss.

Is the aesthetic a universal or a nonuniversal domain of human development? Two prominent examples of nonuniversal domains in Feldman's book are playing chess and making maps. In one clear sense these are nonuniversal, for many people do not engage in them at all and nevertheless live a whole and good life. But aesthetic experience does not seem to be "nonuniversal" in this sense, at least as I understand it. For I suppose aesthetic experience is inherent in our biological nature, begins at birth, and is gradually shaped by our culture. It begins with our first responses to the appearances of things in nature—to the attraction of color, the fascination of texture, the compulsion of line and shape. From there it grows, as Howard Gardner says, through a stage of "romancing" to a grasp of symbolization and representation. And thence, as I also assume, every culture produces artworks, and the people of that culture come to understand those works in the terms of that culture (at some level of understanding). This is true even if the culture does not have the concept of art. In both of these ways—the aesthetic response to appearances in nature and the grasp of artworks—aesthetic experience is universal. And of course these ways are developmentally connected—that is the point of my book. Aesthetic response in this way seems to be as universal as moral judgment or the attempt to understand the world in causal terms—the two standard examples of universal domains. This point is more a conceptually necessary truth than an empirical claim.

But Goldsmith and Feldman claim that aesthetic experience is a nonuniversal domain. The reason they give is that to reach higher levels of sophistication one needs instruction. Of course this is true; but it is also true of other domains of human understanding, including the scientific and the moral. One does not reach the later stages in any of them without

instruction. Piaget notwithstanding, we know that many adults do not reach the stage of formal operations unaided, and educators have a long history of developing programs to help them. And Kohlberg tried for years to develop programs of education in moral judgment. Indeed, Goldsmith and Feldman make these latter points themselves. So it seems one cannot use the question of instruction *at the higher levels* as a criterion to distinguish "universal" from "nonuniversal" domains. It distinguishes nothing. Few reach the sophisticated levels in the "universal" domains without instruction, though everyone enters them by virtue of being born human.

The criterion for nonuniversal domains that Goldsmith and Feldman actually use is whether one needs instruction *even at the beginning*. We do not have citizenship in a nonuniversal domain simply by being human. Rather, we need explicit guidance and teaching. In their view the aesthetic is a domain of this sort. It is such that one may not engage in it at all, can take it or leave it, as it were; and in fact many people don't enter it. In this way it is like playing chess or making maps. Whatever view of the aesthetic this is, it is clearly a narrower one than mine. It has no room for the aesthetic in nature, only in art, for it does not connect the young child responding to the glamour of appearances with the student learning to paint. And with regard to the aesthetic in art it appears to be more technical, or at any rate culturally bound, in that it ascribes no important human function to art, such as the articulation of inner needs or the understanding of self and others. Their assumption seems to be that the aesthetic can be defined as what happens in art rooms and studios.

Goldsmith and Feldman make several other criticisms that suggest this narrow conception. For example, they complain that I do not talk of development as entry into the artworld, but into the social world. They also speak of a "quirkiness" produced by the influence of Kohlberg. These criticisms are intelligible only if one assumes that the artworld and the social world are far less connected than I do. On my view the artworld is primarily a network of ideas, interpretations, and values, sustained by a community, the whole having manifold links to the social world in which it is embedded. It is so necessary a part of the culture that to take on the culture is also to enter the artworld, and vice versa. Understandings of the artworld overlap understandings of people because, in the end, art is the way people express their inner life. Goldsmith and Feldman, on the other hand, appear to think of the artworld as relatively isolated from the social world and do not connect understanding art with understanding anything else. What they appear to be complaining of is that I talk too much of concepts like beauty, empathy, intention, and interpretation, which for them are part of the social world but not the artworld; and that I do not stress instruction in art as such.

Another criticism that points in the same direction has to do with my

account of stage four. Goldsmith and Feldman suggest that stage four is a simple overlay on stage three rather than a restructuring of it, and question whether stage five represents an advance on four. They see stage four as the simple addition of technical interests and ideas to stage three, whereas I go to some lengths to put these interests and ideas in the context of becoming more aware of the artworld and its community and the way these affect the meanings of artworks. For example, I describe how at stage three we conceive artworks as expressing only states of mind that the artist was conscious of, such as anger, love, sympathy. At stage four, however, because of the increased attention to the art medium, we conceive it as including qualities that the artist was not aware of, such as his own shallowness, boldness, sentimentality, and other qualities that may reflect a group to which he belongs: a movement, a generation, a period. Similarly I present stage five as an advance, not because of technique or further instruction, but because it makes possible questions about the values of the artworld itself that previously were taken for granted.

In summary, much of what Goldsmith and Feldman say arises from different conceptions of art and the aesthetic and not from disagreements about developmental psychology as such. Their complaint is not so much that, if I had used Feldman's distinction of universal and nonuniversal domains, my work would have been different: it is rather that if I had had their conception of art, it would have been different. I do not want to deny that their conception of art may be useful for some purposes. But it does underplay the importance of art for human mind in general and seems to me a poor foundation for either a developmental theory or an instructional tool.

I turn to the remarks of DiBlasio, who is most interested in the educational issues. One of her points is similar to Goldsmith and Feldman's: that I do not pay much attention to the effects of instruction. Hence I cannot tell to what extent a good program of art instruction might change the data I used. The point is a good one. Only by comparing the developmental levels of those who have been through a good art program with the levels of those who have not can one tell what difference a good program would make. I have not done this. I would like to see it done. And if it were, surely I would have data different from what I now have. I would hope that at the end of a good art program the students would reach a more sophisticated level of understanding; for example, that many high school graduates would reach stage four. On the other hand, I would not expect a reversal of the sequence of the stages themselves; for example, that elementary school children would reach stage four before working through stage three. What DiBlasio says suggests that she might have both of these possibilities in mind. The distinction is conceptually important, because the first would tend to confirm my thesis and the second to dis-

confirm it. I have given my reasons in the book for thinking the second unlikely, though I agree that the question is an empirical one that could be settled only by (lengthy) investigation. The distinction is also educationally important, because it can save one from making some typical educators' mistakes. For if one believes that elementary school children are capable of dealing with stage-four concerns, one might force on them material which they cannot understand and are obliged to remember only as pointless information.

DiBlasio asks whether this argument might be reversed and a developmental scheme lead to worse, not better, educational decisions. Might it lead educators to postpone unduly material that is challenging and worthwhile? Might it become another set of categories with which to belittle and box children in? This is an important question, and I have no ready answer to it. It is in the nature of a developmental scheme to connect the beginning with the end; and whether this belittles or compliments the beginning depends on how one reads it. It seems that, used badly, any set of categories may be harmful, whether they are categories of development, ability, interest, or family background. And, used well, they will be helpful. Developmental categories may be used to restrict the horizons of learners and also to construct appropriate and meaningful tasks for them. Which way it goes will not depend on the truth of the developmental theory, but on the sensitivity of educators to children's minds. Knowledge of a developmental theory can contribute greatly to that sensitivity, but it is not guaranteed to do so.

There is one complaint all three reviewers share. This has to do with my data and with the various kinds of studies I did not conduct. DiBlasio makes the most important point. I did not randomly sample any population when I conducted my interviews. Instead, I talked with whoever was most convenient. I did not control for sex, education, socioeconomic class, subcultural background, and so on. Hence I cannot reliably generalize my conclusions. In addition, Pariser and Feldman both, in different ways, complain that I do not present my data in the manner standard for empirical psychological experiments. I do not present quantitative summaries of my interviews and perform no statistical analyses of them. What I quote is selected for the point at hand, and I take no account of potentially negative evidence. Consequently the data I present are not conclusive.

All of this is true. The absence of a random sample of a particular population is the key item, since there would be no point to statistical or other quantitative analyses without that. Without a random sample, statistics would have little significance. Here I can only repeat what I said in my introduction. From an empirical science point of view, I described the book as offering a complex developmental hypothesis. This hypothesis was formed in light of two kinds of things: some philosophical assumptions

and some empirical data, both developed over a period of years. The data were influential in shaping the details of the hypothesis, and the hypothesis influenced the interviews that produced the data; and this interaction continued over several years. My data, therefore, could not have been used as evidence for the hypothesis they had already influenced. For that I would need a whole new set of interviews, preferably of a longitudinal nature. I am at present engaged on some longitudinal studies, but the longest of them is no more than eight years old.

There are a number of criteria for a developmental scheme such as mine. One is its consistency with basic assumptions about art and mind. That stresses the philosophical part of the hybrid, where the population of interest is the current membership of the Western artworld. That is a philosopher's population that cannot be defined in terms of sex, nationality, subculture, and so on, and can hardly be sampled randomly. Other criteria include the fit of its general character and logic with other developmental schemes, its intuitive capacity to illuminate actual cases, and its capacity to develop new kinds of data. These are in addition and perhaps preliminary to its adequacy to represent and interpret the data in a reliable way. "Proof" in this latter sense necessarily comes late in the process. As I said in the introduction, I limited my ambition in this regard to making the account intelligible—and to that extent plausible—and to keeping it in line with the data I already had. My frequent quotations of real people talking about artworks were meant only as concrete examples of abstract points and illustrations of my thesis.

My hope is that once the hypothesis is advanced, it might be a basis for further studies by myself and others. There are many such possible studies, including the ones my reviewers rightly say I have not done. The number of interesting questions suggested by the hypothesis is to me not so much ground for complaint as for congratulation. This is also a normal criterion for a hypothesis. The most obvious study is the one I have just admitted not having done: to choose some particular population, to sample it randomly, to collect interviews from that sample, to score the interviews, to make correlations with the usual demographic categories: age, sex, education, class, and so on. A better one is to collect longitudinal interviews from a randomly selected group over ten or twenty years of their lives. Another is to expand the range of artworks used in interviews; to add, for example, abstract works, works from other cultures and subcultures, or three-dimensional objects. Another is to trace the development of some particular concept that we use in understanding artworks, such as style or surrealism. There are also intervention studies, as DiBlasio and Goldsmith and Feldman suggest, which would determine what the maximum, rather than the actual, development of various groups might be. In many ways, these latter seem to me, as to them, the most appealing kind of study, the

kind I personally would like to pursue, since they might yield some insight into how developmental changes occur and what kinds of curriculum will best facilitate them. DiBlasio believes she knows what the best curriculum looks like, and one could test that view developmentally. The list of possible studies could go on indefinitely.

Note that all of these studies would require a well-constructed and validated instrument for analyzing interview material into stages—"scoring." This is a project whose equivalent in the moral domain took Kohlberg more than twenty years, working as he did with many graduate students and a number of large grants. I have not developed such an instrument. One reason is that I have not sought the resources to do it. Another is that I have been more interested in the philosophical foundations of development. And so I have to agree with Pariser's conclusion that until such an instrument is developed, "we will have to make do with projections and hypotheses."

So far, I agree with the reviewers' comments about method and data. There is a further methodological point made by Pariser with which I disagree. Pariser appears to believe that developmental research can be assumption-free and, in particular, that one can investigate aesthetic development without preconceptions about the nature of the aesthetic. This is suggested by his reservation that I don't "demonstrate" my interpretive assumption that an aesthetic response requires one to understand an artwork. But of course, this can't be "demonstrated," not in the way he intends: with statistical analyses of empirical data. For that is a question of what we should count as a relevant response to an artwork and not of how we should do the counting. It is a philosophical question that comes before the gathering of data. Otherwise we will not know what to do with remarks like "It makes me feel good" and "It's by Picasso, isn't it?"

In a similar vein, Pariser praises Housen's interview method, which he says is designed to elicit a stream of consciousness rather than views on particular topics. This method does not seem helpful to me. It seems to assume that anything we say while standing in front of a painting is part of an aesthetic response. Perhaps this explains why Pariser believes there is "a whole stream" of previous studies of aesthetic development. I do not believe these studies exist, studies of what is aesthetic about responses to artworks. I took pains to mention those that I know of. Incidentally, I should say that irrelevance is not the reason I did not mention Housen's work. I am surprised at Pariser's description of her method, because her results are so similar in character, though not in detail, to mine. The reason I did not cite her work was that, regrettably, it is not available, except as a dissertation.

There is also the related but somewhat different question of the interpretation of data. My interviewees say things to me, and I interpret what

they say in order to pick out the developmental threads. Pariser complains about this—that I "reserve the right to invoke [my] own interpretation." There is no alternative. It is not so much a matter of reserving a right as of observing a fact: understanding what someone says is a matter of interpreting their words, and one cannot avoid that. If we are researching what others mean, no technique can save us from the need to interpret what they say or from the "bias" involved in that. A set of numbers derived from a scoring system that is not itself heavily interpretive would be meaningless. All one can do is to be as open as possible about one's interpretations. Pariser says I am "admirably candid" about them, though he does not appear to intend the admiration. But I am candid about it as a matter of policy; when I quote from an interview in the text, I give my own understanding of what the interviewee means, so that the reader can check it.

In short, it is disappointing that Pariser could say, "Why a developmental process such as aesthetic growth should culminate in accordance with Parsons's philosophical preferences remains a mystery to this reader." The mystery is not profound. If my "philosophical preferences" and my data were not coherent with each other, I would have either to get more data or to change my philosophy. Someone with a different conception of aesthetics would of course conceive a different developmental scheme.

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NOTE

1. D. H. Feldman, *Beyond Universals in Cognitive Development* (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1980).