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Expressive Experience

An inquiry concerning the expressiveness of objects

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Introduction

How is it possible that we hear music or see paintings as expressive of affective states? How is it that this bizarre phenomenon extends to natural landscapes, atmospheres, and also to simple colours, sounds, shapes? This research aims at inquiring the phenomenon of *expressiveness*. In particular, it focuses on the expressiveness of inanimate objects.

These problems have not been studied systematically so far. There exists a long tradition of research about musical expressiveness that usually does not consider visual experiences. Moreover, various philosophers dealt with the problem of expression in the arts, that is, the possibility that affective states are expressed *through* or *by means of* artworks. Yet – as I will try to explain – this is not what expressiveness amounts to. First, because not only artworks are expressive of emotions and, second, because a distinction can be drawn between something being *the expression* of an emotion (also independently of its look) and it being *expressive of* an emotion (therefore characterising its way of appearing). In addition, aesthetic research tends to list expressiveness among aesthetic properties but, even if it is reasonable to consider expressiveness as related to aesthetic experience, this would not exhaust the phenomenon of expressiveness.

What is especially intriguing about expressiveness is that it mobilizes a number of issues concerning the nature of perception and that of affective experiences. Questions about the possibility that affective states such as anxiety, melancholy, sadness, solemnity, liveliness are ascribed to non-sentient beings such as artworks, represent a challenge for theories of perception on the one hand, and for theories of emotions on the other hand. Moreover, most of these questions lay at the crossroads of aesthetics and the philosophy of mind, licking the domains of developmental psychology and cognitive sciences more generally.

My research is intended to clarify some of the pivotal aspects of a generally messy debate. Namely, it is concerned with and mostly refers to claims and proposals that have been formulated within the analytic field, especially in the last fifty years. Main players will therefore be philosophers of music and aesthetics that have been dealing with this problem in recent years. Yet, also accounts elaborated within different traditions – like phenomenology and Gestalt psychology – and tracing back in time will be analysed.

To be fair to the history of philosophy, much of what has been written and said on this topic is due to Gestalt's psychological studies on visual and auditory perception and their application to reflections on art and aesthetic experience. Music has always lent itself to studies of expressiveness in both the perceptual and aesthetic fields, but important reflections have also been made with reference to the figurative arts. Besides the classical works by Christian von Ehrenfels, Kurt Koffka, Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Köhler, and Rudolf Arnheim,[1] I shall mention the studies conducted by Paolo Bozzi and his students,[2] that I will not explicitly call into question here – but whose Gestaltistic imprint originally inspired my research and will appear as a watermak the text.[3]

In the aesthetic domain, Wassily Kandinsky (1912) elaborated a theory of synaesthesia and expression in painting based on the arousal power of colours and shapes that I will only mention in passing, focusing instead on contemporary outcomes of this approach. Theodor Lipps' (1903) work on empathy can instead be taken as a model for projectivist theories of expressiveness that philosophers like Gregory Currie and Kendall Walton recently reconsidered. Moreover, another stream of research that I will not address, but that bears relevant connections to the topic of expressiveness is James J. Gibson theory of affordances.[4]

As to the variety of styles and disciplines through which the phenomenon of expressiveness has been discussed, further areas of research that deserve to be mentioned are studies on physiognomy and atmospheres whose origins trace back to Georg Simmel's notion of *stimmung*.[5] A phenomenological approach to atmospheres understood as affective quality of environments and situations has been developed above all by German philosophers Gernot Böhme and Hermann Schmitz[6], and Italian philosopher Tonino Griffero .[7]

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[1] In particular, references to this topic can be found in von Ehrenfels (1890); Köhler, W. (1938); Koffka, (1962). Arnheim's work will be directly brought into play, especially in Chapter 3.
[2] Bozzi (1990).
[3] I am especially indebted to Parovel (2012) for her massive review and insightful analysis of psychological studies about expressiveness and gestalt.
[4] Gibson (1979).
[5] Simmel (1913).
[6] E.g. Böhme (1995); Schmitz (2014).
[7] Griffero (2010) and (2013). I seize the opportunity to thank Tonino Griffero for the numerous chances he gave me to discuss about his and my own work. His phenomenological and metaphysical approach to atmospheres represented a continuous challenge to my views, forcing me to avoid generalizations and to enlarge my perspective.

Importantly, the present work does not aim at exhausting the debate about expressiveness, neither from a historical nor from a conceptual point of view. Its goal is way more limited and it is two-fold. First, it consists in the clarification of one of the fundamental issues concerning expressiveness, namely the *experience* one can have of it. Second it aims at introducing an account that, hopefully, avoids most problems of the already existing theories.

As to the first purpose, my main concern will be what the *experience* of inanimate objects and of their features as expressive amounts to. As I will show, several attempts were made to reply to this question, but these entail a number of misunderstandings about, e.g., the kind of experience that is at stake, how (and whether) to distinguish between its content, mode and character, which cognitive functions are involved in such an experience, what role is precisely played by emotions. This is why I thought that the whole issue required clarification before taking a stand on it.

As to the second purpose, that is the *pars construens* of my work, I will put forward a proposal that tries to save as many claims as possible of the already available theories. Nonetheless, bearing in mind the weaknesses of the latter, my view will reassess what I will be calling *expressive experience*, accounting for its perceptual status as well as for its affective nature.

In order to pave the way for a thorough discussion, the first chapter introduces, describes and highlights the main claims of some of the paradigmatic accounts of expressive experience. The problem of expressiveness is unpacked as a contradiction that most philosophical theories assume more or less explicitly (1.1). Accordingly, objects' capacity to express emotions contradicts their inability to feel emotions. One of the outcomes of such an assumption are theories of so-called "Pathetic fallacy", that is the conviction that expressive experience is but an illusion (1.2). I criticize the background assumption of this kind of accounts, namely the idea that, when we experience a piece of music as expressive of an affective state, we wrongly ascribe to an inanimate object a full-fledged emotion. Appealing to Sartre's projectivist theory of emotions, I insist that we can distinguish felt emotions from what we ascribe to the mere appearance of objects (1.3). Yet, Sartre's view neglects those cases, central to my enquiry, in which the experience of affective states expressed by objects does not depend on the subject being currently in the grip of an emotion. Richard Wollheim explicitly addresses this point, claiming that the fundamental and most mysterious case of expressive experience is

precisely that in which we are *not* feeling the emotion that we ascribe to the object. Nevertheless, Wollheim's theory of 'correspondence' explains expressive experience in terms of a projectivist mechanism that I explore and question with the support of Malcolm Budd's criticism (1.4).

The connection between felt emotions and those ascribed to objects is stressed by *arousalism*. In 1.5 I introduce various versions of this view, mostly referring to philosophy of music. Although they acknowledge that expressive experience is phenomenally perceptual – i.e. we perceive the look of objects as relevantly connected to emotions – supporters of arousalism account for it on the basis of the capacity that music has to elicit emotions and feelings in us. The automatic, causal link between felt and ascribed emotions is not granted, however. Attempts to get rid of such a perspective are taken forward by those philosophers who consider imagination responsible for expressive experience. In 1.6 I consider two of these theories that rely on different sorts of imaginative engagements. Whereas Jerrold Levinson's *Persona theory* appeals to a form of *propositional imagination* meant to make us experience music as being the emotional expression of some fictional character, Paul Noordhof resorts to *sensuous imagination* for an extremely articulated account. These theories share a fundamental concern: they deny that expressive properties are worldly features. Rather, they consider expressive properties as depending on the imaginative response of subjects.

At this point, I introduce a distinction that, I argue, is too often overlooked, namely that between *expression* and *expressiveness* (1.7). Whereas the former (technical) term refers to the manifestation of emotions, the latter points at those perceptual features whose relation to emotions (in a way that every theory struggles to clarify) does not require that any emotion is actually felt by anyone. The distinction is formerly drawn by Alan Tormey (1971) and formally taken on by most theorists, but it often goes neglected. The overt or covert assumption that dealing with expressive experience consists in dealing with a somehow contradictory phenomenon attests that, in many cases, this distinction is not fully understood. By acknowledging it, I reassess the contradiction of expressive experience and insist that the experience of expressiveness should be accounted for as a perceptual experience of properties that – despite connected with emotions broadly conceived, in a way the deserves convincing explanations – do not bear a necessary relation to actually felt emotions.

In the last paragraph (1.8) I introduce an approach towards which I am particularly sympathetic, i.e. Contour theory. Peter Kivy and Stephen Davies are prominent supporters of this view that, I believe, is the one that best accounts for the just mentioned distinction between expression and expressiveness. Their theory claims that we perceive expressive properties in virtue of the resemblances between perceptual patterns constituting the aspect of objects (particularly music) and typical behavioural manifestations of emotions on behalf of human beings. Although, in the light of deeper scrutiny, also Contour theory presents problematic aspects, I endorse its perceptualist (or formalist) approach as the one that most adequately captures the perceptual nature of expressive experience.

Once the fundamental stances on expressive experience have been introduced and some of their weaknesses discussed, in Chapter 2 I focus on the *desiderata* that a satisfactory theory of expressive experience should fulfil. In 2.1, I list these requirements for the purpose of a more focused discussion. A theory of expressive experience should account for (i) its phenomenal character, (ii) its representational content, (iii) its relation to emotions and (iv) its compatibility with empirical results. The following three paragraphs reconsider the available theories, addressing the way in which they try to satisfy the first requirement. I first stress that most theories admit for a perceptual phenomenal character of expressive experience (2.2). This does justice to the fact that when we hear a joyful piece of music we experience its joy as if it were a feature of the music, rather than a character imagined or projected on it. Even for those views (such as Noordhof's) holding that imagination is responsible for expressive experience, I take it that the way it is like for a subject to see a mournful landscape or to hear a joyful music is eminently perceptual in character.

The disagreement emerges, however, when it comes to assess the emotional side of this phenomenal character. Once one acknowledges that expressive experience is phenomenally perceptual, the question is what role emotions play in making this experience *sui generis*. Some arousal theorists claim that felt emotions are part of the phenomenal character, whereas other mentioned theories deny that this is the case (2.3). In order to provide arguments against arousalism, I examine theories concerning the phenomenology of emotions (2.4). Then, I turn to further proposals about how to explain the phenomenal peculiarity of expressive experience (2.5). Available options appeal to its temporal development (2.5.1.), its capacity to elicit bodily movements (2.5.2) and its

complexity (2.5.3). I introduce and discuss these options, arguing that none of them is well suited to distinguish expressive experience from other phenomenally perceptual experiences. As a provisional conclusion I take it that to undergo an expressive experience is phenomenally like perceiveing certain patterns as expressive. These patterns need neither be experienced as developing through time, nor as eliciting bodily movements, nor as being particularly complex. This satisfies the first *desideratum* for theories of expressive experience, namely the one concerning its phenomenal character. So, the discussion can be taken forward by considering the content of expressive experience, which I do in the following three chapters.

After briefly framing the problem of content within representationalism broadly conceived (3.1), Chapter 3 aims at clarifying the role of response-dependence in accounts of expressive properties (3.2). For this purpose, I mainly exploit Paul Noordhof's theory that appeals to sensuous imagination. Trying to do justice to the complexity of his view, I cast doubts on his scepticism about the possibility that expressive properties are "properties of the world" (3.2.1). More specifically I question the sub-personal simulation mechanism introduced by the theory as well as the implications of a cognitive intervention that seems required by such an account (3.2.2). I conclude that the theory ultimately appeals to a causal explanation (3.3). Importantly, I do not deny that this move is legitimate, but I suggest that it is not necessary at the explanatory level that concerns the experience's content. This criticism relies on Budd's argument of the "heresy of the separable experience". This argument turns out to be an extremely useful tool for the development of an alternative account (3.2.3). Budd targets all those theories that account for aesthetic properties (expressiveness among them) in terms of the experience that they can generate, without providing an explanatory link between the experience and the perceivable structure of the object at stake. Causal explanations are doomed to commit such a heresy. They end up with two separable experiences: the expressive experience on the one hand, and the experience of those "features of the world" that are meant to trigger the subjective response, on the other.

The second half of the chapter presents a way to escape the heresy by means of a version of Contour theory (3.5). I suggest to distinguish between three kinds of expressive experience, based on the role played by resemblances. First there is the case of the *weeping willow*, that is meant to exemplify the perception of something as expressive of emotions in virtue of its being similar to emotional expressions (3.5.1). Accordingly, a weeping

willow may appear sad because we associate its shape to the curved posture of a sad person. However, these cases are recognitional experiences of resemblances that may result into ascriptions of expressiveness, rather than expressive experiences. Therefore, I turn to the other two cases. The second example on which I elaborate is that of the expressive *musical gesture* (3.5.2). In order to deal with this sort of experience, Christopher Peacocke put forward his account based on metaphors. Although his theory is appealing, it remains vague as to the exact role played by the perception of resemblances, so that I look for plausible completions in theories of so-called *seeing-as*. I conclude this section suggesting that the case of the musical gesture might be accounted for as a *perceiving-as* experience consisting in the recognition of a pattern as being expressive by means of the subsumption of that pattern under the same concept that one would use when recognising actual emotional expressions. The conceptual subsumption is made possible by the existence of some isomorphism between the perceptual pattern and the emotional expression. The third and last case that I examine is that of the *minor chord* (3.5.3). The fact that a minor chord sounds sad is admittedly problematic for theories of expressiveness in general and for Contour theory in particular. In point of fact, it is difficult to account for it as bearing resemblances to human expressions, the same holding for colours and for very elementary shapes. These are simple features whose expressiveness is hardly accounted for in terms of similarities. After arguing against Kivy's conventionalist solution, I postpone to the last chapter a positive account for this case.

Sections 3.6, 3.7 and 3.8 are devoted to a description of the sort of properties that, I believe, constitute the content of expressive experiences. Relying on a gestaltic approach on the one hand, and on a phenomenological perspective on the other hand, I claim that expressive properties are inherently dynamic low-level properties whose specificity is well captured by the notion of *rythmos* introduced by Andrea Zhok (2012). I take it that this proposal satisfies the second desideratum for a theory of expressive experience, namely the one concerning its content.

The first step forward of Chapter 4 consists in framing the role played by concepts in expressive experience doing justice to an important distinction. Following Malcolm Budd in aesthetics and Mike Martin in philosophy of perception, the idea is that there is a difference between *experiencing* a property and *recognising* it as being such a property. Whereas the former experience can occur without conceptual interventions, the latter requires the application of concepts (4.1). The aim of the chapter is to explain expressive

experience of musical gestures doing justice to Peacocke's claim that it involves a conceptual subsumption and, at the same time, preserving my conviction that the content of the experience is constituted by low-level dynamic properties. The envisaged solution appeals to weak cognitive penetration. I try argue for my view in three moves. First, I introduce cognitive penetration as the intervention of concepts that modifies the phenomenal character of perceptual experiences (4.2); second I appeal to an account of human expression recognition that relies on cognitive penetration (4.3); third I introduce metaphorical descriptions of aesthetic properties (4.4 and 4.5). Examining the aesthetic debate about metaphorical ascriptions of properties, I reject the idea that expressive properties are inherently conceptual and endorse the idea that emotion concepts are required in order to recognise them as such. I concede to the conceptualist the support of a cognitive approach to metaphors (in the style of Lakoff), but I finally discard it as unwarranted (4.6). In the last section, I put the tiles together, arguing that recognitional experiences of the kind of the expressive musical gesture can be explained as conceptually determined at the level of their phenomenal character by concepts that apply metaphorically in virtue of existing isomorphisms between perceptual dynamic patterns and behavioural expressions (4.7).

Chapter 5 is an attempt to extend this view to the more mysterious case of minor chords. I begin by clarifying the kind of knowledge of emotions that is plausibly required in order to self-ascribe emotions. The aim of this clarification is to offer a view of how emotion knowledge can intervene in recognitional expressive experiences of this latter sort. For this purpose, I endorse James Russell's constructivist theory of emotions (5.1). This endorsement has two outcomes: on one hand, it allows me to consider a basic level of emotional episodes constituted by the appraisal of core affect and affective qualities. Recognitional capacities of emotions that allegedly constitute emotion knowledge can accordingly intervene on the resulting phenomenology, enhancing overall emotional episodes (5.2). On the other hand, this version of constructivism allows me considering emotions as patterns of features, and emotion concepts as cluster-concepts (5.3). The benefit that my account gains from this view is that it allows to apply emotion concepts to features that are not necessary components of emotions, such as behavioural expressions. In principle, it also allows for an extension of those concepts to features of inanimate objects, such as colours and chords. Yet, this move is not entirely warranted, for the conceptual recognition of perceptual features as relating to emotions seems to me

to require a further step. This is why I appeal to the distinction between literal, metaphorical and secondary meaning in order to achieve a more tenable solution (5.4). Relying once again on the debate developed in aesthetics, I argue that emotion concepts can modify the phenomenal character of expressive experience if they apply with their secondary meaning, that is, they neither rely on resemblances, nor are applied literally. Rather, their application seems suitable to us and has the power to enhance expressive experience, but the reason for this suitability is unclear. My hypothesis is that, in the case of expressive experience of simple expressive properties, concepts seem suitable in virtue of those properties sharing the same dimensional space of core affect (5.5). Colours and sounds do not *resemble* emotional expression, this is why concepts do not apply metaphorically to them; rather, they are perceived as located along the same vectors that structure core affect, namely arousal (dynamism) and valence (potential pleasantness or harm to the organism's well-being). In order for this recognition to take place, emotion concepts are required. Yet, in order to undergo the non-recognitional expressive experience of a minor chord, conceptual intervention is not needed, since its content is already inherently connected with our emotions in the basic form of core affect (5.6). Beside finally satisfying the third requirement for a theory of expressiveness – namely the connection to emotions – this hypothesis does justice to the distinction between recognitional and simply perceptual experiences mentioned in the first section of the chapter.

Although my approach is highly speculative, it is compatible with experimental methods and results that I mention throughout the text. Moreover, it is open to empirical tests drawing both on emotion theories of core affect (a notion that was originally elaborated for neuroscientific purposes) and on theories of perception.

Chapter 1

The contemporary debate about expressiveness and expressive properties. An overview

When we talk about *expressiveness* we refer to a number of distinct or distinguishable phenomena and experiences. People can be expressive, gestures can be expressive, words and speeches as well as paintings, statues, faces, but also poems, songs and pieces of music. So, what does the phenomenon of expressiveness amount to? What do the listed things have in common that makes them expressive? Do we talk about the same properties when we refer to the expressiveness of an artwork and of a human face? Moreover, all these things can be expressive of intentions, emotions and even of concepts. So, do expressiveness amount to the same phenomenon in all these cases? In what follows, I try to bring some order within all these questions and to circumscribe the issues covered by my research.

An intuitive way to present this as a philosophical problem is by noticing that we consider *expressive* both animated and inanimate beings. Indeed, the same, similar or analogous linguistic attributions are used to describe both human beings – or animals – and objects or arrays of objects. We may contemplate a *sad* landscape, choose a colour because it is *lively*, a certain outfit because it is *cheerful*, find a sunset *melancholy*, and a piece of music *joyful*. Our descriptions make use of adjectives that belong to the semantic field of emotions and of affective states, such as *happy, cheerful, gay, lively, agitated, nervous, sad, melancholy, mournful, quiet, serene, peaceful* etc., independently of the objects of such attributions being animated or not. One of the aims of this research is to clarify in which sense both animated and inanimate beings can express affective states.

Philosophical interest about expressiveness is not recent. Moreover, it arose in very different philosophical traditions and in relation to several disciplines, from psychology to musicology, to art history, art criticism and artistic practices. The main focus of this research will be the analytic debate of the latest fifty years.

In 1.1 I will introduce the problem of expressive objects in terms of a contradiction, that is, in the way in which most of the literature deals with this problem. In 1.2 I will introduce and discuss theories that make such a contradiction particularly evident, to the extent that they consider expressive experience as an illusory experience.

In 1.3 I will exploit Sartre's theory of emotions in order to capture an important aspect of expressive experience, namely the fact that it concerns the perceptual look of objects, rather than the ascription of affective states. From 1.4 to 1.8 I will present the analytic debate about expressiveness and expressive properties. Projectivist, arousalist, imaginativist and perceptualist accounts will be introduced and discussed, providing the context for the analysis that I will take forward in the next chapters.

1.1 The problem of expressive objects

In order to discuss the most relevant accounts of expressiveness within the analytic philosophical tradition, I will start suggesting that most literature introduces the issue of expressiveness of inanimate objects as a contradiction. On the one hand, indeed, we tend to think that emotional expression involves some kind of feeling, an inner affective world that enables sentient beings to manifest their emotions. On the other hand, we accept that inanimate objects not only trigger emotional reactions, but also express emotions. Behind this way of conceiving the problem there is an intuition that is worth trying to articulate.

Thesis of the Inanimate Objects' Expressiveness (IOE): Inanimate objects (such as music, paintings, but also colours and sounds) express emotions.

Argument (1):

(i) Emotions are psychological states
(ii) Only animate beings possess psychological states
(iii) Only animate beings can feel emotions

So far so good, since (i) and (ii) sound as quite uncontroversial premises. They are apparently consistent both with a folk and with a more technical notion of emotion.[8] The conclusion (iii) introduces the notion of *feeling* as the way in which emotion are *possessed*

[8] I will directly deal with the distinction between folk and technical conceptions of emotions in the last chapter of this research (Chapter 5). Moreover, I will discuss phenomenological aspects of emotions in Chapter 2, section 2.4. Most of the authors that I will call into question in the present and next chapters do not endorse any specific theory of emotions (an important exception is Robinson 2005). Therefore, I will treat their theories as relying on a folk notion.

by sentient beings. Emotions are *felt*, and this also is *prima facie* acceptable without much debates.

The second part of the argument has the following structure:

Argument (2):

(iii) Only animate beings can feel emotions

(iv) To express an emotion implies to feel that emotion

(v) Only animate beings can express emotions

Clearly, if one is disposed to accept (iv) as a matter of fact, then one will also take it as a truth that (v) denies the thesis according to which also inanimate objects express emotions.

As I shall show, there are several strategies to deal with the contradiction. A good way to pave the way to the subtlest ones, is to start considering some of the coarsest.

1.2 The 'Pathetic fallacy' and expressiveness as illusion

Among the strategies to work out the contradiction of objects' expressiveness is the notion of *pathetic fallacy*. The history of this term dates back to John Ruskin's huge work *Modern Painters* (1843), and has been endorsed and developed by George Santayana in the early XX century. Ruskin's view would be better explained and justified by an analysis of the philosophical and literary environment in which his enquiry took place. *Modern Painters* is in point of fact a work of art criticism that does not aim to put forward any strong philosophical claim. I will therefore limit my reference to his claim about expressiveness and to how it relates to the contradiction of expressive objects.

The thesis of pathetic fallacy for expressive objects can be so summarized: when people – artists and especially poets – apply psychological attributions to objects such as inanimate pieces of nature, they are making *erroneous evaluations* and producing *wrong judgements*. As suggested by the word "fallacy", Ruskin believes that the experience of something as expressive, and the subsequent attribution to it of an affective character, is nothing but a mistake. And such a mistake is explained by the fact that the subject of the experience and utterer of the judgement is under the influence of an emotion. According to Ruskin, artists should be aware of the difference "between the ordinary, proper and

true appearances of things to us; and the extraordinary, or false appearances, when we are under the influence of emotion" (Ruskin 1843:147).

In the latter case, appearances are deceptive and in a way that should be rejected by artists who engage in a creative work. Indeed, the fact that artists may be so influenced by their affective states has negative aesthetic implications according to Ruskin's view. Faithful to his overall perspective that art should perform an accurate documentation of nature, he argues that the artist who does not keep his or her eyes "firmly on the pure fact" and "views all the universe in a new light through his tears" fails to provide an aesthetically valuable work. (Ruskin 1843:152 -153). An expressive world is a misleading world, distorted by affects.

So conceived, the pathetic fallacy can be understood as a first attempt to solve the contradiction of expressiveness. In particular, Ruskin denies that inanimate objects can express emotions and it would be a mistake to believe that they can. Rather, when we are in the grip of some overwhelming affective state, we undergo misleading experiences and produce wrong judgments.

In *The Life of Reason* (1906), George Santayana puts forward an analogous solution for the same problem. According to his theory, expressive experiences are the result of an uncritical attitude towards the world, which is typical of primitive societies, infants, magicians and poets. Underdeveloped, naïve mentalities as well as attitudes that are not responsive to reasons tend to be victims of the pathetic fallacy. In Santayana's words: "The pathetic fallacy is […] what originally peoples the world" (Santayana 1936:141). The evolution and development of human society made so as to overtake this irrational attitude in favour of a progressive introduction of critical thinking. Unlike Ruskin, Santayana does not condemn the pathetic fallacy as a misleading attitude, but he considers it as a specific way of approaching reality that the progressive disenchantment of human culture has cancelled. Traces of this past attitude can still be found in (dead) non referential metaphors and in fairy tales. Accordingly, our ancestors – as well as we ourselves as infants – were capable of experiencing the world as expressive, whilst nowadays we have lost this capacity.

Still, even devoid of any doxastic commitment, Santayana's account considers expressive experience as a *deceptive* experience explicable on the basis of a lack of rationality. When experiences are not under the guidance of reason, he maintains, we are doomed to face a misleading reality and to produce ultimately mistaken judgments about it. Once more, the contradiction is solved by maintaining that inanimate objects

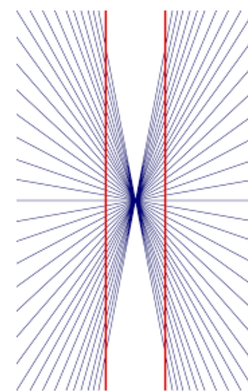
do not actually express emotions. In certain conditions and especially when rationality wavers, subjects may be led to experience them as expressive... but appearances can be deceiving.

The Pathetic fallacy accounts for expressiveness as a case of *illusion*. The experience of expressive objects would accordingly consist in the experience of an object looking different from the way it actually is, and the affective state the subject is in would be responsible for such deception.

Contemporary debates about illusion and delusional experiences more broadly, are extremely rich and the definition of illusion is still controversial. Standardly, however, we maintain that one undergoes an illusion when she perceives a (worldly) object but misperceives one or more of its properties. Beliefs about illusory experiences are such that they prove to be wrong when tested by means of testimony, other tools or senses (MacPherson & Batty 2016).

Optical illusions are the most common example of illusory items. When we experience (a) the Müller-Lyer illusion or (b) the Hering illusion, our experience is such that we respectively form the beliefs that (a) the two lines have different lengths and that (b) the two vertical lines are curved. However, the application of a ruler to the figures is enough to provide evidences that change our beliefs, in spite of the unaltered configurations. Namely: we will come to think that (a) the two lines of the Müller-Lyer are of equal length and that (b) the two lines of the Hering illusion are straight and parallel.

(a)



(b)

We may finally consider the common example of the stick that looks bent when immersed in water. We experience it as bent and we form the subsequent belief that it must be bent, or broken. But as long as we take the stick out of the water, we realise that we were wrong

in thinking that it was bent: it is actually straight, and its bent-look was determined by some environmental conditions (namely, refraction that occurs in water).

Given these paradigmatic examples, we can ask whether the case of expressive objects could be described in an analogous way. According to the Pathetic fallacy account we experience objects – such as certain portions of nature or artworks – as expressive, but this experience is a case of misperception, say, we experience features that those objects do not actually have. However, such an experience can in principle be corrected by the use of critical reason. Thus, if one eliminated the affective condition impairing a correct experience, one should be able to change one's belief about the landscape being sad or the funeral march being sombre. The adoption of a rational stance in the case of expressive objects should parallel the application of a ruler for the case of the Müller-Lyer or the use of touch for the case of the bent stick.

So far, the analogy between perceptual illusions and Pathetic fallacy holds, so it is worth trying to push it ahead. As already pointed out, illusions are such that we form wrong judgments on the basis of an experience: when we see the Müller-Lyer, we form the belief that 'the two segments are of the same length' and when we see the bent stick we form the belief that 'it is broken'. Consistently, supporters of the Pathetic fallacy argue that we form wrong judgments about nature and artworks as long as we attribute to them psychological states. Therefore, if the analogy were sound, we should say that when we are under the influence of our sad feelings and we see a sad landscape, we form the belief that 'the landscape is sad'.

Once again, in order for something to be an illusory experience, it must be possible, in principle, to correct our beliefs about it on the basis of further evidences, i.e. a measuring ruler applied to the segments of the Müller-Lyer will reveal that 'they are of the same length', and the use of touch in the example of the bent stick will reveal that 'it is intact and straight'. Thus, according to the analogy, by applying the "ruler of rationality" to the misleading experience of a sad landscape we would obtain the correction of the previous belief, say: 'the landscape is not sad (I was only being deceived by my emotions)'.

Now, I take it that a judgment of the kind 'the landscape is sad' may be amended in two alternative ways based on the experience we have, and in one further way based on the belief we form. At least one of these should do justice to the intuition from which the Pathetic fallacy stems: either (a) the landscape is not sad but, say, cheerful, and we just misperceived its expressive quality; or (b) the landscape is not sad, but neutral, and

we ascribed to it a feature that it cannot instantiate, but that might be the result of our phantasy or projection; or (c) we had the false belief that objects such a landscapes can *be literally sad* and express such affective state.

First, we might take the negation 'the landscape is not sad' to mean that 'the landscape is, instead, serene'. In which case, the misleading expressive feature would be replaced by a correct expressive feature and related attribution. The deceptive experience in such case would be similar to the one of the person who mistakenly took a wall to be painted in pink instead of white. We would not conclude from this misattribution that the colour pink *does not apply* to walls, but rather that something went wrong with the person's experience (either something in the environmental conditions or in her visual system). Therefore, if the experience of a sad landscape and the resulting belief were wrong in this sense, the Pathetic fallacy would implicitly acknowledge the possibility that a landscape instantiates one of these expressive looks. Anyway, what the Pathetic fallacy view wants to reject is precisely the possibility that a landscape instantiates *any* expressive features, ruling them out as a matter of illusion.

So, we should try with the second interpretation. When John Ruskin and Georg Santayana argue that we can – and ought to – correct our expressive experience and subsequent beliefs by getting rid of our emotions, they are claiming that the resulting, amended experience is *neutral* as to its affective character. Then, the choice would not be between the landscape being *sad* or *serene*, but rather between it being *sad* or *devoid of any affective character*. Also according to this interpretation, however, in order to establish whether a landscape is sad or affectively neutral, one has to be able to point at certain features that the landscape instantiates, taking them as evidences for choosing one of the two alternatives. But if one allows for this identification of features, then one allows for the possibility that a landscape instantiates a sad look, whatever the environmental or psychological conditions of the experiencing subject may be. In short, one should be able to say: "Well, now that I am no more in the grip of my sorrow, the landscape does not have that sad look that it used to have when I was depressed", this sentence implying that the landscape used to have a definite appearance at that time. Looking sad, despite being a misleading appearance for a landscape, must amount to some describable features which can be corrected (or even completely wiped out) by a more critical or more "rational" observation.

Even in such case, it seems that the Pathetic fallacy view should accept that landscapes described as sad by sensitive poets or within primitive cultures, are *sad-looking*,

although this might depend on certain psychological conditions of the beholders. And accepting this point means that one should be able to say something about such (misleading) sad look, as well as one is able to say how the stick immersed in the water looks like (bent). If the supporters of the Pathetic fallacy view allowed for the possibility of such a description, even in its more general terms, they should also accept that there is at least a sense in which an inanimate landscape can *be sad* – namely the sense in which it *looks sad*.

However, given that neither Ruskin nor Santayana say how something expressive of an emotion should look in order to be deceiving (and make the observers commit a Pathetic fallacy), it seems that the burden of illusion is entirely on the wrong judgement that would follow from this illusory experience. In other words, it seems that the error which characterises the attribution of affective characters to objects lies at the level of the belief one forms, rather than in the experience it is supposed to be about.

Let us focus on the third way to interpret the negation of the belief that 'the landscape is sad'. If the Pathetic fallacy view cannot allow for the possibility that *being sad* refers to the look of the landscape, then it must refer to some further property, namely the psychological state of sadness that in principle, within the frame of a non-animistic thought, landscapes cannot have. On this interpretation, the belief that 'the landscape is sad is wrong as long as it is taken to mean that 'the landscape possesses the affective state of sadness'. Thus, the deceptive character of expressive attributions to objects consists in that we form a belief which in principle cannot be true. The subsequent negation of this belief would then be that 'the landscape does not possess the affective state of sadness'. Since the supporters of the Pathetic fallacy do not say how a landscape should look in order to be mistakenly experienced as sad, they must be saying that, rather than undergoing a misleading perceptual experience, we produce a misguided belief. Accordingly, when we see a landscape and judge that it is sad, we are actually experiencing a neutral landscape with its colours, lights, shades and objects, but given that we are under the influence of our emotions, we erroneously believe that it is sad. However, this view is questionable on various counts.

Whenever we have to deal with an optical illusion that we are not familiar with, we form a wrong belief and we presumably behave in accordance with such a belief. Wile E. Coyote is sadly famous for crashing into fake galleries artfully painted by The Road Runner on mountains' faces. Moreover, we might have illusory experiences of objects under the influence of certain emotional states and this could trigger erroneous

judgements: fear of darkness can erroneously make us think that a squeak of the door in the next room is intentionally produced by someone who is about to assault us, and therefore make us run away. Importantly, the discussion so far was not intended to deny that we undergo this sort of experiences and produce this kind of misjudgements.

So, if the belief we form when confronted to a sad landscape were 'that it is sad' in the sense that it possesses the affective state of sadness, we would be inclined to behave in accordance with such a belief. However, this seems not to be the case when we experience a sad landscape: we usually do not comfort sad landscapes, nor pity melancholy pieces of music. At best, we can be influenced by the sadness expressed by the landscape or the piece of music, but in a way that is distinct from our behavioural and affective response to animate beings that we believe to possess and express their sadness. This allows introducing the idea that the belief we form about certain objects being sad, melancholy or lively is to be understood in a different way from that of a delusional judgment concerning affective experiences. Namely, our experiences seem to attest that the sort of belief we form when experiencing a sad piece of music or a lugubrious painting, is different from – though somehow related to – the belief that the object in question expresses an emotion as a result of its possessing the related affective state. It seems that whenever we ascribe affective features to inanimate objects, we do that on the basis of a sensory experience according to which the objects in question *look* in certain, affectively characterised, manners. The first and the second interpretations that I offered of the Pathetic fallacy approach show that the belief 'the landscape is sad' can be understood as meaning 'the landscape looks sad', whereas in the third interpretation (the one the Pathetic fallacy approach is committed to) this translation does not apply.

1.3 Projection of occurring emotions: J.P. Sartre

To deny that the experience of expressiveness is misleading in the sense implied by the Pathetic fallacy is not yet to exclude that emotions we feel can play a role in shaping our perceptual experiences. This is indeed the case exemplified in the second interpretation I proposed. We may happen to undergo an emotion, for example we could be sad or in a depressive mood due to whatever reason and "about" whatever object (if any). There is widespread agreement both throughout the history of philosophy and in psychology

that, when we find ourselves in such condition, we might tend to experience objects in different ways. Emotional states can for example affect the way we perceive space, slant, distances, sizes (for an overview, see Stefanucci, Gagnon and Lessard 2011). Thus, it is also reasonable to think that the affective states we are in can make us perceive objects around us charged with those same affective states or similar ones. Some merely introspective examples may help figuring out what I have in mind: I am feeling deeply sad or depressed due to whatever reason and I experience objects in my surroundings, such as the landscape or the scenario I am in, as looking sad or melancholy; I feel terribly angry and the usually friendly context I find myself in, seems to me annoying and grotesque. Everyday experiences are rich in similar cases that are compatible with the sort of experiences described by the Pathetic fallacy supporters. As I showed, however, their explanation neglects the possibility that when we have those experiences we are not misattributing affective states to objects. Rather, we attribute affective properties to the way those objects *look*.

I will therefore consider one way to account for the case in which we are in the grip of our emotional states that does not appeal to mistaken attributions. Instead, it allows for the possibility that objects have a specific appearance when we experience them under the influence of affective states. It consists in the claim that the emotional states we undergo can be projected and "dye" the objects we are surrounded by, providing them with a particular look.

In his *Esquisse d'une théorie des émotions* (1939), Jean Paul Sartre put forward an instructive theory that is worth considering. His perspective is notoriously phenomenological, and in this essay he tries to account for emotions on the basis of phenomenological (namely Husserlian) premises, overtly arguing against the methods adopted by psychology. In particular, he is highly sceptical about the capacity that a psychological inquiry about emotions (and, allegedly, about any human experience) would have to put forward any meaningful general theory. Being based on what it takes to be "mere facts" disconnected from one another, psychological inquiry is doomed to draw particular conclusions from particular analysis and is not in the position to provide a wider view on the world and the experience humans have of it (Sartre 1993: *Introduction*).

As an alternative, Sartre presents his method as *phenomenological psychology*, based on the description of emotions as *phenomena* provided with a *meaning* that the philosopher is in the position to clarify. Given this methodological premise, the outcome of Sartre's inquiry is instructive for the present research as long as it considers an emotion as "a

certain way of apprehending the world" (1993:52). This view is made possible by the phenomenological approach adopted by Sartre – on which I will not spend many words, though. It suffices to say that he points out a difference between those situations in which we focus on the affective state we are in, so that it becomes the object of our experiences, and those cases in which – independently of the awareness we have of our affective states – our emotions make the world acquire a certain look. Sartre claims that, when we are in the grip of an emotion, we experience the world in a specific way. The objects of our experience acquire certain perceivable features that we apprehend as if they belonged to those objects: "True emotion [...] is accompanied by belief. The qualities conferred upon objects are taken as true qualities" (Sartre 1993:73).

Accordingly, it is not the case that we *misjudge* what we are confronted with, but rather, our emotions are responsible for the generation of an experience in which features determined by emotions are perceived as constituents of the objects. In Sartre's phenomenological terms:

> What is constitutive of the emotion is that it perceives upon the object something which exceeds it beyond measure. There is, in effect, a world of emotion. All emotions have this in common, that they make a same world appear, a world which is cruel, terrible, gloomy, joyful, etc. [...] a world of individual syntheses maintaining connections among themselves and possessing qualities. (Sartre, 1993:79-80).

The specific character of emotions consists in our assuming a specific attitude so as to "constitute" a specific world, namely, the world of emotions, whose qualities are nevertheless perceived as qualities of the world itself, that we experience "passively", similarly to what happens when we see colours, distances or shapes.

As well as the Pathetic fallacy approach, this account deals explicitly with occurring emotions that are deemed responsible for making the world appear in some or some other way. Nevertheless, Sartre's phenomenological approach allows to introduce an element that will soon prove to be important to deal with the problem of expressiveness, namely the notion of *phenomenal character*.[9] He points out that there is a

[9] The notion of *phenomenal character* deserves clarification and will be further discussed in the next chapters. For the moment I will make a rather liberal use of it, meaning the so-called 'what-it-is-like' of an experience. More specifically, the *phenomenal character* of an experience can be defined as the "distinctive way it is like –

specific way in which the world is perceived on those occasions. In so doing, he acknowledges that the experience of objects as affectively charged in a way or another is phenomenally characterised, so that it is not a matter of misjudgement if we attribute to things certain affective features. A sad-looking landscape may look sad because of our being sad, but our attributing sadness to it depends on its specific way of appearing to us under certain conditions.

More will be said concerning the notion of phenomenal character that I will need to adopt in order to take a stance on the experience of expressiveness. For the moment, it is enough to keep in mind the possibility that experiences of worldly things can gain a specific qualitative character thanks to the affective states the subject of the experience is in. And, more important, this specific character is such that properties that depend on our being affectively moved are experienced as belonging to the objects themselves.

Sartre is interested in showing that the emotions that we undergo can change the way in which the world presents itself to us. His view can help to add a tile to the puzzle of expressiveness. Indeed, it accounts for the fact that we can describe affectively charged objects by taking their appearance seriously, rather than discarding the related experience as illusory.

Nonetheless, the experience described by Sartre must not be considered the core case of expressiveness. It can actually account for those cases in which emotions affect the look of things, but it neglects those cases in which things result expressive to subjects that are not feeling any emotion, neither corresponding nor opposed to the one that they attribute to objects. Apparently, we do not need be in the grip of an emotion in order to experience inanimate objects as expressive of affective states: we might be perfectly serene and experience a funeral march as mournful, or a jingle as cheerful. Based on everyday experiences, we may think that "being in the grip of an emotion" is not required in order for the world to look affectively charged to us. So, the next step of this overview will precisely deal with this aspect of the experience of expressiveness, finally addressing the analytic debate about what will be called from now on "expressive experience".[10]

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from the inside, as it were – to undergo experiences of its type" and therefore amounts to "how the experience presents itself to introspection." (Kriegel 2002:175).

[10] This term comes from Noordhof 2008. The phrase is patterned after those of "perceptual experience", "imaginative experience", "emotional experience". It has been noticed that it might create some confusion, for it gives the idea that the way in which the experience is undergone is expressive rather than being an experience *of* expressive features (I thank Diego Marconi for expressing his perplexity on this point). Nevertheless, the label has the virtue of brevity, so that I will adopt it from now on, taking its meaning to be 'whatever experience of expressive features'.

1.4 Projectivism: Wollheim on 'correspondence'

In his article *Correspondence, Projective Properties and Expression in the Arts* Richard Wollheim shows to be well aware of the importance to distinguish between expressive experiences that take place when the subject is moved, and expressive experiences in which the subject does not feel any occurring emotion. He considers the experience of expressive features from a perspective that echoes the one adopted by Sartre. He is interested in those cases in which objects in the external world seem to *correspond* to certain emotional states, say, those cases in which psychological predicates are attributed to nature and to works of art. Wollheim borrows the notion of *correspondence* from Charles Baudelaire's notorious poem "Correspondances", and describes the content of the experience of correspondence as the experience of something that appears *of a piece with* an affective state. Accordingly, if something shows this sort of correspondence, then it is perceived as instantiating *projective* properties.

Projection is a psychological mechanism that Wollheim explains by appealing to developmental psychology in a Freudian vein. Significantly, he had previously faced the topic of projection in his *From Voices to Values: The Growth of Moral Sense* (Wollheim 1986:197-225) when discussing ethical and psychological problems in the light of Freudian theories. According to the theory that Wollheim develops in both works, projection is something we start doing since our infancy. In the early stages of our development, we tend to find relief from oppressive and generally unpleasant affective states such as anxiety, by projecting them on what surrounds us, either people and things. Projection can then give rise to a belief that follows from the condition of relief we are in, so that:

> On the level of judgement, projection […] can be represented by the speaker's applying to someone or something else a predicate that he himself satisfies. (Wollheim 1986:214).

However, unlike Sartre, Wollheim rules out as psychologically and philosophically uninteresting these just described experiences of projection. Namely, he believes that episodes in which attributions of emotions to inanimate objects correspond to the subject's occurrent psychological state do not tell us enough about what he calls

correspondence. As in those cases described by Sartre, we can feel sad and *project* our sadness on our surroundings, so as to perceive them as sad, but this is not to be considered the core case of expressive (Wollheim, consistently, calls it "projective") experience. Indeed, we can experience expressive objects even though we are not in the grip of any emotion, or if we are undergoing completely different emotions from those that we attribute: as already suggested, our common experience attests that we can attribute sadness or melancholy to a depicted landscape despite being perfectly quite, or even happy.

Wollheim focuses on what he names *complex projection*, that is, the projection of emotions that has as its output the ascription of an expressive character to objects, but which does not imply that the subject undergoes any emotional state. Complex projection takes place only as far as there is something inherent to the appearance of the world that makes it possible: "There has to be a real match of correspondence between [the outer world and the inner world]" (Wollheim 1986:214), an *affinity* already present between the object which is taken to be, say, sad and sadness, even though sadness is not the emotion felt by the subject at the time of the experience. Thus, when complex projection is in play, the subject recognises an object as apt for the projection of a certain affective state on the basis of some existing affinity. Once more, Wollheim resorts to developmental psychology, claiming that affective projections that during our infancy are randomly applied, become more precise as we grow up. As time passes we tend to select the objects on which to project. This progressive selection both provides the basis for and depends on the affinity they show to share with emotions.

Here is a first controversial aspect of Wollheim's account. On the one hand, he claims that the affinity that should make certain objects apt for the projection of emotions is a "brute fact", something about which it is impossible to say more; but on the other hand our projections are meant to become more stable as time passes, so that it seems that we tend to project and to attribute expressive traits in a more stable and systematic fashion. This progressive stabilisation creates and enhances the conditions for certain things to be recognisable as expressive, say, to show a certain affinity with projectable emotions. When we recognise something as expressive we recognise it as the object on which we *have* or *may have projected* our emotions in the past. And there is a sense in which the object lends itself to this experience precisely in virtue of the fact that we have projected our emotion on it (or similar ones) in the past.

Now, the appeal to affinity depends on that Wollheim does not want to limit the experience of what he calls *projective properties* to those objects on which we have *actually* projected emotions in the past, otherwise it would be very difficult to account for those cases in which we see as expressive an object encountered for the first time.

> That is evidently too restrictive, for we can and do perceive nature as of a piece with our feelings in cases where we can no longer recall having projected those feelings on to it and, indeed, in innumerable cases where we have not done so. (Wollheim, 1993:153)

There must be some component of the experience that makes so that a completely new object allows for the projection. Therefore, Wollheim suggests that not only the memory of a past projection that the object triggers, but even an *intimation of the projective origin* that the experience could have are responsible for the experience of an expressive object.

> […] When such experiences do not – and most of them do not – intimate how they came about, they do intimate how experiences of the sort they exemplify come about in general. A [..] comparison may help to clarify this claim. […] Most experiences of bodily pain intimate specifically how *they* originate: that is, in damage to part of the body where they are felt. But there are some individual pains that do not arise in this way: the part of the body where they are felt is undamaged or has been amputated. But such pains […] intimate how pains in general arises. Experiences of the sort that they exemplify arise, they tell us, from damage in the body. (Wollheim 1993:150)

But the thesis regarding the intimation that an experience can make of its origin proves to be problematic on two counts. First, it is not clear how such intimation should partake in our experience; second, the fact that it is impossible to specify how an object should be like in order to have some affinity with certain emotional states (and so to entertain a correspondence relation with the inner world), makes it difficult to release Wollheim's projectivism from a radically idiosyncratic view of expressive experience. Let us now deploy this two points.

As to the first one, Malcolm Budd expresses doubts:

> Presumably, for an experience to intimate something about itself the intimation must be an aspect of its phenomenology. But what form does the intimation assume? (Budd, 2008:245).

If one follows Wollheim, it seems that the intimation about its origin that the expressive experience is supposed to give is part of its phenomenal character, say, of what the experience is like for a subject. It should then be specified *how* it enters the experience.

> What is needed is a conception of an emotion that someone does not actually feel on a certain occasion yet is present in the person in an occurrent sense that enables it to modify a perception from not being a perception of correspondence to being such a perception. (Budd 2008:249)

While Wollheim is not too clear on this point, Francisca Perez-Carreño has provided an interpretation that supports his view. She argues, in a Wollheimian vein, that emotions enter perceptual experiences of expressive objects in the form of a thought content (Perez-Carreño 2017). It can subsequently be argued that something we *believe* or *know* about emotions, can enter the perceptual experience we have of certain objects, either because they trigger an associative mechanism linking current perceptual experiences to past projections of emotions, or because they are thoughts intimating the origin of the current expressive experience in possible projections. But – this is Budd's point – our experience does not attest that the capacity to recognise such an origin is required to undergo an expressive experience. In other words, it does not seem that, in order to recognise something as expressive, we should possess the concept of *intimation of a projective origin*. Furthermore, it is far from obvious that even if we reflect on the experience after it took place, we end up with a thought concerning the intimation of its origin in projection.

> […] if an experience intimates something about itself this intimation must announce itself to us when we reflect on the experience in order to determine if it tells us this about itself [But] reflection on the experience of expressive perception—at least, reflection on my own experience of the expressive perception of nature or the perception of the expressive properties of works of art—fails to reveal a thought concerning complex projection. (Budd 2008:246-247).

As to the second point, I shall focus on a discrepancy that emerges from Wollheim's account. On the one hand, he puts forward an explanation appealing to memories and background knowledge of projections. Yet on the other hand, he needs to acknowledge that the appearance of the involved objects plays some determinant role in the experience. In fact, either one claims that any object can be experienced as expressive of any affective state or something in the appearance of the objects should be taken as binding. Wollheim is aware that the first alternative is difficult to endorse. First, there seems to be some strong intuition about objects and features that are liable to certain attributions instead of others: Richard Wagner's *The Valkyries* is hardly experienced as a cheerful piece, whereas, usually, *Jingle Bells* is not considered mournful. Second and more important, Wollheim is well aware that attributions of expressiveness refer to the perceivable look of an object, to its appearance. Despite being convinced that such appearance must trigger memories of past projections or associated thoughts that lie beyond the perceivable surface, the latter should be able to bear some strong connection to those states and contents, on pain of intrinsic randomness which expressiveness does not show to have.

Just a quick example to make the whole point more perspicuous. Suppose two persons are attending at *The Ride of the Valkyries*; while the first person experiences the piece as solemn and, occasionally, threatening, the second person finds it ridiculous. Both listeners have good reasons to attribute those affective features to the piece, and among those reasons are the memories and thoughts – allegedly different ones – that they associate to it. Nevertheless, they are referring to *the same* piece of music, this sameness consisting in the same structure and audible features. If the two were asked to convince each other about the correctness of their attributions, the common ground on which they would probably base their arguments would be the perceptual surface of the *Ride*. Despite not being a knock-down argument, such practice captures something that really features our experiences of expressive features.

Wollheim's worry about this point is the following: as well as merely perceptual properties, projective properties that are responsible for expressiveness both cause our experience and are what the experience is about. But holding that the expressive aspect of a perceived object is simply due to its perceptual features would imply to reduce expressive properties to merely perceptual ones and there would not be any need to explain *correspondence* as a *sui generis* phenomenon.

> If what is wanted is information about how exactly nature has to look in particular cases if it is to be apt for the projection of this rather than that feeling, then this demand must surely go unsatisfied. For how could we convincingly describe what it is about some aspect of nature that makes it suitable for the projection of some particular feeling without upgrading the mere affinity into the projective properties of which it is – at any rate on my view – the mere substrate? (Wollheim 1993:154)

Thus, he claims, it is just a brute fact that certain objects appear as apt for the projection of certain emotions. Projection is precisely the mechanism that allows non-expressive features becoming expressive since it establishes a connection between the perceptual appearance of an object and the emotions that can be projected on it. But since the affinity, as just shown, is at least partly dependent on repeated projections made by the subject onto the same or similar objects according to personal vicissitudes, preferences, or simply casual associations, two subjects are likely to establish quite different projective connections with those same objects. And once they will become able to recognise those objects as expressive in the absence of any occurrent projection, the two experiences are likely to result incommensurable with one another.

Therefore, the projectivist theory put forward by Wollheim is capable of accounting for those cases in which our personal affective states are currently projected or associated by means of our own memories to inanimate objects. However, it proves to be inadequate to account for those cases in which we experience something as expressive for the first time and without being in the grip of any emotion. It is certainly true that, as claimed both by Wollheim and by Sartre, our occurrent affective states can influence the way in which we perceive certain objects, so that we recognise some of their features as being expressive. This allows them dealing with the contradiction of expressive objects by acknowledging that, although they do not literally possess emotions, inanimate objects can look compatible or, in Wollheim's words, 'of a piece' with felt emotions.

Expressive objects are therefore inanimate objects that we experience in a specific manner, namely as having an expressive look, due to the fact that we ourselves *feel* the emotions we attribute to them. But when it comes to the experience of expressive objects in the absence of a (previously or currently) felt emotion, so conceived projectivism does not stand. First it is not clear how the hinted projective origin of expressive experience partake in the content of the experience and, second, this account does not explain the

fact that the way an object is like at least partly determines the expressive experience one can have of it.

1.5 Arousalism: Matravers, Ridley and Robinson on Art and Emotions

There is another way to face the challenge of expressive experience. It stems from the intuition that the emotions that we attribute to objects do depend on those objects, but only as long as they provoke some affective reaction in sentient subjects. This family of accounts can be called "arousalism" and finds in Wassily Kandinsky one of its most notorious supporters. In his *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1912) he famously wrote:

> Colour directly influences the soul. Colour is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand that plays, touching one key or another purposively, to cause vibrations in the soul. (Kandinsky 1997:45)

On this view, perceptual aspect of objects – especially artworks – are capable of arousing emotions in the audience provoking expressive experiences.

In his book *Art and Emotion* (1998) Derek Matravers takes on this intuition and puts forward an articulated arousalistic theory. The explicit assumption of his theory is that if expression is something that is available only for those beings that can *feel* emotions as internal states, then human expression of emotions can serve as a paradigmatic 'central case' for expressive experience. According to Matravers, the normal reaction of human (or, more generally, sentient) beings when confronted to an emotional expression is the feeling of a certain emotion in turn.

> We do not characteristically react to the expression of emotion with the bare formation of a belief. As a general rule, such a reaction would be inappropriate; the characteristic response to such situation is another emotion, whether of the same or of a different type. (Matravers 1998:26).

Suppose we see someone expressing her sadness: if we are not victims of any relevant affective disorder, we ought to react with an appropriate emotion such as sorrow, pity or compassion. Matravers' theory derives the case for inanimate objects' expressiveness

from this paradigm of human expression: some objects trigger in us feelings of the same kind as those elicited by human expression of emotions; such reactive feelings are meant to cause in turn our beliefs about the expressiveness of those objects. Therefore, we call *expressive properties* the features of objects that actually arouse certain feelings in us.

In order to develop his theory, Matravers focuses on the case of music:

> A piece of music expresses an emotion *e* if it causes a listener to experience a feeling *a*, where *a* is the feeling component of the emotion it would be appropriate to feel (in the central case) when faced with a person expressing *e*. Hence music expressive of sadness will cause the listener to feel sad (or maybe the feeling component of pity if that is a different state), and this feeling will cause him to believe that the work expresses sadness. (Matravers 1998:149)

It is undeniable that we happen to feel moved by inanimate objects: let us think about particularly moving pieces of music, but also to the deeply emotional reactions that many people tell they have when contemplating Rothko's paintings; extremely desolate landscape or extremely dramatic ones also provokes affective reaction in beholders, not to talk about the emotions we might feel with objects that are linked to some particularly moving episode in our lives. Peter Kivy, for instance, named this 'the "our song" phenomenon', referring to the arousal that a piece of music may trigger, due to associative mechanisms that tie that very piece to some affectively charged memories (see Kivy 1989:30).

Also, it happens that in such cases we tend to justify our attributions of expressiveness to inanimate objects by referring to the emotions those objects make or made us feel. Admittedly, arousalism captures the intuition that, in order to experience something as being affectively charged, and especially expressive, one has to be involved into a properly affective experience that, in principle, implies some form of arousal.

As already pointed out when discussing projectivism, however, it happens as well that we attribute expressive properties to objects without feeling moved by them: we could acknowledge that a music we hear is very sad, but still feel happy or lack any affective state. Let us think about the *Ride of the Valkyries* once again: one can be deeply affected and moved to exaltation or anxiety when listening to it, but it may also be the case that one goes through the piece without emotional reactions. In the light of this

consideration, and as already suggested, actually felt emotions should not be considered a necessary condition to experience something as expressive.

Nevertheless, Matravers insists that the feelings triggered by expressive objects are ultimately responsible for our ascriptions. His argument against this objection is that those feelings are not something we need to be aware of. On the contrary, feelings can remain completely unknown to the subject, and we can postulate their presence and nature on the basis of the judgment that they are able to cause. In Matravers' own words: "[…] we cannot know the nature of that feeling except by reference to the belief it causes" (Matravers 1998: 150). But this view lends itself to an objection of which Matravers himself is aware:

> Because the feeling aroused by [an expressive object] is only causally connected to it and is thus independent of it, it follows that the feeling could be aroused by other means. (Matravers 1998:169)

In other words, arousalism does not account for the link between the phenomenal character of the experience and its causes. In fact, it does not say how an object should look like in order for it to be experienced as expressive. Accordingly, the phenomenal character of the expressive experience could be identical with the phenomenal character of the perceptual experience we can have of the same object, save the fact that something in its content elicits some reactive feeling.

According to Aaron Ridley (1995), Matravers' account is committed to the *heresy of the separable experience*, that is: it cannot provide an explanation linking the way the expressive object looks like and the belief one forms about its being expressive. Ridley draws on the definition provided by Malcolm Budd, who states that we commit to such a heresy when we describe:

> A musical work as being related in a certain way to an experience which can be fully characterized [and valued] without reference to the nature of the work itself. (Budd 1985:123)

Suppose we are under the effect of some drug that is able to elicit our feelings, and suppose that we are at the same time facing a depicted landscape. The judgment concerning the affective character of the painting that we come up with, despite being

the causal output of the arousal, would be connected to its object only contingently. Say, our belief about the painting being expressive of some emotion would not depend in any sense on the look of the landscape. Arousalism accepts the idea that the causal chain resulting in the belief that an object is expressive starts with the perceptual features of that object. But since the connection is merely causal, it is not possible to say what an object should look like in order to appear sad rather than cheerful to an observer.

Matravers suggests to deal with this lack of normative constraint on the experience of expressiveness appealing to two distinct factors. On the one hand he maintains that there is a specific way in which perceptual expressive features trigger affective reactions, a way that distinguishes such experience from the one that may be caused by a drug:

> A piece of music, then, is a structure, the identity and the value of which will not reside in any particular part, but rather in the relations between its parts (Matravers 1998:178)

So that

> The experience of expressive music is the experience of an organized structure of sounds and the corresponding feelings it arouses (Matravers 1998:177)

It is the very complex structure of music that provokes affective reactions in the listener, in such a way that a drug or any other simple causal stimulus could not obtain the same result.

On the other hand, in order to establish a normative link between the perceived aspect of the object and the feeling aroused, doing justice to the phenomenal character of the experience, Matravers appeals to the constraint of *appropriateness*. The feeling aroused by the expressive object – however complex it is – is the non intentional component of the emotions that it would be appropriate to feel when confronted with an expressive *person*. This is to say that, analogously to how we react in front of certain behaviours and, subsequently, judge them as melancholy or as nervous, there seem to be objects that lend themselves to certain attributions instead of others; Matravers' arousalism accounts for both kinds of experiences (the one of sad music and the one of sad behaviours) in the same way, namely, by appealing to causal reactions: as there are

appropriate affective reactions to human expressions that can be explained by physiological and evolutionary arguments, there are also appropriate affective reactions to the perception of certain features of objects that, in principle, should be explained in the same or similar way.

Both these arguments, that are basically meant to make the experience of expressiveness more articulated than a bump on a toe, deserve some discussion. As to the complexity condition put forward by Matravers against the drug counterargument, it seems to avoid the problem rather than to deal with it. It is true, and will be discussed later in further details, that emotions are multi-componential items that include non intentional feelings, say, physiological reactions that may be devoid of intentional objects and therefore lack any content. Therefore, to consider mere non-intentional feelings as responsible for the merely causal connection between expressive objects and our attributions of expressiveness is consistent with such widespread assumption. Moreover, unlike the projectivist perspective, it locates that the origin of the experience is in certain perceivable features of objects, rather than in the subjective projection of emotions on them.

Nevertheless, the objection of the drug remains. In principle, such objection points at the link between the appearance of an expressive item and our beliefs about the appearance. Even if one is disposed to accept that the responsible causal relation is more complex than the one linking the sharp edge of my chest of drawers and the pain in my toe caused by bumping into it, the problem keeps standing: there may always be other means to arouse the same feeling reaction and subsequent judgments in the absence of the intentional object of the experience. Thus: why should our attributions be about those same objects that our experience seems to be about? And there is more to this.

As just seen, the second way in which Matravers tries to account for the specificity of expressive experience resorts to the idea of *appropriateness*. Our experience of expressive objects attests indeed a certain degree of normativity. So, the appeal to appropriateness should account for the fact that certain pieces of music are appropriately deemed sad, while others are appropriately deemed happy. But on which basis should one accept that the appropriate way to react to the *Ride of the Valkyries* is by having (consciously or not) the feeling component of fear which will cause in turn a judgment of threatfulness? If the criterion to affirm that such a reaction is more appropriate than another is the mere fact that most of us tend to respond in such a way, then this explanation falls short of establishing a normative criterion.

Despite being himself an arousalist, Aaron Ridley has named 'strong' arousalism the approach according to which the disposition of music to provoke feelings 'exhausts the meaning of all descriptions of music in affective terms' (Ridley 1995:51). And he argues that, committing the heresy of the separable experience, strong arousalism condemns our beliefs and judgments about expressive objects to be nothing more than an unjustifiable 'linguistic muddle' (Ridley 1995:52). Such a theory focuses on the *causes* of arousal rather than on its *reasons* and, in so doing, it does not fit the requirements of a theory of expressiveness.

> To ascribe dispositional predicates to a thing is not to attribute to it any expressive qualities. We need not, for example, think expressive of irritation a dentist who, irritatingly, hurts us – though it might be true that the dentist is irritating. (Ridley, 1995:52)

Ridley argues that a theory of expressive experience should be able to distinguish between the causal power that objects can have on our emotional states, and the way in which we experience expressive objects to be. In other words, we may agree on that the causal elicitation is necessary to make us think that a piece of music is expressive of sorrow, yet this would not be enough to say what such an object must look like in order to elicit such a reaction.

A sharp distinction between these to aspects of expressive experience has been famously drawn by Peter Kivy, who states:

> […] we must separate entirely the claim that music can arouse emotion in us from the claim that music is sometimes sad or angry or fearful: in other words, we must keep apart the claim that music is expressive (of anger, fear, and the like) and the claim that music is arousing in the sense of moving. (Kivy, 1990:153)

What Kivy is saying is that affective arousal and the experience that consists in recognising affective features in objects are conceptually distinct. No one can deny that music arouses feelings (perhaps one may argue that the feelings that it arouses are of some distinct quality from those aroused in other situations), but this is not a good reason to believe that aroused emotions are what make us experience music as expressive of emotions.

Ridley proposes a weaker version of musical arousalism, according to which we experience a piece of music as being expressive first of all thanks to its perceivable structure. He agrees with contour theorists such as Peter Kivy (see 1.8) that expressiveness is experienced in virtue of those perceptual qualities of pieces that he calls *melismatic gestures*. Rather than calling it "contour" as Contour theory usually does, Ridley refers to 'melisma' or to 'melismatic gesture', say, the unit of musical pieces that bears the resemblance to emotion expressions, on the basis of the quality of timbre and on that of musical motion (Ridley 1995:49). Expressive experience takes place as long as one perceives melismatic gestures in music as resembling human expressions. He writes:

> Sometimes the resemblance is to *vocal* expressive behavior, as with the sharply rising horn arpeggio at the climax of the slow movement of Brahms's Horn Trio, which sounds like a cry of anguish. At other times, and probably more commonly, the resemblance is to *physical* expressive behavior, as when the musical movements of the *marcia funebre* resemble the movements of someone resolute but heavy of heart. (Ridley 1995:49)

But even if he considers the recognition of melisma ultimately responsible for the experience of music as being expressive, he insists that such an experience requires something more to take place, namely the arousal of emotions. According to Ridley's analysis, arousal is a sympathetic mirroring of the detected melisma on behalf of the subject. When one listens to a piece of music that, given the quality of its timber and motion constituting its melismatic gesture, resembles the human expression of sadness, one experiences that piece of music as expressive of sadness as long as one mirrors the emotion of sadness in oneself. For example, he argues that when listening to the Funeral March from Beethoven's *Eroica* symphony:

> in attending to the musical gestures I come to be aware of their heavyhearted, resolute quality through the very process of coming myself to feel heavyhearted but resolute. (Ridley 1995:52)

This sympathetic arousal is, in Ridley's view, the same sort of mechanism that allows for the recognition of other people's expressions as being expressive of internal states, rather than as mere perceptual patterns. His worry is clear: while perceptual patterns such as

contours or melismatic gestures might be in principle recognised and correctly associated to affective attributions by computers, expressive properties mobilised in expressive experience must bear some robust relation to our *inner life*.

The arousalistic perspective acquires in Ridley's words a more refined and convincing shape. The reason why felt emotions and expressive experience cannot stay apart is that only sentient beings that are aware of what it means to undergo a certain emotion can also fully and adequately understand what it is for someone – and therefore for something – to be expressive of that affective state.

Jenefer Robinson endorses a very similar account of musical expressiveness, although she does not share the sympathy requirement. On her view, Ridley is right in considering emotional arousal as a necessary component of expressive experience, especially the idea that such an arousal is what enables us to pick up very specific shades of emotions that music can express. She is by the way not convinced that the sort of arousal in play is a sympathetic one. Indeed, she observes, the emotions felt by the listener are not always those expressed by the piece of music: a piece may express nostalgia while evoking melancholy in the listener, or express joy and provoke amusement in the listener (Robinson 2005:358). However, I would take this to be a minor disagreement between the two arousalistic perspectives and consider them of a piece regarding the role of felt emotions in the experience of expressive features that they want to account for: they both claim that musical expressiveness is something we experience thanks to the capacity that music has to evoke emotions in us.

To conclude this presentation of arousalism, let me recall the contradiction that, I argue, most philosophers see as the core of objects' expressiveness. The contradiction is meant to show that, provided that one takes expression of emotions to be the outward manifestation of internal conditions, it is contradictory to believe that inanimate objects can be expressive. The solution proposed by Matravers is simple: it is not the case that inanimate objects really express emotions; it happens instead that they provoke emotions (at least their non intentional and possibly sub-personal components) in sentient beings, that will automatically be led to attribute some affective character to those objects. Thus, expressiveness is a matter of ascription of affective states that we feel, to objects that cannot feel them. Ridley and Robinson rephrase the same solution in a subtler way. Indeed, they also claim that the central case of expressive experience is the attribution of affective states to other human beings on the basis of our capacity to feel (through some mirroring mechanism) those states. The case of expressive objects is therefore a derived

experience that involves the same capacities and mechanisms that are in play in the central one. Thus, recognising perceptual patterns as expressive is a matter of being able to lead a merely perceptual experience back to our emotional, *inner* life. Once again, objects do not express emotions, but they at best resemble human expressions that we can recognise only if we feel the corresponding or related emotions.

1.6 Imaginative theories: Levinson and Noordhof

The recent debate about expressiveness has mainly focused on music. In particular, pure music has been and is especially interesting for those who intend to explain the expressive features of inanimate things and their relation to our emotions. One of the most influential views in the philosophy of music that seeks to account for the experience of expressive music is the so-called *Persona theory*. Jerrold Levinson is the most prominent supporter of this theory. His account of musical expressiveness is well summarised by the two following quotes:

> […] a passage of music P is expressive of an emotion E if and only if P, in context, is readily heard, by a listener experienced in the genre in question, as an expression of E. (Levinson 2006:93)

That is:

> […] music expresses an emotion only to the extent that we are disposed to hear it as the expression of an emotion, although in a non-standard manner, by a person or person-like entity (Levinson 2006:93)

Levinson explicitly shares the concern that "expression" is, by definition, the manifestation of inner states through outer signs, performed by sentient (especially human) beings. Given such premise, the link between human expression and musical expressiveness requires the appeal to some psychological mechanism that accounts for the fact that musical expressiveness cannot be the expression of any occurring internal state, for music is an inanimate object.

In order to fill in the gap between human emotional expression and musical expressiveness, Levinson introduces the notion of a fictional character that we are meant

to imagine whenever we experience a piece of music as being expressive, namely, an imagined character. The term "persona" is not chosen by chance: the Latin word refers indeed to the mask that used to hide the actor's face when performing a play. The "persona" is therefore the fictional character of a play who mimics behaviours, especially affective manifestation, on the stage. Consistently, we experience expressive music *as if it were* the expression of emotions and feelings on behalf of such a fictional character.

Levinson's explanation resorts to our capacity to *perceive* (hear, in the case at stake) something *as* something else. What an experienced listener does when she hears a sad piece of music, is hearing it *as* a behavioural expression of the emotion of sadness on behalf of a fictional agent. Levinson treats the experience of *hearing-as* as an imaginative experience that is anchored in perception. According to his perspective, expressive properties are dispositional properties that listeners (at least experienced ones) recognise by virtue of their capacity to trigger the appropriate imaginings that, in turn, can make listeners hear merely perceptual properties *as* the expression of someone's emotions.

The so conceived expressive experience is taken to involve (i) the perceivable features of the piece of music, such as its notes, chords, melody, rhythm, and (ii) what Levinson calls the "modifier" of the perceptual content of the experience, that is, what makes the perceivable features of music sound in a *sui generis* way, i.e. expressive of emotions. This modifier, according to Levinson, "plausibly belongs to the content of a subsidiary thought on the expressing we hear in expressive music, not part of the content of the core experience" (Levinson 2006:95). And in order for such a modifier to actually modify the perceptual content of the "hearing as expressive" experience, the intervention of *imagination* is required. In particular, Levinson writes that, although defining the experiences of perceiving-as or perceiving-in is a difficult task:

> […] it suffices to locate hearing-as and hearing-in among perceptual acts that partake freely of, or that substantially enlist, the *imagination* […] To hear music as such and such is, perhaps, to imagine *that* the music is such and such, and more specifically, to imagine *of* the music, *as* you are hearing it, that it is such and such. (Levinson 2006:95)

This statement must be unpacked. It seems to follow from it that imagination is responsible for the content of our experience to involve expressive features. This intervention consists in the propositional imagining that a person or person-like entity

expresses her affective states through the piece of music. As a result, what could be the experience of a mere arrangement of perceptual features is turned into the experience of expressive features.

If this interpretation is correct, then we should think about the experience of expressive music as the experience of certain perceptual properties that are capable of triggering propositional imaginings having an expresser (the *persona*) in their content. Such a content, however, is not necessarily part of what we experience, but it has the power to modify it and make it a *sui generis* perceptual content.[11] Levinson insists that "immediacy is a proper desideratum for an account of musical expressiveness" (Levinson 2006:101), meaning that expressive experience is, so to say, perception-like for what concerns its phenomenal immediacy. In other words – that will become clearer in the later discussion – the experience of an expressive piece of music is very much like the perceptual experience of its structure and sounds for what concerns the immediacy with which it presents itself to a subject. Expressiveness is therefore maintained to be the conjunction of two factors. On the one hand perceptual features of music are meant to trigger the propositional imagining *that someone is expressing her felt emotions through music*; on the other hand, the resulting experience is a *sui generis* perceptual experience whose perceptual features are "readily" recognised as being expressive.

One of the problematic aspects of the theory of persona is that it appeals to an imaginative experience with quite distinctive content and phenomenology, such that it seems to predict that we should be able to consciously experience an expressive persona (see Davies 1997; Walton 1999; Robinson 2007; Noordhof 2008 for various versions of this criticism). As efficaciously summed up by Tom Cochrane (who nevertheless defends the Persona theory):

> The main criticism of the persona view is that it places too great a demand on what a listener is experiencing when he or she hears music as emotionally expressive. We may agree that a listener can imagine that the emotion in the music belongs to a person. We might also grant that his or her imagination can be passively stimulated to do as such, rather than deliberately engaged on most occasions. But this is far from agreeing that listeners necessarily imagine a persona (Cochrane 2010:264)

[11] Levinson does not explicitly distinguish between content and character, but I take his view to imply that we experience only some features of the experience's content – namely those that result in the phenomenal character. In the next chapters I will try to make this distinction clearer.

Although we can undergo experiences where we imagine fictional characters within music, most of our experiences of expressive music do not bear witness to such a content and to the related phenomenology: most of the time we do not imagine any persona expressing herself through music. Levinson replies to this objection by appealing to an extremely thin notion of persona. He suggests that we think of the fictional character "hidden" behind the music as devoid of specific features that must be imagined. Rather, it should be imagined as the mere capacity of animated beings to express themselves through movements and behaviours.

> [...] this agent or persona, it must be stressed, is almost entirely indefinite, a minimal sort of person, characterised only by the emotion we hear it to be expressing and the music gesture through which it does so (Levinson, 2005, pp. 193-194).

And in the same vein, Cochrane insists that:

> In general, this minimal sense of self intrinsic to emotional experience is all that we should consider necessary to the musical persona. We appeal to the persona only insofar as it is required in order to explain the bare connection between music and emotions (Cochrane 2010:264).

The required persona is therefore a "minimal self" provided with the capacity to express affective states. Neither a fictive composer, nor a fictive musician then.

Anyway, also this minimal sense of persona is questionable. On one hand, as Paul Noordhof (2008) points out, one is tempted to ask if, once it has been reduced to such a residual notion, the fictional character that we are expected to imagine is still a useful explanatory tool. On the other hand, for how minimal and vague the persona is taken to be, Levinson's theory requires the listeners to engage in an imaginative experience in order to hear music as expressive of emotions. Although the object of this experience could be no more than an *x* without of specific features, it remains a required integral part of the imaginative engagement, a part that not all experiences of expressive music seem to witness.

Notice that this objection does not amount to denying that certain pieces or kinds of music can or should better be attended as if they were the emotional expression of somebody. For instance, Jenefer Robinson observes that:

> […] it is appropriate to look for musical personae only in Romantic and post-Romantic music that can plausibly be interpreted this way either because the composer explicitly encourages such an interpretation, as in the *Symphonie Fantastique*, or because the composer is working in light of this kind of precedent. (Robinson 2007:27)

There exist experiences of expressive music that may allow for the imaginative engagement predicted by the theory of persona. Moreover, certain works advise listeners to attend to the music by means of this kind of engagement (see Robinson, 2005 for an extensive defence of the Persona theory in this genre of works). But this is not enough to claim that such an engagement is required to hear a piece of music as expressive.

Notice that an analogous consideration can be put forward for other sorts of expressive items. One may take Jackson Pollock's dripping canvas to be expressive of anxiety, while Mark Rotcko's grey and near-black paintings to be expressive of despair. But do we need to imagine them as being the expression of some true (the painters') or fictional character's anxiety or despair in order to see them expressive (see Lopes 2005 for further criticism)? Once again, the phenomenology of our experiences hints a negative answer.

This difficulty in reconciling the perception-like phenomenal character of expressive experience and the mechanism that is meant to explain it, has been pointed out by Paul Noordhof (2008). In order to argue against alternative approaches, Noordhof proposes to distinguish two different tasks that a theory of expressiveness has to fulfil: first, it should account for the content of the experience at stake (roughly: what the experience of expressiveness is about) and second, it should elaborate on the explanatory mechanisms that make the experience possible. Therefore, according to his analysis, Levinson fails in distinguishing between these two levels of the explanation. On the one hand, Levinson acknowledges that the experience of expressive music is perception-like, since it consists in an immediate and spontaneous recognition (Levinson, 2006:95), whereas on the other hand, he accounts for the specificity of the experience (its being *sui generis* perceptual) by "reflecting, in the phenomenal content of expressive perception,

features which, at best, are part of the explanation of expressive perception or analytic commitments of our notion of expression". (Noordhof 2008:332).

But, although he criticises Levinson, Noordhof is still persuaded that imagination is what one should appeal to in order to explain expressive experience. His entire argument stems from the idea that:

> […] it makes little sense to suppose that something may be experienced as expressive quite independently of how we respond to it; that our experience of expressiveness can be simply an experience of features of the world (Noordhof 2008:342).

The intuition here is that the sadness that a piece of music seems to express does not belong to the piece in the same way in which its rhythm, notes and pitches do. *Sadness* is something that cannot be literally heard as a "feature of the world", that is, as a perceptual property of the piece of music, while auditory properties are. In other words, notes and chords are perceptual components of music independently of the subjects' responses, whereas sadness seems to be more dependent on the way subjects respond or are disposed to respond to it. The task is therefore to appropriately describe the content of the experience of expressiveness so as to characterise as precisely as possible the explanandum of the theory. After casting light on the specificity of the content, it is possible to find out a consistent explanation which should be compatible with both phenomenological observations and experimental data.

As to the content of the experience, Noordhof claims that it should be described differently from what Levinson did: it is not *as if* the music were expressing emotions (through some fictive persona), but rather certain perceptual properties of music are experienced *as potentially expressive,* and:

> […] it is in virtue of this potential, that the properties in question are part of the realisation of expressive properties. […] we simply experience the fact that they could be used to express something in much the same way that the potential uses of many things in our environment signal themselves to us (Noordhof 2008:332).

The *sui generis* character of the content of this experience consists in the perceivable expressive potential of certain "merely perceptual" features instantiated by objects. Let

us consider once more Pollock's famous paintings realised by means of the so-called "dripping" technique. Noordhof's suggestion is that we experience the perceptual pattern constituted by its stains of colours and manifold shapes as being *potentially* expressive, say, as being an adequate way to express.

Once he has characterised the content of expressive experience, Noordhof focuses on the related explanatory level. As already said, he is sceptic about explaining the experience of expressiveness in terms of mere perception and he argues that expressive properties are better characterised as response dependent properties. Nonetheless, expressive experience mobilises properties that are perceived as belonging to the works of art, and not as the result of our propositional imagining of a fictive persona.

In order to avoid the difficulties encountered by the Persona theory, Noordhof's account relies on *sensuous imagination*. Such a faculty presents several advantages compared to the propositional imagining employed by Levinson. Before explaining them in details, an elucidation is in order about the term used by Noordhof. When he appeals to "sensuous imagination", indeed, he considers it as that sort of imagination of which "visualisation" is an instance.

The recent debate about sensuous imagination is tightly intertwined with theories of perception and of imagination that go far beyond the borders of the problem of visualisation. Sensuous (or, as it is more often called, "sensory") imagination is maintained to be a subclass of mental imagery, namely that kind of imagination which implies the formation of mental images to be successful. The specificity of sensuous imagination, is that it *recreates* in imagination a perceptual experience, say, it *re-presents* features that can be perceptually experienced but that need not be directly presented to the subject at the time of the sensory imagining. When I visualise a landscape, for instance, I form the image of such a landscape in the absence of it, and the image that I form is meant to instantiate those features that I may perceive if the landscape in question were actually in front of me. Thus, we should think about sensuous imagination as significantly related to perception as to its content.

It is still much debated the extent to which this constraint of perceptual experience on imagination is to be considered or not a relation of strong dependency, and Noordhof is among those who deny it. In particular, he believes that, although sensuous imagination consists in the mental representation of perceptual features, such a representation does not imply a first person point of view. To make a long story short, he argues that this sort of imagination is the imagining of perceptual features but not

necessarily from the point of view of the viewer. Rather, one can undergo sensory imagination without assuming a first person point of view but, for instance, adopting the point of view of someone else on the instantiated perceptual features.[12]

Compared to perception, the character of sensuous imagination is less immediate. Immediacy is usually taken to be among those phenomenal qualities that help us distinguish between the two kinds of experiences, along with the lack of vivacity and determinacy of sensuous imagination if compared to perception (see Dorsch 2012). Moreover, by definition, imagination requires some kind of engagement, say, we can to some extent decide what and how to sensuously imagine. Therefore, sensuous imagination, unlike perception, is "relatively under our control" (Noordhof 2008:337). These three characteristics of sensuous imagination are, according to Noordhof, apt to account for the phenomenal features of expressive experience.

First, the fact that sensuous imagination recreates perceptual features in imagination matches the content of expressive experience, namely the fact that the it seems to represent those shapes, colours, sounds, that are mobilised be the perceptual experience of the same objects. Second, in the words of Noordhof:

> […] our perceptual experience of expressive properties, while attributing them to objects, does not have the immediacy of our perceptual experience of colours say. (Noordhof 2008:337)

And he takes sensuous imagination to account for this alleged difference in immediacy that characterises standard perceptual experiences and expressive experiences.[13]

Third, expressive experience is not as stable and as independent of our will as standard perceptual experiences (such as those of mere sounds, chords, shades or shapes) seem to be. To some extent, it seems that we can decide whether to experience an artwork as expressive or as affectively neutral. He writes:

> It is possible to hear music as inexpressive noise, […] especially if you are not attending to it. It is tempting to think that the difference arises from whether or

[12] In the next chapters, the discussion about the role of perception in the experience of expressive features will present Noordhof's position in more details.

[13] Notice that this intuition about the lack of immediacy is in contrast with what most authors think, namely that expressive experience is perception-like in character. This disagreement about the phenomenal character of expressive experience will be the object of an in-depth analysis in the next chapter.

> not our imaginations are engaged. The fact that our imaginations are relatively under our control explains how it is also relatively under our control whether we experience expressive properties. (Noordhof 2008:337)

Thus, sensuous imagination meets three fundamental requirements that the phenomenal level of expressive experience sets up, namely: (i) the fact that it instantiates perceptual features, (ii) the fact that its character lacks the immediacy and vividness of perceptual character and (iii) the fact that it is relatively under our control. This is meant to make sensuous imagination the best candidate to account for expressive experience.

On such basis, Noordhof can elaborate on the most intriguing part of his theory. He claims that, when we experience a work of art as expressive of some affective state, we *sensuously imagine the emotion-guided creative process* that is or might have been responsible for making expressive certain merely perceptual features of the work (Noordhof, 2008:330). Such imaginings do not imply that we imagine *someone*, like a fictive persona, who creates the work in such a way that makes it expressive, and in so doing expresses some feelings through the work; nor we need to imagine that we ourselves are engaged in a creative process. A creative process can indeed be considered as an expression of affective states: we can imagine how certain features that constitute the work we are attending might be the result of a process of selection and arrangement that is led by emotions - even if such a process never took place. According to Noordhof, when we perceive the expressive features of a painting, we are actually sensuously imagining those features as the result of an intentional creative process that was put in place under the guidance of the emotional state we see expressed. Last but not least, the very fact that we experience expressive properties is taken by Noordhof as an evidence that there is a sensuous imaginative project going on, involving what he calls the *phenomenal skeleton* of emotions, i.e., the causal power they have to generate expressive gestures that can in turn result in a creative process.

Now, the problem with the Persona theory that Noordhof had pointed out, was that the imagined persona is not part of the content of the experience as the explanation would imply. In other words, most of us in most occasions would not acknowledge to be engaged in the imaginative project of a fictive, expressive character when attending to expressive music or paintings. *Prima facie* one might address the same criticism to Noordhof's theory, arguing that it is definitely not the case that, when perceiving an expressive work, we are aware of imagining a creative process that gives expressive

properties as its outcome. Noordhof replies by resorting to the distinction between judging *whether* we are or not imagining, and judging *what* we are imagining (if actually we are):

> My claims about the plausibility of attributing one content or another are thus independent of the question of whether or not we are aware that we are imagining. (Noordhof 2008:342)

We may accordingly be wrong about the fact that we are imagining rather than perceiving something, but not about what such a mental state is about. This, applied to the case at stake, means that we might be perfectly right about the music sounding sad, but not about the fact that the mental state we are in is an imaginative one. The content of our expressive experience is in fact constituted by perceptual properties that we recognise as apt for being the result of a creative process, so that we seize their expressive potential. The fact that such a content is the result of an imaginative process is something we do not need to be aware of. Accordingly, what we are aware of – the phenomenal character – is only the expressive potential that imagination made available. So, unlike the theory that implies that one imagines a persona, Noordhof's account is apparently safe from criticisms addressing the way it is like for a subject to undergo the experience.

In order for an imagined creative process to make perceptual features expressive, the imaginings that are triggered by such non-expressive features should partially "involve states with phenomenally similar (but not identical) content to our experience of our own emotions" (Noordhof 2008:344), which means that certain features of emotions, namely their power to cause expressive behaviours, will be part of the content of the imaginings, that are in turn responsible for perceptual features resulting expressive: "In brief, we will sensuously imagine the phenomenal skeleton of an emotion that guides the creative process" (Noordhof 2008:344).

Noordhof very carefully specifies that it is not the case that we imagine that we ourselves undergo an emotion that guides an expressive behaviour resulting in a creative process. Therefore, expressive experience does not require an imaginative engagement from a first person perspective. Such a claim follows from his view about the notion of sensuous imagination: as already suggested, he stands by those who believe that the first person perspective on the object is not a necessary component of the content of an

episode of sensuous imagination. Rather, we may well sensuously imagine an object from someone else's point of view.

Given the specific case of the emotion guided creative process, Noordhof consistently claims that we can imagine the phenomenal skeleton of the emotion without imagining that emotion to be *our own* emotion, say, without imagining to be *feeling* the emotion in question. All is needed is that we recognise the phenomenal skeleton of an emotion leading the process, say, its causal power to give rise to certain expressions and behaviours. According to this hypothesis, we need to recognise something as ultimately generated by such a phenomenal causal skeleton; to make it simple: we need to be able to imagine something as resulting from an emotion.

In order to explain how the phenomenal skeleton partakes in the experience, Noordhof endorses a simulationist theory for imagination. The mechanism he proposes and its relation to experience's content will be further analysed in the third chapter, For the time being, it suffices to say that the application of simulation theory to his account allows him to claim that: "A simulation approach takes our sensuous imaginings to involve off-line or facsimile emotions guiding off-line or facsimile processes" (Noordhof 2008:345).

The idea is that to sensuously imagine an emotion-guided creative process may consist in an off-line simulation of emotional states which does neither imply that one feels any emotion nor that one imagines to undergo an emotion. Rather it consists in the re-creation at the sub-personal level of the salient causal features of an emotion (namely those features that one can recognise in someone's expressive behaviours) as "a relatively automatic response to features of the world" (Noordhof 2008:346).

Both Levinson and Noordhof provide theories of expressive experience that use imagination as a powerful explanatory tool. Further virtues and drawbacks of these accounts will be analysed in depth later on, when focusing on specific aspects and desiderata for theories of expressive experience. However, in order to locate these two views within the framework I provided, we should focus on the way they relate to the contradiction of expressive objects. It can be thought that the Persona theory introduces the imagined character (i.e. the minimal persona) precisely in order to solve the contradiction: emotions and therefore their expressions do not belong to music and other inanimate things, therefore imagination is required to make the ends meet. Namely, imagination introduces in the experience what cannot be "out there" in reality and therefore what simple perception cannot give us: emotions and their expressions as

belonging to inanimate objects. In quite the same way, Noordhof appeals to simulation mechanisms of affective expressions that make objects as close as possible to humans.

Once again, it seems to me that the problem of expressive objects is dealt with as if it were a contradiction that the intervention of imagination is asked to solve, analogously to what illusion, projection, memory and arousal did in the cases of Pathetic fallacy, projectivism, complex projectivism and arousalism respectively. So, despite it distances itself from Wollheim's standard projectivism and from Matravers' standard arousalism, the imaginative projectivism supported by Noordhof shares with the former two an important supposition: expressive features of objects cannot be features of the world, and this because objects cannot literally possess emotions. Therefore, when we recognise in objects expressive features we are not experiencing something that belongs to those objects. Moreover, since expressive qualities are connected with emotions, and emotions are a prerogative of sentient beings, then expressive qualities that may seem to belong to objects can only be explained in virtue of projective mechanisms that – so to say – inflate objects with emotions (or their components). Emotions, however they are understood, are projected on objects so as to fill the gap between the animated and the inanimate.

1.7 Expression and expressiveness

As the discussion about the Pathetic fallacy view suggested, talking about expressiveness is talking about something that concerns the look of objects. Once acknowledged that attributions of expressiveness to objects are not attributions of felt affective states to them, philosophers struggle to find out the link between felt emotions and the look of inanimate things. What can be made explicit after this overview is that there are two related elements that must be assessed: expressive appearance on one side and emotions on the other side. As to this dichotomy, in the literature about expressiveness it has already been noticed that we should draw a clear distinction between *expression* and *expressiveness*. It is now time to introduce it in the debate.

This question has been particularly urgent within the analytic aesthetic debate of the Thirties and Forties. The focus of that discussion was the possibility that artworks express the affective (or, more broadly, the intentional) states of their creators by, so to say, embodying them. More specifically, John Dewey (1934), Robin Collingwood (1938), and Curt Ducasse (1944) among others addressed the problem of how emotions may

result in artworks through creative processes, being creative processes themselves a form of expression. A synthetic representation of the so called Expression theory that these authors supported was given at a later time by Alan Tormey (1971):

> (E-T) [Expression T] If art object *O* has expressive quality *Q*, then there was a prior activity *C* of the artist *A* such that in doing *C*, *A* expressed his *F* for *X* by imparting *Q* to *O* (where *F* is a feeling state and *Q* is the qualitative analogue of *F*). (Tormey 1971:103)

In short, and leaving aside Tormey's taste for placeholders, the idea here is that expressive qualities of objects are necessarily the result of the corresponding (intentional, since it is directed to an *X*) affective state, manifested by the creator by creating that object. On this view, the expression of a feeling or intentional state more generally and the expressive qualities of artworks (be they musical or not) are necessarily linked. As to this, Tormey observes:

> If it turned out that Mahler had experienced no state of mind remotely resembling despair or resignation during the period of composition of *Das Lied von der Erde*, the expression theorist would be obliged to conclude that we were mistaken in saying that the final movement (*Der Abschied*) of that work was expressive of despair or resignation; and this seems hardly plausible. (Tormey 1971:104-105).

On the contrary, it seems reasonable to think that attributions of expressive qualities to artworks concern the works themselves and cannot, for instance, be denied or supported by references to the emotional state of the artist. Against Expression theory, Tormey insisted that the phenomenal aspect of objects is what our judgements are about and, moreover, this is something that any theory of expressive qualities of artworks should share:

> Even those who argue that 'music is sad' can be translated 'the music makes me feel sad' or '…has a disposition to make me, or others, feel sad' will agree that their accounts are only plausible on the assumption that the object has some properties which are at least causally relevant to the induced feeling. (Tormey 1971:104)

The most important consequence of accepting this point is that judgements about expressive features of artistic objects can be endorsed or falsified only on the basis of their aspect, say, of their perceivable qualities, rather than on the basis of biographical considerations about the affective life of their creators. Tormey is once more very clear on this:

> 'That's a sad piece of music' is countered not by objections such as, "No, he wasn't' or 'He was just pretending' (referring to the composer), but by remarking 'You haven't listened carefully' or 'You must listen again; there are almost no minor progressions and the tempo is *allegro moderato*'. (Tormey 1971:105)

The explanation that Tormey provides for the confusion at the basis of the Expression theory introduces the distinction between expression and expressiveness. He claims that Expression theorist wrongly maintain that 'express' and 'being expressive of' an emotion are always synonyms. But if this were the case, then we would think that somebody's expressive face is always expressing some emotional state, whereas "the equivalence is not guaranteed" (Tormey 1971:107). In point of fact, we use the term "expressive" in relation with facial patterns, in at least three different fashions: first, we can use it *intransitively*, i.e., in such a way that would not legitimate the question "expressive of what?". In this case, "expressive" only means the particular disposition of a face to display a wide range of facial expressions. Second, "expressive" can be followed by the specific emotion that a face may seem to express, such as "expressive of rage", "expressive of joy", in which case it can refer to the way the face looks, without necessarily implying that the expressed emotion is actually felt by the person. Third, the term may be used as a synonym of "to express", so that the statement "her gesture was expressive of anguish" could be translated as "she was expressing her anguish through that gesture".

Rather than being a merely speculative consideration about common linguistic uses, these remarks pick up an important point of the discussion, namely the fact that expressive qualities of artworks do not bear a necessary relation to actual expressions of felt emotions. And this both because, especially in the case of artworks, being "expressive" does not automatically mean to express some specific emotion (on can be told to play a piece *espressivo* without expressing any particular emotion), and because being expressive of an emotion does not necessarily imply to feel that emotion.

This distinction has been importantly taken on by Peter Kivy (1980), who famously phrased it in terms of "express" and "being expressive of". According to Kivy, the former label applies to actual expressions caused by affective states, whereas the latter can be predicated both of animated and inanimate objects that display certain perceivable features – namely, expressive features.

The attempt to vindicate the independence of expressive features of artworks from the emotional life and even the intentions of their creators gave as a result a clearer notion of expressiveness that may be applied both to artworks and to persons. As Jenefer Robinson importantly stated: "[…] although they can go together with marvelous effect, [expression and expressiveness] are related but conceptually distinct phenomena" (Robinson 2007:39).

In her view, the term 'expression' refers to the external manifestation of some internal state. Therefore, both a face and a painting can be 'expressions' as far as they are means to manifest felt emotions. On this count, artworks *can* be expressions of emotions and there exist cases in which it is correct to interpret them in this way (Robinson refers in particular to Romantic painters and composers who explicitly conceived of their works as emotional expressions). Thus: "Expression is fundamentally something that agents or imagined agents (implied artists, narrators or characters) *do* (or are imagined as doing)" (Robinson 2007:21).

'Expressiveness', instead, refers to the capacity of behaviours and works of art to convey some affective character to the audience, regardless of their being the outputs of felt emotions. As Tormey had already noticed, there is no necessary link between expressiveness and expression, as long as for something to be expressive does not imply for it to be the expression of some felt emotion. And this is true, according to Robinson, for both human and artistic expressions. In point of fact, she observes that facial and behavioural expressions can be judged to be more or less expressive. Let us think about a very common expression of joy such as a smile: both a stereotyped smile and the one displayed by a human face do express joy, so they both are *expressions* of joy; but we would probably judge the latter to be *less expressive* than the former. The same could be said about two smiles displayed by two persons: one might be more expressive than the other despite they both would be expressions of joy.

The same conceptual distinction can be rephrased for the case of inanimate objects and artworks in which, as suggested, the difference between expression and expressiveness is even sharper. Robinson writes:

> *Jingle Bells* is arguably an expression of cheerfulness, but it is not very expressive music: it is monotonous and banal, even annoying. A more expressive piece of cheerful music would be the culmination of Beethoven's *Egmont* with its expressive expression of triumphant joy. Similarly, a piece of music can be sad in a boring mindless inexpressive way (plod plod plod in the base, moan moan moan in the treble) or in a more revealing and expressive way as in Purcell's funeral music for the death of Queen Mary or the Beethoven funeral march from the *Eroica* symphony. (Robinson 2007:32)

One could be sceptical about this distinction being so clear and argue that it may be a matter of degrees rather than a conceptual difference. On this perspective, *Jingle Bells* would only express 'less joy' than Beethoven's *Egmont*. But this is not very convincing: in principle, indeed, not all artworks that we know to be the expression of an artist's despair, are necessarily expressive of desperation. On the contrary, an artist can express her anguish by realising absolutely balanced works that the audience may experience as expressive of peace and serenity. Expressiveness is therefore independent of its being attributable to expressions which, in turn, can be more or less expressive, depending on their recognisable features. Robinson explicitly writes that: "expression is neither necessary nor sufficient for expressiveness" (Robinson 2007:36), since there can be expressions of emotions that are completely inexpressive.

So, before introducing one further family of theories of expressive experience, it is worth reconsidering the contradiction of expressiveness in the light of the conceptual distinction between expression and expressiveness.

What I called *Argument (2)* sounded like this:

(iii) Only animate beings can feel emotions

(iv) To express an emotion implies to feel that emotion

(v) Only animate beings can express emotions

It seems that the just explained distinction questions (iv) by means of a conceptual clarification: (iv) is true as long as one takes into account only one way in which 'to express' can be intended, namely what we have called 'expression'. But, as we have just seen, (iv) reveals some ambiguity when one focuses on objects and their expressive

qualities. First, it is reasonable to think that objects can be themselves ways to express the emotions of their creators, as the Expression theory maintains. Second, there is a way to distinguish between 'expression' and 'expressiveness' (or, according to Kivy's terminology, between 'to express' and 'to be expressive of') that challenges the allegedly necessary relation between expression and felt emotions. So, the contradiction may be domesticated through the reformulation of:

(iv) To express an emotion implies to feel that emotion
as:
(iv)* To express an emotion implies to feel that emotion, but to be expressive of an emotion does not imply to feel that emotion

The consequence of this reconsideration will be that:

(v)* Only animated beings can express emotions, but both animate and inanimate beings can be expressive of emotions

Note that this is just a step towards a more complete reconsideration of the paradoxical approach to the problem of expressiveness. What I have been suggesting since the beginning of this overview is that most authors set up their theories of expressiveness as if they were to face the above displayed contradiction. What I am suggesting now is that, when dealing with expressive experience, one should take into account the distinction between various ways to understand the term 'to express' and should not consider it as a synonym of 'to be expressive of' or of 'to have expressive qualities'. This more nuanced approach helps to refine the concept of expressiveness as something that has to do with the appearance of things and that in principle does not need to be explained by resorting to actual felt emotions of artist or of the audience.

1.8 Contour theory: Kivy and Davies

Among the theories that aim at accounting for the expressiveness of music is the *Contour theory*, according to which music can be experienced as expressive in virtue of those features that make it similar to human emotional expressions.

Contour theory accounts for expressiveness in terms of those resemblances that hold between its perceivable profile or contour – constituted by the auditory properties of a piece of music – and the typical profile of human emotional expressions. The key idea, originally expressed by Peter Kivy, is that we perceive music as expressive as far as it resembles typical vocal expressions and behaviours that human beings perform when experiencing and expressing emotions. In this sense, two dimensions of the musical contour are particularly relevant. First, it seems that some musical features sound like human voices (Kivy 1989). An acute, stable sound, brilliant and well articulated may sound and be experienced as similar to a joyful voice, whilst a sound full of dissonances is typically experienced as a vocal manifestation of anguish or despair. Second, some features of the contour, such as melody, rhythmic cadence, agogics, and so on, resemble visible aspects of human behaviour, like gestures and bodily movements (Kivy 1989; Davies 1994; 2010). According to Kivy in particular:

> We hear [musical sounds] as human utterances, and perceive the features of these utterances as structurally similar to our own voices when we express our own sadness in speech (Kivy 1980:51)

While according to Davies:

> […] music expresses emotions by presenting or exemplifying the appearances of emotions. (Davies 2005:129)

And:

> […] music is naturally expressive because the dynamic character of music is experienced as significantly similar to human behavior expressive of emotions. Movement is heard in music. The relative highness and lowness of notes provides a dimension in aural space within which music moves through time. Thus, if the characteristic behavioral expression of an emotion, *X*, has the dynamic form *Y*, and if a musical work is heard as having the same dynamic form, then *X* is heard in the music. (Davies 2005:132)

Both Kivy and Davies consider musical expressiveness a matter of *perceivable features*. Expressive qualities reside, in their view, in the configurational aspect of music, in the

way it perceptually presents itself to listeners, as well as its notes, pitches, rhythm and chords. Indeed, Contour theory assumes that for music to be expressive does not amount for it to express the emotions of its composer, creator, not even their fictional versions. On the contrary, talking about expressiveness for Contour theorists is first of all talking about the phenomenal character of the experience we can have of it. The phenomenal character in question is such that it mobilises features resembling the typical way in which people express their emotions.

Kivy's and Davies' reference to the perceivable *contour* of music makes it clear that the resemblance which is taken into account holds between the perceptual structure of music on the one hand, and the perceptual profile of emotion manifestations on the other. This point is worth noticing because it is overtly in contrast with another theory of musical expressiveness that relies on resemblance in a quite different way. Malcolm Budd (1995), for example, has argued that the resemblance which is responsible for making music expressive of emotions is the one holding between music and emotions as internal psychological states. He famously wrote that, when we hear a piece of music as being expressive of an emotion [E], we:

> hear the music as sounding like the way E feels; […] So the sense in which you hear the emotion *in* the music – the sense in which it is an audible property of the music – is that you perceive a likeness between the music and the experience of the emotion (Budd 1995:136)

According to Budd, expressive music resembles our feelings, namely the phenomenology of feelings felt in a first person perspective. Music is taken to mirror the affective component of emotions: music resolves its tensions in a way that corresponds, for example, to the satisfaction of desires; music trembles and so resembles the way in which we waver and feel uncomfortable when taken by agitation; a syncopate musical rhythm may mirror the feeling of anxiety and so on. Even if he declares himself open to a variety of ways in which musical expressiveness can be experienced (including arousal, imagination and the intersection of the two), Budd's minimal claim is that we perceive this sort of cross-categorical resemblances between the way music sounds and the way emotions feel. He deems this kind of perception ultimately responsible for expressive experience.

Discussing those theories that ground the experience of expressive music in the resemblances it bears to emotions, Saam Trivedi has argued that Budd's view loses the link to our ordinary concept of *expressiveness* as an external manifestation. He writes:

> Our ordinary concept of expressiveness involves the outward manifestation of inner mental states. As a species of expressiveness in general, musical expressiveness must relate somehow to this ordinary concept. (Trivedi 2001:412)

Which means that the component of emotions that music should resemble in order for it to be perceived as expressive cannot be disconnected from what we usually consider expressive, namely, expressive behaviours.

One could try to defend Budd's theory, insisting that he is not saying that the feeling that expressive music is taken to resemble is the one felt and inflated in music by its (true or fictional) creator, nor projected on it by its listener. What is relevant in his view is that expressiveness belongs to the perceivable aspect of music. The fact that it does so in virtue of a resemblance to felt emotions in general (and not experienced in the occurrence of expressive experience) does not affect the idea that expressiveness is something else than actual expression of felt emotions. But there is more to this criticism. Trivedi puts it in terms of an analogy:

> For example, an extremely hot and spicy food may taste the way extreme anger, or anguish, feels in that there may be a "fiery, burning" affect common to both; similarly, a soothing beverage may taste the way calmness, or contentedness, feels in that there may be a "pacifying, cool" feeling in common. […] if indeed there are such likenesses between some foods and some emotions, and if indeed we perceive them, that alone does not suffice to show these foods are expressive of these emotions, nor that they are, or should be, judged to be so. (Trivedi 2001:412-413)

What I take Trivedi to argue is that having something in common with an emotion, or resembling some features of an emotion is not enough to be considered *expressive of* that emotion. The same doubt about Budd's account is expressed by Noordhof:

> A resemblance, however strong, is not sufficient to explain how something is heard as expressing that which it resembles. At best, resemblance makes

> something appear expressive if it resembles something which is expressive (Noordhof 2008:332).

It is not the case that *any resemblance* accounts for expressiveness. Thus, if one wishes to account for musical expressiveness in terms of perceivable similarity, one should better focus on what is expressive in the first place, namely, expressions.

If Trivedi's and Noordhof's criticism is right, then the term of the resemblance is to be sought in those components of emotions that are manifest and perceivable. Accordingly, Contour theorists insist that the resemblance they refer to holds between the perceptual structure of music, say, its profile, and the perceptual profile of emotion manifestations, namely what Stephen Davies has named "emotion characteristics in appearance" (Davies 2005).

Let us recall once more the difference between expression and expressiveness and insist on that the perceptual account developed by Contour theory explicitly assumes it as a requirement for a theory of expressiveness. Once one has accepted that actual expression is not required for something, especially for an inanimate object, to be expressive, one should look back at the notion of expressiveness. Indeed, Robinson's distinction and the rich range of examples that she proposes do not provide an exhaustive definition, rather she seems to indicate a direction of inquiry. She says:

> So what is expressiveness? It is, I think, a *cognitive* notion. Expressions reveal something about the nature of the emotion expressed. (Robinson 2007:30) [And it] on the other hand, depends on how effectively the artwork reveals to a (suitable) audience what that emotion is like. (Robinson 2007:19)

Thus, it seems that, despite they are conceptually distinct items, expression and expressiveness cannot be considered as completely disconnected from one another. Consistently, Stephen Davies points out that musical expressiveness would be completely uninteresting if it did not bear any relation to human emotions:

> If the expression of emotion in music is seen as one of music's most important features, then it can be only because we *recognize* a connection between the emotions expressed in music and in life, because musical expressiveness reflects and reflects on the world of emotions (Davies 2005:135).

Contour theory is precisely concerned with the relation holding between the *manifest components* of emotions and musical expressiveness. In accordance with Tormey and Robinson, Davies observes that we tend to isolate expressiveness from expressions also in the case of human beings: we say that someone's face is *sad* without implying that the person is feeling and expressing her sadness; we attribute joy to the behaviour of an actor, without attributing the feeling of joy to the actor on the stage; we may describe folk dances as cheerful and enthusiastic, but we are ready to believe that the dancers are rather serious and concentrated on their performance. Since felt emotions need not be expressed, and they can be privately experienced:

> The emotion characteristics in a person's appearance are given solely in his behavior, bearing, facial expression, and so forth. […] there is a legitimate and common use of the word 'sad' in such sentences as 'He is a sad-looking person' that does not imply that the person feels sad or is prone to feel sad and, therefore, that does not refer to the person's felt sadness or proneness to feel sad. This no-reference-to-feeling use refers solely to the person's look. That is, emotion words can be used, are regularly used, and can be understood by others as being used without even implicit reference to the occurrence of feelings (Davies 2005:136)

Relying on this sort of linguistic practices, Davies claims that what we refer to when making such attributions are emotion characteristics in appearance, say, typical gestures and behaviours that have an intimate connection to emotions. This, however, does not imply that we attribute felt emotions to expressive persons.

Emotion characteristics in appearance are therefore the term of the resemblance, the other term of which are structural perceptual properties of pieces of music. The experience of musical expressiveness consists therefore in the perceptual recognition of this sort of resemblances. Which is far from perspicuous. The question in fact arises of what this sort of perceptual features exactly amounts to. Consistently with the identification of musical perceivable "profile" as responsible for expressive experience, Kivy and Davies maintain that expressive features are perceptual (more specifically, auditory) gestalt properties, that is, complex patterns emerging from and exceeding the sum of simpler perceivable properties of pieces of music.

Paul Noordhof is critical against Contour theory as far as, in his view, it reflects in the phenomenal character of expressive experience a resemblance that cannot be

claimed to be (always) manifestly there. His criticism parallels the one he put forward against the Persona theory and points out that we do not necessarily perceive a *resemblance* when we perceive something as expressive. It can be true that, sometimes, we notice resemblances between certain musical tones and typically expressive tones of voice, but this does not amount to say that when we experience a piece of music as melancholy we necessarily experience it as resembling a melancholy behaviour. Things might rather work the other way round, that is, in virtue of the expressiveness of music, we might be led to compare it to an expressive behaviour and find out the similarities. Noticing resemblances seems not be a necessary condition to experience an expressive piece of music.

Peter Kivy responds to this sort of criticism relying on evolutionary explanations. According to Kivy (Kivy 1989 and, in a more sceptical attitude, Kivy 2002), we are forced to hear the contour of a piece of music as an expressive behaviour in virtue of an existing resemblance, even when we do not recognise any actual similarity relation. In other words, the invoked resemblance that is maintained to explain our experience of it as expressive need not be conscious. Rather it is supposed to lie at an unconscious level as the remains of an evolutionarily favourable mechanism. Such a mechanism is compatible with the idea, supported by a number of psychological evidences, that we tend to animate objects as much as possible. Take the case of a twisted branch partially hidden in the grass: we are likely to perceive it as an animate snake which is potentially dangerous for us, and this sounds compatible with an evolutionary explanation. To be brief, for our ancestors it was probably convenient, for the sake of survival, to behave as if perceptual inputs where mostly produced by intentional beings. That is, to run away when hearing a noise that sounded *as threatening as* the one produced by a truly threatening animal. For contemporary people, who live in a world in which dangerous sounds coexist with music, the same ancient mechanism selected for its efficacy in protecting from the danger would be recruited for a second, new function.[14] Thus, traces of this same mechanisms may have survived human kind's development, to the extent that a piece of music is perceived as expressive of emotions, say, as animate, as far as it unconsciously triggers resemblances.

The second objection that Noordhof addresses to Contour theory's appeal to resemblance lies on the explanatory level. It is not clear why the resemblances which are

[14] For an overview on the various theories about the purported evolutionary origins of music, see Cross and Morley (2010). For criticism of evolutionary approaches to the problem of musical expressiveness, see Ravasio (2018).

supposed to hold between the perceptual contour of a piece of music and an expressive behaviour should result more salient than many other similarities that in principle may be noticed. One could indeed argue that a piece of music, or a passage, resembles a dialogue, a fight, a journey, a series of events, the fury of the elements, rather than emotional expressions. Moreover, Contour theorists should answer the question of how it is possible that the numerous differences that can be seized between the audible contour of a piece of music and typical emotion manifestations do not undermine the emergence of expressiveness.

Even in this case, it seems that a Darwinian stance may provide some consistent explanation for the priority of the recognition of objects' features that resemble human expressions, over others. Since Darwin (1871), basic emotions are taken to have typical facial, bodily and vocal expressions, which conspecifics are able to detect rapidly and automatically. This ability is not surprising from an evolutionary point of view, as a highly social species like ours gains extensive selective advantages from being able to recognise others' emotions. Contour theorists can appeal to numerous researches to support their view (see Benenti and Meini 2017 for an overview of the theories that Contour theory can invoke in support of such a view).

As to this strategy, which is available to Contour theory and that Contour theorists have exploited (see in particular Kivy 2002), one further remark can be introduced, although the whole issue of psychological explanations will be developed later on. Curiously enough, this remark mirrors what has already been observed about Noordhof's psychological account of expressive experience as simulation. In point of fact, so conceived Contour theory appeals to an analogous solution: the content of expressive experiences consists of perceptual properties whose expressive potential is determined by psychological mechanisms functioning at an unconscious level and responsible for those features to appear in a *sui generis* way. These sub-personal mechanisms need not be part of the phenomenal character of the experience, but can be invoked as an explanation as long as they are compatible with the phenomenal description of expressive experience.

As well as Noordhof's explanation was based on the factual capacities of certain perceptual features to trigger imagination, Contour Theory ultimately delegates to unconscious recognitional mechanisms the task of detecting similarities. Both theories, moreover, acknowledge the importance of the phenomenal profile of emotions when they are expressed first of all by human behaviours. Noordhof refers to the "phenomenal skeleton" of emotions, understood as those patterns of affective expressions that, in the

case of creative processes, may result into expressive works of art, whereas Davies speaks of emotion characteristics in appearance. It seems that, after all, the structures of the two accounts are not radically different. On the contrary, they converge on some aspects that will reveal pivotal to elaborate a more satisfactory account of expressive experience.

To conclude this overview, my impression is that Contour theory has the advantage of taking the distinction between expression and expressiveness more seriously than the rest of the presented accounts. In point of fact, it does not appeal to the subjective capacity to evoke fictive characters or memories of past experiences in order to fill the gap between actual human expression and objectual expressiveness. Rather, Contour theory acknowledges that expressiveness must be analysed as distinct from actual expression and as something that pertains to the look of things (and of people). Still, the appeal to resemblance that expressiveness bears to expressive behaviours as what does justice to the affective relevance of expressiveness is problematic. As argued by critics of resemblance accounts, despite they might explain some experiences, similarities are not always available, not even upon reflection. Moreover, reconsidering the idea of expressive objects as representing a contradiction, Contour theory shows to keep at least some traces of such an approach. The appeal to similarity limits the explanatory power of Contour theory to features that are complex enough to be compared (or comparable) to behavioural manifestations. This limitation is further attested by the difficulties it has to account for elementary but nevertheless expressive features (pitches, chords, notes, colours, simple shapes). Recognitional mechanisms of similarities play therefore the role that imagination, memory, illusion, play for other theories, namely linking what is taken to be the *derived* case of expressiveness to the *central* case of expression.

Chapter 2

Desiderata for a theory of expressive experience. Phenomenology first

In the first chapter I introduced the most relevant theories that, within the contemporary analytic debate, have been concerned with what I have called expressive experience. From that introduction a constellation of perspectives emerges that share some intuitions but disagree on various points. In the present chapter, I list and clarify what I maintain to be the *desiderata* for a theory of expressiveness and expressive experience (2.1). They will allow me to test the available theories against standardized criteria and see whether and to what extent they satisfy those requirements. In 2.2 I show that there is a general agreement about the phenomenology of expressive experience, namely its perceptual character; then I show that the disagreement emerges when it comes to the role that felt emotions play in the phenomenal character (2.3) and I discuss this point in more details in 2.4. From 2.5 on I try to assess the phenomenal character of expressive experience in terms of its relation to time (2.5.1), movement (2.5.2), and the complexity of the phenomenology (2.5.3).

2.1 Desiderata for a theory of expressiveness

The aim of the first chapter was to introduce the main positions animating the debate about expressive experience of music and objects more generally. I take the debate to show that most philosophers tend to agree about what is puzzling about expressive experience of objects, namely its being two-faced. On the one hand, the experience of expressive objects looks like a perceptual experience: it presents objects in such a way that most philosophers agree in considering perceptual. This is attested by the common appeal to sense modalities: we *see* expressive landscapes and we *hear* expressive music. On the other hand, expressive experience has a peculiarly affective component, as attested by the related linguistic attributions: we see *melancholy* landscapes and hear *cheerful* pieces of music. As I have shown, the puzzle of objects' expressiveness is widely treated as being a sort of contradiction precisely on the basis of this duplicity. Since affective states are inherently human mental states, then the fact that objects *look expressive of emotions* must be explained by resorting to the intervention of emotions. As just said, however, such an

intervention cannot be, so to say, a direct one. Indeed, it must account for the distinction between the expression of actual emotions and the expressiveness that can be recognised in objects without taking it to be the outcome of some actually felt and subsequently expressed emotion. Unlike what the Pathetic fallacy maintains, there is no illusion going on, as long as expressive features are experienced as belonging to the perceptual aspect of objects, rather than – as it is in the case of human expression – as the outcome of felt emotional states.

Despite the debate between the various positions provided some common ground to avoid falling back into naïve or coarse conceptions, it is still unclear what a satisfactory theory of expressiveness should be able to account for. In this paragraph I list and explain what I consider the requirements that a theory of expressive experience has to fulfil in order to accomplish its task. In the light of the existing accounts and of their problems, this will therefore pave the way, first, to a better structured analysis and, second, to the elaboration of my own view.

I believe that there are four main requirements that theories of expressive experience must meet, which are intertwined with one another and that may generate in turn further sub-requirements.

i. Phenomenology, or what-it-is-like

The first requirement for a theory of expressive experience is that it accounts adequately for the phenomenology of such an experience. In particular, many philosophers take the phenomenal character of expressive experience to be *sui generis* perceptual. If so things stand, then a theory of expressiveness should be able to describe such a phenomenal character, namely, the way it is like for a subject to experience an inanimate object as being expressive of an emotion. Allegedly, the account for the distinctive phenomenology of expressive experience should also distinguish it from the phenomenology of other perceptual experiences. This can be done, I argue, by referring both to introspection and to psychological results based on subjective reports about expressive experience.

ii. Content, or what the experience is about

The second requirement that a theory of expressive experience has to meet is an account of what expressive experience *is about* and how the content of the experience relates to the phenomenal character. A satisfactory theory of expressiveness should be able to say what sort of properties – if any – are represented in the content of expressive experience

and whether they cause, are determined by or entertain a supervenience relation with the phenomenal properties of expressive experience.

iii. *Role of emotions*

A good theory of expressive experience should clearly account for the role played by emotions when we experience objects as expressive of them. As we have already seen, expressive experience is taken to be relevantly connected to emotions, but must neither be confused in principle with the attribution of mental states, nor with provoked arousal. That is, it must not be confused with the experience of actual *expression* and should be accounted for as being relatively independent of it (Robinson 2005). Moreover, despite the view that we are necessarily aroused when we undergo expressive experiences has been strongly criticised, emotions cannot be jettisoned as merely contingently related with that experience. Rather, a theory of expressiveness should find a way to account for emotions so as to do justice both to phenomenology, which apparently does not leave much room to *felt* emotions, and to the strong intuition, supported by linguistic attributions, that emotions somehow partake in expressive experience.

iv. *Empirical results*

Last but not least, theorists of expressive experience must be aware that their theories should accommodate most empirical data that are relevant for the matter. This implies both using such data when it comes to the analysis of the experience's character and content and providing a theory with some heuristic value to be fruitfully employed by empirical sciences.

2.2 Some agreement: the phenomenal character of expressive experience

The first requirement that a theory of expressive experience should meet, is an accurate account of its specific phenomenal character. In this paragraph, I intend to show that philosophers of expressiveness agree to some relevant extent on the phenomenal character of expressive experience. In particular, they share the view that expressive experience is a partly perceptual experience, though a *sui generis* one. Even if this perceptual character is rarely explicitly ascribed to the phenomenal character as distinct

in principle from its explanatory mechanisms (as Noordhof correctly points out), I will try to show that this is mostly what these theorists should be arguing for.

The first account that is worth dealing with is Contour theory, and this for the good reason that it is the sole to consider expressive experience as a perceptual experience *tout court*. Given this stance, Contour theorists have devoted much attention to the phenomenology of expressive experience. As already pointed out in the previous chapter, both theories of Peter Kivy and Stephen Davies claim that expressive experience of music is analogous to the perceptual experience of structural features of the pieces.

As Davies writes:

> […] the claim is that the expressiveness is a property of the music itself. This property resides in the way the music sounds to the attuned listener, just as happy-lookingness can be a property displayed in a creature's face or movements. (Davies 2005:181)

On this perspective, expressive qualities are perceivable components of musical structure and so they are experienced. They are neither the result of affective arousal, nor of imaginative engagement. Rather, they are heard in music (and, presumably, seen in paintings and visual works more generally). This confirms, first of all, that the phenomenology of expressive experience is perceptual and that it consists in the recognition of profiles or contours.

Remarkably, this point is held to be true of music as well as of other objects, regardless of their being natural or artefacts. Indeed, even though most philosophers that deal with expressiveness focus on auditory experiences, they normally take their theories to apply also to other sensory modalities. Levinson declares that his view on expressive properties "is apt not only for music, but for non-representational art generally" (Levinson 2006:102), and Davies relies on episodes of visual experience to make the case of expressive music more perspicuous, arguing that: "[…] when we attribute emotions to music we are describing the emotional character it presents, just as we do when we call the willow sad or the car happy" (Davies 2005:181).

The phenomenal character of expressive experience consists therefore in the auditory or visual perception of features that does neither attest the intervention of imagination nor of other mental faculties such as memory or beliefs: it is as immediate and as unreflective as the perceptual experience of sounds, colours and shapes.

If this approach to the phenomenal character of both auditory and visual expressive experience is perfectly consistent with Contour theory, its suitability for arousalism might appear less straightforward. As I have already suggested, strong versions of arousalism are difficult to defend. They indeed imply that one has to be aroused in order to undergo expressive experiences. However, this is not attested by expressive experiences, that is, we do not always *feel* aroused when we have them. Furthermore, if arousalism explains this aspect of the phenomenology resorting to "feeling components" of emotions, have troubles precisely in accounting for the intentional link between the perceptual character of the experience and its emotional cause.

However, this is neither the sole arousalistic account that exists in the literature, nor the most refined. Aaron Ridley (1995), for instance, showed that one can hold an arousalistic position about music's expressiveness without neglecting the link between the structure of music, its contour, its auditory features and the sort of emotions that it is capable of arousing in listeners. In point of fact, Ridley takes on Kivy's idea that we experience music as being expressive as long as music bears some resemblance to typical expressions of emotions performed by humans. Interestingly, despite he rejects the idea that musical expressiveness can be reduced to a merely perceptual experience, Ridley endorses Contour theory as long as it establishes the necessary conditions for expressive experience to take place, namely that its contour resembles in some relevant aspect the expression of emotions on behalf of human beings. He calls this contour *melisma*, but what Ridley has in mind is not far from the idea of expressive profile supported by Contour theorists, and the same intuition is shared by Jenefer Robinson, who claims: "Of course, in listening to music we may also be *noticing* expressive contours and *figuring out* how the expressive character of the music unfolds" (Robinson 2005:374).

Thus, even if she doubts about Kivy's account and believes that felt emotions must aid expressive experience, she acknowledges that 'the cognitive mode of understanding' expressive contours of music plays a necessary role in the experience of expressiveness. Once again, the idea is that at least a relevant part of the phenomenal character of expressive experience is a matter of perceptual experience of certain features, be they a contour, a profile or a melisma.

Further support to this idea is provided both by Noordhof and by Levinson, that is, by proponents of imaginative accounts. Levinson is indeed convinced that we experience music as being expressive as long as its perceivable features trigger some propositional imaginings that a persona is expressing herself through music. In order for

this imaginative experience to take place, there is a preliminary step that consists in the perceptual recognition of certain features of the piece, namely the "appearance of human emotion" that the structure of music resembles:

> In addition to presenting an array of sonic features, simultaneously and successively, much music offers the appearance of human emotion, or of persons outwardly manifesting emotional states; arguably, that is what the expressiveness of music largely consists in […] The degree of resemblance between the shape of music and the behaviors through which emotions are commonly expressed in life will have something, though not everything, to do with our being disposed to hear music in such ways. (Levinson 2006:50)

Even though he does not content himself with this endorsement of the Contour theory's proposal and invokes the imaginative solutions already mentioned, Levinson is quite explicit: the 'shape of music', which means its perceivable structure, is an important part of expressive experience as long as it bears resemblances to expressive behaviours. More specifically, Levinson claims that when we experience music as being expressive we perceptually experience its gestures:

> Gesture in music serves as the crucial middle term between musical movement and musical expression. It is because music often presents the appearance of *gestures* of various sorts that it can be heard, by analogy with the role of physical gesture in behavioural expression of emotion, as if it were *itself* an expression of emotion (Levinson 2009:420)

The experience of gestures as what makes music expressive cannot be accounted for appealing to *inferences*, Levinson says, rather it is a *sui generis* sort of perceptual experience as reliably attested by its *immediacy*:

> basic musical expressiveness—though perhaps not all sorts of expressiveness, such as that more typical of literature, involving articulate states of mind, nor that perhaps attaching to works of music as wholes—is something directly heard, not inferred, […] immediacy is a proper desideratum for an account of musical expressiveness (Levinson 2006:101)

Directedness and *immediacy* are commonly maintained to be peculiar features of the way it is like to perceive something. The phenomenological ascertainment of these features is therefore at the origin of the claim that expressive experience is a kind of perceptual experience. Consistently, Noordhof names expressive experience *expressive perception*, referring for his theory to a specific sort of perception that, as we have seen, requires the interplay between perceptual and imaginative contents and attitudes. According to Noordhof, expressive experience phenomenally consists in the perception of potentially expressive features of artworks. The mechanism to which he appeals has already been presented and, as I shall recall, phenomenal considerations about the specific character of expressive experiences are precisely meant to support the imaginative intervention. To recall, expressive perception is taken by Noordhof to be: (i) less immediate than normal perception, (ii) relatively under our control, unlike normal perception, but (iii) such that it presents the same phenomenal features of perception (colours, shapes, shadows, sounds and so on).

In the remainder of this paragraph I will assess features (i) and (ii) that Noordhof ascribes to expressive experience, trying to show that they do not automatically imply the intervention of imagination. Rather, I will insist that they can be considered features of the phenomenal character of perceptual experiences and that the appeal to imagination requires further arguments.

My first remark concerns the claim that, although it represents standard perceptual features, expressive experience lacks the typical immediacy of perceptual experience.

Let us focus for an instant on the difference between perceptual and sensuous imagery experience. It is very common to introduce it starting from the lack of immediacy and of vividness of the latter compared to the former. Fabian Dorsch writes:

> That sensory imaginings (as well as sensory memories) lack the immediacy of perceptual experiences means, first of all, that they do not present their objects as being there before us in our actual environment. When we see a tree, it seems to be right there before our eyes. But when we visualise a tree, we do not have a similar impression of its presence in our actual environment. (Dorsch 2012:83)

On this interpretation, immediacy is understood as some sort of feeling of presence that accompanies every perception, whereas it is lacking, or at least is diminished, when we

undergo imaginative experiences. Noordhof seems to buy into this distinction when he appeals to sensuous imagination. Yet, this distinction is far from established in the literature. Nanay ascribes this way to distinguish between perception and sensuous imagination ('mental imagery' in his words, and in most of the debate) to Hume, according to which imagery amounts to a "paler version" of perception. Accordingly:

> […] seeing an apple seems to have a certain phenomenal oomph that is missing in the case of imagining the apple. This phenomenal oomph is often described as feeling of presence. When we see an apple, we have this feeling of presence. When we have mental imagery of it, we don't have this feeling of presence. (Nanay 2016:128)

However, this seems to be no more than a paradigmatic distinction that admits for intermediate cases in which the "oomph" criterion is not applicable. As Nanay goes on:

> I don't see any reason to take the difference in the feeling of presence to be a mark of the difference between the phenomenology of perception and mental imagery. It sounds right that perception is, at least when conscious, accompanied by a feeling of presence. But I see no reason to think that mental imagery in general is not accompanied by a feeling of presence. (Nanay 2016:129)

Thus, one may argue that the difference in terms of immediacy (oomph, feeling of presence) is not granted. Still, even if one accepts this as a viable criterion, it is not clear that so-conceived lack of immediacy applies to expressive experiences. We do not seem to experience the sadness of a chord less immediately than how we hear the chord itself, nor the liveliness of a landscape less immediately than how we see its colours and slopes. Sadness or liveliness are no less immediately presented in experience than colours or shapes, nor experienced in a later moment compared to the auditory structure of music. Significantly, it has been noticed that:

> It takes as long to hear the music's expressive properties as it takes to hear the passages in which those properties are articulated. (Davies 2005:181)

That is, it does not take more to hear the "noble and restrained passion" expressed by the principal theme of the First Movement in Gabriel Fauré's Piano Quartet in C Minor, Op. 15, than it takes to hear "the strings with syncopated interjections from the piano"

that Levinson takes to underlie it (Levinson 2009:422). Expressive qualities are rather apprehended as immediately as merely perceptual features of musical pieces. Therefore, even if one endorsed a view according to which the object of mental imagery is not as present to the subject as the object of perceptual experience, it is not clear that the objects of expressive experience should fall within the former instead of within the latter category.

However, if Noordhof's notion of immediacy has to do with the phenomenal character of experiences, there is a more charitable way to interpret his claim. Indeed, one may take it to be that expressive experiences are not as *vivid* and as *stable* for a subject as perceptual experiences. On this view, the sadness that is expressed by a sonata would be experienced as being phenomenally fainter than the sounds and rhythm that constitute it. Vividness is a phenomenal characterization of experiences that may be taken to belong either to their representational content or to their phenomenal character. In the former case, vividness concerns the degree of vagueness of the information provided by the representational content, whereas in the latter case, vividness affects the experience we have of the objects and of their features.[15]

Whatever is the part of experience to which vividness applies, however, Dorsch argues that, as a qualitative aspect, it remains a matter of degrees:

> […] it is not clear whether there could not be, on the one hand, perceptions […] which are faint and, on the other hand, sensory imaginings which are vivid. (Dorsch 2015:82).

Thus, nothing guarantees that vivacity or vividness is enough to distinguish perceptual episodes from imaginative episodes. It is at best a typical qualification of the phenomenology rather than a criterion for the classification of different mental states (Dorsch 2012:82). Hence, immediacy (understood as vividness) does not offer any good reason to appeal to imagination or to perception when describing the phenomenology of expressive experience.

My second objection regards Noordhof's claim that the fact that expressive experience is relatively under our control makes sensuous imagination the best way to account for it. Even in this case, my strategy will be to insist that being partially under control is not a prerogative of imaginative experience.

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[15] For discussion about blurriness and fuzziness of perceptual experiences, see Tye 2003; Boghossian and Velleman, 1989 and Calabi 2014.

According to a general and widely accepted characterization, the main distinction between perceptual states and imaginings is that, whereas the latter are subject to will, the former are independent of the subject's will or agency.[16]Along this line, Noordhof points out that there are occasions in which we can deliberately decide whether to experience the same piece of music as being expressive or affectively neutral. It must be noticed that the claim is not that we are totally free to imagine the same piece of music as expressive of whatever affective state – which would imply to deny any constraint of the perceptual, non-expressive structure of the piece on its expressive features. Rather, the idea is that we can control our experience and obliterate, so to say, its expressive component in favour of a neutral and merely perceptual experience. This remark captures an important phenomenal quality of expressive experience, namely its resulting more dependent on the subject than other perceptual experiences. It is indeed true that, while we cannot decide whether to experience Malevič's *Black square* as being or not "black", we have some control on our experience when it comes to seeing it as being or not "disquieting". And even if we ourselves can't help experiencing it as disquieting, it is not difficult to imagine that the art historian who is studying the painting and focusing on its shape and on the contrast between the black of the square and the white of the frame, will be able to neglect its expressive character in favour of an affectively neutral experience.

Accepting that the expressive character of things is phenomenally not as independent of our will as colours are, however, is not yet enough to rule out perception in favour of imagination. A fruitful strategy in support of this objection consists in considering perceptual experiences in which we exercise some control but that are not usually explained in terms of imagination. The example that I wish to analyse is perceptual attention and shifts of attention from certain to other perceptual saliences. Suppose we are looking at a depicted landscape like *Der Nachmittag* by Caspar Friedrich, and suppose that, at a first glance, we do not see the horse pulling the wagon at the centre of the canvas. Then, all of a sudden, we notice it. We shift the focus of our attention, maybe in virtue of a chromatic discontinuity on the canvas, and we perceive features of which we were previously unaware. Once we are aware that there is a horse pulling a wagon in the picture, it might also be the case that we shift again our attention and we

[16] See for example Dorsch 2012 for an exhaustive account of imagination characterized as motivated action. He ascribes what he calls the *Agency Account* to Richard Wollheim, Jerrold Levinson, Amy Kind and Colin McGinn.

focus on other elements of the work, such as the compositional structure, or chromatic range displayed on the canvas, so that we neglect again the depicted wagon and the horse. Such an experience does not require that one engages in an imaginative project in which figuring out features of the painting that are not actually part of the painting. It is just a matter of looking more attentively at the surface, picking up certain saliences.

An immediate objection to this example is that it concerns a change of the visual focus that leaves a certain particular of the painting out of sight. If so, this would not be a counterexample to the idea that controlling one's experience makes this experience an episode of imagination. Rather it would just suggest that we can direct our gaze to different items in our environment and that, due to spatial reasons, we cannot have all of them in sight. What is needed instead is a perceptual experience that allows us neglecting certain features in favour of others, keeping nonetheless our gaze fixed on the same portion of the canvas.

To make the counterexample more convincing, say, to show that there are perceptual experiences in which we exercise some control on the experience without necessarily mobilise imagination, let us consider the case of bi-stable (or multistable) figures perception. As is well-known, we can experience figures such as the Jastrow's duck-rabbit either *as representing x* or *as representing y*, depending on the perceptual saliences on which we focus our attention. They are perceptual patterns that lend themselves to be perceived in different ways. Notoriously, seeing-as experiences are explained in terms of "seeing" or "noticing an aspect", following Wittgenstein's famous remark:

> I contemplate a face, and then suddenly notice its likeness to another. I *see* that it has not changed; and yet I see it differently. I call this experience "noticing an aspect" (Wittgenstein *PI*: II, xi, 193)

Such a noticing, as well as the recognition of the duck in the duck-rabbit figure, or of Voltaire's portrait in Dalì's *Slave Market with the Disappearing Bust of Voltaire (1940)*, is often maintained to be perceptual in character and sometimes involving the voluntary focus of attention (see for instance Gombrich 1960; Wollheim 2003; Nanay 2010; Jagnow 2011; Voltolini 2015) Yet, it is also relatively under our control.

> True, we may be able to stop seeing a picture as a picture (e.g. by attending to it in a certain way); and we may have some control over whether we see the duck-rabbit drawing as a depiction of a duck or as a depiction of a rabbit. (Dorsch, 2016:234)

Such a characterization of aspect perception suffices to point out that a phenomenology which mobilises will and voluntary control is not peculiar of imagination, say, it does not indicate *per se* that imagination is involved.

Importantly, both remark (i) and (ii) about the phenomenal character of expressive experience must be taken into account. True, there is a sense in which expressive features often appear to be less vivid than colours, and true, expressive experience is relatively subject to will. But these characters are not specific enough to distinguish the phenomenal character of expressive experience from that of standard perceptual experience. For sure, they are not enough to appeal to sensuous imagination.

If I am right so far, despite providing different explanations for that, most accounts agree on our expressive experiences being perceptual in character. They exclude in one way or another that the ascription of expressiveness to objects is the ascription of full-fledged emotions to them (in what would be a sort of illusory, systematically erroneous or hallucinatory experience), and they try to deal with the fact that objects expressiveness is first of all a matter of perceptual recognition, whatever this implies. This experience is however taken to be distinct from standard perceptual experiences, like the perceptual experience of patterns of sounds, pitches, chords, rhythms (or, in the case of visual features, as the perceptual experience of colours and shapes). In order to account for the specificity of expressive experience, two further phenomenal features are usually considered and they seem to me particularly controversial. The first feature is what we may call the *affective load* of expressive experience, while the second is the *degree of complexity* of the experienced expressive features.

2.3 Some disagreement: the affective load of expressive experience

Curiously enough, there is no agreement among philosophers about affective load qualifying or not expressive experience. Whereas many tend to agree that expressive experience is perceptual in character, some believe that such a phenomenal character is distinct from the perceptual recognition of a shape or of a shade of colour because it

occurs *along with*, or *in virtue of* some felt affective state. What the relation between the perceptual and the emotional character amounts to is far from clear and I shall try to clarify it hereafter.

Many authors conceive of the affective component of expressive experience as being an emotional arousal. As we have already seen, Derek Matravers insists that the arousal of the feeling component of an emotion is required to undergo expressive experience. However, on his perspective, such an arousal needs not be part neither of the content nor of the character of that experience. Rather, the aroused feelings responsible for our attributions of expressiveness can be mere causal triggers that do not enter the phenomenology of expressive experience. Analogously, Noordhof's appeal to arousalistic insights is limited to the mechanism that he believes is in play when we experience expressive things. Simulation processes do not affect us emotionally, that is, do not make us feel emotions, not even through the mediation of imagination. All we do, according to Noordhof is recognising expressions by means of simulation.

In the same spirit, in his *Projectivism, Empathy and Musical Tension* (1999), Kendall Walton puts forward an account of what musical tension and relaxation amount to and how they are experienced by listeners. In a nutshell, Walton distinguishes between two sorts of musical (and, more broadly, of aesthetic) properties that explain the experience of music as being expressive: at the ground level he places properties like tension and relaxation (which one may also want to call, depending on musical genres, description, culture and so on: *force, intensity, stress, restlessness, stability, calmness, repose*. Walton, 1999:409). These properties are experienced by means of simulation processes that make one feel the changing tension of music as if it were one's own tension. They are dispositional properties that music has to trigger in people's analogous reactions, and thus they are experienced. On the top of tension and relaxation, Walton locates expressive properties – at least some of them – that can result in the content of experience once the simulation process of tension and relaxation takes place and we, so to say, *empathise* with music.

Empathy as Walton conceives of it is not a brand new idea in history of philosophy. Interestingly, it has been noticed that the concept of empathy originally emerged – in German philosophy – precisely for the purpose of explaining our relations to inanimate objects (see for instance Geiger 1911), rather than in connection with *mindreading*. It is worth noticing that Walton's account closely resembles Theodor Lipps's theory of empathy (*Einfühlung* in German). In his *Ästhetik* (1903), Lipps argues that

empathy is our primary and most direct way of approaching objects in our environment, and that it consists in the subject filling in the objects with her own feelings. Literally, *einfühlen* means "to feel in", evoking the idea the one may feel oneself *in* something – or someone – else. Lipps is not clear, at least from an empirically demanding perspective, about how the *Einfühlung* takes place. He rejects the view that it might involve bodily movement and simulation and tends to consider it a matter of psychological resonance (1903:105-6). However, this is not the point here. What is instead especially interesting is that in Lipps' theory as well as on the Waltonian view, the process of projection taking the shape of an empathic relation is not random, say, we do not project whatever feeling on any sort of objects. Instead, empathy for objects is always led by perceptual features that trigger and lend themselves to projection. So, the being *tense*, *relaxed*, *straight*, *curved*, *expanded*, *agitated*, *rising*, *falling* of inanimate objects is what allows for projections of feelings and for the empathetic experience of them. These features are taken to have the dispositional power to elicit mechanisms of resonance and consonance in subjects which, however, do not necessarily reach the level of consciousness.

Thus, although both views require *empathy* as the special reaction that allows us experiencing expressive properties of objects, neither of them seems to require that the subject of the experience *feels* any more definite affect than tension, relaxation and the like. And in principle, the mechanisms of simulation of tension and relaxation need not be something we consciously experience as being an emotional reaction. Rather, they might remain fully off-line processes.[17] Both in Lipps' and in Walton's view, we may not experience any affective state in expressive experience, which may still consist in recognising perceptual features as being apt for the ascription of some affective character. Talking about empathy for objects, Gregory Currie points out:

> Simulation may do its causal work without reaching the threshold of consciousness, or may produce a very dim conscious experience that easily goes unnoticed. (Currie 2011:91-92)

Thus, the claim that we must be aroused to some extent – that is, that some mechanism of behavioural simulation or empathy must be triggered and is responsible for the

[17] Noordhof, who appeals in turn to simulation mechanisms akin to arousal, adopts an even more radical stance on this point: he carefully excludes not only that we must be emotionally aroused in order to experience expressive features, but also that our simulation mechanisms must be held from a first person perspective.

ascription of affective features to objects – does not coincide with the claim that expressive experience entails that *we feel* emotions in turn. For the purpose of understanding the extent – if any – to which emotions enrich the phenomenal character of expressive experience, making it *sui generis*, this is a relevant point. Indeed, one may in principle accept that some causal connection to emotional states can contribute to the overall expressive experience, but this does not automatically imply that such mechanisms affect the phenomenal character of expressive experience.

The claim that felt emotions are components of the phenomenal character of expressive experience is instead overtly vindicated both by Jenefer Robinson and by Aaron Ridley. They argue that expressive experience of music is not limited to the perceptual recognition of features – be they melismatic gestures or contours – but that it is an inherently affective experience, provoking in the listeners an emotional arousal that needs be felt. It would be true that we perceive those features of music that make it similar to human expression, but a recognitional, perceptual process would not be enough, which is why they deem Contour theory reductive on this count.

According to Ridley, either we are aroused – namely, the appropriate feelings are aroused in us – or we do not recognise what is expressed. This is held to apply to humans in the first place and to music derivatively. Ridley is especially worried about the distinction between merely perceptual recognition, which may equally be performed by an adequately instructed computer, and expressive experience, which – he seems to wish – can only be performed by someone who can feel emotions. He supports his view via two sets of arguments. On the one hand, he appeals to the origins of meanings of emotion words. Ridley observes that unless some or even most of us had responded affectively to musical melisma, the application of expressive predicates would have never been extended to music (Ridley 1995:54). This implies that we might have learnt to associate those predicates to certain perceptually distinct patterns in such a way that does not require any arousal. But the semantic shift of emotion words from felt emotions to patterns to which we ascribe expressive features must have originally occurred on such basis, say, it must soon or later have involved some arousal (Ridley 1995:54). This remark has to do with the way in which we learn to apply emotion words and how they acquire their meanings through time. I will deal with this topic in Chapter 4. For the moment, I do not see how this argument plays in favour of an arousalistic account of expressive experience.

On the other hand, Ridley appeals to the conditions at which we can recognise perceptual signs as expressive. He writes:

> […] the recognition of expressiveness (and not merely of one kind of sign among others) is conceptually related to our capacity to feel. If I judge someone's behavior to be expressive of, say, melancholy, then I am saying at the same time that I know something of what [one's] melancholy is like, what it would be like to be in the state which [one's] gestures reflect; my judgment is partly felt […] My response is a part of my recognition of those qualities. (Ridley 1995:53)

Ridley is claiming that the full understanding of emotion concepts requires that one feels (or at least is capable to feel) the concerned emotion, say, that one knows what it is like to undergo such an affective state. We cannot attribute expressive values, unless we affectively respond (or know what it is like to respond) to the perceptual stimulus to which we attribute this value. That means, although we may learn to recognise certain traits as typically associable to affective values and we can perform the association as computers do, expressive attributions require that we feel or know what it feels like to undergo the related emotions. Expressiveness is, according to Ridley, not just a perceivable sign that bears some connection to felt affective states. It is instead intrinsically (conceptually) related to felt emotions. There is more to expressiveness than mere perceptual recognition of a pattern and the required extra bit consists in actual or at least potential arousal. Commenting on and enriching Ridley's view, Robinson affirms:

> […] we never merely recognize dispassionately what music expresses; we identify what a piece of music expresses partly by the way it makes us feel. (Robinson 2005:354)

Emotions aroused by music, says Robinson, help us *understand* its expressive character, guiding us and setting our expectations about expressive musical development. The following example may clarify the point.

> In the Brahms Intermezzo Opus 117 No. 2, the A theme makes me feel anxious and uneasy, which helps me to recognize the yearning quality in the theme. When the B theme arrives I am relieved and pleased, and this helps me realize that the B theme is more stolid and reassuring than the A theme it replaces. (Robinson 2005:366)

As said, according to these two accounts, emotions are not mere reactions to stimuli that may occur sub-personally. They are taken to be affective states with a phenomenology that is precisely what contributes to the phenomenal character of expressive experience and makes it a *sui generis* experience.

Weak arousalistic theories like the ones I considered provide good reasons in favour of their view. Nonetheless, the disagreement between them and Contour theory, and between them and theories such as Noordhof's, Walton's and Levinson's is striking. It seems indeed that they do not share the same view about the phenomenology of the experience they want to account for. We may allow for the fact that expressive experience involves subjective variables that deserve to be explained: there may be differences between experts and non-experts in experiencing expressive music, as well as differences due to personal and subjective associations. However, the aim of theories of expressiveness must be to explain expressive experiences as having some common ground, namely, finding out their necessary conditions and the required "components". On this perspective, the disagreement about the required phenomenal ingredients of expressive experience cannot but raise doubts: because the disagreement is at the phenomenal level, it is reasonable to think that philosophers have in mind different kinds of experiences.

Clearly, a number of different experiences can fall under the label of 'expressive experience'. Expressive experiences may indeed differ in duration, intensity, richness, capacity to generate behaviours and to justify assertions and beliefs, degree of clarity and vagueness, consistency with the subject's set of beliefs, her taste, her background knowledge. It must therefore be acknowledged that what Robinson describes in the above quoted passage may take place, namely that those affective states that music arouse lead us and orient our experience of the piece. Analogously, it may well be the case that we get a better insight in the expressive value of Van Gogh's *Wheatfield with crows* (1890) if we let our emotions influence and guide our judgements.

Regarding Ridley's argument that felt emotions are required to fully understand the meaning of emotion words and therefore to use them appropriately, there may well be a sense in which knowing what it is like to feel an emotion helps attribute it more precisely. But before committing to this as being a necessary condition for expressive experience and subsequent attributions, some remarks about the phenomenology of emotions may be of help.

2.4 The phenomenal character of felt emotions

What is it like to feel an emotion? By replying to this question, we may indeed find out whether, on a phenomenological perspective, expressive experience presents the phenomenal character of felt emotions and how this merges with its eminently and widely acknowledged perceptual character.

Traditionally, the phenomenology of emotions is taken to involve at least two aspects: bodily feelings and the intentional representation of some objects. Moreover, *modes* or *attitudes* are often considered part of the specific phenomenology of emotions.

As to bodily feelings, they are usually considered fundamental if not necessary components of emotion episodes. The etymology of the term 'emotion' alludes precisely to movements, agitations or disturbances that take place and that we feel when we undergo emotions. Some of the most relevant elements that cause those feelings are heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, adrenaline. Also, emotions as feelings of bodily changes are described in terms of kinesthetic sensations and muscular feedback (Deonna and Teroni 2012:3). William James is usually considered the pioneer of theories of emotions as feelings of somatic changes. He famously claimed that emotions consist precisely in our feelings of bodily changes that occur when facing certain situations or objects (James 1884 and 1890). Relying on this view, for example, Jesse Prinz takes affective states to consist primarily in the representations that bodily changes provide of the relations between the organism and the environment (Prinz 2004). Feelings of bodily changes are therefore considered necessary constituents of emotions and fundamental components of their phenomenology.

Less radical views that nevertheless assign bodily feelings a central role, have been put forward confirming the importance of this aspect of phenomenology (Barlassina and Newen 2013). More generally, even those philosophers that consider emotions eminently judgmental mental states try to integrate this aspect of the phenomenology in their theories (see for instance Solomon 2004).

However, it has been noticed that bodily feelings do not necessarily characterise every emotional state. For example, it is hard to distinguish an episode of *pride* from an episode of *satisfaction* on the basis of the bodily feelings they provide. Moreover, bodily changes may occur without the subject noticing it, that is, they might be unconscious. This is true both if one believes that changes at the brain or neural level are among the

bodily changes required by a somatic theory of emotions, and if one thinks about those cases in which we are simply *not aware* of our feelings and related emotions as they occur, but we may get to acknowledge them afterwards (see Deonna and Teroni 2012:16 ff. for a clear overview of what "unconscious" emotions might amount to). Therefore, one should also contemplate cases in which emotion phenomenology does not amount to bodily feelings, or at least not only to them.

The second aspect of emotion phenomenology is related to the intentional nature of affective states. Under this respect, emotions are usually taken to be evaluative attitudes. They represent objects as having evaluative properties: intentional objects of fear episodes are represented as fearful, intentional objects of shame episodes are represented as shameful, intentional objects of episodes of enthusiasm are represented as thrilling or exciting. According to an intentionalistic perspective, we experience the forest as fearful, a gesture as shameful and the plane's take-off as thrilling, and the phenomenology of these experiences – their typical what-it-is-like – is determined by evaluative properties such as fearfulness, shamefulness and thrill that are represented in their content.

This latter point can be better understood in analogy with intentional theories of perception, according to which the phenomenal character of perceptual intentional states is determined by the sort of properties that are represented in the content of the experience. In both cases, the idea is that those properties that the experience is about, are responsible for the experience appearing to the subjects in such and such a way. Evaluative properties, such as the property of "being shameful" of a situation, would therefore be responsible for producing a certain effect on the subject, namely the specific "what-it-is-like" of experiencing that situation as shameful. Whatever stance one takes on this – be it a version of dispositionalism for evaluative properties (Kriegel 2002); an Edenic theory of affective properties (Mendelovici 2014) or a pure intentionalist view – it has been noticed that it is unlikely that the intentional content of emotions *exhausts* their specific phenomenal character (Lutz 2015). In point of fact, it seems reasonable to think that feeling ashamed or, on the contrary, proud, amounts to experiencing certain feature as capable of triggering some kind of "affective attunement" in the subjects, rather than producing a merely "cognitive" reaction – as it would be the case in perceptual experiences of colours. Thus, if on the one hand, bodily feelings are not enough to phenomenally characterise emotional experiences, on the other hand it seems that the

mere recognition of evaluative properties requires some connection to feelings if it is to characterise emotional episodes.

It is presumably for this reason that a third candidate has been introduced that could characterise emotions as intentional mental states: their intentional *mode*. The most enthusiastic proponents of a theory of emotion phenomenology as depending on modes have been so far Julien Deonna and Fabrice Teroni. They believe that emotions are characterised by a specific intentional mode, namely, an evaluative intentional mode. They claim that emotions are evaluative in virtue of their phenomenology, which peculiarly involves bodily feelings. Therefore, they conceive of emotions as particular attitudes towards objects instantiating evaluative properties. Their theory seems to accommodate nicely the idea that the phenomenal character of emotions is eminently "felt" with the fact that it must also involve the phenomenal characterization of intentional objects. Accordingly, they provide descriptions of the phenomenal character of several emotions in terms of bodily feelings oriented towards objects that exemplify evaluative properties:

> In anger, we feel the way our body is prepared for active hostility to whatever causes the anger. In shame, we feel the way our body is poised to hide from the gaze of others that typically causes the shame. In an episode of loving affection, we feel the way our body is prepared to move towards cuddling the object of one's affection. In disgust, we feel the way our body is poised to prevent the object from entering into contact with it. And in sadness, our body is given to us as though prevented from entering into interaction with a certain object. (Deonna and Teroni 2012:80)

We can finally figure out what is it like to undergo an emotion. In particular, we have seen that emotions are mostly taken to entail bodily feelings, also in those cases in which we are not aware of undergoing an emotion. Also, they are mostly taken to have intentional objects instantiating evaluative properties in such a way that may imply specific attitudes. We can thus go back to the question that originally motivated this brief overview about the phenomenal character of emotions, that is: are felt emotions required in order to experience objects as expressive?

In the light of what said, claiming – as arousalism does – that felt emotions are required, amounts to claiming that at least some of the elements listed above (bodily

feelings, evaluative properties of the intentional objects, evaluative attitudes connecting the two) are present in our experience.

Let us start from the view that the intentional object of emotion might be responsible for the phenomenology of emotions, in conjunction with the specific attitude one takes towards it. We may consider the case in which a piece of music is experienced as fearful. The arousalist can insist that, in order for such an experience to occur, one must entertain a specific attitude that involves both bodily feelings and the representation of some evaluative features, namely the fearfulness of the piece. However, it is immediately clear that the case of fearful music must be distinguished from the case of a full-blown episode of fear such as being afraid of a barking dog. Indeed, in expressive experience, objects are not the intentional objects of an affective experience, for it is not the case that we are *afraid of the piece of music*, that we feel tenderness *towards it*, that we are happy *about it*. In short, if the arousalist wants to argue that the capacity that music has to express emotions is connected to its capacity to provoke emotions, then she has to provide an account which preserves the distinction between full-blown episodes of emotions directed towards something and expressive experience.

Once it is clear that the way in which the phenomenal character of felt emotions that contributes to the phenomenal character of expressive experience cannot depend on the intentional object of the experience, arousal theorists can insist that the phenomenal component of affective states that must be present in the phenomenal character of expressive experience is the "feeling component". Given the two versions of arousalism that we have considered, we may further unpack this requirement into two alternative possibilities. The requirement that felt emotions are in place in the form of bodily feelings when we experience expressive objects may be understood in a strong or in a weak version.

The strong version of the requirement would be that the constitutive feelings of the emotion are actually *felt*: hearing a piece of music as sad would accordingly require that we feel our body as deprived of something, assuming a bowed-down posture and a weary attitude, lacking energy and disposition to action. And even if one follows Robinson on that the kind of felt emotion required does not necessarily coincide with the one perceived in the object, the requirement would still be that some *consistent* feeling (pity, sorrow, melancholy, grimness) is actually felt by the subject. Moreover, if one follows the suggestion of Deonna and Teroni about unconscious emotions, one may allow for the case in which the subject is not *currently* aware of the feelings she is undergoing,

but may become aware of them afterwards, by means of reflection and introspection. This strong version of the feeling requirement is therefore consistent with the weak versions of arousalism described so far, namely Robinson's and Ridley's.

The weak version of the requirement would instead be that those feelings needed for an emotion to be in place might occur sub-personally, without reaching the level of consciousness or of bodily awareness. This sounds as a quite counterintuitive hypothesis. Indeed, it goes against the "common-sense intuition that there always is something it is like to undergo an emotion" (Deonna and Teroni 2012:17). Although this is a very controversial matter, it has been defended that feelings can be unconscious and still have a causal impact on our overall emotional state (Gardner 1993; Damasio 2000). Moreover, one may hold that neural activations that correlate to feelings are enough for the feeling component of an emotion to be in place. As I shall recall, Derek Matravers held that we do not need to be aware of the emotions' feeling components as we experience expressive qualities. Rather, they can remain unknown to the subject, who may become aware of them on the basis of the judgment that they cause (Matravers 1998:150). According to such a version, the claim that emotions are required by expressive experience would amount to the claim we must be aroused *sub-personally* in order to undergo such an experience. The weak view is therefore compatible with Matravers' strong version of arousalism. Instead, both Robinson and Ridley seem to adopt the aforementioned strong reading of the requirement: we must be aware of the emotions we are undergoing when experiencing expressive things, that is, they must be phenomenally conscious.

Now, whereas the weak reading can only be corroborated or disconfirmed by empirical results – which nevertheless would lead us quite far away from the phenomenal level that I am currently exploring – the strong reading can be rejected on the basis of phenomenological considerations. In this vein, I would like to present two objections.

First, I suggest that, as well as in the case of the Persona theory, against which phenomenal reports could be fruitfully employed, we can consider introspective reflection about one's experience. Desolate landscapes, lugubrious colours, cheerful motifs can be experienced as being desolate, lugubrious and cheerful without necessarily resounding or echoing in us in the form of feelings of which we are aware. Neither is the case that these feelings are such that they can always be recognised afterwards, when reflecting on the experience. This is neither to deny that, as Robinson suggests, such feelings can "help" us listening to music passages in the correct way (which I take to mean: in the richest way, possibly the one intended by the composer or the musician

playing the piece), nor to claim that we are *never* aroused when we undergo expressive experience. On the contrary, it may well be the case that we are very often affectively involved when we hear emotionally characterised pieces of music, see expressive landscapes, decide whether to paint our walls in white, yellow or grey colour. But it seems that our conscious experiences of expressive things do not attest that bodily feelings are necessary components of their phenomenal character.

Second, we should focus on the specific way in which bodily feelings are taken to be a fundamental part of emotions. In particular, we have seen that one of the problems with somatic theories of emotions is characterising the role of feelings as distinct from the one they play on other non-emotional experiences. Take *fatigue* for example: somatic theories must be able to explain why, despite being a bodily feeling, fatigue is not to be counted among emotions. It is precisely this worry that leads most supporters of somatic theories to account for the specificity of bodily feelings in emotions in terms of their relation to intentionality (Prinz 2004; Deonna and Teroni 2012; Barlassina and Newen 2013). They all argue that feelings are components of the phenomenal character of emotions as long as they put us in contact with the intentional (or formal) objects of emotions. Prinz, for instance, thinks that emotions: "use bodily states to represent organism-environment relations" or what he (following Lazarus 1991) calls "core-relational themes", whereas feelings such as fatigue are mere bodily perceptions that represent nothing but some bodily condition (Prinz 2004:190). In turn, Barlassina and Newen have provided a clear definition of what this *distinctiveness thesis* amounts to:

> Emotions are interoceptive states, and what distinguishes emotions from non-emotional interoceptive states is that emotions are those interoceptive states that represent core relational themes (i.e., organism-environment relations that pertain to the organism's well-being). (Barlassina and Newen 2013)

Moreover, Deonna and Teroni provide several descriptions of emotions as consisting of bodily feelings (namely readiness to action) intentionally connected to intentional objects with evaluative properties. Here are a couple of them:

> Fear of the dog is an experience of the dog as dangerous, precisely because it consists in feeling the body's readiness to act so as to diminish the dog's likely impact on it (flight, preemptive attack, etc.), and this felt attitude is correct if and only if the dog

> is dangerous. […] Admiration is an experience of a given object as admirable, because it consists in feeling the way one's body opens up to sustained and expanding exploration of the object, and it is correct if and only if the object is admirable. (Deonna and Teroni 2012:81)

Finally, also Barlassina and Newen argue that the way in which feelings contribute to the specific phenomenal character of emotions is via an integration (which may be cognitive or perceptual) with intentional attitudes. (Barlassina and Newen 2013:24-27).

It is interesting to notice that an analogous position is taken by Davies in discussing Robinson. He also distinguishes between *feelings* such as tension, relief, nervousness that might well "initiate" an emotional state, and (propositional) *attitudes* towards formal objects that "surround" those feelings.

> An overdose of caffeine might put me on edge, but if my state is one of nervousness, this is because my sensations become located within a wider cognitive context, one where I contemplate some future state or action with apprehension. Now, if music triggers reactions of nervousness, relief, disturbance, and reassurance – and thereby is unnerving, relieving, disturbing, and reassuring – it is far from evident that these qualities *connect* with a cognitive content delivered or directed by the music, as opposed to one created by and imported from the listener. (Davies 2005)

According both to Davies's remark that is explicitly meant to undermine Robinson's arousalism, and to a number of theories about the phenomenal character of emotions, if one takes feelings to be what attests the phenomenal presence of an emotion, then one must take into account that feelings can only play this role as long as they are significantly connected to some intentional object (namely an object that instantiates evaluative properties that make it the appropriate formal object of an affective experience) through appropriate attitudes. Anyway, we have already seen that this cannot be the role of feelings within expressive experience, for expressive experience does not provide any intentional object that is adequately conceived as the formal object of a full-blown emotional experience.

Once again, I would argue that, in spite of the possibility that we are causally aroused in expressive experience, felt arousal is not necessary. Moreover, it does not bear any necessary connection to the (broadly understood) intentional component that – so to say – makes an emotion out of a mere feeling. It is therefore reasonable to believe that

what Robinson and Ridley consider as the paradigmatic case of expressive experience is only one example out of the many that can be put forward, namely the one that involves felt emotions. One can admit that this arousalistic experience is an example of expressive experience. It is perhaps what happens most frequently, but this is not enough to consider felt emotions a necessary ingredient of expressive experience.

If so things stand, then we can reconsider the question of how emotions enter expressive experience otherwise. Since most authors' main worry is to reconcile the perceptual aspect of expressive experience with its affective aspect, and felt emotions are not a good candidate, we shall examine further options. For this purpose, it is useful to focus again on the perceptual side of expressive experience.

2.5 The phenomenal character of expressive experience: time, movement and complexity

The best way so far to characterise the phenomenal character of expressive experience implies a perceptual mode of experience. This means that when one sees a painting as expressive of sorrow, she or he perceives the painting or some of its features as liable to affective attributions. It has been noticed that, even in those cases in which such a perception is taken to involve imagination, this is not taken to be part of the phenomenal character of the experience, say, we do not experience expressive features as if they were the result of some imaginative engagement. Whereas the mechanisms that are responsible for expressive experience – such as the possible interplay between perception, imagination, recognitional mechanisms, unconscious or conventional associations and the like – will be analysed in the next chapter, phenomenal features that might be taken to distinguish expressive experience from other experiences are here at stake.

The following steps of my analysis will deal with further qualitative features of expressive experience, assessing their relevance for its specific phenomenal character. I will first consider temporality and development through time as inhering expressive experience; second, I will consider bodily movement and third I will assess the distinction between complexity and simplicity.

2.5.1 Time

Whatever mechanism one holds is responsible for expressive experience, it is interesting to notice that expressiveness is rarely considered a quality that applies to elementary properties such as colours or sounds. Philosophers of music, who legitimately aim at accounting for musical expressiveness, take the entire piece of music, like a *sonata*, or a portion of a piece, such as a movement or *melismatic gesture* as the units to which expressiveness applies. As already seen, contour theorists focus on contours, profiles, gestaltic configurations, Ridley refers to *melisma*, Levinson to musical gestures, whereas simpler features like sounds, chords, notes are more infrequently addressed. Just to mention an example, in discussing about the creative role of the performer and the authenticity of musical works, Davies describes music as follows:

> […] rather than consisting of mere aggregations of notes, music is comprised of themes, chords, subjects, answers, sequences, recapitulations, developments, motifs, accompaniments, and so forth. These are gestalts (or aspects, etc.) and not mere successions of notes. (Davies 2005:93)

Later on, he will account for expressive experience as a kind of aspect-perception, i.e., the perception of a gestaltic configuration, assuming that the proper object of the explanation are features like gestaltic patterns of themes, melodies, motifs and so on, rather than their atomic components.

Prima facie, what seems especially responsible for their being experienced as the units to which expressiveness applies is *temporality*. Davies picks out this aspect when he affirms:

> Because music is a temporal art, its expressive character is revealed only gradually and can be heard only through sustained attention to its unfolding. It takes as long to hear the music's expressive properties as it takes to hear the passages in which those properties are articulated […] In the case of music, this [expressive] 'appearance' depends on its dynamic topography, as this unfolds through time. (Davies 2005:181)

Apparently, the same does not hold for mere, detached sounds. On this view, whereas music develops throughout time, chords and notes do not entertain the same relation with temporality and, therefore, with expressiveness. Moreover, the focus on music as a temporal art should not, in principle, represent an obstacle to an account of expressiveness that extends to visual experiences. For this purpose, I will first put forward some remarks about music considered as a temporal art and then show that this is not as problematic as it might seem.

As Davies rightly points out, the development through time is an essential feature of music and music's appreciation and, apparently, it distinguishes music from other artistic forms like painting or sculpture, that are traditionally considered "a-temporal" arts. Music is specifically constituted through time in such a way that makes it a *sui generis* – and therefore especially fascinating – item. The way in which music reveals itself perceptually consists in that it "being in time appears experientially as passing" (Forlè 2016:178). In his *Filosofia della musica* (1991), Piana provides an extremely accurate and insightful description of the special relation that music entertains with time. Unlike visual patterns, he insists, auditory (musical) patterns are inherently temporal. In the case of painting, for instance, time is a phenomenological determination of our experience rather than of its object: visual features present themselves in time since our experience requires time to take place. But such features are objectively independent of the passing of time, say, of the duration of our experience – they are rather intrinsically spatial. Music is instead temporal for it makes us experience *duration*, *beginning*, *end* as being intrinsic to music and independent of our experience: "Duration manifests itself concretely in perception" (Piana 1991:154, my translation). It is not the experience of music that *requires* time, it is music itself that takes place as *passing*. As Forlè efficaciously sums up:

> […] this passing appears as the sequence of the phases of one single phenomenon. The melody, in fact, is not just the static juxtaposition of sounds but emerges from the perceived relationships between the notes. In this way, perceiving a melody means in a certain sense perceiving the sequence of notes as the transition from one sound to another. (Forlè 2016:178)

But there is more to this. Piana pushes the zoom further, to the point that the description of music's relation to its essential temporality finds itself at odds precisely with the expressive power of music. He argues that the temporality of music manifests itself thanks

to the capacity of music to attract our perceptual attention to transitions from notes to notes. Such transitions consist in the alternation of *openings* and *closures*, that is, in the form of a *tension* that displays a *teleological directedness*. It is not as if sounds were randomly juxtaposed; rather they are structured as gestalts that are internally organised and teleologically oriented. This teleological orientation of the structure of music is indeed responsible for musical expressiveness, whereas temporal development contributes to the experience of expressiveness only as a subsequent result. It certainly contributes to the overall phenomenology of the experience of music, but once one focuses on its expressive experience, it is its dynamic dimension that is at stake.

2.5.2 Movement

It is therefore true that music is essentially connected to time, but it is also true that temporality is not the place where we have to look if we want to find the source of expressiveness. This does not imply to deny that musical expressiveness is the special and philosophically interesting experience it is also due to its essential relation to time. On the contrary, my aim is to find out the layer of expressive experience on which music and visual objects might be compared as formal objects of the same kind of experience. I am indeed convinced that only on such basis any kind-specific analysis can be taken forward.

Let us therefore reconsider the latter quotation from Davies. Just aside temporality, Davies refers to the "dynamic topography" of music. *Dynamism* is in point of fact a characteristic that is commonly ascribed to music and that clearly refers to *movement*. Widespread spatial descriptions of music support this characterization. I borrow from Forlè (2016) the following evocative excerpt:

> We say that a sequence of sounds rises or falls, or that one note jumps to another. We say that the leading tone displays the tendency to move towards the tonic, while the tonic shows no tension and acts as a resting point. In the same sense, we say that a cadence is suspended when it does not move to the tonic. We also talk of fast or slow tempos and we can define a musical piece as a dance or a gallop on the basis of its rhythm and metrical structure. (Forlè 2016:175)

Dynamic features of music are, on this view, those features that connect the temporal development of music with its allegedly spatial properties. It is thus easy to see how

Contour theory can appeal to resemblances between bodily movements like behaviours and musical contours as presenting dynamic qualities.

The most intuitive way to conceive of this analogy is obviously provided by *dance*. Piana, for instance, speaks about dance as the perceived "possibility of an internal relation with gesture and movement" that characterises the listening to music as irreducible to "an act of pure contemplation" and as showing the "direct and immediate link with subjectivity […] as vitality gushing out in bodily movement" (Piana 1991:167). From a quite different, namely enactivist, perspective, Krueger considers dance as the most adequate way to engage with music, precisely in virtue of the way in which bodily movements fit musical ones, providing a privileged experience of it:

> Via dancing, the temporal regularities of melodic and rhythmical patterns within the music are physicalized within an array of bodily movements. (Krueger 2011:75)

Expressive potential of music seems to find its source in music's relation to *movement* rather than in its being a temporal art. If so things stand, then *dynamism* could illuminate the path to follow in order to provide an account of expressive experience as a wider phenomenon which is not limited to the experience of music. What about visual expressive features? As said, painting is not an intrinsically temporal art. Which means that, despite time could be required in order to undergo the aesthetic experience of a depicted landscape, the temporality in question would not be relevant in the same way it is inherent to the appreciation of music. Let us take a natural landscape that we deem desolate, hopeless. Do its expressive features need time to be revealed to the beholder? A good answer can be patterned after Davies' statement about music: it takes as long to experience the desolation of a desert as it takes to see its perceptual features like its chromatic shades, shadows, shapes, the arrangement of objects within it, and so on. Once again, movement and dynamism seem to provide better handhold for such a comprehensive account.

Even if he insists on music's intimate relation to time, Davies is aware that dynamism and movement are ultimately responsible for musical expressiveness. In particular, he takes this argument to support his resemblance account:

> "Music, like behavior, is dynamic. It is a straightforward fact about hearing that two notes an octave apart are heard as 'the same' and that notes are heard as relatively high or low" (Davies 2005:140).

Thus, also according to Contour theory, music is first of all a dynamic item and it is primarily thanks to this intrinsic dynamism – rather than to its intrinsic relation to temporality – that it resembles behaviours. Davies again:

> We experience movement and pattern in music; we hear in music a terrain shaped by ongoing interactions between its parts, which vary in their pitch, complexity, teleological impetus, energy, texture, inertia, tension, and so on. If music resembles an emotion, it does so by sharing the dynamic character displayed either in the emotion's phenomenological profile, […] or in the public behaviors through which the emotion is standardly exhibited. (Davies 2005:176)

Yet, the notion of dynamism as being part of the phenomenal character is not established. Despite many authors share the idea that movement and dynamism are experienced in music, it is not clear what such an experience amounts to.

In her analysis of musical expressive features, Francesca Forlè (2016) adopts an enactivist perspective on the basis of Joel Krueger's (mainly 2009; 2011) and Alva Nöe's (2004) theories of perceptual and aesthetic experience. According to Krueger, the experience of music and of its expressive power is a matter of embodiment, that is, of interactive bodily engagement with musical features. I will not deal with this account of musical perception here, but it is worth quoting a passage so as to give the reader an idea of Krueger's enactivist view:

> Bodily gestures in response to musical events can act as a kind of attentional focusing: the animate body, by interactively engaging with the piece, becomes a vehicle for voluntarily drawing out certain features of the piece, such as rhythmic beats or the progression of a melodic contour, by foregrounding them in our attentional field. This 'drawing out' is an enactive and exploratory gesture in response to felt affordances within the music. The listener perceives the inner space of the piece as a space that can be entered into, experientially, and by doing just this shapes how the experiential content of the piece-as-given becomes phenomenally manifest. (Krueger 2011:73-74)

The parallel both with Contour theory and with Robinson's arousalist approach is here well suited. As to the former, it seems to share with this enactivist account the idea that bodily movements are somehow responsible for musical expressiveness. Both theories take bodily movement to provide the paradigm of dynamism. According to Contour theory the dynamism is perceived in music as long as it resembles bodily movement, whereas according to Krueger dynamism triggers the interactive engagement that makes music animated. As to the latter instead, both enactivism and what I have called weak arousalism exploit the idea of an active psychological engagement that guides the experience of expressive music. While for Robinson our felt emotions guide us through perceptual saliences of music, Krueger ascribes this guiding role to the body. All these accounts focus on those features that make music as close as possible to psychological and bodily emotional dynamics.

Forlè agrees with Krueger to the extent that his enactivist perspective accounts for what she calls *dynamic qualities*, that are "enacted" by perceivers who become bodily engaged with musical patterns. However, she claims that, despite enactivists are in a good position to explain a specifically immersive and bodily involving experience of the dynamic quality of music, there are certain features that they cannot adequately account for.

> If we can say that dynamic musical qualities are enacted by our virtual or actual motor engagement, what is exactly that we track with our movement in music? Which are those music features that afford our movement? It seems that we already need to perceptually recognize a musical structure that allows our bodily entrainment in order for the enactive constitution of dynamic qualities to take place. (Forlè 2016:177)

In particular, she argues that in order to undergo the just described experience of music we need to apprehend certain dynamic perceptual structures that are conditions of possibility for the above mentioned, bodily-centred experiences. Such a precondition, she claims, cannot be accounted for by Krueger's theory. As it is very clear on the view of Piana, *openings*, *closures*, *downbeat* and *upbeat*, *impulse* and *quiet* that characterise musical gestures are what make music describable in terms of movement. This movement, however, is neither an enacted movement, nor a simulated one, say, it does not require

any specific bodily engagement on behalf of the subjects. It can be rather perceptually recognised by subjects as being the intimate structure of music.

I find Forlè's criticism of Krueger's theory particularly convincing. Its main virtue is that it provides a distinction between the possibility that musical expressiveness is enacted and the necessary role played in this experience by the perceptual recognition of certain structural regularities. The phenomenal character of expressive experience may accordingly be enriched by the contribution of bodily involvement, analogously to what can happen when emotions drive our psychological engagement with music. Nevertheless, Forlè remarks, expressive experience consists primarily in a perceptual experience of some kind of dynamic qualities. If so things stand, it may be the case that there is a minimal level of the experience of musical expressiveness that does not entail a bodily-characterised phenomenology.

An interesting parallel with visual experience can be traced. For this purpose, it is useful to refer to the observation of paintings, namely abstract works. More specifically, I take the example of Action Painting, also known as "gestural painting" as it is a quite well known style that is usually taken to convey very expressive works. Setting aside historical and critical considerations, I assume that most of these works can be taken to express inner states. Regardless of such states being experienced as belonging to the actual or to the fictional painter (see Walton 2008, and 1990 for this distinction that is strongly related to Levinson's Persona), it seems reasonable to think that we engage with these works by bodily simulating the actions that might have realised them. In other words, it may well be the case that the best fruition one can have of this kind of painting requires some form of bodily engagement, possibly with their alleged creative process.

In his essay about *style*, Kendall Walton supports this intuition that he generalizes to most aesthetic experiences. Arguing against what he calls the "cobbler model" (namely the idea that aesthetic fruition implies a relation between a producer, a product, and a consumer who values the product on the basis how it fits her needs), he claims that aesthetic fruition mostly consists in the appreciation of the creative process that one believes has realized the artwork. And that if this is blatant for music and dance, it is also true for painting. In short: "we 'see' in a work the action of producing it." (Walton 2008:225) and "The action of interest is in many cases that of behaving as though one is creating and/or displaying a valuable aesthetic object." (Walton 2008:225). So, it is possible that we experience even the expressive character of paintings by means of some bodily engagement, which may well take place by means of simulation processes. This

kind of engagement is likely to enrich the aesthetic fruition of Action Paintings, and maybe of many other artworks (see Benenenti and Fazzuoli *forthcoming* for an account of this kind of fruition).

Still, the same criticism that Forlè addresses to Krueger applies to this case. In order to engage with the expressive properties of paintings that trigger our bodily reactions, we must be able to perceptually recognise some features of the works as "affording" such reactions. In other words, our experience of expressive properties must be taken to be, also in this case, the perceptual experience of the object's features which may (or not) trigger our bodily reactions.

Let us take stock. On the one hand, we have seen that the development through time is inherent to the structure of music, but that when it comes to the experience of expressiveness, temporality is not necessarily a qualitative aspect of expressive experience. This is even more evident when we experience visual static objects such as (expressive) paintings. Our experience of paintings might require time, the experience of it as expressive might take place as quickly as the experience of its colours. Temporality is not a constitutive aspect of the experiences' phenomenology, not more than it is a constitutive aspect of the recognitional experience of its perceivable traits.

On the other hand, motoric interaction with music is for sure an enhancing factor of such a phenomenology. It makes certain dynamic or kinetic qualities of music more salient thanks to our capacity to mirror musical gestures. Still, as Forlè remarks, bodily engagement implies the perceptual recognition of such gestures, or at least of some components of those gestures. If this is the case, then the phenomenal character of expressive experience is perceptual in the first place, that is, undergoing an expressive experience is like undergoing a perceptual experience, although a number of integrations and enrichments are possible and do often take place.

Now, before asking – and trying to answer – the question of what kind of properties are those that make the experience of expressiveness possible, there is still one point that needs to be discussed. Namely, there seems to be a difference between experiencing something like a painting, a landscape or a melody as expressive, and something like a colour or a sound as expressive. Intuitively, one may say that the phenomenology of the former kind of experience is much more complex and demanding, than the latter kind.

2.5.3 Expressive experience of simple and complex features

As I recalled when introducing the problem of temporal development, musical expressiveness is often faced as an issue concerning pieces of music having either a significant duration, or at least offering the possibility to be compared to expressive gestures. Along this line of thought, Peter Kivy believes that a distinction should be made between the experience of complex and the experience of simpler expressive features. His point is not that simple features cannot be experienced as expressive, but rather that their expressiveness cannot be accounted for in terms of resemblances to behaviours. He therefore suggests that the experience of chords or keys sounding sad or happy needs to be accounted for in a different way. He claims that the sounding "anguished" or "restless" of the diminished triad, is a matter of *convention*:

> [...] in its context, during a long period in the history of our musical tradition, it is an "active" chord; it has to go somewhere, lead to something [...]. We can now see why the diminished triad can, in a proper musical context, present an anguished quality that can be accounted for on the contour model. (Kivy 1980:80)

Simple features are too indefinite and ambiguous to be expressive *per se*, and they require the appropriate context within a cultural tradition to acquire their expressive value. Analogously Kivy treats colours as simple features whose expressive value is to be accounted for in a different way from music (and, presumably, visual complex patterns). He thus appeals to allegedly associative mechanisms that are corroborated by repeated uses within the same culture and which provide the ground for further analogous associations between certain perceptual features and emotional states (Kivy 2002).

So, while colours are *conventionally* happy, sad, mournful, music is happy, sad, mournful in a more complex way, that is, in such a way that we can justify expressiveness by pointing at the resemblances it bears to expressive behaviours.

As already seen in the first chapter, Davies and Kivy have troubles in claiming that resemblances are part of the specific phenomenal character of expressive experience. This is precisely the reason why, after introducing and endorsing Contour theory, Kivy casts doubts on it and ends up with an impoverished version (Kivy 2002). In point of fact he appeals to sub-personal mechanisms which process similarities and allow for a phenomenal character that does not require the recognition of resemblances. Moreover,

he maintains that, in order to experience a piece of music as expressive, we need not be aware of what components of the piece make it expressive – be they its rhythm or its key. This implies that, on his view, there is nothing specific on the phenomenal level that makes the expressive experience of a piece of music different from the expressive experience of a chord. Therefore, although the expressiveness ascribed to chords – and analogously to colours – and expressiveness ascribed to pieces of music require different explanations, Kivy's theory implies that they have a similar phenomenal character. Colours and simple sounds might be experienced as expressive thanks to conventions (whose intervention remains under the level of awareness) and pieces of music might be experienced as expressive thanks to resemblances (*idem*).

Let me recap this latter issue and reconsider it briefly in the light of the previous discussions. On the one hand, Kivy claims that the expressiveness ascribed to complex items depends on simpler features (notes, chords, rhythm, keys in the case of music) that may well be non-expressive *per se*. On this perspective, musical expressiveness would *emerge* or *supervene* on standard, non expressive features. On the other hand, he admits that also simple features (both auditory and visual) can look expressive, but this is due, for Kivy, to conventional mechanisms of association. In the next chapters I will delve into this issue, dealing with the kind of properties that expressive experience entails. Yet, even if one believes that simpler and more complex things are expressive due to different reasons and must be explained in different ways – as Kivy does – this does not seem to entail any significant difference for the phenomenology that I am tying to describe.

First, one might be tempted to say that temporality is what distinguishes the expressive experience of complex items from the expressive experience of simple items. But, as we have seen, temporality does not affect the expressive character of expressive experiences. At best, it makes them last longer, as well as listening to a piece of music may take longer than looking at a painting.

Second, one may think that complex expressive items are more likely to resemble gestures and behaviours. But the recognition of resemblances to bodily movements is not always required to undergo expressive experience. It is perfectly possible that certain musical gestures or certain lines on a canvas resemble human behavioural expressions and that we tend to associate expressive values to such gestures thanks to our capacity to recognise resemblances. Still, expressive experience is phenomenally distinct from the experience of the resemblance holding between contours.

Third, one can think that, whereas the experience of a piece of music triggers significant bodily involvement, the perception of a chord or of a sound does not. I wish I have shown that, despite bodily involvement can be particularly useful to get a phenomenally rich expressive experience, it is not the case that bodily involvement is required by all expressive experiences. So, even if articulated expressive objects (like many artworks are) are more likely to trigger this sort of bodily reactions, we can undergo expressive experience even in those cases in which we are not bodily engaged.

Therefore, all the phenomenal differences between hearing a simple sound as sombre and hearing a musical gesture or a complex piece of music as sombre do not seem to affect the experience in such a way that it is no more an expressive experience. It might be a longer lasting, more intense, more involving or intriguing experience, but there seems to be a minimal level of expressiveness which survives after all.

Thus, what is the phenomenal character's ultimate specificity in the experience of expressiveness? So far, I think I have shown that expressive experience is phenomenally a perceptual experience. Still, as Davies says, the problem of expressiveness would be completely uninteresting if we lost contact with the affective side of the experience. As I hope I have shown, most criteria that can be found in the literature which are supposed to account for the specificity of the phenomenal character of expressive experience do not fulfil the task. I therefore believe that the next step of this analysis consists in developing an account for the content of expressive experience which does justice both to its perceptual phenomenal character and to the relation it bears to emotions.

Chapter 3

The content of expressive experience

In the previous chapter, I claimed that expressive experience has the phenomenal character of a perceptual experience. As I tried to show, it seems that, phenomenally, expressive experience does neither involve an imaginative engagement – although it might enhance and enrich the character of the experience – nor require a phenomenally relevant affective arousal – even if we are often aroused by expressive objects, and despite felt emotions may in turn make expressive experience more detailed. Moreover, I discussed the way in which temporality and bodily movements relates to the phenomenal character of expressive experience, arguing that they do not necessarily characterise expressive experience either. However, I tried to remain as neutral as possible regarding the *content* of the experience at stake, that is, about the kind of properties mobilised by such an experience. Nor I discussed the issue of the relation between the phenomenal character of expressive experience and its content.

In the present chapter I will frame the problem of expressive experience's content within representationalism broadly conceived. I will namely address the relation between the phenomenal character and the representational content of expressive experience in terms of a relation between standard perceptual properties and expressive properties (3.1). I will then deal with the widespread conviction that expressive properties are inherently "response-dependent", that is, they depend for their instantiation on the kind of response of the subject (3.2). In (3.2.1) I focus on the idea that imagination is the kind of response involved, along with the assumption that perceptual properties play a causal role. I discuss two possible mechanisms that may account for expressive experience, namely a cognitive intervention and a simulationist strategy, both efficaciously employed by Noordhof (3.2.2). Then I present the problem of causal triggers in terms of the "heresy of the separable experience" proposed by Budd (3.3 and 3.4). In 3.5 I suggest that a perceptual strategy helps to avoid the heresy by endorsing and in the following paragraphs I introduce a distinction between three sorts of expressive experience. Namely, in 3.5.1, I deal with the case of the *weeping willow* in terms of a seeing-as experience of manifest resemblances; 3.5.2 I discuss the case of the *musical gesture* as a case of seeing-as experience *tout-court,* and in 3.5.3 I introduce the more mysterious case of the

mournful chord. Finally, I suggest that dynamic perceptual properties are what is actually mobilised by the content of expressive experience (3.6). I define dynamic properties appealing to gestalt properties and to the fenomenological notion of *rythmos*. I conclude that, if this strategy is viable, one can make one step forward and ground expressive experience in perceptual properties, avoiding the heresy of the separable experience (3.7).

3.1. The problem of content

In order to assess the problem of what exactly expressive experience is about, I should first of all frame the discussion as it is carried out in the contemporary literature. Analogously to the debate about the phenomenal character of expressive experience, I begin by noticing that this issue is rarely explicitly addressed by authors as being a problem of "content". However, most authors seem to adopt what has been called a "Content view"[18] about expressive experience. In other words, they account for expressive experience in terms of those properties that are related to a certain phenomenology and that constitute the content of that experience. I accordingly take their theoretical framework to imply some form of representationalism.

The representationalist approach to the experience of expressive properties can be understood in two distinct although related ways. First, there is the idea that speaking of content implies speaking of adequacy conditions. In this case, some properties of the world should be taken to satisfy the experience of something as being expressive. Such properties would be responsible for our experience being veridical and for certain experiences being more or less correct than others. Second, there is the idea that phenomenal properties of experiences can be *reduced to* properties of their content, in which case one should either claim that expressive properties are properties of the world, or that they are phenomenal properties that can be reduced to perceptual properties of the world. Importantly, one may hold the first view without committing to the second. In point of fact, one may claim that there are adequacy conditions in the world that verify our expressive experiences, but that the content of expressive experience is not exhausted

[18] The Content View is usually defended against so-called Naïve Realism or Direct Realism, although it has been argued that some inclusive versions of the Content View may accommodate also these latter theories, at least to the extent that they allow for a description of experiences in terms of phenomenal properties (Siegel 2010). I will deal directly neither with non-representationalist nor with anti-representationalist theories of perception.

by those properties that ground such conditions. In what follows, I will adopt this latter approach.

The first consequence of this consideration is that even if one is disposed to accept that experiencing something as expressive is phenomenally like *perceiving* it as expressive – as I have insisted throughout the previous chapter –, one can still ask whether the kind of properties that one is perceiving are standard perceptual properties – such as colours or shapes or sounds – that one represents in a particular way, or if they are a different kind of properties that, nevertheless, convey a perception-like experience.

The present chapter will explore the tension between two poles of expressive experience: on the one hand, accounts of its content must do justice to those constraints that reality puts on it. Expressive experience is not a sort of daydreaming or phantasy where one is free to ascribe whatever expression to whatever object; rather, it appears to be related to objective features of objects. This suggests that some adequacy conditions are required. On the other hand, such accounts must do justice to the relational – if not relative – and therefore "subjective" nature of the experience, that is, to the fact that important differences might subsist between two expressive experiences of the same objects on behalf of different subjects. The same painting can look sad to someone and simply dull to someone else. Although – as I will insist – the margin of agreement about expressive properties of things is wider than most authors believe, this relativity of expressive experience is not easy to discard. This suggests that the representational content of expressive properties is not entirely reducible to properties of the world. This tension already emerged when assessing the phenomenal character of expressive experience, but I think I have offered reasons to believe that it does not affect the phenomenal character in such a way that one should doubt about its being perceptual. The discussion about the experience's content, instead, rests on the relation between expressive properties ascribed to objects and their standard perceptual properties.

3.2 Response-dependence

A widely endorsed way to deal with this tension is to consider expressive properties as depending for their instantiation on the specific reaction they trigger in the observer, be such a reaction an affective or an imaginative one. The relevant kind of response is the intervention of a mental state that interacts with perception in one way or another. Whereas standard perceptual properties are normally agreed to be mostly independent

of whom, when, on the basis of which background knowledge and in what emotional condition is experiencing them, expressive properties are mostly understood to be intrinsically dependent on this sort of factors. This is why philosophers try to account for their nature in terms of the kind of reaction these properties trigger in us. They are usually considered response-dependent and the relation that they are taken to entertain with subjects varies from account to account.

I argued against imaginative accounts by insisting that they appeal to imagination in such a way that the phenomenology of our experiences does not always bear witness to. Yet, claiming that imagination does not necessarily affect the *phenomenology* of expressive experience, does not imply to deny that imagination contributes in one way or another to the content of expressive experience. Thus, even if one agrees that the phenomenal character of expressive experience is perceptual, one can insist that for a phenomenally perceptual experience to be the experience *of* perceptual features, an independent argument must be provided. This is the case of those imaginative accounts that explain the nature of expressive properties in terms of their capacity to trigger some imaginative reaction in the subjects. Both Jerrold Levinson and Paul Noordhof deal with this problem along this line.

Let us focus on Noordhof first. His doubts about expressive experience being the experience *of features of the world* needs not be recalled at this point. However, the imaginative mechanism that he believes is in play when one undergoes an expressive experience can be further analysed and fruitfully discussed by focusing on what he considers the experience's content.[19]

3.2.1 Imaginative responses

Noordhof addresses the problem of content after drawing the distinction between the *explanandum* and the *explanans* of expressive perception. Philosophers, he says, should acknowledge this distinction and, preliminarily, describe the experience, then they should consistently account for it. This being said – and after describing expressive experience in the way I thoroughly discussed in the previous chapter – he puts forward his account of expressive perception in terms of "sensuously imagining an emotion guided creative

[19] I shall underline a terminological issue regarding Noordhof's paper: he uses the non-standard locution "phenomenal content" when talking about experiences. In discussing his view, I will adopt the standard term "content" or "representational content".

process". On his view, when we hear an expressive piece of music, we perceive its expression in virtue of our imagining the process guided by the emotion which might have led to the creation of such a piece of music. Our seemingly perceptual experience is therefore actually an imaginative process whose content is a creative behaviour, the act of *making*, under the guidance of some emotion.

On this perspective, there are three ways to account for the content of expressive perception, namely (i) a non-representational approach, (ii) an "experiencing-as" approach, and (iii) the sensuous-imagination approach. Noordhof believes that the first two paths can be discarded, whereas the third is to endorse.

First, he rejects the idea that expressive experience could be a matter of non-representational content, and this on the basis of his endorsement and defence of representational theories of experience (Noordhof 2003). I will hereafter follow him in discarding this first path and I will not try to develop it either, although I do not have any strong argument against it. Second, assuming that expressive perception cannot be *merely* a matter of perception of features of the world, but must involve some imaginative engagement, one can conceive of sensuously imagining an emotion-guided creative process as a specific way of experiencing merely perceptual features. Noordhof writes:

> […] we might take imagining an emotion-guided creative process to characterise a different way of perceiving what are, in fact, non-expressive properties. According to this view, expressive properties would not literally be part of the representational content of perceptual experience. (Noordhof 2008:343)

He is saying that, if this were the case, the content of expressive experience would involve standard perceptual properties that would be experienced by the subject in a special way, possibly due to the intervention of imagination. Therefore, expressive properties would be perceptual properties which are experienced in some specific way – as through a distorting lens. Although this may seem an intriguing hypothesis, for it would preserve the perceptual constraint to the look of objects placing the burden of expressiveness on the experience modality, Noordhof jettisons it. He claims that it does not do justice to the fact that expressive properties figure in our experience *as if they were properties of the object*, rather than characters of our experience. Unlike Noordhof, I will leave this second path open and develop it in the next section. Here, I focus on the third path, which is extremely promising but whose weaknesses I try to point out.

The solution based on sensuous imagination stems from the worry that, despite expressive properties cannot be features of the world, they appear as if they were so:

> It seems literally true that expressive properties are part of the content of our perceptual experience. Moreover, our experience of expressive properties presents them to be features of the world. (Noordhof 2008:344)

The appeal to sensuous imagination is meant to vindicate the apparent mind-independence of expressive properties. Indeed, by definition it represents features as belonging to objects and, in the specific case of expressive experiences, features that are represented as belonging to objects *are* expressive properties. Yet, what kind of properties should we take them to be? What is actually represented in the content of expressive experience?

> We might take the type of representational property responsible for the representation of expressiveness to *be* imagining an emotion-guided creative process. Here expressive properties would be part of the representational content of our perceptual experience. (Noordhof 2008:343)

This is probably the most delicate part of the theory and requires some efforts to be correctly interpreted. Once it is triggered by perceptual properties of artworks, sensuous imagination provides the overall experience with a content such that it represents the imagined creative process. Moreover, such a creative process is not whatever process that might have given origin to the perceptual features of the work; rather, it is the creative process that would have originated under the "guidance" of an emotion, so providing the work with those very features.

The guidance in question is the automatic, causal guidance that the expression of an emotion may generate. Emotions generate behavioural expressions that may turn into creative activities, actions and gestures that give matters a shape. Thus, experiencing a piece of music as expressive of sadness means to imagine the perceptual properties of the musical matter as if they were the result of a creative process that might have taken place under the impulse of an emotion. Noordhof calls this guidance the "phenomenal skeleton" of an emotion, say, what an emotion is typically able to cause. Imaginings of these phenomenal skeletons are therefore an integral part of the content of expressive

experiences as long as they consist in the recreation of the productive capacity of emotions.

Some words about the phenomenal skeleton are needed. It might be thought that the phenomenal skeleton which is imaginatively experienced as guiding the creative process consists in the behavioural profile of an emotion. This would place Noordhof's imaginative account closer to Contour theory and to the Persona theory. Because if what is needed is a way to bind the perceptual aspect of things to some perceivable aspect of emotions, it seems that behavioural expressive profile could do the job. Moreover, it must be recalled that Noordhof himself criticises Budd's account based on resemblance, insofar as it appeals to a first person phenomenological perspective on emotions, the what-it-feels-like to undergo that emotion, (Budd 1995:136), rather than of the expressive component of emotional episodes (Noordhof 2008:332).

However, Noordhof's proposal is different and lays somehow in between these two views. The phenomenal skeleton constitutes indeed the causal component of an emotion, what in the emotion is responsible for its outward expression. We can simulate this component in such a way that it remains an off-line or fac-simile emotion, that is, in such a way that the simulation does not cause us to perform any behaviour (Noordhof 2008:332). However, this simulation must not be understood as the introspective experience of the phenomenal skeleton – which is a (simulationist) way to interpret Budd's view. Instead, based on the fact that Noordhof takes sensuous imagination as not necessarily involving a first person perspective (Noordhof 2002, following Williams 1973), he can insist that sensuous imaginative engagement does not imply any sort of introspection.

So, to take stock, experiencing an artwork as expressive of melancholy consists in simulating in imagination the causal skeleton of an emotion that might have guided a creative process so as to shape the perceivable structure of the artwork in that precise way. Sensuous imagination is therefore responsible for representing such a creative process when triggered by certain perceptual properties. This is what expressive properties would consist in and how they can be taken to be literally represented in the content of expressive experience.

Noordhof's account is convincing. It accommodates the perceptual phenomenology of expressive experience and provides an explanation for its relation to affective states, without requiring any arousal, but is also capable of accounting for those cases in which arousal occurs. Indeed, the appeal to the truncated causal power of

simulated emotions allows for those cases where simulation results in an effective arousal (Noordhof 2008:346).

If so things stand, no adequacy conditions can be found for expressive experience. Stressing the point: the same landscape could look desolate to somebody and cheerful to somebody else, and these two ascriptions could never be verified by actual properties of the landscape, because the experience would entirely consist in the responses the two subjects would give to the same causal stimulus. At best, causal conditions may explain the rise of certain expressive experiences whose content would not find in the world any criterion to establish its correctness. This view does justice to the subjective character of expressive experience. However, it is not in the position to capture its more objective side, that is, our tendency to ascribe same or similar expressive features to things, or, at least, our tendency to appeal to the way objects perceptually look, in order to justify our ascriptions.

Thus, the first problem that arises if one buys this view, is that of explaining how standard perceptual features can cause an observer to engage in the imagining of a creative process. That is, if one takes standard perceptual properties such as the chromatic shades of a painting, its slopes, the spatial relations on the surface, as responsible for the initiation of the off-line simulation of an expressive behaviour resulting in the activity of creation, then the role of standard perceptual properties must be further explained. Otherwise, the account risks to allow for a radically relativistic outcome, according to which any perceptual configuration may give rise to any expressive experience. I try to delineate two possible ways out, patterning them after Noordhof's argument. The first path consists in putting weight on the cognitive impact of background knowledge on the experience, in the spirit of Wollheim's projectivism. The second path consists in putting weight on the affective component of the experience, rooted in automatic mechanisms. Both paths present some difficulties.

3.2.2 Cognitive and affective requirements

In order to account for the relation between standard perceptual properties and the specificity of expressive experience that they give rise to, one may be tempted to adopt a perspective that is analogous to Wollheim's projectivist view based on the notion of "correspondence". As already seen in Chapter 1, Wollheim believes that associations taking place somewhere in memory are ultimately responsible for things looking

expressive. According to the interpretation provided by Perez-Carreño (2017), that account appeals to thought-contents associated to perceptual inputs, namely those cognitive contents of background knowledge and memories about emotions and projections undergone and performed in the past. Such contents associated to perceptual stimuli would result into expressive experiences. What a thought-content consists in, is not entirely clear however. I take it that the best way to interpret this notion is as "recognitional concept". Along the line of the debate about the recognition of musical properties, and in particular following Budd (208:138), the notion has been introdced by Loar (1990): a recognitional concept is, according to Loar, the disposition to make minimal judgements about objects being *of a certain kind*, i.e., to classify objects (Loar 1990:87). Applied to the case at stake, claiming that a recognitional concept associated to the perceptual input is required to undergo an expressive experience, implies that one must be able to classify the experience one is undergoing as being *of the same kind* of past, analogous experiences. We have already seen, following Budd's criticism, why this mechanism is problematic. In particular, it implies that one has at least a minimal concept of what it is to project one's feeling on an inanimate object, to experience it as a case of "correspondence", and has the ability to use the concept to classify new occurrences of correspondence.

Given the developmental (namely Freudian) approach adopted by Wollheim, his notion of projection could even be understood as allowing for an automatic mechanisms of association which would not require that one is aware of performing an association, for it would take place automatically and possibly at an unconscious level. Still, it would require a classificatory ability. In which case, the two projectivist accounts at stake would look even closer to one another: if on one account (Wollheim's) standard perceptual properties would be able to cause an observer an expressive experience in virtue of their capacity to trigger recognitional concepts about past, analogous experiences, on the other account (Noordhof's), standard perceptual features would be able to cause to an observer an expressive experience in virtue of a recognitional mechanism based on background knowledge about creative processes, and, possibly, emotional causal skeletons. For example, when confronted with Turner's *Snow Storm: Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth* (1842), one's experience of the painting as agitated would amount to one's knowledge about the way in which agitation can result on a canvas through an allegedly artistic creative process. If this were actually the case, simulation would take place only provided that one is sufficiently equipped with knowledge about how, e. g., sounds, colours, plastic

materials can be juxtaposed to obtain possibly expressive results. At least a minimal degree of knowledge (if not that of experts or anyway experienced subjects) would be needed about how material things can be creatively manipulated under the guidance of an affective state (real or pretended).

As I shall recall, Malcolm Budd had argued against Wollheim that recognising in the content of expressive perception (even in the reflective aftermath of the experience) the intimation of the projective origin of that experience was too demanding as a requirement and did not find sufficient confirmation in our introspective reports of expressive experiences (Budd 2008:246 ff.). Analogously, one may argue against Noordhof that recognising an emotion-guided creative process in our expressive experience is highly demanding in that it requires additional knowledge about artistic creation. Moreover, our introspective experiences hardly attests this sort of recognition. It seems that, if we endorse this view, we restrict the range of people capable of undergoing expressive experience to those who are well acquainted with processes governing artistic creation. On the contrary, even artistically lay people seem to be able to perceive music, as well as paintings, as expressive of emotions. Moreover, even accepting that only those subjects who have a sufficient degree of expertise about creative processes can undergo expressive experiences, this would not straightforwardly account for expressive experiences of natural objects. And in point of fact, Noordhof's move consists in arguing that natural objects are experienced as expressive as long as one is able to imagine them as being the result of some intentional creation. Far from considering it an argument against his view, he takes this to be the confirmation of our natural tendency to engage in this sort of imaginative processes. Still, this engagement would be even more cognitively demanding, since beside the capacity to recognise something as the product of a creative process, it would require the capacity to apply this category also to non-artefacts. So-conceived, this conceptual shift is at least as demanding as the capacity to recognise the "intimation of the origin in analogous experience" postulated by Wollheim. Therefore, difficulties faced by this strategy would parallel those faced by Wollheim's projectivism.

The endorsement of simulation as the sort of process underlying sensuous imagination serves the purpose of avoiding such a limitation. The second way to solve the problem puts indeed the burden of the explanation on the phenomenal skeleton of emotions, rather than on the creative process that it is imagined as leading. It exploits the idea that emotions are automatic, unreflective processes, and that their behavioural

expressions are immediately recognised – with different degrees of accuracy – since an early age by means of simulation.

As it is well known, Simulation Theory of mind-reading consists in the view that our ability to understand others' minds can be explained in terms of our capacity to simulate their manifest behaviours. Simulating gestures, movements and expressions can accordingly give us access to others' intentions and mental states in a quick and automatic way (e.g. Heal 1986; Meltzoff and Gopnik, 1993; Goldman 2006). Importantly, simulation processes need not be conscious. They can and mostly take place sub-personally, that is, in the form of

> systems that operate within the person, are not directly under personal control, and the workings of which may be inaccessible to consciousness, though they may give rise to conscious experiences (Currie 2011:85).

In the case of sensuous imagination that is involved in Noordhof's proposal, in particular, off-line simulation is taken to generate mental states whose contents are very similar to perceptual ones. And the automatic and non-reflective character of this recognition which may occur by means of simulation is stressed by Noordhof as being one of the main virtues of his account.[20] This view is particularly consistent with evidences about young children seizing others' emotions by means of non-cognitive simulations of their behaviours and expressions. So, also very young children – who allegedly lack complex background conceptual knowledge about emotions and creative processes – can perform attributions of affective states to others (Meltzoff and Moore 1977; 1983; 1989; Bavalas et. al 1987).

Recall that, first, what is simulated in expressive experience is the phenomenal skeleton of an emotion, capable of causing creative processes and that, second, simulation accounts for our capacity to attribute mental and affective states to others. On such basis, off-line simulation of emotions can be taken to explain the fact that, even without a specific cognitive background about creative processes, one may simulate the phenomenal skeleton of an emotion as guiding gestures. The kind of mechanism in play in expressive experience would be the same or analogous to the one in play when we understand others' mental states based on simulation. We automatically come to

[20] I must specify that Noordhof is not *tranchant* in his endorsement of Simulation Theory as the best available theory of mind. He just notes that it is particularly compatible with his own account.

understand what is on other's mind thanks to the fact that we are triggered to simulate certain manifest qualities of their behaviour. The same would hold for expressive experience: certain manifest qualities of artworks would trigger in us the simulation of emotions (fac-simile emotions running off-line) whose outcome in terms of a creative process would be the representation of expressive properties as perceivable properties belonging to objects. So, according to this latter solution, standard perceptual features cause the observer to simulate a creative process neither because they are associated to past experiences, nor because they are integrated by background knowledge about creative processes. Insisting on mechanisms of simulation that may be in play helps avoiding the appeal to background knowledge or, more generally, to cognitive integrations. Perceptual properties would indeed function as causal triggers of an automatic and mostly sub-personal simulation.

3.3 Causal triggers

If this is the case, that is, if basic perceptual properties are merely causal triggers of an expressive response, then their capacity to evoke an expressive experience is a matter of empirical study. And in point of fact, Noordhof's account as well as Wollheim's account remains silent about what perceptual properties must look like in order to cause an expressive reaction. Whereas Wollheim's worry is to avoid the reduction of expressive properties to standard perceptual properties (Wollheim 1993:154), Noordhof explains this point appealing to brute factuality:

> My response is that emotion-guided creative processes find certain features natural for expression and others not. This is a brute fact. […] There may be no explanation in nature apart from this for why pieces of music and human behaviour share expressive properties. (Noordhof 2008:345).

The search for the reasons why certain perceptual features cause the experience of expressive properties is doomed to lead nowhere but to causal relations, that is, to "brute" facts. Consistently, if the simulation processes can only be explained as the result of causal stimulations, then the account at stake is not committed to the appeal to particular knowledge concerning emotions or creative processes: in order to experience a work of

art as expressive we just need to be naturally equipped with working mechanisms of simulation, apt to respond to particular stimuli in a particular way.

The content of those sensuous imaginings that we entertain is a process whose (causally generated) expressive profile is capable of making expressive properties out of merely perceptual ones. Such perceptual properties are assigned a trigger-role, that is, they *cause* the imaginative mechanism, but it is not the case that we *represent* perceptual properties *as* expressive. If this were the case, we would be able to point at those perceptual qualities responsible for expressive experience, that is, for the – seemingly perceptual – representation of expressive properties. In other words, we would be able to justify our experiences in terms of those properties. Instead, all we can say is that certain perceptual properties can *cause* imaginative responses of the kind just described.

When framing the problem of the relation between standard perceptual properties and expressive properties, Noordhof acknowledges that a relation between the two might exist that goes beyond mere causality. He does not intend to:

> deny that we cite certain features of the music as bound up with our perception of the music's expressive properties. Indeed, we might cite these features to explain and partially justify our responses […] (Noordhof 2008:348).

Such a "bond" would therefore serve the purpose of "justifying" our expressive responses. But, he continues, he doubts that:

> the features we identify are both specific enough to explain why our imaginings are triggered by a piece of music but not the pattern of rainfall on the roof, and yet general enough to be common to all those works which have a certain expressive property. (ibid)

This is probably the most relevant problem that must be faced when trying to assess the content of expressive experience. All accounts should deal with this issue and many of the available theories try to find their way out.

Contour theory's appeal to resemblances holding between musical profile and people's expressions can be understood as an attempt to solve this problem. That is, it is meant to provide a rationale between the merely perceptual structure of music and our experience of it as being expressive. According to this view, we would in principle be able

to detect similarities that bound music to forms of behaviour (even if this does not necessarily happen whenever we undergo an expressive experience) and our expressive experience would be grounded in these similarities. But as we have already seen, it is easy to contradict this grounding, for there are many cases of expressive experience in which resemblances cannot be found. And indeed, in discussing Contour theory, Noordhof insists that their supporters are wrong in indicating resemblance to human behaviour as being responsible for the role played by merely perceptual properties in the representational content of expressive experience. He is at best disposed to allow for some sub-personal detection of resemblance that could trigger the simulation process. Interestingly, this idea is already present in Kivy (1989) where he writes that resemblances: "must lie at some deeper, nonconscious and pervasive level, although we can, of course, bring it to consciousness by analysis and scrutiny" (Kivy, 1989:173).

This idea of a mechanism working sub-personally is radicalised in Kivy (2002), by the appeal to evolutionary mechanisms that do not necessarily make the resemblance available for conscious scrutiny. Yet, the best he can provide are suppositions about how these mechanisms could work, according to the general evolutionary assumption that it is more advantageous to seize as many stimuli as possible as being animated (and, in particular, threatening), rather than inert. Even in this case, the causal explanation is adopted, although supported by reasons of evolution. There seems to be a stage of the explanation where the appeal to a "black box" is required: justifications are not possible any more, bacause in principle one may never be able to consciously recognise the resemblance that makes expressive experience possible; all that can be said is that there are things capable of causing certain reactions.

Once the explanatory chain gets to this point, I think that two options are available. First, it is possible to reject the idea that any rationale can be provided for the relation between perceptual properties and expressive properties. Derek Matravers agrees on this view:

> I cannot see that we have any reason to think that the cause of our experience of expression should also be its object. The object of the experience of expression would, presumably, have to fall within a reasonably narrow range fixed a priori. By contrast, there is no reason to suppose that there are a priori limits on what properties of music can cause the experience of expression, nor that some of those

> properties will not turn out to be quite unexpected, even bizarre. (Matravers 2007:98-99)

On Matravers' view, the debate about expressiveness is doomed to be irreducibly split: causal stimulus on the one hand, intentional objects on the other. The problem when one tries to find a relation between the two is that we are not able to establish *a priori* what a stimulus must be like in order to evoke an expressive experience. Expressive experience of sadness is plausibly caused by a number of different stimuli, variously composed, not to talk about the contextual variables that can intervene. Stimuli fall therefore within the causal space, they are brute facts, whose relation to experience can at best be empirically dealt with. The task for philosophers is instead to offer phenomenological descriptions of experiences and of their contents that should be as consistent as possible among themselves and as compatible as possible with empirically testable causal reactions (Matravers 2007:96).

Does adopting this approach to expressiveness settle the issue? Or is there any work left to do for the philosopher that aims at accounting for the role played by perceptual properties that is not merely a causal one? The task consists in dealing with the content of the experience in order to provide a minimal rationale between expressive and perceptual properties.

The second option we have is peeping "inside the black box", that is, providing more detailed and consistent causal explanations about what kind of stimuli and contextual variables evoke expressive experience in people. I think this way is viable both in terms of meta-analysis of available data coming from psychology and neurosciences, and in terms of experimental hypothesis that can be tested. I will draw on some of the existing empirical literature for this purpose. However, what is relevant at this stage is insisting that the appeal to the "black box" or to the inevitable split of the explanation of expressive experience does not justify philosophers to stop their enquiry about expressive experience.

3.4 The heresy of the separable experience

As anticipated, when it comes to accounting for the relation between perceptual and expressive properties, one strategy consists in a closer focus on perceptual properties. My working hypothesis is that such a focus may provide better explanation of the content of

expressive experience. The original question from which the problem of the relation between perceptual and expressive qualities stems is nicely phrased by Paul Boghossian:

> Sounds are heard as having the expressive properties they have *because* they are heard as having certain musical properties: it is something about the shape of the melody which opens the fourth movement of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony that makes us hear it as sombre. So what we are asking is: how could possessing certain musical properties amount to expressing a state of mind? (Boghossian 2007:121)

The way in which Boghossian develops his answer is antithetical to the one embraced by Noordhof. He indeed argues against those views according to which a rationale between these two kinds of properties cannot be provided. Boghossian insists:

> The point is that the expressive properties of music are clearly grounded in its purely musical properties. It is *because* a passage has certain musical properties that it is heard as having certain expressive properties (Boghossian 2007:124)

Even if he does not develop his positive account further, Boghossian's claims are sympathetic with resemblance theories. In particular, he argues that judgements of musical expressiveness are justifiable by listeners in terms of resemblances and that the fact that one might not always be able to indicate the extent to which music must resemble a behaviour in order to be expressive is not problematic. The simple fact that we tend to point at resemblances in order to justify such judgements is enough, on his view, to base an account of expressiveness on resemblances. Boghossian draws the attention back to the problem of justifying expressiveness in terms of underlying perceptual properties and of their relations. Yet, he does not provide any knock-down argument in favour of resemblances, so I take his claims to be just descriptions of how people tend to justify their ascriptions and of how this tendency points at perceptual structures of things as being the place to look for more robust and detailed justifications.

The tension between the idea that the relation between perceptual and expressive properties can be clarified and the idea that it is doomed to remain mysterious is adequately stressed by Budd's argument against what he calls the "heresy of the separable experience". In Chapter 1, I showed how this argument was used by Ridley to criticise standard arousalism. According to Budd, a theory of expressiveness is flawed by the

heresy if it represents a work: "as being related in a certain way to an experience which can be fully characterised without reference to the nature of the work itself" (Budd 1985:125).

Budd argues against those theories that explain values such as musical expressiveness in terms of the experience music can generate, but without providing an explanatory link between the experience and the nature – that is, the perceivable structure – of music.[21] As a result, these accounts end up without an explanation of the experience as being the experience of that very work and of its features. In principle, characterising the experience in causal terms implies that such an experience can be undergone even without experiencing those features. In the case of expressive music, for instance, we would end up with two distinct experiences, one in which we are confronted with the "nature of the work", that is, its intrinsic, allegedly perceptual qualities, the other which is the reaction to such qualities, and that may entail imaginings, feelings, memories and so on:

> […] music can be valued as music in virtue of its expressive aspect only if the experience of music as expressive of a state of mind is not thought of as a mere combination of experiences—an experience of the music which does not relate it to the state of mind and an experience of the state of mind—each of which would be possible without the other." (Budd 1985:124)

Instead, Budd claims that: "the obligation to provide an independent description of the experience can never properly be discharged" (Budd 1985:123).

Such an independent description must therefore account for expressive experience in terms of the specific character and content of the experience, that is, in terms of those properties (of music or of whatever object) that the experience is about. This implies that the causal strategy, although it can provide some insight in those mechanisms that are activated and that arguably implement the experience, cannot fulfil this task. Indeed, as the objection of the drug undermines arousal theories (as said in Chapter 1), an analogous objection inspired by the heresy of the separable experience might be used against Noordhof's as well as against Kivy's late hypothesis of the "black box": the appeal to causal mechanisms which does not account for the specificity of the

[21] In the text, he namely refers to the so-called "communication theory of emotions" that he ascribes to Lev Tolstoy and to Deryck Cooke.

objects' properties – namely, for those perceptual properties that are experienced by the subject in such and such a way – can only provide a contingent combination of two separate experiences.

3.5 Dealing with the heresy

In order to deal with the heresy, I take one of the approaches discarded by Noordhof as offering a way out. In particular, he jettisons the idea that expressive properties can be accounted in terms of perceptual properties represented in a certain manner. His reason to reject this strategy is that it does not do justice to the fact that expressive properties figure in our experiences as if they belonged to the object to which we ascribe them. In other words, expressive properties do not seem to characterise the experience, but rather the objects that we experience. It is not the case that we experience a sunset *sadly*, or a piece of music *cheerfully*, rather, we experience sad sunsets and cheerful pieces of music.

I will try to develop the idea that this experience might consist in the experience of certain perceptual properties as being expressive, for this does not necessarily entail that so-conceived expressive properties do not appear as belonging to the objects. Moreover and importantly, this approach promises to account for the link between perceptual and expressive properties in a way that is not merely causal. If expressive experience were a matter of the perceptual experience of certain perceptual properties that we represent *as being expressive*, those perceptual properties would provide minimal adequacy conditions for expressive experience. This would therefore do justice to the fact that we tend to justify our ascriptions of expressiveness by reference to perceptual properties of things.

As it emerged by the discussion of the various positions within the debate, almost everyone agrees on that perceptual properties play a role in expressive experience. The problem is however that most approaches take them to be only the causal trigger of expressive experience, rather than being part of its content. Amongst these positions, the resemblance approach is the one that explicitly acknowledges the relevance of perception not only for what concerns the phenomenal character of expressive experience, but also when it comes to its content. It indeed claims that we not only have a perceptual experience of expressive properties, but also that these properties bear a significant relation to standard perceptual properties, namely a resemblance relation. The difficulty is that of "locating" this perceived resemblance.

As already said, Contour theory holds that we perceive expressive qualities as long as we experience resemblances between objects and expressions. Yet, this is not the case for any expressive experience, because resemblances are not always available. I shall distinguish between three cases here. First, the case in which resemblances actually and manifestly enable us to ascribe expressiveness, let us call it the case of the *weeping willow*. Second, there is the case in which the resemblance relation between the perceived object and the emotional expression is not consciously experienced by the subject. Still, in principle, the subject might be able to justify her experience afterwards, by reflecting on it, finding out that *there are* resemblances to which one can appeal for such a justification. Let us call this the case of the *musical gesture*. Third, there is the most mysterious case in which resemblances are not even available upon reflection, what I would call the case of the *minor chord*.

3.5.1 The weeping willow

Why do weeping willows look sad? One plausible answer appeals to manifest resemblances. Likely, this depends on that their structure resembles the posture of a sad person. Also, we probably ascribe sadness to the weeping willow *because* we experience it as resembling such a posture. In this case, expressive experience would consist in the perception of manifest resemblances between the structure of the weeping willow and a sad posture. This can be thought of as an example of a *seeing-as experience*, or *seeing-an-aspect*.

Stephen Davies presents his version of Contour theory in terms of seeing-an-aspect-perception (Davies 1994; 2005). His view is based on the idea that, as in the case of the recognition of expressive behaviours of human beings where one does not need to infer the presence of a mental state generating the expression, when we experience expressive objects we do not need to connect the expressive appearance to any mental state. Rather, we just recognise certain perceptual patterns as being similar to typical perceptual patterns displayed in human expressions. He preliminarily draws a relevant distinction for the case of expression recognition in humans that is worth recalling. He argues that when we see someone as, say, 'hopeful-looking' two possible explanations are available: on the one hand, we might be seeing her look while entertaining the belief that she is feeling and expressing hope; on the other hand, we might be seeing her look without entertaining the belief that she feels hopeful. This latter case is, according to Davies, an

example of aspect perception for, although we are not inferring the presence of a mental state, we are seeing the behavioural pattern as being the expression of such a mental state that can nevertheless be absent. Take for example the case of the actor who is rehearsing for the play and produces with her body, face and voice a wide range of expressions without feeling them, and suppose to assist to the rehearsal. We would probably see those movements and hear those sounds as being expressions, yet we would suspend any belief about the actor being actually feeling the corresponding emotions. However, Davies says, both mentioned cases involve an experience of seeing something *as if* it where the expression of some emotion, that is, as potentially connected with some felt emotion. Instead – and this is a third possibility –, when one experiences someone's 'hopeful-look' without willingly suspending the belief about the mental (affective) state that the person is undergoing, one is perceiving what Davies calls the 'emotion characteristics in appearance'. This latter case is precisely one of seeing-as that does not involve any ongoing nor suspended belief about the expressed mental state. Rather, we perceive certain traits of the person's look *as* expressive of hope. In order to prove that this is what happens, Davies appeals to the fact that the same look may be experienced in different ways, that is, as 'hopeful' or, say, as 'dreamy'. This does not (always) depend on the belief one has about the person's actual or potential feeling.

> The perception of an emotion characteristic involves the recognition of an aspect of the appearance that bears the emotion characteristic. As with other instances of aspect perception, it is sometimes possible to see an appearance as presenting first one emotion characteristic and then another. Because of the possibility that the same material object of perception may be seen under more than one aspect, aspect perception differs from 'ordinary' seeing despite remaining a perceptually based experience. (Davies 2005:139)

When we ascribe to the weeping willow a sad look, we actually do not entertain any thought about it feeling and expressing its sadness. Rather, we perceive some of its structural properties as resembling typically sad behaviours. One might disagree or be unable to see the weeping willow as sad and the very fact that this is possible plays in favour of the explanation of the perceptual resemblance theory in terms of seeing-as. The

kind of explanation offered here accounts for expressive experience as the experience of a resemblance to actual expressions.[22]

But what exactly does this resemblance experience amount to? Interestingly, Levinson offers a reply to this question that appeals to imagination. It is nevertheless worth mentioning, for it has a seeing-as experience as its target. Levinson speaks indeed of "hearability-as-personal-expression" (Levinson 2007:91) and, as we have already seen, he argues that we experience music as expressive only as long as we are disposed to hear it readily as if it were the expression of someone's emotion. Accordingly, the perceptual structure of music can be heard-as an expression, provided that one engages in an imaginative project about some fictive character producing the music in order to express her or himself. Following various critics, I have already questioned this imaginative approach. Yet, it has the virtue of considering perceptual properties as what is actually mobilised by the content of expressive experience and that can be readily experienced-as an expression by means of imagination.

Clearly however, the supporters of a perceptual account of expressive experience cannot endorse such a proposal. Rather, they have to explain the process of seeing-as in terms of a perceptual experience of similarities.

The content of such an experience would accordingly mobilise a sufficient amount of perceptual properties that the object (the weeping willow) would have in common with the expression of sadness (a typical posture). Such perceptual properties would be represented by the subject as resembling one another, determining a perceptual phenomenal character.

Take the case of children resembling their parents, or of elder people resembling themselves younger. When we undergo a recognitional experience of this kind, that is, when we recognise someone as resembling her or his father, or as resembling her or himself in an old picture, the recognitional process can amount to some form of comparison. Namely, we perform a comparison between features of two items (that may or not be present at the same time) and we find out that they share a sufficient amount of features. In which case, the content of the experience mobilises those properties that belong to the different items and that are represented by means of a comparison.

[22] I have already mentioned this way of dealing with certain perceptual experiences when discussing Noordhof's rejection of a perceptual approach. In particular, I have pointed at seeing-as experiences in order to show that there are perceptual experiences that are partly under our control without necessarily requiring any imaginative engagement.

Let us focus back on the weeping-willow case. We see its shape as resembling the posture of a sad person (which clearly need not be there, neither need be a specific person, but rather it is the typical profile of somebody expressing sadness). As long as we take such a posture to be inherently expressive of sadness, we might end up considering the weeping willow as sad in virtue of such a manifest resemblance. The content of this experience would therefore amount to those perceptual properties that the weeping willow shares with the profile of a sad person and that would phenomenally manifest themselves to the observer. Sometimes, manifest resemblance is what expressive experience is about: I see something resembling an expression and *therefore* I deem it expressive.

But is it that when we experience expressive things we undergo the experience of subsisting resemblances? To what extent is expressive experience similar to the experience of something as resembling something else? Clearly, this is not always what happens. Rather, this is probably something that is not representative of expressive experience, for it is one thing to experience the weeping willow as resembling someone expressing sadness and another thing to experience it as sad (Noordhof remarks this in 2008:332). Despite sometimes the latter experience can be explained in terms of the former, this is not always the case, for the former requires that resemblance is actually experienced *as such*. In point of fact, most experiences of expressiveness do not consist in the conscious mapping of the features of inanimate objects upon the expressive profile of persons. Instead, when we hear a sad song, look at a serene sky, choose a colour in virtue of its liveliness, resemblances are not what we actually recognise. At best, they can be found out afterwards, upon reflection, in the search for a justification.

3.5.2 The musical gesture

Most expressive things are not experienced as such on the basis of a conscious detection of a manifest resemblance. One reason for this is that things resemble one another under a bunch of respects. Thus, unless the amount of shared features between, say, a lament and a musical gesture is so overwhelming that it strikes us as being a manifest resemblance, resemblance is unlikely to be phenomenally manifest to the subject who is undergoing the expressive experience of that musical gesture as lamenting. Therefore, we must assess the expressive experience of things that, *prima facie*, do not resemble anything inherently expressive.

This second case is what Christopher Peacocke has in mind when he discusses his theory of metaphorical experience (Peacocke 2009; 2010). It is worthwhile to linger over his view, because it casts light on a relevant aspect of our problem. Rejecting the idea of metaphor as a merely linguistic device, Peacocke puts forward the notion of "metaphorical content" of experience as being a *sui generis* content that can be represented in perception as well as in imagination or in thought.

> The metaphorical content of experience is a kind of content of experience in its own right. It cannot be reduced to a combination of visual experience of some other kind with an element of imagining that something is the case. (Peacocke 2009:259)

The metaphorical content characterises those experiences in which we identify certain objects as other objects, belonging to different domains. We happen to see a solitary tree as a lonely person, to imagine dark, stormy clouds as an army, to think of an artichoke as a warrior. Metaphorical content is embedded in all these experiences and especially in expressive experiences as long as we hear, say, a musical gesture − belonging to the domain of perceivable sounds − as the expression of an emotion − belonging to the domain of affects. These sorts of experiences may well be considered instances of experiencing-as where what is experienced is not a manifest resemblance. Therefore, according to Peacocke, they require a specific account to explain how we can see, hear, imagine, think of things as being other things.

Peacocke's idea is that a process of "mapping" takes place which establishes the link between the distinct domains (moods and sounds, people and pottery). Namely, he claims that metaphorical content entails the detection of some *isomorphism* between these domains, such that it may give rise to a metaphorical content. This detection of an isomorphism, that is, of a structural resemblance between two distinct things, can take place at some subpersonal level and involves establishing a correspondence between the mental representations of such things (Peacocke 2009:267). This implies that the metaphorical experience of something as something else does not entail the conscious representation of something as *resembling* something else.

> Whenever there is metaphorical representation, whether in thought, imagination, or experience, there is some kind of isomorphism between two domains. It does not follow, and is not true, that to enjoy metaphorical thought, imagination, or

> experience is to think about, imagine, or experience a correspondence or isomorphism […] Metaphorical thought, imagination, or experience exploits a correspondence, rather than representing it. When you think of life as a journey, various features of your representation of a journey are mapped onto your representation of a life. The mapping is exploited, rather than being thought about or represented. (Peacocke 2009:260)

And later on:

> Suppose, for example, one hears a piece of music as expressing a gradual transformation of suffering into joy. On my account, this hearing exploits (but does not explicitly represent) an isomorphism between the musical features in question and a domain of mental states including suffering and joy. (Peacocke 2010:189)

The mapping process allows for the representation of the domain that maps the other to enter the experience's content. Here is Peacocke's elaborate description of the mapping process:

> Under the correspondence of mental representations between the two domains, some representations of the metaphorically represented domain are copied to some special kind of storage binding them with their corresponding mental representations (of the representing domain) in the subpersonal state underlying an experience, imagining, or thought which has the metaphorical content. Thereby their content enters the metaphorical content of that mental state or event […] Detection of the isomorphism is causally active in producing that state with metaphorical content, but no representation of the isomorphism itself enters the content of the state to whose underlying realization various mental representations are copied. This is why one who enjoys the mental state with metaphorical content may have to work out consciously what the isomorphism is. (Peacocke 2009:267 ff.)

This way of dealing with resemblance can explain the case of the expressive musical gesture: the perceptual structure of the gesture is metaphorically represented as expressive of an affective state as long as it triggers the subpersonal mapping from the domain of expressive behaviours to the one of organised sounds. Unlike in the case of the weeping willow, this mapping process takes place subpersonally, so that it is not necessary

that one is aware of the resemblances that make it possible in the very moment in which the experience occurs.

This subpersonal process draws on the "special kind of storage", that is, on allegedly cognitive resources whose nature, according to Peacocke, must be empirically specified. As Peacocke writes, the reference to the special kind of storage is an "empty box" with the sole functional role of distinguishing the metaphorical recognition (of x as being y) from the standard recognition (of x as being x). The activation of a mapping process from one domain to another is responsible for this distinction. Such an activation is causally determined by the perceptual structure of the musical gesture, so that the mapping process and the storage on which it draws can be understood in different ways. Peacocke is not entirely clear about his favoured solution to "fill in" the "empty box". He seems disposed to endorse a solution that entails imagination: "We can say that in some very broad sense, the ability to experience one thing metaphorically-as another involves imaginative powers" (Peacocke 2009:267).

But he also insists that a sharp distinction should be drawn between imagining something in the music and perceiving it as belonging to the music. So, the "very broad sense" to which he refers implies that the content of the resulting experience must present expressive features as belonging to the objects. Thus, his view can be compatible with Noordhof's idea that simulation is involved and that the result of the mapping process is an "integrated experience". If so, isomorphism would *trigger* the simulation of the salient phenomenal features of, say, cheerfulness, and sensuous imagination would perform the mapping of such features onto the perceptual structure of the stimulus. The result would be the metaphorical representation of the musical gesture as cheerful.

Notably, an analogous solution is offered by Bence Nanay's conception of mental imagery, according to which we can unconsciously undergo mental imaginings in such a way that they provide us with "quasi-perceptual" mental contents (Nanay 2015). Nanay starts from the alleged similarity between the phenomenal character of mental imagery and perception, traditionally attested by the famous Perky experiment in which subjects took themselves to be visualising the objects, whereas instead they were perceiving them (Perky 1910). He therefore grounds the similarity between the phenomenal characters of these mental states in terms of properties attribution, that is, the fact that both when we undergo mental imagery and perceptual states we ascribe properties to objects (Nanay 2010 and 2015, who finds support in Burge 2010, Peacocke 1985; 1992). Since the phenomenal character of the two mental states is similar, he argues that their intentional

contents are similar as well. Nanay attributes to the different sources of determinacy of the two sorts of experience the responsibility for their differences in content (Nanay 2015; 2016). Whereas the determinacy of the content of perceptual experience is provided directly by the properties of the stimulus (it is bottom-up), the determinacy of the content of mental imagery is determined by top-down sources such as memories, beliefs or expectations. As a result, mental imagery turns out to be much closer to perception under many relevant respects, namely the phenomenal character, the intentional content and its functional role in our cognitive architecture. If this were right, then Peacocke's "empty box" could be filled in by mental imagery – i.e. by a kind of mental state which is close to perception but less constrained by worldly properties – that would perform the mapping process.

Despite this perspective is intriguing, I find myself at odds about two aspects of it, in particular if I try to apply it to expressive experience. first, if we take mental imagery to be ultimately responsible for the content of expressive experience, we have to look for its adequacy conditions precisely in those sources of determinacy Nanay refers to. Once again, the criterion for the ascription of expressive properties to objects would not reside in properties of the world (the perceptual structure of the musical gesture), but rather in our memory, beliefs, expectations. Second, the mapping from one domain to another is supposed to relate what is actually perceived to some storage we have in mind, so that further specifications about the way in which mental imagery should perform such a mapping would be needed. Yet, I am not able to infer such specificcations from Nanay's approach to mental imagery. I would rather insist on the possibility to interpret the mapping process in terms of perception before resorting to mental imagery.

In point of fact, further interpretations apply to this metaphorical approach that do not necessarily mobilise imagination. Focusing once again on the mapping process and on the storage that makes it possible, one can also take this mapping as being a case of perceptual recognition that exploits some background knowledge. As Peacocke states: "the recognition of expression in a piece of music, and more generally identification of the content of the music, is fundamentally perceptual identification" (Peacocke 2010:190).

This interpretation is supported by the idea of "mentally non-predicatively subsuming" something under a certain concept:

> The isomorphism involved in the perception of Zurbaran's painting of pots maps the concept of those pots to the concept *person*. So this explanation counts the perceiver of the painting as mentally non-predicatively subsuming the depicted pots under the concept *person*. (Peacocke 2010:189)

In which case, the interpretation offered by Perez-Carreño and the additional support provided by Loar's notion of recognitional concept turns out to be useful. In short, the perceptual stimulus of a musical gesture would trigger in the subject the application of some concept that is stored in our mind and that would appropriately apply in virtue of the existing isomorphism.

This approach leads us back to the discussion about the background knowledge required in order to recognise an object as being expressive. I wish I have shown the risk that such an assumption entails, namely an intellectualisation of expressive experience which, instead, shows to be available also for those who are neither expert in artistic creation, nor particularly skilled in emotion ascriptions. Thus, in order to argue that some sort of recognitional concept is required to undergo the experience of an expressive object, one should always bear in mind that the kind of experience to be accounted for seems to be available also for those who lack a specific background knowledge.

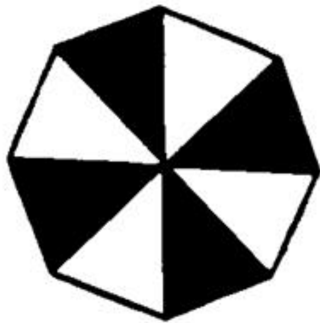
In order to cast light on the issue whether conceptual background knowledge is required to represent certain perceptual properties as expressive, an insight on the topic of *seeing-as* is helpful. The question whether seeing-as has a conceptual content or not is still a matter of debate.

A general overview of the various positions on the problem of bi-stable figures and of seeing-as experiences more generally shows an important divide. On one side one can think that seeing-as experience has a conceptual content. According to this position, in order to undergo the experience, a subject needs to possess those concepts necessary to specify what that content is. If so things stand, then concepts are part of the content of seeing-as experiences: the concept of "duck" is part of the experience of the Jastrow figure as representing a duck, whereas the concept of "rabbit" is part of the content of the experience of the same figure as representing a rabbit. On the other side there is the position according to which the content of seeing-as experiences is non-conceptual (e.g.

Jagnow 2011; Peacocke 1992; Raftopoulos 2011), that is, one does not need to possess any relevant concept in order to have them.[23]

In his account, Peacocke refers to the process of subsuming something under a concept, despite he suggests that this process might occur "non-predicatively". The focus should therefore be on the role that conceptual abilities play in the recognition of expressive characters of things. Once again, the debate about bi-stable figures is of help.

Regarding the role played by concepts in the experience of bi-stable figures (and allegedly similar items such as depictions) Voltolini (2013) puts forward a solution that is grounded in an allegedly Wittgenstenian distinction. It goes as follows: not all ambiguous figures that lend themselves to seeing-as experiences can be accounted for in the same way. We can for instance experience the shift from the black to the white cross in Figure (c) without appealing to the concept of cross. Rather, it seems that such a phenomenal switch depends on properties of the visual pattern itself.



(c)

As Wittgenstein writes:

> Those two aspects of the double cross (I shall call them the aspects A) might be reported simply by pointing alternately to an isolated white and an isolated black cross.
> One could quite well imagine this as a primitive reaction in a child even before it could talk. (Wittgenstein *PI*, IIxi:207)

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[23] It has also been argued that concepts might be required in order to entertain an experience whose content would nevertheless be non-conceptual. However, Tye writes: "Where a figure has an ambiguous decomposition into spatial parts, concepts can influence which decomposition occurs. This is one way in which top-down processing can make a phenomenal difference." (Tye 1995). I cannot discuss Tye's view in details, but for the purpose of my argument, I am happy with his admission that concepts can, in one way or another, make a phenomenal difference to some perceptual experiences.

This kind of aspect perception consists in the grasping of certain "grouping properties" constitutive of patterns, which are responsible for both two-dimensional and three-dimensional organization of patters (Voltolini 2013; 2015). Grouping properties are "the different ways for the figure's elements of being arranged according to different orientations" (Voltolini 2013:219), that is, *gestalten* responding to orientation rules. The grasping of such properties as being internally organised is something that does not require the intervention of concept.

However, the case of the duck-rabbit or, as suggested by Voltolini, of Arcimboldo's *Vertumnus*, is more complicated than this and it is likely to require some conceptual equipment. One must possess the concept of "duck" in order to see the Jastrow's figure as a duck, and the concept of "fruits" (of various types) in order to recognise them in Arcimboldo's famous portrait. In short, someone who were completely unaware of what a rabbit looks like, would be blind to the rabbit-aspect of the Jastrow's bi-stable figure, and someone who did not know what a fruit or a vegetable looks like, would not recognise the fruit-aspect – so to say – of Arcimboldo's painting. In Wittgenstein's words:

> You only 'see the duck and rabbit aspects' if you are already conversant with the shapes of those two animals. There is no analogous condition for seeing the aspects A. (Wittgenstein *PI*, IIxi:207)

Voltolini explains how the content of this latter kind of seeing-as is two-layered. Experiencing the Jastrow's figure as a duck implies that one has grasped the grouping properties that are responsible for the specific perceptual organization of the figure. Once this perceptual grasping has taken place, the conceptual intervention allows the viewer to see the configuration as being the depiction of a duck (or, alternatively, of a rabbit). The content is accordingly constituted by a recognitional conceptual level which presupposes a non-conceptual level of grasping grouping properties (Voltolini 2013).

We can now look back at the case of the expressive musical gesture. The hypothesis is that it can be explained as a case of experiencing-as. The kind of experience that Peacocke's account captures is a recognitional experience whose content is perceptual and consists in the detection of the isomorphism between the perceptual properties of the gesture – its internal structure, or, to use the same vocabulary adopted by Voltolini, the grouping properties that are constitutive of it – and typical expressive

behaviours, postures, tones and so on. The fact that isomorphism is not phenomenally manifest does not imply that the experience does not involve conceptual abilities. On the contrary, metaphorical experience so-conceived admittedly requires a mapping capacity that consists in a conceptual subsumption.

The metaphorical explanation, therefore, can be understood as a refined version of a resemblance theory that allows for the phenomenal character of the experience as being perceptual, but whose content represents perceptual properties by means of conceptual intervention. As in the case of bi-stable figures, the experience consists in recognising something as something else thanks to conceptual capacities. To use a distinction sketched by Loar, this class of expressive experiences requires not only a recognitional *disposition*, that is, "the disposition to classify objects (events, situations) together" (Loar 1990:87); but also the recognitional *ability* to do that. We need to be able to apply concepts on the basis of a detectable isomorphism in order to undergo expressive experiences of this kind.

I will develop this approach in the next chapters, for I believe that it offers a promising way. However, this explanation will prove to be viable only for a limited range of cases, namely for the "expressive gesture" experiences.

3.5.3 The minor chord

> The minor chord is nothing like a premusical human expression of sadness. There is no changing pitch contour of the music that in some way corresponds to the contour of a non-musical bodily or verbal expression of sadness over time. There is no changing contour of the single, isolated chord. If someone were to play the chord to indicate sadness, that will succeed only because the chord is already heard as expressing sadness. (Peacocke 2009:262)

The case of the minor chord is probably one of the most mysterious in the philosophy and psychology of musical expressiveness (e.g. Hevner, K. 1935; Curtis and Bharucham 2010). As Peacocke notices, there is no contour in such a temporally limited and simply structured object that justifies the appeal to isomorphism or to resemblance. Even Contour theorists are well aware of this challenge to their view. Peter Kivy, in particular, accounts for the experience of expressive simple features in terms of conventions. This alleged difference is not such that it is mirrored by the phenomenal character of

expressive experience, that is, it does not seem that the experience of an expressive musical gestures is phenomenally different from the experience of an expressive chord, as per its affective character, at least in the relevant sense that I tried to clarify earlier. Yet, one may insist that these two experiences have different types of contents that require different explanations. Kivy's proposal about convention goes in this direction, since it argues that we can represent something like a minor chord as sad in virtue of its occurring within a context (musical and, more widely, cultural) that makes it appear as sad. The minor chord *per se* would therefore be too much underdetermined to be experienced as expressive of an affective state.

The same might be said for colours. And in point of fact, the cultural and contextual relativity of the affective value of colour shades is hard to deny. There is no need to oppose this intuition, arguing against the idea that the expressive experience of shades of colour and of simple sounds is relevantly determinate by contextual features. However, accepting relativity cannot amount to accept that expressive experience of simple features consists in the expressive representation of such features – which are *per se* affectively neutral – that is fully determined by our cultural habits, beliefs and expectations. Indeed, this amounts to deny that expressive experience bears a significant relation to the perceptual look of things, falling back into the heresy of the separable experience. On this view, whatever simple property that did not bear any resemblance to any expressive behaviour would be neutral, and its expressive character would be completely relative to contextual variables.

One minimalist intuition is instead worth defending here: even when we ascribe affective character to this sort of properties, we tend to justify our ascriptions on the basis of their look. Oversimplifying: minor chords are used to convey sadness in compositions, rather than happiness, as well as red is normally used to brighten up outfits, rather than to make them sadder. This is compatible with the idea that the affective value of this kind of features may vary from context to context, but the explanatory effort should be to find out whether something in the perceptual look of these things may justify the purposes for which they are used, *before* resorting to conventionalist explanations. Once this effort has been pushed to its limit, arguments from contexts and cultural specificities can be taken back into account.

In virtue of this intuition, I would make an attempt to explain the case of simple expressive properties that is consistent with the strategy I have adopted so far. It consists in focusing on what a simple thing – like a colour or a sound – looks like when we

experience it as sad. If one believes that minor chords are perceived as expressive but that even the most refined resemblance theory does not account for this, then one should try to find out what – if not isomorphism – in the aspect of the chords can provide an explanation that does justice both to the phenomenal experience on has and to the way the experienced object appears.

3.6 Dynamic properties

Interestingly, Kivy refers to the property of being "static" to describe simple features like colours and sounds. He writes that "A static event like the sounding of a chord cannot be similar to any expressive behaviour" (Kivy 1980:80), which means that the property that simple features lack to be explained by a Contour theory is some sort of dynamism. Accordingly, dynamism supports the resemblances with human behaviours. Something similar is implied by Davies when he refers to the "dynamic topography" of music as being responsible for similarities between it and human "gaits, carriages, or comportments" (Davies 2005:181). So, what must be clarified is what exactly the invoked dynamism – already mentioned in the previous chapter – amounts to.

Dynamism is problematic not only for the philosophy of music, where it raises questions about what actually musical movement is, but also for philosophy of perception in general. It is indeed unclear what the experience of something dynamic amounts to, above all when experiences are of static images. Take the case of figurative paintings: we tend to see the dog in Balla's famous *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash*, (1912) as if it were moving its legs fast. One may argue that this sort of perceived dynamism could be explained by reference to our knowledge about real dogs' behaviours. But the immediate counterexample would arise that not every dog represented as running gives the impression of dynamism. Compare Balla's dog to the dogs depicted by Paolo Uccello in his *The Hunt by Night* (1470) and the difference in terms of dynamism will appear very clearly.

James Cutting (2002) proposed to sort the ways to convey movement in representations into five categories: (a) dynamic balance, also described as broken symmetry or instability, (b) multiple, stroboscopic images, (c) affine shear, (d) blur, and (e) vector-like lines superimposed on an image. Movement in Balla's dog is clearly represented by means of (b) multiple images. All these techniques are used by painters and illustrators to represent moving objects. The use of dynamic balance makes

represented things appear less static – think about the widely acknowledged difference between Classical and Hellenistic sculpture; affine shear has been widely used by cartoonist to convey the idea of a fast movement towards – think about the ellipsoidal tire or the leaning forward of a train's smoke stack to emphasize its movement; a nice example of blur that gives the impression of movement is instead that of pictures taken while the subject was actually moving, so that the edges of the figure appear increasingly transparent in the image; whereas vector-like lined are widely present in comics' illustrations.

Thus, the possibility to convey and to perceive movement in static images is not mysterious. Yet the fact that objects can be represented as moving by manipulating certain pictorial techniques is just a minimal step towards the solution of our problem. What interests us is indeed the perceptual experience of dynamism of very simple features that cannot be explained through any reference to represented objects. Let me put it this way: when we see the depicted train as "moving" along the depicted rails, we must be perceiving some of the patterns that constitute the drawing as being dynamic. Depicted movement is likely to depend on the arrangement of these features plus their being applied to represented objects whose real referents usually move.

Take instead abstract paintings. We happen to perceive them as being *dynamic* although not properly "moving", which suggests that some difference exists between perceiving movement and perceiving dynamism – although the latter experience is likely to make the former possible.

In the previous chapter I argued for the perceptual phenomenal character of expressive experience and for its specifically dynamic nature. The task is therefore to find out what properties must be mobilised by the content of a perceptual experience for it to be dynamic. Support can be found in the tradition of Gestalt psychology, which developed between the end of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. The works by Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Köhler, Kurt Koffka – the Berlin School – and, later, by Rudolf Arnheim, provided both a theoretical framework and experimental procedures to test human perception of dynamic visual and auditory patterns. They famously argued against the view that we only perceive the atomic components of more complex patterns, insisting that we rather perceive "wholes" that cannot be reduced to the simple sum of their parts. According to this essentially phenomenological approach, they theorised and listed fundamental phenomenal rules that govern the perception of these units. Factors such as *similarity*, *continuation*, *closure*, *proximity*, *figure-ground*, *good-form*, *pregnancy* were

individuated as being responsible for our perception of gestaltic figures (Köhler 1929). Moreover, Gestalt psychology emphasized how these same factors are at work in spatial grouping as well as in temporal grouping: sequences of sounds can form temporal gestalt in a way that is isomorphic with that of visual structures. In addition, Gestalt theory has been fruitfully applied to arts, showing how dynamic effects can be created with simple oriented figures.

Mainly interested in paintings and pictorial techniques, Rudolf Arnheim developed a theory for the perceptual experience of visual art, focusing precisely on dynamism. Rejecting the view that perceived dynamism conveyed by static images is a perceptual illusion, he claims that dynamic forces ("oriented tensions") are inherent to images at a very elementary level and that painters and artists are supposed to handle them in order to realise dynamic (and subsequently, on his view, valuable) works. Relying on a vast range of artistic examples, Arnheim claims that "Obliqueness is perceived spontaneously as a dynamic straining toward or away from the basic spatial framework of the vertical and horizontal" (Arnheim 1974:425). For this purpose, artists should always try to break the symmetry, because "Broken symmetry introduces perceptual effects, often called dynamic balance" whereas "Perfect bilateral symmetry can have a perceptually stultifying effect" (Cutting 2002:1170).

Interestingly, this sort of rules applies not only to represented figures, but also to decorations and abstract patterns, both in painting and in architecture. For instance, Arnheim remarks that "Baroque architecture used the dynamics of curved shapes to increase tension" (Arnheim 1974: 428). And just to quote some more examples concerning compositional and formal features of paintings: distortion of shapes (ovals rather than circles, rectangles rather than squares), the interval between compositional elements, the more or less symmetrical relation between them, up to the visual occlusion of certain portions of a figure can, if duly handled, create and enhance perceivable dynamism of static figures.

Importantly, the kind of dynamism at stake in these descriptions does not coincide with movement. In point of fact, the examples above do neither refer to those techniques and tools that artists (on the view of Arnheim) can (or should) intentionally use to represent movement or to create the illusion of movements. Instead, very simple perceivable features are responsible for the fact that a pattern is experienced as crossed by tensions, rather than as static. Artists can (learn to) manipulate such features so as to obtain dynamic effects. Moreover, this does not seem to depend on the complexity of the

pattern at stake: Arnheim's examples go from the representation of human figure in paintings and sculptures, to the inclination of two orthogonal lines.

So the question is, once again, what are dynamic properties that are represented as expressive when we undergo expressive experience of simple things? It is useful to recall Forlè's discussion of Kruegel's account of musical expressive properties, for it introduces an important notion that, on my view, provides deeper insight in this matter.

3.7 Minimal *rythmos* and dynamism

In Chapter 2 (especially 2.5.2), I presented the enactivist approach to musical expressiveness adopted by Joel Krueger, arguing that it is at best able to account for those cases in which music is actually enacted, that is, triggers certain movement in the hearer that echo musical movements. I followed Forlè's criticism that we should be able to say what in music is responsible for such an enactement. For this purpose, Forlè borrows from Zhok (2012) the notion of *rythmos* as what ultimately grounds the dynamic qualities of music. It is worth devoting some words to this notion.

Easy to suspect, *rythmos* has to do with rhythm, although it assumes a more general meaning and covers a wider range of experiences than the standard notion. Giovanni Piana (1991) also focuses on the notion of *rythmos*, although he does not explicitly turn it into a technical term. He remarks that rhythm is not only one of the most pervasive components of music, what makes it especially inviting to dance, but it also applies to a variety of items, especially visual ones: even pinnacles, colonnades, architectural elements more generally can be said to display a rhythm. Once again, he notices that such manifoldness of rhythm weakens the relation one may think it has with time (Piana 1991:169-170). As soon as rhythm acquires this cross-modal meaning, it lends itself to the characterization of the intrinsic structure of perceptual (especially auditory and visual) patterns presenting regularities which are perceptually seized by perceivers.

Andrea Zhok goes as far as to extend the notion of *rythmos* to any sort of pattern that is perceived as displaying regularities that shape our experiences of objects. Such regularities are experienced as dynamic, i.e., as involving movement directed towards some kind of end, realization, closure. Yet, what are exactly the regularities these authors refer to and, most important, how are they experienced by the perceivers? As Piana and Zhok remark, when we experience a perceptual pattern as having a certain *rythmos*, that is, an internally oriented structure, we are confronted with the *discontinuity* between the

lower level components of the pattern, be they sounds or dots on a canvas. Such a discontinuity is made of the differences and similarities existing between such components, as well as (or above all) by the *pauses*, *intervals* and the *voids* that separate them. The articulation of this discontinuity takes the shape of a *rythmos* whenever it lends itself to the recognition of a "minimal rule of development" i.e., to the possibility to forecast what will come next (Zhok 2012:130).

In order for the internal articulation of the pattern to be in place, the time that the experience of it could require is not a valid criterion, since *rythmos* is a feature of perceptual patterns and it is cross-modal, that is, it is not specific for one sense modality such as audition or vision. It is therefore present in various – if not all – kinds of perceptual experiences, leaving the door open to multimodal experiences. Rather, Zhok writes that two conditions are needed for something to be experienced as having *rythmos*. First, there are a minimal and a maximal limit of the intervals that can be experienced without two elements collapsing one onto the other or resulting completely disconnected from one another; second, a pattern has to present an *opening* and a *closure* (Zhok 2012:132-133). These two conditions are responsible for making perceptual patterns liable to be experienced as dynamic. It is easy to remark how this theory is patterned after a gestaltic approach to perception: claiming that regularities, discontinuities and other objective relations are ultimately responsible for the presence of *rythmos* is analogous to claiming that measurable rules such as continuity, similarity or closure are responsible for the instantiation of gestalts.

According to Forlè, *rythmos* is what we actually grasp when we experience expressive music. It is the qualitative aspect of music that enables our bodily engagement and therefore our enacted experience. Like in the case of music we describe melismatic gestures as rising and falling, jumping and quietening, so we can describe visual patterns as pointing or tending toward a direction, as more or less regularly alternating features, colours as exploding, slopes as descending. As long as a pattern presents those minimal requirements, it has a minimal degree of dynamism. Chords and notes are *low* and *high*, as well as certain shades of colours seem to *pour out* of the surface, whereas others seem to be *attracted toward* the centre of the surface (think about canvas painted in Blue Klein or some monochromes by Rothko).

It is even possible to zoom-in and consider musical properties such as *harmonics.* These are "Sets of musical notes whose frequencies are related by simple whole number ratios. A harmonic series is a set of frequencies which are successive integer multiples of

the fundamental (or first harmonic)" (Oxford Music Online definition). What a profane of music (as I am) can draw from this definition is that harmonics are sounds whose frequency determines audible notes, timbre, pitches. They are described as having a "a complex pattern or waveform" whose components cannot be heard separately and are therefore heard as a single sound. Instead, components of patterns that are only close approximation to harmonics can be heard separately and do not give rise to a clear pitch. Harmonics and their approximations are therefore responsible for the dynamism of the resulting, audible features.

As to colours, they notoriously depend on a number of variables such as hue, saturation, brightness, gloss. The combination of these (ad further) dimensions determines the visible outcome that we perceptually access. Colours are experienced, for instance, as tending more or less towards white or towards black, to be more or less nuanced, bright, saturated, that is, in a broad sense, dynamic. They are experienced as having an internal – though minimal – structure.

On this level, patterns are experienced as dynamic without the appeal to similar movements performed by humans, neither to time, nor to temporal development. Their perceivable dynamism is provided by *rythmos* and is constitutive of the way such patterns look. This way of understanding the dynamic character of objects goes in the direction that I have suggested: it gathers any perceivable structure having a minimal and a maximal limit of experienceable intervals, openings and closures, without appealing to time, bodily movement or comparisons with behaviours and preserving a cross-modal character.

The notion of *rythmos* offers a way to reply to Kivy's characterization of simple expressive features as "static", as opposed to "dynamic" musical gestures or melodies. Those features that Kivy accounts for in an *ad hoc* way can be characterised instead in terms of their dynamic structure.

3.8 Taking stock

In the light of all this, I suggest that what is first of all required in order for us to represent simple perceptual patterns as expressive is the dynamic structure describable in terms of *rythmos*. The internal dynamism of blue (think about the "vibrating", "intense", "absorbing" blue Klein) presents itself as relating to other chromatic shades that can be present or not in the perceptual scene. Analogously, the perceptual structure of the minor

triad consists in its tension towards, its wait for completion, its being more subdued than the major triad: all these characterizations mimic the "oriented tensions" invoked by Arnheim. According to this proposal, we grasp the so-conceived dynamic structure of simple patterns in such a way that enables us to undergo expressive experience analogously to what happens when we see the white or the black cross, alternatively, since the function of the dynamic structure is similar to what have been called "grouping properties".

If so things stand, and this is the hypothesis that I will explore in more details in the next two chapters, expressive properties are at least grounded in the dynamic structure of perceptual patterns that we are able to grasp, and that function as adequacy conditions for the content of our experiences. Perceptual structures so conceived are not mere causal trigger of a phenomenally *sui generis* experience, but are part of the representational content in such a way that they justify our expressive ascriptions. This is compatible with the fact that minor chords are cross-culturally perceived as sad (Balkwill and Thompson 1999), that dark shades are usually experienced as more subdued than bright shades, that there is agreement among people when ascribing affective values to some simple shapes (Takahashi 1995; Stamatopoulou 2008). In short, they account for the objective side of expressive experience, limiting in principle the range of possible expressive outcomes. Davies puts it this way:

> Even if our hearing of the musical features of slowness, etc. in a musical work does not entail that we will also hear sadness in that work, these features may be relevant to our experience of the music's sadness. They could not be used to support the mistaken claim that the music expresses happiness in the way they may be used to support the claim that the music expresses sadness. (Davies 2005:143)

Moreover, it should be noticed that this objective side of expressive experience is attested by the way in which properties are manipulated by artists and experts: creative expertise can be taken to consist – also – in the ability to employ materials characterised by certain perceptual properties to convey expressive outcomes. Designers know (or should know) how to make a place look welcoming or alienating, composers know how to make a music sound threatening, painters know how to juxtapose colours so as to make a painting look mournful. The fact that such outcomes are relatively under control should provide a good reason to believe that expressive properties are at least partly determined by their

objective perceptual structure. The experience that I account for in this way is no more split into two separate experiences. Rather, this account justifies the experience by reference to features of its objects, namely perceptual dynamic properties.

Still, one thing is to experience a dynamic pattern as being sad and another thing is to experience it as dynamic. That is: there must be more to the experience of expressive features than the mere grasping of dynamism (and, in the case of the musical gesture, than mere resemblances to expressive behaviours). A movement as well as a musical pattern may well be perceived as slow, without being experienced as sad. Analogously, a patch of grey may be seen as less bright than a patch of orange, but not necessarily sad. The instability and relativity of expressive properties must be accounted for by explaining what is required on behalf of the experiencing subjects. Although I think I have shown to what extent standard perceptual properties are involved in the content of expressive experience, the question concerning the extent to which expressive properties can be reduced to standard perceptual properties remains unanswered so far.

What is still to be established is the role played by background knowledge, whether the content of expressive experience lends itself to cognitive penetration and if we can treat expressive properties as high level properties. These questions are intrinsically related to the way in which concepts of emotions apply to objects and how we learn to characterise them as such.

Chapter 4

Expressive experiences: metaphors and resemblances

In the present chapter I will deal with the role of concepts in recognitional expressive experiences. First (4.1.) I will reframe the unanswered questions about the conceptual intervention in expressive experience. For this purpose, I will introduce an important distinction between recognitional experiences that allegedly require the intervention of concepts, and non-recognitional ones that can occur without such an intervention. I will hypothesise that recognitional expressive experiences can be explained as cases of cognitive penetration. In order to support my hypothesis, in 4.2 I will introduce cognitive penetration as a plausible phenomenon. Then, I will draw on theories of expression recognition that allow for cognitive penetrability of the phenomenal character of perceptual experience (4.3.). The question will arise of how concepts of emotion apply to recognitional expressive experience, and I will suggest that they do it as metaphors. In order to clarify the status of metaphorical uses of concepts, I will draw on notorious theories of metaphors that deal with expressiveness and aesthetic descriptions. Namely, I will introduce Nick Zangwill's and Nelson Goodman's view of metaphorical descriptions, arguing that they have problems in accounting for the kind of properties that allow for metaphorical shifts (4.4). Then, I will take the debate about metaphorical aesthetic descriptions as a model (4.5), seeking support for theories of conceptual metaphorical content in Lakoff's theory of metaphors (4.6). After discussing the weaknesses of this approach, I will finally put the tiles together, offering a proposal for recognitional expressive experiences as weakly cognitively penetrated by metaphorically applied concepts (4.7).

4.1 Reframing the problem of concepts: an important distinction

The previous chapter left important questions unanswered. I take it that the most urgent among them regards the role of concepts in expressive experience. As I shall recall, I have proposed to distinguish three sorts of expressive experiences, namely the case of the weeping willow, the case of the musical gesture and the case of the minor chord. Whereas I accepted that the experience of the weeping willow as looking sad could reasonably

amount to the recognitional experiences of the resemblances that it bears to human postures, apparently, the latter two cases do not work in the same way. In point of fact, I suggested that both when we experience a cheerful musical gesture and a mournful chord, resemblances need not be manifest to the perceiver.

The discussion so far showed that there are cases, namely the one I called of the "musical gesture", that require some recognitional capacity, that is, the capacity to detect an isomorphism between an expressive gesture and the heard musical pattern and to perform – either consciously or unconsciously – a comparison between the two. The outcome of this comparison is the perception of the musical gesture as expressive (Section 3.5.2). Before engaging in the development of this approach, an important distinction is worth making whose acknowledgement, I believe, helps to clarify and avoid some of the disagreement on the role of concepts.

Malcolm Budd argues against Peacocke's metaphorical approach that it is not able to account for an important distinction. On his view, one thing is to perceive the character of a musical gesture, whereas another thing is to perceive it as having a specific, namely expressive character. The latter experience is likely to require some knowledge of emotion, allegedly consisting in the capacity to apply concepts to experiences, whereas the former might occur without the intervention of such a conceptual knowledge.

According to Budd, a metaphorical stance like the one put forward by Peacocke does not *per se* account for this difference, since the metaphor – that is, the conceptual mapping relation from one domain to the experienced object – is taken to be part of the content. As a consequence, it seems that all expressive experiences consist in the recognition of the expressive character as such, whereas it would never be the case that we experience the cheerfulness of music without recognising it as cheerfulness. Budd disagrees with this consequence, for he believes that what Peacocke considers a *sui generis* content is the very same content which, on some occasions, triggers a conceptual response.

This divergence stems from an original disagreement between the two approaches. Peacocke believes that metaphorical recognition depends on the existence of an isomorphism that, although need not be represented as such in the content of the experience, is nonetheless the property that is ultimately responsible for it. Budd, instead, thinks that the peculiarity of aesthetic experience (and therefore of expressive experience that he considers a subclass of it) consists in the power that certain perceptual contents have to trigger the application of certain concepts.

> […] the cognition is just the suitability of the alignment of the concept of sadness (rather than joy) with that character: the property revealed by the metaphorical-as perception is this suitability and nothing more. (Budd 2009:292)

On Budd's view, such an application is responsible for the distinction between a recognitional experience and a merely perceptual one. In order to support his view, Budd invites us to imagine a situation in which we experience an artwork but we struggle to find the term to describe it. Then, someone comes up with a predicate which, suddenly, seems to us to perfectly match the artwork's aspect. Once we (or somebody else) come up with the emotion word that applies to that work or character of the work, our experience becomes the recognitional experience of a quality as falling under a certain concept:

> Now suppose a characterization in metaphorical terms is offered to someone who experiences difficulty in coming up with an adequate description of the aspect, and this characterization seems to them to fit the character of the work well […] When they now look at, read or listen to the work, regarding this characterization as being well suited to convey the work's character, without anything else needing to happen, they thereby experience the work as having that character. Their experience of the work has changed: previously it was inchoate, the character being obscure, now it is distinct, the character apparent. (Budd 2006:140)

Accordingly, conceptual abilities are required only in order "to understand and engage in the practice of musical analysis and criticism" (Budd 2008:141), whereas:

> neither the lack of a certain concept of a particular phenomenon nor the inability to recognize instances of the phenomenon as falling under the concept prevents a person from being sensitive to the presence of the phenomenon in a work of art and alive to the aesthetic or artistic function of the phenomenon in the work. (Budd 2008:139)

The point, here, is to find a convincing way to distinguish between those experiences that require concepts and those that occur independently of the possession of concepts.[24]

[24] This controversy is not new and concerns the distinction between conceptual and non-conceptual contents of perceptual experiences in general. The debate is notoriously wide and I cannot assess it here.

Mike Martin (1992) offered a thorough discussion about recognition requiring or not the application of concepts. His view is suitable for the present purpose. He argues against conceptualism about perceptual experience (significantly represented by Peacocke) that the assumption that we only have an experience as long as we possess the concept that is required to appreciate it (i.e. recognising it as such), prevents from accounting for the difference between *experiencing* and *noticing* things to be a certain way. Martin holds that a "belief-independent view of experience" is instead in the position to account for such a difference. Here is his argument in short.

According to the conceptualist, experience is to be reduced to *noticing*, that is, to recognitional experiences based on the capacity to apply concepts. The conceptualist would accordingly end up claiming that: "If one lacks the recognitional capacity, one will not be able to discriminate between the presence or absence of a certain feature in a perceived scene" (Martin 1992:757).

Martin's argument against this claim relies on memory, namely on the possibility that we do not notice the presence of a feature at a certain time, but that we may recall such a presence afterwards, in memory. If this is true, his argument goes, then there is a reason to insist that we neither need concepts nor the capacity to apply them in order to experience features of the environment.

In Martin's example, a dice player lacking the geometric concept of dodecahedron (in the example she is not able to count past five) is nevertheless capable of distinguishing, for the purpose of the game, an eight-faced from a twelve-faced dice, based on the differences they present, let's say, in spots and colours. If the player acquired the recognitional concept of dodecahedron, Martin supposes, she may recall past games and distinguish in memory whether they were performed using a twelve-faced dice or not. If this is possible, then is an evidence for the fact that the feature identified by the concept "dodecahedron" was already present in the content of the past, non-conceptualised experiences of the player.

This argument is probably not knock-down. Yet it offers the ground for discussing the distinction between recognitional and non-recognitional expressive experience. If it is possible to distinguish between experiencing a sad character and realising afterwards that such a character was actually sad, expressive experience need not always be

As it will be clear, however, I am sympathetic with views claiming that perceptual content is non conceptual, despite allowing for cognitive interventions on some occasions. This makes theories of high level contents plausible, saving room for the idea that low level contents can remain unattained by top-down influences.

recognitional. It may well be the case that we do not recognise the atmosphere of a room painted in grey as being mournful, but this does not imply that we do not notice the difference from entering such a room, and entering a bright one. If asked to describe the two rooms, we may well use the words (and the related concepts) “mournful” and “bright” in case we possessed them, but this does not seem to imply that we were to apply them at the time of the experience. As Budd notes and as the distinction between different kinds of bi-stable figures provided by Voltolini (2013) helps to clarify (Section 3.5.2), an account of expressive experience should also explain the case in which one undergoes an expressive experience without any recognitional disposition.

Keeping this distinction before mind, the hypothesis that I try to develop hereafter consists in the idea that conceptual intervention allows for the recognition of visual and auditory patterns of objects’ look as being such that emotion concepts rightly apply. This can occur by means of a non-conscious detection of resemblances, so that it is not necessary that we see or hear patterns as resembling one another, but the conceptual intervention is such that it allows for the subsumption – as Peacocke would call it – of the pattern under the concept of the emotion that we would use to identify a similar expressive gesture. It is plausible, as resemblance theories claim, that this conceptual intervention is triggered by the detection of existing isomorphisms holding between the low level perceptual features of human expressions and the low level perceptual features presented by inanimate objects.

This view is consistent with resemblance theories, although it limits its explanatory power to those cases of expressive experience in which resemblances exist and expressiveness can be ascribed relying on conceptual knowledge. The idea that concepts may intervene in expressive experience of the kind of the musical gestures is compatible with many of the accounts that I have examined so far. On this view, the content of expressive experience of a cheerful musical gesture is constituted by dynamic perceptual properties that can be experienced as expressive of cheerfulness as long as they trigger the application of concepts that are standardly triggered when we recognise emotional expressions of humans. This kind of recognitional process is achieved in virtue of those concepts that we possess and by the capacity we have to apply them to expressions.

In order to put forward an account, first, I will present cognitive penetration as a phenomenon that plausibly occurs, at least at the level of the phenomenal character;

second I will present an account of emotional expression recognition in humans that will provide support to my proposal.

4.2 Cognitive penetration

A nowadays widely accepted definition of cognitive penetrability in philosophy of perception claims that perception is cognitively penetrable if it is possible for two subjects (or one subject at different times) to have two different experiences on account of a difference in their cognitive systems which makes this difference intelligible when certain facts are held fixed, namely, the nature of the proximal stimulus on the sensory organ, the state of the sensory organ, and the location of the attentional focus of the subject. (Macpherson 2012: 29; Stokes 2013).[25]

It has been claimed that cognitive penetration can help explain a number of experiences, from aesthetic expertise (Stokes 2014), to differences in perception of chromatic cues (MacPherson 2012), to the perception of bi-stable figures (Voltolini 2013). It is indeed taken to explain one of the ways in which, in spite of being functionally and phenomenally distinct, perception and cognition can interact, accounting for differences in the phenomenology of our experiences (Stokes 2013). Here is Stokes' definition:

> A perceptual experience E is cognitively penetrated if and only if (1) E is causally dependent upon some cognitive state C and (2) the causal link between E and C is internal and mental. (Stokes 2013:650)[26]

Importantly, cognitive penetration differs from (a) difference in judgement about the same perceptual experience; (b) changes in spatial attention (Macpherson 2012) and (c)

[25] The notion of cognitive penetrability of perception was originally introduced and subsequently discussed by Zenon Pylyshyn (1980; 1984; 1999). Pylyshyn's aim was to distinguish between high cognitive functions and encapsulated functions such as early vision (understood as a biological mechanism) that cannot be influenced by the former. Therefore, MacPherson points out, what he had in mind were the subpersonal representational outputs of brain processing mechanisms (MacPherson 2012). However, also due to Pylyshyn's alleged ambiguity in defining his target, philosophy and psychology took on the notion of cognitively (im)penetrability of perception as regarding perceptual experience, rather than its biological implementation.

[26] Stokes is aware that his definition is not immune to counterexamples. Yet, duly integrated by the listed requirements, it is sufficient for the present purpose.

merely causal effects of beliefs on perceptual experiences that are not semantically consistent with the experience itself (Pylyshyn 1999; Macpherson 2012).[27]

On the top of this definition, a distinction can be added concerning the level at which concepts may intervene and relevantly change perceptual experience. For the purpose of my proposal, it suffices to distinguish between the possibility that concepts intervene in such a way that they structure the intentional low-level content of the experience, and the possibility that they modify the phenomenal character. The former type of cognitive penetrability is usually taken to be 'strong', for it influences a level of experiences that has been traditionally maintained to be "encapsulated", i.e. impermeable to conceptual influences (e.g. by Fodor 1983). In the widely explored case of vision, strong cognitive penetration would have an impact on so-called *early-vision*, representing shapes, size and colours.[28] In the latter kind of cognitive penetration, concepts intervene at the level of the phenomenal character, so as to influence the way it is like to have a certain perceptual experience, leaving its underlying low-level content intact. Always concerning visual experiences, this cognitive intervention is taken to occur at the level of *late-vision*, which is held to enable the subject to recognise an object as belonging to a certain kind.

Keeping this distinction in mind, I must now introduce the second ingredient of my proposal, namely a theory of recognition of human expressions that relies on cognitive penetration.

4.3 Expression recognition as cognitively penetrated perception

The case of recognition of emotions in humans is controversial. The interest for emotion recognition traces back to Charles Darwin's seminal study (1871) which notoriously insists on the evolutionary importance of facial recognition. This universally shared assumption makes theories of perceptual recognition of facial – and, more generally,

[27] That of semantic coherence is another controversial aspect of cognitive penetrability. Various versions of this requirement have been proposed. Whereas Stokes is happy with the connection between contents being "internal" and "mental", MacPherson insists that the kind of link that is needed for a cognitive content to penetrate a perceptual one is semantic coherence. This amounts to the cognitive content being not only the *cause* of the perceptual change, but also providing *reasons* for it. This is in line with Pylyshyn's worries about a merely causal influence that would not preserve the distinction between higher level and lower level functions. At the end of the chapter I will propose an account of expressive experience as a perceptual experience that is cognitively penetrated is such a way that it satisfies the semantic requirement.

[28] Importantly, Fodor admits for top-down influences that take place *within* modules, determining changes at the level of *late vision*. Modularism is accordingly worried that allowing for cognitive penetration of early vision would ultimately cancel the distinction between these levels (see also Marr 1982).

behavioural – emotional recognition highly plausible. Yet, the issue about the exact mechanisms allowing for this sort of recognition is far from settled and I will not take any relevant stance on this matter here.

Given that many theories that I have analysed so far rely on the possibility to experience something as expressive as long as it resembles emotional expressions, I am just going to present a view according to which the process underlying the recognition of human emotional expression is analogous to the perceptual process of object recognition. This will help me to offer an account of expressive experience of musical gesture that is compatible with its perceptual phenomenal character. This account does not necessarily appeal to imagination and clarifies the way in which background knowledge has an impact on – some of – our expressive experiences. Moreover, this will make the appeal to resemblance more plausible. Yet, as it will emerge in a while, the appeal to expression recognition as a matter of cognitively enhanced perception will not settle the problem. Referring to theories of expression recognition and categorization will reveal helpful also at that stage.

Newen *et al.* (2015) draw on Ernst and Bülthoff's (2004) psychological model for objects recognition, affirming that it consists in the integration by means of the relevant concepts of multi-sensory perceptual inputs. This integration process occurs in two stages: the first consists in the maximization of the information delivered from the different sensory modalities – what they call 'sensory combination' – whereas the second is called 'sensory integration' and consists in the reduction of the the variance in the sensory estimate that is meant to increase its reliability (Ernst and Bülthoff 2004:162). On such basis, Newen *et al.* (2015) claim that we mostly have access to others' emotions thanks to a perceptual process that has typical emotions patterns as its object. They argue that the recognition of emotions consists in a bottom-up process activated by sensory cues leading to a first sensory estimate; then, a top-down process allows for a cue integration, say, the weighting of redundant information to exclude irrelevant features, and for the development of a stable (expressive) percept. Such a percept is what justifies most of our attributions of emotions to other sentient beings.

Along the same line, Marchi and Newen (2015), have developed an account for the perceptual recognition of emotions expressed by human faces that appeals to the notion of 'cognitive penetration". Their argument is two-stage. First, they argue that the process of facial cues integration is a perceptual process in virtue of it having been shown (Block 2014) that the recognition of ambiguous facial expressions is sensitive to perceptual

adaptation.[29] Second, they claim that the perceptual integration of sensory cues leading to the recognition of facial expressions is influenced by contextual background knowledge in such a way that it can be explained by appealing to cognitive penetration of perceptual content.

The first stage of their argument is supported by Block's analysis of facial expression recognition in terms of a fully perceptual explanation. Ned Block (2014) has indeed insisted that expression recognition is a case of perceptual recognition of patterns that does not require the intervention of concepts. He preliminarily distinguishes between primary and secondary seeing. According to his distinction, concepts can intervene and modify *secondary seeing*, which indeed "involves states that put together perception with perceptual judgment" (Block 2014:566). However, he claims that *primary seeing* is not permeated by concepts. Primary seeing is taken by Block to apply to low level features such as "shape, spatial relations (including position and size), geometrical motion, texture, brightness and color" (Block 2014: 560), that is, to those perceptual properties that are standardly associated to early vision. However, primary seeing it is not limited to this sort of properties, for also higher level patterns such as facial expressions (as well as gender, race and individual identity) are processed at this level. In perception in general and in the case of expression recognition in particular, higher level properties are intended to overlap with the underlying low level perceptual features, but the integration of the latter into the former is not taken to require any conceptual intervention.

In order to support the second stage of their proposal, Marchi and Newen refer to a notorious experiment taken forward by Carroll and Russell (1996) in which contextual information (namely a story previously told to the participants about the situation in which the shown ambiguous facial expressions were displayed) were supposed to influence the way in which presented facial expressions were perceived. The experiment had been explicitly realised to undermine the idea that facial expressions can *per se* be recognised as expressive of a specific emotion. Indeed, according to the authors, the face provides information that are relevant to the recognition of emotions but does not signal any specific emotion. Low level sensory cues provide constraints on the range of emotions that can be ascribed to the corresponding facial expressions. For instance, the same facial patterns can be recognised as an expression of joy or of surprise,

[29] Block (2014) presents further psychological and neuroscientific evidences for adaptation being a perceptual phenomenon that does not involve conceptual interventions. He especially discusses Schwiedrzik *et al.* (2014).

depending on contextual information, but not as an expression of fear. However, these cues are not specific enough to identify an exact emotion out of the range (e.g. to allow for a discrimination between anger and fear on the basis of the same pattern). This discriminatory job is, on Marchi's and Newen's view, performed by background conceptual knowledge.

Marchi and Newen take the fact that previous beliefs influence our responses to ambiguous facial expressions to be the evidence that facial recognition is sensitive also to higher level conceptual knowledge.[30] In a nutshell, they claim that (certain) facial expressions are too vague to be experienced as expressive of one rather than another emotion, so that they recognition requires some background knowledge shaping the percept.[31]

In the light of these general premises and of what cognitive penetration is held to be, the account offered by Marchi and Newen for expression recognition entails weak cognitive penetration. The phenomenal character of the perceptual experience of certain patterns instantiated by faces is modified by our background knowledge concerning typical expressions and contextual information. The intervention of concepts is maintained to have an impact on the phenomenal character of the perceptual experience, say, it is held to make the difference between the perceptual experience of an object before we are able to recognise it (i.e., to discriminate it from others with a certain degree of accuracy), and the perceptual experience of an object once recognised as such. Yet, their claim is compatible with the idea that low level cues that constitute the content of the recognitional experience – on which the phenomenal character depends – are not modified by conceptual interventions.

Importantly, this is not the only way to account for emotion recognition. Even concentrating on those theories that assign to perception a key role in emotions ascription, there is no agreement about the role of cognitive penetration. For instance, theories of direct perception of emotion take it that others' emotions are directly perceived in the absence of concepts (Gallagher 2008; Zahavi 2011; Krueger 2012). According to this phenomenological approach, the perceptual process that would enable

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[30] It must be said that they endorse a view of conceptual knowledge as corresponding generically to *top-down* inferences from the cognitive system to the perceptual system. They therefore seem to blurry the distinction between concepts, perceptions and mental imagery, although they assume that a "minimally clear separation between *perceptual experience* (be it conceptual or non-conceptual) and the *judgement* based on this perceptual experience" must be preserved (Marchi and Newen 2015:4).

[31] What they are interested in arguing against is the view according to which the same phenomenon can be accounted as a change in judgement, rather than in perception.

us to ascribe emotions would not be mediated by the perception of behavioural manifestations; rather, it would consist in the direct perception of a mental state (see Jacob 2011 for a criticism of this position). Despite the phenomenological approach is intriguing – above all when it comes to social cognition, that is, to the issue of how we understand others' minds – I would not go this far.

I rather seize the opportunity to insist on an important aspect of my account, namely the distinction that can be drawn – and that I do not believe is controversial – between the ascription of emotions and the perception of their expressions. Although some non-contingent relation between emotions as mental states and their expressions can be relevant to our conceptualisation of emotions, it is possible to distinguish between the two. The reason is intuitive: not any perceptual recognition of something as being an expression implies the ascription of an emotion; *vice versa*, not any ascription of an emotion is based on the recognition of an expression. The two notions are epistemologically distinct. Nonetheless, it is plausible that in many – probably most – cases, we ascribe emotions in virtue of the perceptual recognition of their behavioural expressions.[32]

Let me take stock. The theory I have presented about expression recognition acknowledges that this process is quick and automatic. Moreover, it holds that conceptual intervention can occur at some point, modifying the phenomenal character of the experience. For sure, this happens in ambiguous situations in which further knowledge is required for discriminatory processes, due to the excessive vagueness of the information provided by low level features. Anyway, this does not amount to claim that the widespread experience of facial and, more generally, manifest emotions recognition requires background knowledge in order to take place.

I have hypothesised that the recognition of a musical gesture as being expressive is a perceptual experience that is plausibly permeated by concepts. I searched for support in theories of recognition of behavioural expressions that rely on some conceptual integration of the perceived patterns. Marchi and Newen show that there is a level of perceptual experiences of expressions that can be permeated by our conceptual knowledge about emotions and about the context in which they are expressed.

[32] Recently, Joulia Smortchkova (2017) put forward an account for emotion recognition that manages to save the idea of emotions as something that can be perceived from the contradictions pointed out by Jacob (2011). Her view is interesting and – I think – compatible with my present proposal. Nevertheless, she aims at accounting for the perception and the ascription of mental states, which is clearly not my scope here.

4.4 Metaphorical descriptions

If it is plausible that the recognitional process of a perceptual pattern as being expressive of an emotion consists in the capacity of the pattern to trigger a conceptual intervention (that I have described as a case of weak cognitive penetration), then a step forward can be done about the sort of concepts that are involved.

I have followed Peacocke and theorists of resemblances in supposing that the recognition of a pattern as being expressive relies on the fact that the perceptual pattern bears some resemblance to affective expressions that the application of concepts make salient. Likely, the concepts triggered by the detection of such content are the same concepts that allow for expression recognition in the ambiguous cases addressed by Marchi and Newen (2015), but that they are applied in virtue of the detected resemblances. A sunset will accordingly trigger the application of the concept of melancholy in virtue of some resemblance that its perceptual look bears to common expressions of melancholy (tension towards the ground, decreasing energy/light, gradual passage from bright to sombre colours, suspended dynamic are some possibilities).

It has been argued that the way in which concepts are applied in such occasions is metaphorical. This claim, along with the fact that Peacocke names his account "metaphorical" should draw our attention toward the implications of adopting such a conception, as specifically regarding emotion concepts and their application that we are to endorse. In what follows, I will explore the idea that concepts involved in expressive recognition are used metaphorically. The question to be answered is whether – the right sort of – metaphorical ascriptions can constitute the intrinsically conceptual nature of recognitional expressive experience.

For the time being, I will adopt Christopher Gauker's definition of concepts as:

> the building blocks of the kinds of thoughts expressed in sentences, which stand to whole thoughts as words stand to whole sentences. […] we can think of concepts as components of the content of the thought expressed. (Gauker 2017)

Later on, I will provide more elements about the way in which emotion concepts are meant to work, especially in expressive experience.

My assumption is that, although the correspondence between descriptions of experiences (namely expressive ones) and recognitional concepts is not warranted, the

employ of the former mirrors to a relevant extent the application of the latter. At least, the relation between the recognitional concepts the we use and the descriptions we provide of the corresponding experience is non-contingent.

Given that emotion concepts find their natural field of application in emotion episodes and manifestations (like the ones discussed by Marchi and Newen), it seems reasonable to think that their use in expressive experience is metaphorical. I take this view to imply that concepts that are mobilised in recognitional expressive experience and that shape its phenomenal character are used metaphorically.

That of metaphor is notoriously a controversial notion. Nick Zangwill has repeatedly claimed that descriptions of music as expressive of emotions are obviously metaphorical (Zangwill 2007, 2011, 2014). This is maintained to be true also of other inanimate things and artworks. Accordingly, if one refers to a piece of music as *joyful*, to a painting as *melancholy* or to a sculpture as *sombre*, one is providing metaphorical descriptions of those items. More specifically, Zangwill takes all (or at least most) aesthetic descriptions as being *non-literal* descriptions and argues that we should not treat expressive attributions differently. In Zangwill's view something *literally* 'delicate' is something liable to break (Zangwill, 2007:394), which is not the case for something – such as a piece of music or a pictorial composition – that is merely *aesthetically* 'delicate'.

Things should stand in the same way in the case of expressive attributions. In fact, according to Zangwill's non-literalist approach, for a term to be used literally is for it to apply to something that possesses those properties the term applies to. For the term "green" to apply literally, objects must be green (or have the property of "greenness"); for the term "white" to apply literally to the snow, the snow should possess the property of "whiteness", and so on. But whereas this correspondence between predicates and properties in the case of terms such as "green" and "white" is intuitively straightforward, things get more complicated with more complex predicates, such as emotion terms. That is: in order for something to be literally "sad" we should be able to say what the property of "sadness" consists in – which cannot be reduced to a trivial question. Actually, what Zangwill is interested in, is not to establish what a metaphorical or extended use of predicates consists in. Rather, he wants to argue that emotion words cannot be used literally when referring to inanimate objects and to music in particular. Therefore, the required distinction is between literal and non-literal applications of emotion terms.

However, considering metaphor as the application of a predicate to an object that is not *commonly* maintained to have the property to which such a predicate *usually* refers is

at best vague. Claiming that attributions of expressiveness to objects imply a metaphorical use of emotion terms, requires a deeper insight both in the nature of properties and in that of metaphors.

In order to avoid a trivialization that would make Zangwill's view uninformative (at least in the case expressive attributions), one has to be sure about what affective properties amount to. And it is precisely for this reason that Zangwill adopts a specific – although not too detailed – conception of emotion. In other words, he endorses an overtly stipulative view according to which an emotion is a mental state with a certain qualitative character and distinctive rationalization (Zangwill, 2007:393). Therefore, either something possesses at least one of these features, such as being a mental state with a certain phenomenology, or any application of emotion terms to describe it is to be considered non-literal. The outcome of this perspective is that, if something neither has emotional mental states along with all their distinctive qualitative characters, nor stands "in any obvious relation to something that has these characteristics" then the linguistic use consisting in the application of emotion terms to such a thing, "is probably metaphorical or at least an extended use of the word" (Zangwill, 2007:393).

In *The Languages of Art* (1968) Nelson Goodman provides an explanation for the case of expressive attributions that is to some extent consistent with Zangwill's proposal. In fact, also according to Goodman, when we apply an affective term to a work of art, we use the term metaphorically. Goodman famously faces this issue as follows:

> A picture literally possesses a gray color, really belongs to the class of gray things; but only metaphorically does it possess sadness or belong to the class of things that feel sad (Goodman 1968:51).

There are properties that artworks literally possess, such as their colours and shapes, and other properties that artworks possess in a special way. The idea of "metaphorical possession" in employed by Goodman to account for expressive things. For an object to be expressive amounts to metaphorically possess the property that it is said to express. This means that a piece of music expresses sadness as long as it metaphorically possesses sadness.

A quick step backward is required. Goodman's account of metaphorical possession relies on the whole theory of symbols and language that he introduces in *The Languages of Art*. In particular, Goodman's view can provide further arguments in favour

of Zangwill's non-literalist view about expressive attributions. Goodman believes that, say, a grey object is denoted by the label (predicate) "grey" and it possess the property of greyness as long as such a predicate applies to it. This amounts to saying that what property the object possesses depends on the predicate that applies to it (Goodman 1968:51-52). Expression is, on his view, a kind of possession and therefore of labelling, yet a special one. It is indeed a metaphorical possession, i.e. the application of a label to something that exemplifies a property. One can therefore say that a sad painting expresses sadness since it (somehow) exemplifies sadness, i.e., it is an instance of the domain of objects to which the label "sad" applies. So far so good: it seems that this description of the expressive relation is true both of sad behaviours and of sad paintings. They both express insofar as they exemplify the label "sad", even though in its own way (namely literally vs. metaphorically).

In order to capture the distinction between metaphorical and literal applications, the focus of Goodman's account shifts to the way in which labels organise the logical space of linguistic uses. Labels apply to *realms* of objects and come networked in *schemas*. Labels and schemas apply literally to certain domains or realms of objects: anatomical labels apply to the domain of the body, botanical terms apply to plants, chromatic labels apply to colours and so on. Thus, what happens with metaphorical applications is that schemas *move* from one realm to another, which is not their "native" one. Tactile labels are applied to the chromatic domain (warm colours), bodily labels to geography (a cape, a river's mouth), affective labels to the domain of inanimate things etc. (Goodman 1968:70 and ff.).

According to Goodman, the metaphorical shift does not challenge the possession of the labelled property by the described object. There are warm colours as well as there are dark colours, and the fact that predicates can be applied metaphorically does not make the predication false. If this moving of a schema of labels from one realm to another is what makes the application of a label metaphorical, then the distinction between literal and metaphorical attributions is to be sought for in the "novelty" of the application: "Briefly, a metaphor is an affair between a predicate with a past and an object that yields while protesting" (Goodman 1968:69).

The predicate in question has a past since its original domain of application is different from the new one. "The journey of life" is the typical, although not very original) example of metaphors which may help clarify this point. Whatever application to life of labels connected to the domain of journeys can be considered a shift from an original to

a new domain. The semantic domain connected to "journey" indeed has "a past", that is, a number of usual, literal applications that stabilised along time. Once the new, allegedly metaphorical application is performed, such a past leads the new application, which indeed is not randomly realised, but rather depends on the intrinsic organisation of the schema to which the label originally belongs.

In his notorious 1954 paper, Max Black gives an evocative (metaphorical) explanation of this mapping process:

> Suppose I look at the night sky through a piece of heavily smoked glass on which certain lines have been left clear. Then I shall see only the stars that can be made to lie on the lines previously prepared upon the screen, and the stars I do see will be seen as organized by the screen's structure. We can think of a metaphor as such a screen. (Black 1954:288).

The organization of the original or "past" application schema determines, at least to some extent, the application to the new domain. But what makes a domain the original - and therefore the literal - domain of application of a label? How are we to determine whether an application is actually a new one or not? Let us take the term "reflective". It is generally taken to belong to a psychological domain, describing a kind of temper or psychological attitude. However, it clearly derives from the verb "to reflect" that, beside its psychological meaning, has a concrete reference in the domain of physics and reflectance phenomena. Moreover, we may go further and consider the even more material origin of this term which comes from the Latin "re-flecto", literally "to re-bend". Things stand analogously for many if not most words that have to do with mental attitudes, such as "to consider" (*cum-sidera* = gathering stars), "to ponder" (*pondus* = weight), "anguish" (*angus* = snake). A plausible etymology of these terms would be that they progressively abandoned their native domain to move towards a new one, in a fully-fledged metaphoric transfer. We could therefore be tempted to say that many of the words that we use as if they were literally applied, are actually *old* metaphors. This is for instance what happens when existing words are used to "remedy a gap in the vocabulary", a process that Black calls "catachresis" (Black 1954:280):

> 'Orange' may originally have been applied to the color by catachresis; but the word is now applied to the color just as "properly" (and unmetaphorically) as the fruit (Black 1954:281).

Goodman is well aware of this sort of phenomena. He deems it reasonable to think that:

> Current literal use of many a term has been specialized from an initial, much broader application. The infant at first applies 'mama' to almost anyone, learning only gradually to make important distinctions and restrict the range of the term. A consequence of this process is that what seems a new use of a term may then consist of reapplying it over a region earlier vacated (Goodman 1968:76).

Whoever aims at providing a criterion to distinguish between literal and metaphorical uses must take into account this intrinsically processual nature of words given by their uses. The answer provided by Goodman appeals to his nominalism. On his view, our linguistic practices and habits establish whether a term is applied literally or if its application is the result of a shift towards a new realm. It would be misleading to resort to etymology or to ancient practices in order to draw the distinction. Goodman argues that whatever story a term may have, whatever changes it may undergo throughout time, its literal meaning is established by its *current use* and metaphorical applications are all those practices that require a transfer from such a current use.

Metaphoric transfers are of several kinds, among which are euphemisms, personifications, synecdoche, antonomasia, hyperboles, litotes and whatever more or less broad shift of a schema on a realm. What makes them metaphors is the "novelty" of application, rather than some intrinsic connection with the property of the world they apply to. As in the aforementioned case of catachresis, metaphors become old, they freeze and they die. And as soon as the domain in which they are newly applied stops protesting (as soon as the use becomes a widespread linguistic habit) they become literal uses.

If now we look back at the problem of expressive attributions, Goodman's lesson seems to provide some deeper insight in what metaphors are and how they behave. In his theory, expression and metaphor overlap, and Goodman too can be taken to be a non-literalist about expressive attributions of affective properties to inanimate objects. Additionally, his view proves to be compatible with Zangwill's strategy, insofar as

aesthetic attributions can be considered as labels shifting from an original domain (whatever it is) to the aesthetic domain.

Yet, none of these accounts manage to answer the question of *why* such shifts occur, especially within the aesthetic domain. To keep the focus on expressive experience: why are we allowed to use emotion terms to describe inanimate objects? Goodman does not take any explicit stance on the kind of properties that are responsible for a linguistic use to be born, or at least to be efficacious. He explicitly states that:

> The question why predicates apply as they do metaphorically is much the same as the question why they apply as they do literally [...] the general explanation why things have the properties, literal and metaphorical, that they do have [...] is a task I am content to leave to the cosmologist (Goodman 1968:78).

Being Goodman's approach to properties so dismissive and Zangwill's strategy overtly stipulative (at least for what concerns emotions), the door remains open for further discussion. Namely, since Goodman does not provide any property-based criterion to distinguish between literal and transferred applications, and he rather lists several degrees of metaphorical shifts (giving birth to a wide range of figures of speech) he may in principle agree that, so to say, metaphors come in degrees. I would moreover suggest that this same intuition is shared by Zangwill. In fact, he claims that a non-literal use of a predicate is metaphorical or at least an "extended use" of a word. This element, along with the widespread intuition that language and uses change and modify along time, makes the distinction between literal and non-literal applications blurrier than Zangwill would like it to be.

On the one hand we can see that Zangwill's strategy that takes aesthetic attributions as metaphorical and extends to expressive attributions does not *per se* support the distinction between metaphorical and literal applications. On the other hand, Goodman's theory of metaphor gives convincing arguments about how metaphors work, but when it comes to the properties an object should be expected to possess so as to be capable of expressing other properties, he passes the ball to the cosmologist.
In particular, if one relies on current habits in order to establish the correspondence between domains and schemas and the subsequent shift's relevance, it is not straightforward that this strategy applies to aesthetic attributions. Why should we buy the idea that the label "balanced" finds, in our nowadays practices, its literal application

within the domain of mechanics instead of in the domain of pictorial composition rules? How can our linguistic habits tell us whether the adjective "graceful" is *mostly* used to describe artworks or people's attitudes?

4.5 Metaphorical use of concepts in aesthetic ascriptions

In order to properly dive into this problem, I suggest that we draw on a debate that is traditionally dealt with in aesthetics, namely the debate about metaphorical ascriptions of aesthetics properties. I see two good reasons for making this move. First, within the aesthetics domain, expressive properties are often listed among so-called aesthetic properties and, second, aesthetic descriptions are often maintained to be metaphorical descriptions. As to the first reason, a caveat is in order. Most philosophers take for granted that expressive features like melancholy or cheerfulness are aesthetic features along with gracefulness or balance. This should not induce one to believe that expressive properties entertain a special relationship with artistic objects. Aesthetic descriptions, indeed, make often use of affective terms, referring to expressive features: we experience lively paintings, sad pieces of music, cheerful ballads, but – as repeatedly said – there is no need to circumscribe to artworks the domain of their application.

Let me list some of the most frequently mentioned aesthetic properties, distinguishing them from expressive ones. First, expressive properties can be distinguished from essentially aesthetic properties such as *beauty*, *ugliness*, *sublimity* or *gracefulness*. Independently of the account of properties that one adopts, these ones seem to be ultimately responsible for aesthetic experience, as long as they determine purely aesthetic judgements. Second, expressive properties can be distinguished from formal properties such as *balance*, *symmetry*, *dynamism*, *staticity* although, as we have already seen, there seems to be a strong connection between them and expressive features. Third, expressive properties can be distinguished from arousal properties such as *being sexy*, *disgusting*, *appealing*. Arousal properties bear a necessary relation to the elicitation of a reaction (sexual excitement, disgust, repulsion, attraction). Needless to repeat, one can argue against arousal approaches that expressive properties ascribed to object do not necessarily elicit our reactions. This being said, descriptions of expressive properties pose analogous problems as descriptions of other aesthetic properties.

Since expressive features are identified via emotion terms like *sad*, *lively*, *cheerful*, *melancholy*, *serene*, *anguished*, *tense, desolate*, *prostrate*, the point in aesthetic literature is how to

account for the relation between these terms and the same terms when used in ordinary contexts, on the basis of the kind of properties that justifies their application. So, does this possibility to apply certain terms in different contexts make them ambiguous? Here is the question nicely phrased by Roger Scruton:

> To understand the word 'sad' is to know how to apply it to people in order to describe their emotional state. The criteria for the application of the term 'sad' concern the gestures, expressions and utterances of people on the basis of which I describe them as sad, and to grasp the concept of sadness is to know how to apply it on the basis of these criteria. When we apply the concept to art, however, it is arguable that these criteria are not, or need not be, present. Does this mean that the term 'sad' is ambiguous? (Scruton 1998:38)

Let us therefore adopt the aesthetic debate about metaphorical ascriptions as a model. Malcolm Budd (2006; 2008; 2009) has thoroughly discussed this same problem with aesthetic terms taking Frank Sibley's approach to aesthetic descriptions as his target. In a nutshell, Sibley accounts for the attribution of aesthetic qualities introducing the notion of 'quasi-metaphors' (Sibley 2011). His general claim is that most terms that we use in the aesthetic discourse are used metaphorically, that is, have their original and literal use in some domain other than the aesthetic one. He also distinguishes between those concepts that are used metaphorically and concepts that, although they have been borrowed from other domains of the experience, "*have come* to be aesthetic terms by some kind of metaphorical transference" (Sibley 2011:2). This latter case is that of 'quasi-metaphors', i.e. of metaphors that gradually loose their metaphorical status and become part of the standard vocabulary of art criticism. The problem with this view, once again, is the relation between (quasi) metaphorical and literal uses of words, i.e. the explanation of the shift of a word from its own realm to another. As Budd remarks, the problem is not that sometimes metaphors "die". Rather, it is the way in which the use of words is related to the properties to which they apply literally, metaphorically or 'quasi-metaphorically'.

Sibley argues that the metaphorical and quasi-metaphorical use of words to capture aesthetic properties is such that the terms we employ seem to us perfectly suitable.

> There is nothing unnatural about using words like 'forceful', 'dynamic', or 'tightly-knit' in criticism; they do their work perfectly and are exactly the words needed for the purposes they serve. We do not want or need to replace them by words which lack the metaphorical element. In using them to describe works of art, the very point is that we are noticing aesthetic qualities related to their literal or common meanings. […] Aesthetic concepts, all of them, carry with them attachments and in one way or another are tethered to or parasitic upon non-aesthetic features. (Sibley 2011:17)

Thus, on one hand, Sibley believes that metaphorical and quasi-metaphorical descriptions of aesthetic properties are perfectly appropriate and that alternative literal expressions (if some were available) would not serve the same purpose; on the other hand, he maintains that those words that we use to refer to aesthetic properties are indissolubly linked to non-aesthetic properties that they literally and originally refer to. Yet, the nature of such a link is unclear.

In his famous article about metaphors, Donald Davidson argues in favour of a resemblance account of metaphors. His claim that "metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more" (Davidson 1978:32) relies on the idea that metaphors simply direct our attention to some resemblances that hold between the source and the target domain:

> A metaphor makes us attend to some likeness, often a novel or surprising likeness, between two or more things. […] Ordinary similarity depends on groupings established by the ordinary meanings of words. Such similarity is natural and unsurprising to the extent that familiar ways of grouping objects are tied to usual meanings of usual words. (Davidson 1978:33-34)

Whatever opinion one may have of Davidson's theory, resemblances provide a natural way to account for metaphorical descriptions. They seem indeed to preserve the link between literal and metaphorical uses of the words in terms of the similarities that can in principle be grasped between properties in different domains. One can therefore argue that the recognitional concepts involved in expressive (and more generally aesthetic) experiences are used metaphorically (or quasi-metaphorically) in virtue of the alleged resemblances between expressive (or aesthetic) properties of things and human

expressions. The precise role played by similarities between aesthetic and standard perceptual properties is thus at stake:

> There is, of course, a question as to how exactly this idea of a perceived resemblance is to be understood, and whether there are any aesthetic qualities — and if so which — for which the idea of perceived resemblance figures in the specification of the intrinsic nature of the canonical basis of a judgement that a certain item possesses that aesthetic quality. (Budd 2011:138)

We must accordingly establish whether aesthetic ascriptions involving the metaphorical use of concepts rely, and to what extent, on resemblances. Thus: what it is for a concept to apply metaphorically in such a way that the resulting experience is of aesthetic or expressive properties? What happens when concepts that we possess about a domain of objects or features apply to another domain in virtue of the similarities that link the two? Always discussing Sibley, Budd writes:

> […] for at least some aesthetic qualities commonly ascribed by an expression used metaphorically (or quasi-metaphorically) nothing more, but nothing less, is needed for someone to perceive an item as possessing that quality than for the person, in perceiving the item, and triggered or confirmed by that perception, to regard that expression (or some synonymous expression) as being well-suited to capture an aspect of the item's character. (Budd 2006:139)

This seems to attest once again that concepts borrowed from other domains play a major role in aesthetic and expressive experiences. Budd holds that there is an interplay between what we perceive in an item and the concept that we are prompted to apply. Moreover, he believes that the use of such a concept influences the overall experience, making the difference – for instance – between expert and non-expert listeners:

> […] the acquisition of a musical vocabulary, especially if it includes the ability to recognize by ear the phenomena that the terms designate, is likely to involve an enhancement of the understanding of music: the sensitivity of the ear to musical patterns and relationships can be increased. (Budd 2008:141)

Concepts provide enhancements to the extent that they increase our sensitivity to patterns. However, in order to establish the precise role that concepts play, we need some further clarification.

Precisely regarding this role, Roger Scruton, claims that metaphors – understood as transferred uses of words from one original domain to the another (namely the aesthetic one) – are constitutive of our experience of music as moving through space. He argues that if we were not able to conceptualise features of music in terms of standard concepts describing movements, we would not be able to experience music as moving. Lacking the capacity to apply metaphors of movement to melodies:

> We should then cease to hear orientation in music; tones would no longer move towards or away from each other; no phrase would mirror another, no leaps be bolder or larger than others, and so on. In short, the experience of music would involve neither melody nor counterpoint as we know them. (Scruton 1997: 92–93)

The same holds for metaphors using emotion terms and for aesthetic predicates more in general. According to Scruton, expressive experience is exhausted by the recognitional experience that consists in being prompted to subsume perceptual properties under aesthetic and especially emotion concepts:

> To see the sadness in the music and to know that the music is sad are one and the same thing. To agree in the judgement that the music is sad is not to agree in a belief, but in something more like a response or an experience; in a mental state that is - unlike belief - logically tied to the immediate circumstances of its arousal. 'The music is sad' is only superficially, therefore, of propositional form: what you know when you know that the music is sad cannot be elucidated by referring to the conditions for a proposition's truth. (Scruton 1998:54)

Accordingly:

> […] aesthetic descriptions are divorced from truth conditions in the epistemological sense: aesthetic features are not properties. (Scruton 1998:53)

Scruton claims that aesthetic and expressive properties are not properties like standard perceptual properties, that is, they cannot justify our ascriptions. Rather, they are

intrinsically conceptual and require that one possesses aesthetic (quasi-metaphorically applied) and emotion concepts in order to be instantiated. Labelling in terms of quasi-metaphors is not a simple description of some property that is "out there" independently of our experience. Instead, it is constitutive of the experience that it is taken to label.

On this view, the application of metaphors to perceptual patterns shapes the resulting experience in such a way that it is conceived as fully response-dependent. Perceptual patterns that allegedly constitute the content of aesthetic experience of, say, music cannot even be heard as being *melodies* or as *moving*, unless the concepts of movement are applied. Concepts turn out to be entirely responsible for the structure of the representational content, upon which aesthetic (expressive) experience supervenes. If concepts lack, not only we cannot ascribe aesthetic qualities to a piece of music or to a painting, but we would basically hear successions of mere sounds, or mere juxtapositions of colours and shapes, lacking any aesthetic and expressive value.

As I have argued, following Budd and Martin, in the previous chapter, this way of conceiving the experience as being conceptually structured does not account for the difference between experiencing and recognising (or noticing). Moreover, making expressive experience fully response-dependent is problematic in that it does not account for the fact that "we cannot in general *choose* which experiences to have" (Boghossian 2009:71).

Peacocke's account diverges from Scruton's view. It assumes that isomorphisms between distinct domains exist and are responsible for metaphorical experiences. Also, they justify metaphorical descriptions of such experiences. As said, Peacocke holds that the detection of resemblances is not necessarily a conscious mechanism, but is rather something that takes place under the level of our awareness. In some occasions, we simply experience certain things as apt to be metaphorically identified, but this must necessarily happen in virtue of existing isomorphisms linking distant domains of properties. So-conceived isomorphism is rooted in the way in which we experience the world, and is causally responsible for metaphorical experiences to occur. Such a causal triggering, as we have seen, can be followed by the conscious subsumption under a metaphorical concept.

> Suppose, for example, one hears a piece of music as expressing a gradual transformation of suffering into joy. On my account, this hearing exploits (but does not explicitly represent) an isomorphism between the musical features in question

> and a domain of mental states including suffering and joy. […] It is essential to the theory that the isomorphism exploited in such perception of music is specified using the very same concepts as are employed outside the scope of metaphorical embeddings. (Peacocke 2010:189)

Unlike Scruton, Peacocke vindicates the distinction between the conceptual (metaphorical) subsumption and metaphorical experience. He states: “We have metaphors in language only because we need a device for expressing these mental states whose content involves metaphor” (Peacocke 2009:260). Accordingly, in Peacocke’s view there is room for a non conceptual content that, nevertheless, requires conceptual subsumption to be experienced as such.

Paul Boghossian (2009) developed a straightforward criticism of Peacocke’s theory casting doubts on the idea of metaphorical content so-conceived. The problem with Peacocke’s account is that, by appealing to a non-propositional (that is, non-judgemental) subsumption of a perceptual content under a concept, he ends up with an obscure notion of content. According to Boghossian’s criticism, if the content of metaphorical experiences were non-conceptual, it would be unclear how concepts should (metaphorically) apply to it, making a metaphorical experience out of a standard, non conceptual one; if the content were conceptual, it would turn out that we could in principle *decide* what metaphorical experience to undergo – which is not the case.

This latter remarks are meant to rule out the hypothesis that the content of expressive experience is conceptual. What I retain of Boghossian’s argument, for the sake of my own one, is the idea that so-conceived metaphorical experience is committed to the heresy of the separable experience. In point of fact, if isomorphisms merely *cause* metaphorical experiences, it is not clear how we should account for the correctness of metaphorical ascriptions. Sure, as Peacocke insists, since resemblances are not always manifest, we may “have to think hard about, and work out, what exactly the correspondence in question is if someone raises the issue” (Peacocke 2009:260), but from the perspective provided by his account, the intentional role of correspondences is fundamentally unwarranted. On the one hand, we would have an experience – that of music sounding sad – and on the other hand a conceptual subsumption leading to a judgement that, however, would not find any confirmation or disconfirmation in the experience itself. Therefore, whatever ascription would equally apply to whatever experience.

This interpretation locates Peacocke's account in the vicinity of Scruton's. Namely, it dooms the metaphorical experience as Peacocke conceives of it, either to have an inherently conceptual content – going against the intuition that we cannot *choose* our experiences – or to commit the heresy of the separable experience.

First, I will try to provide Peacocke's account with some further support. Namely, I will make a detour on an approach to experience that takes metaphors to structure the way in which we standardly experience objects and properties. If such a strategy were viable, then we would have reasons to think that the content of – at least some of – our experiences is inherently metaphorical and offers the required justification to metaphorical ascriptions. In particular, the account that I present, may substantiate the notion of metaphorical content, by introducing a view of metaphors that blurs the distinction between experiences and conceptual categorization.

After this attempt, I will suggest that a better service is provided to resemblances approaches in general by the appeal to cognitive penetrability of the phenomenal character of expressive experiences. Although one can legitimately insist that the content of the experience is non-conceptual, the possibility that the phenomenal character can be cognitively influenced, as it happens in the case of emotional expressions recognition, remains plausible.

4.6 The cognitive approach to metaphorical descriptions

One notorious way to deal with metaphorical ascriptions is traditionally known as the "cognitive approach". George Lakoff is considered the most influential linguist that introduced the cognitive approach to metaphors, especially through the book co-written with Mark Johnson *Metaphors we live by* (1980). Cognitive linguistics holds that we are provided with some very basic concepts that are strongly related to our sensory motor system with which we explore the world. Such concepts present us with a world of discrete objects spread out, moving in space and changing over time. Our basic concepts are the coordinates according to which we experience reality and include: horizontal and vertical directions, spatial positions such as higher and lower places, upward/downward and self-propelled/forced motion, containers and contents, and so on. These can be thought of as broad categories that organise our experiences and thoughts and that can be combined and refined. Also, one may think of the linguistic equivalents of these categories as those

terms that used to have a broader application, and then came refining and narrowing their appropriate domain of application.

So conceived categories and the related linguistic terms are essentially cross-domain: features like *being higher* or *lower*, *fast* or *slow*, *self propelled* or *forced to move* characterise objects almost independently of the realm they belong to. Therefore, the labels with which we describe such objects are often applicable without relevant shifts to objects belonging to different domains. And being this view based on a theory of experience in which our language habits are rooted, it is in the position to explain why the distinction between literal and metaphoric application is so vague. According to Lakoff and Johnson:

> our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. [...] The concept is metaphorically structured, the activity is metaphorically structured, and, consequently, the language is metaphorically structured. (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:4-5).

Experiences and objects of experiences that we label are not rigidly sorted into classes, so that applications of predicates seldom require radical (metaphorical) shifts, for we always experience and describe things and situations relying on linguistic sources coming from different semantic domains. Instead of a sharp divide, this view entails a continuum between literal and metaphorical applications in virtue of the existing continuum among various domains of properties and experience modalities. A hierarchy is implied which gives priority to the concrete over the abstract and to more familiar experiences and labels over less familiar ones. We would accordingly tend to describe more abstract and less familiar experiences in terms of more concrete and more familiar ones.

The inspiring and at the same time controversial perspective offered by this approach is that, in a motto, every experience is metaphorical. The way in which we perceive the world is organised by means of cross-domain categories that apply to any domain of experience so that all descriptions we provide cross-domain (therefore metaphorical) in turn. The prediction of this approach is therefore that our understanding of what we traditionally maintain to be literal expression and of metaphorical ones basically work in the same way.

Lakoff's theory promises to account for metaphorical ascriptions in terms of the continuity that exists between different experience domains. If it kept the promise, it

would provide a powerful tool to explain expressive ascriptions to objects as being anchored to cross-modal and cross-domain experiences that our concepts categorise along a continuum, rather than on the basis of sharp conceptual distinctions. Saying that a piece of music is sad would therefore amount to label an object on the basis of a cross-domain mapping of perceptual features that – for reasons that need to be clarified – we experience as connected to – or, at least, not sharply separated from – emotional expressions. This labelling would not depend on the conceptual intervention at the level of content. Rather, it would work as a literal ascription based on an experiential continuum mirrored by a conceptual continuum.

I do not deny that this perspective is appealing. In particular – and apparently paradoxically – the idea of a continuity among experiences and subsequently among the application of predicates would make the appeal to metaphorical explanations unnecessary. If everything is metaphorical, then nothing is metaphorical. Every ascription of predicates would turn out to be literal in this very loose and branched sense. As I said, this way of dealing with metaphors and experiences can offer support to Peacocke's metaphorical theory about expressive experiences. Indeed, basic perceptual and affective experiences turn out to be so much intertwined with the way in which we conceptualise them, that the appeal to isomorphism would be justified by the fact that experiences are intrinsically isomorphic with one another at a very basic level, which is appropriately described by very basic concepts.

This model has been strongly criticized though. Two objections are worth mentioning. The first comes from cognitive sciences and linguistics studies concerning the way in which people tend to process (i.e. to understand) metaphorical expressions. Elisabeth Camp concludes her overview of psycholinguistic researches about metaphors understanding by suggesting that:

> Overall, then, the empirical data clearly militate against drawing a sharp boundary between literal and metaphorical meaning, or insisting that metaphor is a "deviant" or unusual use of language. But at the same time, they do clearly support some distinction between literal and metaphorical meaning. (Camp 2006:158)

In point of fact, empirical studies about the cognitive implementation of metaphors understanding show relevant differences in terms of the average time required to understand a metaphor and the average time required to understand standard linguistic

ascriptions (Camp 2006; Blasko and Connine 1993; Brisard *et al.* 2001, Gentner and Wolff 1997). This makes it at least difficult to consider the understanding of literal sentences as amounting to the understanding of metaphors. If this is the case, then the best support that psycholinguistic studies can provide to Lakoff's approach is that *sometimes* we reason in terms of metaphors, but this is not enough to conclude that *all* our experiences and the related linguistic descriptions function as metaphorical experiences and descriptions.

The second objection to the Lakoffian stance is that it assumes the existence of an asymmetry between certain experiences – and their descriptions – and others. Therefore, we would be forced to process those experiences that we are less familiar with, in terms of those that we are more familiar with. Yet, this is difficult to prove. As Camp correctly notices, we tend to describe arguments in terms of the vocabulary of war (*indefensible* claims, *attacking* weak points, *demolishing* arguments) despite most of us are definitely unfamiliar with the experience of the war. Along the same line, and explicitly criticizing a Lakoffian approach to emotion terms (namely, Zoltàn Kövecses' very controversial book: *Metaphors* of *Anger, Pride and Love: A Lexical Approach to the Structure of Concepts* (1986)), Ortony (1988) insists that there is no evidence for the vocabulary of emotions being parasitic on that of more concrete experiences. The fact that we tend to use metaphorical descriptions of affective states that appeal to colours, tactile features or the behaviour of materials (the reference is to Lakoff's example: ANGER IS HEAT OF FLUID IN A CONTAINER) does not depend on that we acquire the concepts of colours or material features *before* we acquire our vocabulary of emotion terms:

> If anything, it seems more likely that the emotion concepts precede these more sophisticated concepts upon which they are alleged to depend. For example, it seems more reasonable to suppose that children come to acquire concepts of anger and love *before* acquiring an understanding of the behaviour of hot fluids (Ortony 1988:101-102)

Thus, it seems that what one should retain from the theory by Lakoff and Johnson is a more modest view, relying on what Ortony calls a "lexicalization view" and of what Camp calls a "similarity view". As I shall show, taking this path leads us back to our fundamental worry about expressive ascriptions to inanimate objects.

The lexicalization view about metaphorical expressions (above all those used to describe emotions) that Ortony is willing to support maintains that:

> there exists (or from a historical perspective, existed) source domains in which one or more already lexicalised relations could be mapped onto similar relations in the target (emotion) domain and that in this latter domain those relations were not already independently lexicalised. (Ortony 1988:103)

Unlike the stronger cognitive approach, this view does not rely on radical assumptions in terms of the priority of certain experiences over the others. It neither holds that our mental models are constitutively metaphorical. Rather, it suggests a way in which metaphorical ascriptions may work – which, in my view, fully overlaps with Black's account – by using the relations existing in one domain of the experience that we can describe with more fine-grained terms, to map another domain for which a coarser literal vocabulary is available.

The way in which the mapping process works on a cognitive level is far from clear. I will confine myself to report Camp's view on the most convincing path to take, avoiding the details of the concerned theories. Camp (2006) endorses a two-tiered theory of metaphors' understanding that on one hand relies on the search for similarities between the source and the target domain of a metaphor, and on the other hand consists in the projection of knowledge on the target domain in such a way that establishes further matches and make the resulting picture more coherent, rather than limiting it to the sole features explicitly mentioned in the metaphor. If "nature is a temple" it is not just because trees resemble columns ("des vivants piliers"), as the renowned Baudelaire's sonnet explicitly says, but also, probably, because the comparison between Nature and temples can be expanded so as to involve references to the spiritual relation one can entertain with both.

It seems that we are once again stuck with the same problem: the lexicalization view invites us to think that metaphorical applications follow the recognition of similarity relations holding between domains. Moreover, the approach recommended by Camp is, as she says, "a more systematic and algorithmic version of Black's 'interactionist' theory" (Camp 2006:164), based on the possibility to recognise resemblances between distinct domains. Yet, this overall approach is at odds with those cases in which similarities cannot be recognised. The case of aesthetic descriptions should, on this view, work as a case of

resemblances recognition, namely the recognition of similarities between non-aesthetic, allegedly perceptual properties, and aesthetic properties to which the same terms apply. But the distinction offered in the previous chapter showed that this is not always the case. Resemblances may well go unnoticed, and still be causally responsible for expressive recognition to occur. Yet, if one takes their role to be causal, the heresy of the separable experience is in ambush.

The cognitive approach to metaphors and metaphorical experiences relies on the idea that, despite they are less strictly categorised than it is usually thought, certain experiences are parasitic on others, but it does not provide satisfying evidences for such a hierarchy. The opponents of this view can easily insist that, as long as one does not have a clear theory of concepts acquisition that proves such assumptions, the best one can do is keeping the explanation on a lexical level. We "simply" make metaphorical use of words when isomorphisms allow for it. And this implies, once again, that concepts take part in the experience, either at the content level – determining what property of the source domain resembles what property of the target domain – or at the phenomenal level, turning a perceptual experience into a recognitional one, by means of a metaphorical application.

4.7 Recognitional expressive experiences as cognitively penetrated by metaphorical concepts

I suggest that this approach can finally benefit from the notion of cognitive penetrability of the phenomenal character of expressive experience. As I have already noticed, the recognitional process involved in expressive experience is analogous to processes of *seeing-as*. This is in line with Contour theories and with the intuitions shared for instance by Levinson, Noordhof and Peacocke, that is, the idea that expressive experience is a fundamentally perceptual experience that, nevertheless, mobilises conceptual knowledge in order to take place. In the previous chapter I treated expressive experience of musical gestures as being similar to *seeing-as* experiences. That discussion brought to light a disagreement within the seeing-as debate concerning the role played by concepts. However, most authors seem disposed to accept that concepts can intervene and modify perceptual experiences, although they disagree on the way in which this intervention takes place.

It has been suggested that top-down modification of perceptual experience, that is, interventions from high cognitive and especially conceptual functions can occur in the form of cognitive penetration. In particular, in his account of *seeing-as*, Voltolini argues in favour of cognitive penetration as being plausibly responsible for a range of experiences (Voltolini 2013:230). Given that, in the previous chapter, I endorsed Voltolini's view, suggesting that the gestaltic properties constitute the content of expressive experience, I take it that the hypothesis that some sort of cognitive penetration explains recognitional expressive experiences is worth applying.

If one agrees that conceptual intervention can make the difference in the phenomenal character of an experience, and if cognitive penetration is a plausible explanatory strategy to account for (some) recognitional experiences, then such a change could be explained in two ways, mirroring the above mentioned distinction between strong and weak cognitive penetration. The first consists in arguing that emotion concepts influence the content of expressive experience whereas the second amounts to denying that concepts play such a constitutive role, arguing instead that they intervene at the level of the phenomenal character.

I have already argued for the content of expressive experience being constituted by dynamic perceptual patterns (Chapter 3). Moreover, I have shown that arguing for a conceptual content of expressive experience, as Scruton does, fails to account for the distinction – which I take to be phenomenologically attested – between recognitional and perceptual experiences, that is, between merely perceiving an affective character and recognising that character as such. This distinction must instead be preserved and explained. One thing is to ascribe expressive properties by means of the conceptual intervention of metaphors, and another thing is to undergo an expressive experience, that is, hearing the sad character of music or seeing a lively shade.

Yet, this distinction does not rule out the possibility that certain expressive experiences are conceptually shaped, i.e., require the intervention of conceptual knowledge in such a way that preserves their non conceptual nature.

Cognitive penetrability of the phenomenal character of perceptual experiences may provide an explanation. I have introduced a view according to which conceptual abilities drawing on emotion concepts are responsible for recognitional processes of ambiguous face expressions; moreover, I have endorsed the idea that the recognition of patterns such as musical gestures as being expressive may require the detection of

underlying similarities between a pattern and an expressive gesture and that such a detection may occur unknowingly.

I can now claim that recognitional expressive experiences take place in the form of a perceptual experience of dynamic patterns that trigger the intervention of emotion concepts. This triggering happens in virtue of resemblances between patterns and typical expressive manifestation that one has learnt to discriminate. Concepts affect the phenomenal character by activating the recognitional process of resemblances between patterns. Moreover, the concepts involved in this process apply metaphorically, that is, their application rely on the possibility to be justified by pointing at those resemblances underlying the experience.

I take this description of the recognitional mechanism to satisfy the requirements for something to be an instance of cognitive penetration. In point of fact, I can say that the phenomenal character of expressive experience so-conceived is causally dependent on the emotion concept that modifies it. To put it counterfactually, if one were not able to apply the concept of, say, melancholy to a landscape, one would not be able to recognise that landscape as being melancholy. This seems to me a plausible consequence of this account, provided that it does not reduce expressive experience to recognition.[33]

Secondly, this mechanism satisfies the requirement that the causal chain relating the cognitive and the perceptual content is internal and mental, for the chain I have described does not appeal to any non-mental function. Moreover, the link between the emotion concept and the phenomenal character resulting from cognitive penetration seems to me semantically coherent. As noticed above, the way to interpret the semantic constraint is not undisputed. Yet, the basic worry from which it raises is avoiding merely causal relations which would not do justice to the epistemological function that cognitive penetrability is held to accomplish. The resulting requirement is that the cognitive content that cognitively pervades the phenomenal character provides also reasons for the resulting experience (Gross 2017). If this is so, then I believe that the intervention of an emotion concept that applies in virtue of the resemblances between a component of emotions (namely expressive behaviours) and a perceivable pattern can provide a rational

[33] I know that the problem of attention counting or not as cognitive penetration is debatable. Gross very recently addressed this issue, arguing for a pluralist answer (2017). Since my aim is not to establish what cognitive penetration actually is, I will rather follow MacPherson (2012:44) and Voltolini (2013) allowing for certain attentional mechanisms – namely those that do not overtly involve spatial attention – counting as instances of cognitive penetration.

justification for the resulting phenomenal character, that is therefore experienced as semantically connected to emotions.[34]

This overall account can be taken as a version of resemblance theories that nevertheless shows to have some advantages over others. The first is that it does not imply that expressive experience is necessarily a recognitional experience, for it holds that the content of the experience is non-conceptual and is not cognitively penetrated. As a consequence, it leaves room for non-recognitional experiences of expressive features.

Moreover, its explanatory claim is limited to cases in which resemblances can be detected (either personally or subpersonally), leaving the door open for to explanation of cases in which resemblances lack. Also, despite preserving the idea of a perceptual phenomenal character, by allowing for cognitive intervention, it is compatible with accounts that take imagination to be at work in expressive experiences. In point of fact, given the recognitional step, one may well explain the imaginative engagement in terms of those imaginings that rely on resemblances. Imagination, be it sensuous or propositional, can be legitimately deemed responsible for expressive experiences that draws sophisticated connections between perceptual patterns and complex emotions and psychological states more broadly.

Unlike emotion ascriptions to living beings, the ascription of expressiveness relies entirely on the possibility of ranging over the perceptual aspect of things, relating it to background knowledge and imaginings about emotions, preventing the subject from the ascription of emotional states. Once recognised as sad, a musical gesture may well be imagined as the expression of a fictional persona, or as the outcome of a sadness-driven creative process. Additionally, natural objects may be imagined as being the result of an intentional creative gesture and included within a wider network of imaginings that can be plausibly captured by creative usages of language.

When endorsing a view that makes conceptual intervention at least partly responsible for the resulting expressive experience, and that therefore takes expressive properties to be relatively response-dependent properties, I must take into account the risk represented by the heresy of the separable experience. As seen, Peacocke's account faces this risk, as long as it takes resemblances to be merely causal triggers of those concepts that should shape the phenomenal character of expressive experience. At the

[34] The semantic link between the cognitive content and the perceptual content will hopefully result even more clearly in the next chapter, where I will clarify the kind of concepts that are in play when we talk about (and recognise) emotions.

same time, it cannot say that expressive experience represents resemblances, for this is not always the case according to phenomenology.

However, beside what I have just said about the possibility for an independent account of non-recognitional expressive experiences in terms of their non-conceptual contents, I should insist that the appeal to cognitive penetration can mitigate the risks entailed by response-dependence. In point of fact, those concepts that intervene in the perceptual experiences are meant to make salient those dynamic perceptual properties that the experience is about, namely their non conceptual perceptual content. Rhythmic, dynamic, gestaltic properties are in point of fact constitutive of the intentional content of expressive experience and the conceptual intervention is meant to – so to say – cast light on their connections with emotional expressions. This makes expressive properties represented in experiences of the kind of the musical gesture weakly response-dependent properties, that is, their instantiation depends on the way in which we conceptualise them only as long as (i) conceptual recognition is in play and (ii) it applies to resemblances. As I try to show in the last chapter, this is not the case for all expressive experience and, therefore, for all expressive properties.

Granted, a further step forward must be done to illuminate cases in which, lacking resemblances, recognitional experiences by means of metaphorical application of concepts cannot take place.

Chapter 5

Expressive experiences: secondary meaning and core affect

In this last chapter I focus on the exemplar expressive experience of the minor chord. I frame the problem starting from the account I have provided of expressive experience as being the result of a conceptual recognition. Section 5.1. addresses the sort of conceptual knowledge of emotions that one is expected to have in order to recognise a chord or a shade of colour as expressive of an affective state. In 5.2. I introduce the notion of *core affect* as it is put forward by Russell's constructivist theory of emotions and I endorse it, claiming that it is well suited to explain simple expressive experience. I follow Russell's distinction between emotions and meta-emotions, being the latter conceptual self-ascriptions. This allows me claiming that even the recognition of simple affective features may consist in the application of conceptual knowledge to a non-conceptual content, and that this conceptual intervention can be accounted for as weak cognitive penetration. In 5.3. I claim that emotions are multi-componential items and that the concepts that better capture them are cluster concepts. Besides offering further support to the metaphorical account previously given of conceptual intervention in the case of the expressive musical gesture, this view of emotion concepts allows for one further step. Namely, it paves the way to the notion of *secondary meaning* that, I contend, accounts for the way in which concepts apply to simple expressive experiences (5.4.). In 5.5. I finally put forward an explanation for recognitional expressive experiences of simple features as having non-conceptual content and a cognitively permeated phenomenal character. In 5.6. I conclude that expressive experiences are not necessarily recognitional experiences, that is, one can undergo expressive experiences without the intervention of conceptual knowledge.

5.1 What kind of emotion knowledge?

Whereas when we recognise an expressive pattern as expressive one may argue that resemblances, although not manifest, play a role, the case of chords and of shades of colours is hardly explicable in this way. When we hear a mournful chord, not only we are not aware of what makes it similar to typical expressive behaviours, but it is also

difficult to justify *ex post* such an experience referring to this kind of isomorphism. Thus, what resemblances could hold between a chord and the expression of sadness, or a shade of orange and the expression of cheerfulness, such that they trigger recognitional experiences of expressiveness?

True, it seems that Peacocke offers a way to reintroduce isomorphism also in accounting for the expressive minor chord.

> The relation of the perceived minor to its (unheard) major is perceived metaphorically-as an instance of the relation an emotion of sadness, a subdued emotion experienced from the inside, bears to a non-sad ordinary state of mind that is not subdued. The isomorphism in question is a mapping from the domain of moods (a normal non-sad mood, and sadness in this case) to the modes of major and minor. One of the literal relations of sadness to a normal mood is that of the former being more subdued than the latter. Under the isomorphism, this relation is mapped onto the relation of being the minor of the corresponding (unheard) major. (Peacocke 2009:262-263)

On his view, the detectable isomorphism would not consist, as in the case of the musical gesture, in the resemblance between the pattern and some expressive behaviour. Rather, it has to do with the "position" that the perceptual feature (the sound) occupies within the network of related features. In the case of the minor chord, its being "subdued" compared to the major offers the appeal for a comparison with subdued affective states, such as sadness. The dynamic tension provided by this relation is sufficient for a comparison with some component of an affective state.

And we may think about colours. Let us consider chromatic shades used to paint internal walls of public buildings. For how this consideration might sound trivial, I think it gets to the point: choosing light, pastel shades of grey rather than lively shades of orange provide the overall environment with an affective tone. Interior designers are well aware of this minimal expressiveness of colours, that is, they are aware of the perceptual space in which shades of colours are located and can interact with one another. Grey will therefore present itself to the observer as more subdued than red, for example, so entertaining a relation analogous to the major-minor relation between chords. On this perspective, simple expressive features are perceived as related to further features, and if

we follow Peacocke, it is thanks to this more or less manifest relations that they can be mapped onto the domain of affective states.

It should be added that we rarely see isolated colours or hear isolated sounds, devoid of a minimal context. Interesting remarks about the way in which we usually experience colours are offered by Martin Lindauer:

> First note that more than just "red" is experienced [...]. The color could be crimson, scarlet, ruby, burgundy, or cherry – as well as dark, deep, exciting, and "fire" red. (Similarly, the family of blues originating in the sky includes azure, beryl, cerulean, cobalt, indigo, navy, royal, sapphire, teal, turquoise, and ultramarine – and "electric" and "sky" blue.) Within the family of reds, one particular shade "stands out" as the most representative (prototypical) and memorable (codable). A flood of color names, like cerise, fuchsia, mauve, and "Weekend in the Country" are invented by paint manufacturers, decorators, and interior designers in an attempt to capture subtle physiognomic nuances [...]. The perception of a color is also affected by the circumstances under which it is seen, its surround. Viewed without distance cues, devoid of surface properties, and without a context, like the sky overhead, colors are called "aperture colors." When seen under even more restricted circumstances, "film color" describes a color viewed in isolation, not tied to any object, as when looked at through a peephole that restricts our view to the object itself without any of its surrounding area. (Lindauer 2013:87)

Colours hardly present themselves as segregated from further shades, shapes, surfaces, textures, as well as sounds are rarely heard in isolation. Therefore, when considering expressive experience of simple properties, one should always be aware that they tend to present themselves in context. Thus, one may insist that, also given our standard encounters with this sort of features, it is likely that we experience them and learn to recognise them as being related to other features, such as their surrounds or in overt or covert comparison with other shades, or sounds.

Yet, I believe that this condition is not fully satisfactory. Once again, it is not clear why recognising something as being subdued should lead to experience it as sad rather than, simply, as low. This problem is not new, it simply re-emerges as something that the appeal to resemblance and isomorphism cannot fix once for all.

A conceptual intervention analogous to the one proposed in the previous chapter can be hypothesized in order to answer this question. The intuition would be that having

some knowledge about emotions makes so that a subdued chord is conceptually categorised as bearing some relation to emotions. Emotion concepts would therefore shape the experience we have of the chord making such a relation salient, allowing us to label its content (the perceivable structure of the chord) as "mournful" or "deeply sad".

Peacocke focuses on a specific aspect of emotions, and therefore of the specific sort of knowledge one is expected to have in order to hear a chord as sad. Namely, one has to know how emotions feel "from within". He explains the relation between the perceptual experience of a minor chord as subdued and the emotion of sadness in terms of the knowledge one has about what sadness feels like subjectively: "The perception of the chord as expressing sadness is possible only for someone who has some idea of what sadness is like from the inside" (Peacocke 2009:263).

What does this knowledge amount to? What is it to know what sadness is like from the inside and to apply this knowledge to the experience of a sound? The idea seems to be that if I know what it is like to feel sad, then I should in principle be able to ascribe sadness to the subdued minor chord. However, it is not entirely clear how this recognitional process should take place.

On the one hand, it does not amount to ascribe anything like an expression to the chord, because the recognitional process involves subjective feelings rather than expressions of those feelings; on the other hand, it is difficult to understand how the capacity to recognise something as a *felt* feeling could translate into the ascription of a property to an object. According to Peacocke, once again, the capacity to exploit an isomorphism is required, i.e., the isomorphism between, say, feeling "low" and hearing a "low" chord. Knowing what it is like from the inside to feel low and knowing that it is at least part of what it is like to feel sad, should allow us recognising the minor chord as sad in virtue of its being categorised as lower than other chords.

As I have to recall, Malcolm Budd had an analogous intuition supporting his resemblance account, which I have already discussed. In short, he claimed that we perceive the resemblance between music and the first personal experience of emotions "from within". I have also shown (1.8), following Saam Trivedi's criticism, why this view is problematic: according to Trivedi, Budd's resemblance theory relies on a notion of resemblance that looses contact with our intuition of what it is to express an emotion outwardly. Rather, it provides us with some causal story that is not *per se* sufficient to explain expressive experience (Trivedi 2001).

Still, the power of such an intuition is attested by accounts that we have already encountered and discussed. The first is Aaron Ridley's weak arousalism. Against the Contour view he argued that we cannot reduce expressive experience to the simple detection of perceptual patterns and their resemblances to expressions. Instead, he claims that some knowledge of those feelings connected to emotions is required by an explanation of expressive experience – if we do not want to reduce it to something that even un-affective machines can perform. In addition, the same worry can be found in Wollheim, where it also takes the shape of an antireductionism of expressive properties to standard perceptual ones, and appeals to the intervention of associative mechanisms of projections (Wollheim 1993).

I believe that the case of the mournful chord, i.e., of simple features that are not recognisable as similar to expressive gestures, invites us to look for an additional explanation of two aspects of expressive experience. First, it forces us to answer the question of the kind of conceptual intervention that occurs when we recognise them as being expressive; second, it makes us focus on non-recognitional expressive experiences that do not require conceptual knowledge in order to take place.

These two questions will turn out to be strongly related to one another. In point of fact, the account I will provide for emotion knowledge will reveal the nature of those low level affective qualities that can be experienced in the absence of conceptual knowledge. This will therefore offer an answer also to the second question.

My argument will be two-tiered: I will first assess the kind of knowledge of emotions that we are supposed to have in order to recognise a simple sound as expressive, appealing to constructivist theories of emotions based on core affect; second I will explore emotion concepts and offer an account of their use that is compatible with different justified applications to both animated and inanimate beings. This will allow me saying that expressive experiences that do not involve recognisable resemblances are categorised by means of quasi-metaphors.

5.2 Emotions as core affect and meta-emotions as conceptual recognition

Peacocke suggests that we need at least to be able to know what it is like to feel sad from the inside. Well, what does this knowledge amount to? Peacocke does not clarify this point, which I think is worth developing. What does it mean and how does it happen that we know what it is like to feel sad?

My impression is that, when it comes to the appeal to emotions in theories of expressive and aesthetic experiences, it is not always clear what theory of emotions we should refer to. So far, I have directly dealt with emotions only in terms of their phenomenal character, without discussing nor endorsing any specific theory of emotions and emotion concepts. The discussion taken forward in the second chapter only allowed me to reject the arousalistic stance according to which ascribing expressive features to objects results from feeling them.

Constructivist theories of emotions are, on my view, in a privileged position to clarify this point. They indeed offer an original approach to what emotions consist in, and on what knowledge about emotion is. Moreover, they take these two sides to interact, giving rise to emotion episodes. In what follows, I endorse in particular James Russell's version of constructivism based on the notion of *core affect*.

In a nutshell, Russell argues that our knowledge of emotions broadly conceived, consists in the conscious intentional state representing the intentional object of the emotion as well as somatosensory perceptions and requiring emotion concepts to be instantiated (Russell 2014:195).[35] This conscious, conceptual representation is itself part of the emotional episode broadly conceived, but can be analysed in terms of an *emotional meta-experience* that, importantly, need not be present at every occurrence of an emotion. Russell conceives of the content of these meta-emotions as the appraisal of what in the world may alter our wellbeing. Emotional meta-experiences are therefore self-ascriptions of affective states that require discriminatory capacities, but – although such conceptual self ascriptions can be considered legitimate components of emotion episodes – they do not exhaust the emotional episode.

This conception of emotions' self-ascription is already useful to integrate Peacocke's intuition. Namely, it offers a view on what it is to have knowledge of emotions from within: it consists in being able to apply concepts such as "fear", "sadness" and "joy" to the perceptions that we have of the way in which things in the world, as well as our own thoughts or beliefs, may alter our wellbeing.

Now, the question is still standing about what this sort of self-ascriptions actually categorise, that is, what they are about. Russell takes the core of such appraisals to be core affect. In introducing this notion, he writes:

[35] See Kringelbach and Berridge (2014) for an overview of the neural underpinnings of core affect as basic component of emotions.

> Core affect is a part of what are commonly called emotions, feelings, and moods, but it is not synonymous with any of these […] whereas emotional episodes are said to begin and then, after a short time, end, one is always in some state of core affect, which simply varies over time (sometimes slowly, sometimes rapidly) without beginning or end. Emotional episodes are typically directed at something (one is angry with, afraid of, or sad about something). In contrast, core affect is not necessarily directed at anything. Like mood, core affect per se can be free-floating (as in feeling down but not about anything and without knowing why), but it can come to be directed at something. (Russell 2014:195-6)

The notion of core affect proves to be a useful heuristic tool in psychology and neuroscience. In point of fact, according to Russell's seminal formulation:

> Core affect is a neurophysiological state that is consciously accessible as a simple, non-reflective feeling that is an integral blend of hedonic (pleasure–displeasure) and arousal (sleepy–activated) values (Russell, 2003:147).

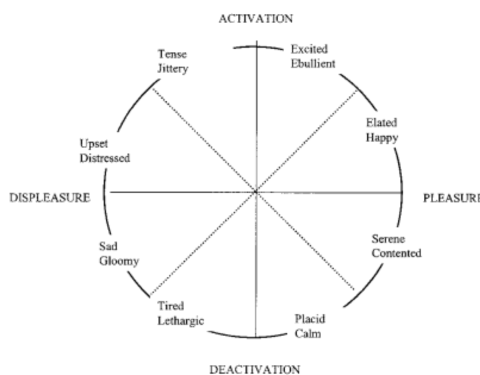

Figure 1. Core affect.

Core affect are standardly represented as the combination of these two dimensions, so that they consist in an assessment of one's condition at a certain time, determined by the degree of pleasure (ranging from agony to ecstasy) combined with that of arousal (ranging from sleep to frenetic excitement) (Russell and Barrett 1999; Russell 2003; Russell 2015). Core affect can be activated by and/or directed towards "affective qualities", the perception of which is "a 'cold' process, made hot by being combined with a change in core affect" (Russell 2003:148).

So, Russell individuates two fundamental components of emotional episodes (whose conceptual categorization may or may not take place). These are core affect on

the one hand and affective qualities on the other hand. Whereas the former can be intuitively understood as moods or feelings, the latter are dispositional properties that are perceived according to the same dimensional criteria (pleasure – or valence – and arousal) as what can potentially alter one's core affect. Such dispositions are, on this view, perceptually appraised without the need for concepts. Moreover, such an appraisal of affective qualities does not require that any modification of core affect occurs:

> Phenomenologically, core affect is a feeling inside oneself, whereas an affective quality is a property of the thing perceived. […] in principle, perception of affective quality can occur with no change at all in core affect (Russell 2003:157).

This way of conceiving of affective qualities is consistent with what I have argued so far about expressive properties. It indeed maintains that there are properties of the world that can be experienced as inherently connected to our affective dimension, requiring neither the activation of background knowledge on one hand, nor the arousal of emotions on the other hand. Such a perspective helps me to insist on that the perception of low level expressive properties, such as those instantiated by our experiences of certain notes or chords, is inherently perceptual. It is in the position to rule out arousal as a necessary condition for expressive experience. Yet, it maintains that a fundamental connection exists between what happens "inside" and what is recognised "outside", as a property of the world.

In some sense, the isomorphism invoked by Peacocke is preserved by this view. It amounts to qualities of the environment and qualities of feelings being classifiable according to the same dimensions, namely arousal and valence. Yet, what is fundamental for my account is that, if so things stand, I do not need to assume that recognition of any inner modification of core affect occurs prior to recognition of affective qualities in the environment. Moreover, such a recognition may occur by means of a conceptual intervention (resulting into the ascription of an affective state) which, nevertheless, is not a necessary condition for the experience.

Recently, strengthening the reliability of constructivist approaches to emotions that are based on core affect, Cespedes-Guevara and Eerola (2018) argued that such approaches are better suited than traditional theories of basic emotions to account for what they call the "emotional meaning" of music – that is, expressiveness. They massively review the available psychological literature about music and emotions, contending that

empirical results both regarding adults and children are best interpreted through the constructivist dimensional lens.

One of the most important claims that I draw from their review is that core affect can account for cross-cultural and cross-age differences, as well as for convergences. The culturally and cognitively-related stance of constructivism is nevertheless grounded in a biological, and evolutionarily consistent kernel. The dimensional approach accounts for the basic layer of emotion and expression perception appealing to biological functions such as the preservation of well-being; however, it considers this level of emotional experience as interacting with high level cognitive functions. The latter admit for a rational use of concepts and for culturally related modifications of the experience. Although, to my knowledge, constructivism does not explicitly address the issue of cognitive penetrability of perceptual and affective contents, it seems consistent with such a view. In point of fact, it allows for the same emotion to be categorised and self-ascribed in different ways, giving rise to different overall experiences, depending on a number of factors, especially cognitive ones.

Let me now sum up the benefits that a theory of expressiveness might gain by endorsing constructivism based on core affect. First, the notion of affective qualities as dispositionally related to core affect can explain the relation between felt emotions and perceived affect without appealing to arousalism. I can consistently claim that certain properties of the world can be experienced as expressive as long as they are recognised as capable of modifying one's core affect. What Russell calls affective qualities can be interpreted as corresponding to those low level perceivable properties (chords, sounds, colours, lines) that we tend to perceive as affectively loaded and therefore to recognise as being minimally expressive of emotions. Moreover, this view should satisfy Ridley's worry about formalist and perceptualist explanations of expressive experience that – he maintains – do not account for the difference between sentient beings and computers that undergo expressive experiences (Ridley 1995)[36]. The perception of affective qualities in the environment is, according to Russell, intrinsically connected to the possibility that such features alter the balance of inner well-being – something that, allegedly, is not available to computing machines. This connection is granted by the dimensional field that core affect share with affective qualities.

[36] I mentioned this worry in Chapter 2, section 2.3.

Second, the theory of core affect combined with affective qualities avoids the limitation to traditional 'basic emotions' the range of expressions that can be perceptually recognised. Therefore, applied to a theory of expressive properties, this dimensional model allows extending such a range to as many emotional expressions as the concepts of emotions that one possesses. Accordingly, depending on contextual elements as well as on one's background knowledge, white can be peaceful, inhuman, still, devoid of life, promising or boring.[37] Yet, any of these possible descriptions based on a recognitional experience is grounded in the dimensional space of core affect which is our basic affective equipment. The conceptual categorisation occurs once the modification of core affect is felt, or the affective quality is perceived, or once the combination of the two is in play. If this kind of appraisal applies to expressive experience, then the expressive experience that can eventually be shaped by conceptual categorisation is anchored to very low level features that we do not need to conceptualise in order to apprehend as emotionally loaded. These features can be vague and coarse-grained, for they range along the vectors of pleasantness and arousal. Therefore, it is likely that, lacking more fine-grained concepts, one can only experience simple expressive properties such as being more or less agitated, static, potentially pleasant, potentially unpleasant. Instead, the expressive experience of white as being "inhuman" is something that requires more refined emotion concepts to take place (and, allegedly, some imaginative context that justifies the conceptual application).[38]

Third, accounting for expressive experience by referring to the dimensional structure proposed by constructivism and to the possibility of cognitive integrations allows to explain the differences between distinct levels of expertise in the affective domain on the one hand, and in the aesthetic field on the other hand. By endorsing a theory of core affect, a perceptualist theory of expressive experience can easily claim that the expert musician and the novice hearer will entertain distinct expressive experiences of the same auditory feature (the minor chord, once again), thanks to their conceptual capacities being more or less fine-grained. Analogously, such a theory can explain why children are

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[37] Herman Melville devotes a paragraph of his *Moby Dick* to the inhumanity of white, whereas Paul Klee speaks of its lack of life. I owe these examples to Paolo Spinicci's course of theoretical philosophy at the university of Milan, 2014.

[38] This is probably one of the aspects of my theory of expressiveness that should be developed further. The idea that the sort of context that allows for the application and the recognitional experience of properties as expressive of complex emotions is put forward and elaborated by Spinicci (2017). This seems to me the right direction to take, for it reintroduces imagination in expressive experience by capturing its inherent capacity of establishing relations between what is actually perceived and higher level kinds of representations.

very skilled from a very early age in discriminating between positive and negative affective values of music (Giomo 1993;[39] Trehub, Hannon, Schachner 2010). It can indeed claim that the experience is based on the same perceptual appraisal of low level affective qualities that comes prior to the conceptual categorisation of the chord as being, say, simply "subdued", or "sad". Conceptual categorization can intervene and refine the overall experience, allowing for subsequent ascriptions.[40]

Therefore, despite conceptual intervention can enhance expressive experience, such an experience will not be entirely response-dependent. Instead, it will consist in the perception of those worldly low level features that are inherently connected to core affect. This specific advantage will be discussed in the last section, and it will finally allow me to claim that not only the content of expressive experience is non-conceptual, but also its phenomenal character can do without the intervention of emotion concepts.

Finally, constructivism generally endorses an anti-essentialist view of emotions as psychological episodes in conjunction with a theory of emotion concepts as family resemblances concepts. As a result, it takes emotion knowledge that can intervene in emotional episodes to be grounded in common language and everyday experiences. This makes so that the criteria for the justified use of emotion concepts is not rigidly fixed, neither by the presence of a mental state, nor by the presence of gestures, behaviours or the like. In order to understand this latter benefit that such a theory can provide to my view of expressive experiences, I have to explore the constructivist approach to emotion concepts, based on the view of emotions as clusters of features.

5.3 Cluster-concepts and emotions as patterns

Given what I have been arguing in the previous and present chapter about recognitional experiences of expressive properties as involving the possession of emotion concepts, I shall now put forward a consistent view about what emotion concepts are and how their application relates to emotions conceived as complex multi-componential phenomena.

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[39] It can be interesting to note that Giomo found scarce correlation between musical training and capacity to ascribe affective value to music.

[40] An analogous dimensional approach to emotions is fruitfully exploited by Juslin and Timmens (2010), where it is explicitly related to experimental results concerning musical fruition and evaluation. Emotions ascribed to music are accordingly located along the two orthogonal axes of valence and arousal.

Authors who, like Zangwill, assume that emotions amount to one feature – usually an internally felt state – or to a limited set of necessary components, derive from this assumption the idea that the kind of concept that needs to be mastered in order to perform the recognition of certain perceptual aspects as connected to emotions, is the concept that applies to such a feature (or set of components). Such a narrow view of what emotions are and of what kind of concept identifies them is overtly contradicted by many theories of emotions.

Arguably, the kind of concept in play depends on the kind of emotion theory one is disposed to endorse: if one holds that emotions are to be identified by means of their intentional object (e.g. Stecker 1984), then one would probably think that possessing the concept of sadness is to possess the concept of what we can be sorry about; if one holds that emotions are identified by the typical appraisal, then one will consider the concept of sadness to correctly apply to that typical appraisal (Scherer 2009); if one thinks that emotions are identified by the "gut reaction" we undergo when feeling, again, sad, then the concept of sadness will correctly apply only to those cases in which one undergoes the gut reaction (Prinz 2004), and so on.

Nowadays, most authors agree that emotions are better identified as complex patterns of heterogeneous components rather than by a unique, necessary feature. The occurrence of an emotion is hardly identifiable as the instantiation of a single kind of property such as the presence of its intentional object, the evaluative attitude of the subject, the activation of some physiological, measurable reaction or the external manifestation of a feeling. Moreover, many philosophers and psychologists maintain that emotions consist in dynamic processes that involve a number of components, rather than in temporally and functionally limited episodes. (e.g., Izard *et al.* 2000; Scherer 2009; Newen *et al.* 2015; Barrett *et al.* 2015. See also Robinson 2005 for an insightful overview).

Appraisal theories, for instance, tend to consider emotions as adaptive processes that detect and assess the significance of the environment for well-being. Appraisal is precisely such a detection process. Accordingly, emotions consist in the recognition of what and how, in the environment, can satisfy or prevent from the satisfaction of our needs, attachments, values, goals, and beliefs (see, among others: Smith and Ellsworth 1985; Lazarus 1991; Frijda 2007; Scherer 2004, 2009; Ellsworth 2013). They thereby establish interactive connections with objects and events. In order to describe and explain these processes, Scherer put forward the so-called Component Process Model (CPM) that accounts for the architecture of emotions as dynamic processes involving a number of

variables, reactions and organismic systems and subsystems (Scherer 2009). Among these components are physiological reactions, motivational components, evaluative (cognitive) components, tendencies to action, motor activations, bodily and facial expressions, feeling components, the neural systems and subsystems that implement all these factors and the social and normative variables that can affect the emotional process. Moreover, emotions are usually said to possess intentional objects, towards which they are directed with axiological attitudes. In principle, the list of components is not limited to such features, nonetheless this should suffice to realise that the most adequate way to conceive of emotions is as being patterns of components that relate to one another (the dynamic model proposed by Scherer offers an insight on these relations), but do not necessarily occur all together in every emotional episode. Still, one may argue that theories of appraisal, despite presenting differences from one another (see Moors *et al.* 2013 for a review of their common assumptions and specificities), take the appraisal process to be essential for the occurrence of an emotional episode: no appraisal, no emotion.

Constructivist theories stress this multi-factors view of emotions and affectivity more in general. As it has been noticed, constructivism is an approach to psychology whose history has not been reconstructed as a unitary tradition so far (Barrett and Russell 2014). Nevertheless, constructivism can be understood as assuming an anti-essentialist perspective on affective phenomena (Barrett 2013). On this count, constructivism radicalizes the multi-componential approach that I have introduced referring to appraisal theories by rejecting the essential role of appraisals too. Constructivism of emotions stems from the consideration that there is no agreement about what emotions are, that is, about the paradigmatic concept of emotion to be adopted, neither in the field of psychology and philosophy, nor in the field of neurosciences. According to a constructivist approach, an unwarranted essentialist assumption is responsible for such a disagreement:

> […] there are a variety of meanings employed for emotion, but scientific inquiry seems unable to settle the matter. The reason for this conundrum can be found in what these unanswered questions (What are the classes of emotion? How many? Definition? What is it?) have in common: an assumption that the components (nonverbal expressions, physiological changes, etc.) in an emotional episode are caused by and therefore explained by a common agent behind them, the essence of each emotion. (Barrett and Russell 2014:4)

Supporters of constructivism hold the view that emotion concepts apply to many of the listed components, none of which is essential to those emotional episodes that psychology and cognitive sciences should account for. Not all components will appear in all emotional episodes and however they need not occur in a fixed order. Both according to constructivism and to appraisal theories, these components are mostly processes, unfolding over time and interacting with each other and with further psychological and physiological processes (Russell 2014:201; Scherer 2009; Newen *et al.* 2015). Let us consider the example of sadness. The concept of sadness is taken by constructivist approaches to apply not only to those cases in which all the components of the pattern of sadness are present (even because establishing a fixed amount of components does not seem possible beyond approximation), but even in cases in which a subset of such components is instantiated, such as behavioural expressions.

Constructivism makes it even harder to find an exhaustive definition for a phenomenon that seems to be constitutively multifaceted. Importantly, it denies that emotions are natural kinds (Russell 2003:163), but rather insists that they are "unified events or episodes that have physiological, cognitive/perceptual, and social elements" (Barrett and Russell 2014:9). Too many different things fall under the broad category of emotion that, originally adopted as a folk-notion, progressively needs to cover all those factors and components that scientific research brings about.

> The instances within the category named emotion are qualitatively different: occurrent events and dispositions, intentional and nonintentional states, automatic and controlled processes, motives and lack of motivation, reflexes and cognitive states, and so forth. The implications of this heterogeneity are vast. Heterogeneity undermines the seemingly endless search for a precise definition of emotion. It undermines categorical statements purporting to be laws of emotion. (Russell 2014:187)

The search for a definition of emotion (and for sub-definition of every type of emotion) seems therefore doomed to fail, unless it adopts a strategy that looks for "family resemblances" instead of "common cores".

> The everyday, ordinary words emotion, fear, anger, love, and the like name categories that have proven to be vague and heterogeneous. Instances that fall within each of these categories share a family resemblance rather than a common core. […] What do all and only emotional episodes have in common? They bear a family resemblance to one

> another, but what they and only they have in common is that our language community calls them emotional. (Russell 2014:186-201)

This seems to be the case in our everyday use of emotion words: we employ the adjective "anxious" to describe ourselves on the basis of the feeling of anxiety that we have first-personally, but even to describe someone moving incessantly, speaking frenetically, and also somebody whose gaze denotes anxiety, lacking any sort of more explicit behavioural manifestation. Moreover, we may imagine to be neuroscientists in the business of finding out what neural mechanisms implement anxiety, in which case our description would correctly apply to a specific neural activation that is intended to relate to the emotion of anxiety. It is therefore difficult to identify the component of an emotion pattern that adequately justifies once for all the use of an emotion term.

Based on these considerations about common ascriptions of emotional states, constructivism holds that the meaning of emotion concepts should be found by looking at their everyday uses in our language games. In point of fact, it seems that only in their everyday use concepts such as "sadness", "happiness", "fear", "frustration", "nostalgia", "jealousy" can be meaningfully applied. Interestingly, Russell notes that only as everyday concepts "they play an actual role as in, for example, emotional meta-experience and the perception of emotion in others, which in turn play a role in social interactions" (Russell 2014:204).

If on the one hand we agree that emotions are not reducible to one or to a limited set of components, but that they are rather multi-componential entities, and on the other hand we follow Russell on that emotion concepts are only effective in their everyday use, then I suggest that the kind of concept that better catches emotions as complex patterns is a 'cluster-concept'.

Cluster concepts are generally characterized by a sufficient amount of characteristic features, none of which is necessary to possess that concept (Newen *et al.* 2015). This is not an undisputed notion, though. It explicitly refers to Wittgenstein's remarks about "family resemblances" according to which we are wrong in thinking that there must be something common to all the instantiations of a category to which we apply the same term. Instead, those things that fall under the same definition share family resemblances. Russell seems to have precisely this approach in mind:

> There are no necessary and sufficient features to be found, no border separating emotion from not-emotion. (Russell 2014:188)

Admittedly, this approach to concepts raises problems when it comes to scientific definitions (see for instance Parsons 1973 on this, but above all Putnam 1975). As Kathryn Parsons insists, if cluster concepts are understood as "family resemblance clusters", then we lack the criteria to establish what is relevant and what is not for something to fall under a certain concept:

> any term may show family resemblance cluster features if the similarities among instances are inappropriately chosen. To make his position plausible, the philosopher holding a "family resemblance view" must make tenable the claim that the characteristics he has chosen are those which are genuinely relevant to being a thing of the kind in question. (Parsons 1973:519)

Therefore, scientific concepts should be better intended as "cluster-*law* concepts". According for instance to Putnam's (1975) account which originally brought about this label, the reference of cluster-law concepts is determined by a cluster of law-like statements that contain the term, rather than by the simple appeal to the way in which language games happen to work. According to Parsons, this normally allows for explanations of borderline cases to which we apply scientific concepts: in cases of controversial applications one can appeal to such law-like statements that define cluster-law concepts in order to verify whether the application is justified or not.

Now, it is not entirely clear whether psychology should be treated as, say, physics when it comes to establishing the justified employ of its technical terms. In the light of Parsons' remarks, when examining the criteria for the correct application of a term that refers to a mental state as it is treated by psychology (broadly conceived), one would be tempted to appeal to cluster-law concepts, rather than to everyday use of terms such as "belief", "thought", "intuition", "desire" and so on. This would entail that applications of these terms within the scientific domain is justified as long as the cluster definition appeals to the use of those terms within the scientific discourse. Yet, it is notoriously difficult for psychology and related disciplines to establish the technical meaning of such terms when employed within the scientific domain, for the precise reason that they are borrowed from everyday discourses.

This is especially problematic in the case of emotions and the related emotion terms. On the one hand, the references of emotion concepts, that is, those objects or features to which they apply, are better identified as patterns; on the other hand, adopting a cluster notion of emotion concepts in terms of family resemblances attested by their common use in everyday talk – that is, by their folk notions – might lead to the impossibility to establish if borderline cases qualify or not as emotions. (Newen et al. 2015:191). Would one be justified in applying the concept "sad" to the mere behavioural expression of sadness? And what about the application of such a term to cases in which one is not fully aware of one's own feeling, but realises to have been sad only afterwards?

Parsons seems to endorse a solution of this problematic case that lies in between that of law-like clusters for scientific terms and family resemblances for everyday terms. What is interesting is that her view is compatible with the constructivist approach to emotions and emotion concepts. According to Parsons, cluster concepts of psychological phenomena should be modelled on the kind of "cluster-law concept", taking into account the fact that the "theories" in which psychological terms appear include also common-sense rational discourses about psychological phenomena (Parsons 1973:522). Therefore, explanations of why certain phenomena (especially borderline ones) are correctly defined by a psychological everyday term (such as "sadness") or not, will be given in terms of reasons, everyday practices and all those contexts in which – as Russell claims – such terms play an "active role". This is not to say that psychologists must limit their inquiries about affective states to those that are identified by folk notions of emotions. On the contrary, while we should preserve a cluster notion of emotions based on family resemblances attested by the common use of words, psychological research about emotions needs to employ technical terms that do not necessarily coincide with the folk ones. Here is Russell's clarificatory analogy:

> […] consider the scientific status of the concept of a house. All houses (whether palace, mansion, shack, toy house, birdhouse, or houseboat) conform to the laws of physics, and the builder of houses does well to take those laws into account. Houses are real, but, all the same, house is not a technical term in physics. […] Emotional episodes are simply an especially interesting and important subset of human episodes, much as houses are an interesting and important subset of physical systems. (Russell 2014:205)

In the light of cluster concepts so-conceived, the application of emotion terms to mere manifestations of emotions sounds justified. The use of the term "sad" to describe a shabby posture is not only justified by the fact that this is the way our language games commonly work (as it would be in a rough application of the Wittgensteinian stance), but by the composite nature of emotions which gathers an indefinite amount of components. One does not need to look for such a justification in the presence of a mental state or of a typically felt feeling. Expressive behaviours are constitutive (although not necessary) components of emotion patterns and, therefore, are adequately captured by cluster concepts.

This latter point offers further support to Stephen Davies' theory of emotion-characteristic-in-appearance, according to which certain perceptual patterns share certain perceivable characteristics with human expressive gestures. By endorsing an anti-essentialist view about what emotions are and an account of psychological concepts modelled on a – partially amended – version of the Wittgensteinian idea of family resemblances, we can conceive of emotions terms as being cluster-concepts. The possession of emotion concepts might therefore amount to the capacity to apply emotion terms to some of the features that are commonly taken to be part of emotions patterns, rather than to some allegedly essential feature such as internal mental states.

I am confident that this approach allows us going beyond the resemblance based account that relies on emotion-characteristic-in-appearance. For, if emotion concepts apply to an indefinite number of heterogeneous features in virtue of their cluster nature, it is reasonable to extend the range of recognitional experiences to which they apply beyond those justified by similarities. Similarities holding between references are one of the conditions at which cluster-concepts apply, but they are not the sole. In particular, emotion cluster-concepts apply metaphorically in virtue of resemblances in the case of the musical gesture. But I still have to show how they can apply in the simpler case of the chord.

5.4 Metaphorical, quasi-metaphorical and secondary meaning

I have argued that metaphorical uses of concepts are well suited to explain those experiences of perceptual patterns that bear resemblances to expressive gestures. More specifically I have suggested that the way in which concepts intervene and modify the experience is thanks to the triggering provided by resemblances, allowing for the use of

those same concepts that we employ for the recognition of expressions (Chapter 4). In a nutshell:

> Metaphors work only if there is some important and readily noticeable similarity between two situations. A metaphor is a sort of figurative use of language in which the extension of the word is derived from the established sense on the basis of noticing a similarity. (Ter Hark 2009:599)

Metaphors can be understood as those uses of terms that can in principle be analysed by direct reference to underlying resemblances. Let us exemplify this point by referring to a lively musical gesture: instead of describing it as simply "cheerful", one could refer to the similarities that link it to human tone of voice and describe it as "sounding like a cheerful tone of voice normally sounds". Another way to tell the same story is that so-conceived metaphors can be in principle reduced to similes. In the light of the accounts of metaphors that I have introduced, this is not controversial.

For this reason, the explanatory power of a metaphorical account is limited. Namely, it is at odds when it comes to explain expressive experiences whose contents do not mobilise resemblances. Talking about Sibley, I have introduced the notion of quasi-metaphor that I intend to develop hereafter, in order to overcome this difficulty.

On Budd's view, appealing to resemblances when trying to explain the ascription of aesthetic properties does not properly account for their nature. He claims that Sibley coins the term "quasi-metaphors" precisely in order to explain those ascriptions that cannot be justified in terms of resemblances. It seems, indeed, that certain aesthetic properties (and I assume that expressive properties are among these) are captured by those concepts that we use to identify them in such a way that is not mediated by their similarity to non-aesthetic properties. And in point of fact, such features cannot be characterised in other words, nor reduced to similes (Budd 2006:137).

According to Budd, in order to preserve the idea that quasi-metaphorical ascriptions are such that the same property could not be characterised in other words, the concept expressed by the term must figure in the experience of the property: the concept of "dynamism" should accordingly figure in the content of the experience we have of, say, a dynamic picture, so that we could not find any adjective that were more appropriate than "dynamic" (or of its synonyms) to describe it. Yet, suggesting that a concept can be part of an experience falls short of an explanation.

In order to cast light on this intuition, Budd refers to the Wittgensteinian notion of secondary meaning. Secondary meaning (or sense) is something in between literal and metaphorical meaning: on the one hand, it applies in such a way that one cannot substitute the word with any other – precisely as Sibley observes is the case for aesthetic predicates; while on the other hand, it is not a paradigmatic use of a term, because in order to grasp it, one needs to understand the primary (literal) use of the term in question. Let me delve into this notion.

As it is well known, according to the late Wittgenstein, meaning is the way in which we use the words within our "language games":

> §43. For a large class of cases - although not all cases - in which we use it, the word "meaning" can be defined as follows: The meaning of a word is its use in language.

In the second part of the *Investigations*, however, Wittgenstein puts forward some remarks that are apparently difficult to accommodate with the rest of his view on meaning.

> Given the two ideas 'fat' and 'lean', would you be rather inclined to say that Wednesday was fat and Tuesday lean, or *vice versa?* (I incline decisively towards the former.) Now have "fat" and
> "lean" some different meaning here from their usual one? —They have a different use. —So ought I really to have used different words? Certainly not that. —I want to use *these* words (with their familiar meanings) *here.*
> […]
> Asked "What do you really mean here by 'fat' and 'lean'?"—I could only explain the meanings in the usual way. I could *not* point to the examples of Tuesday and Wednesday.
> Here one might speak of a 'primary' and 'secondary' sense of a word. It is only if the word has the primary sense for you that you use it in the secondary one. (Wittgenstein, *PI*, IIxi:216)

In this passage, Wittgenstein envisages the case where we use certain terms of which we already know the meaning – i.e., that we use literally in the appropriate language games – to refer to objects or in contexts to which they do not seem to literally apply – at least not as smoothly as in their literal applications. Well, he wonders, does the very fact that they are being used in an uncommon way, change the meaning of such words? This

would seem to be a logical consequence of the hypothesis that meaning corresponds to the use of words in language games. Yet Wittgenstein's answer is negative: their meaning remains the same and, in cases like this, words preserve the meaning we are familiar with:

> §558. What does it mean to say that the "is" in "The rose is red" has a different meaning from the "is" in "twice two is four"? If it is answered that it means that different rules are valid for these two words, we can say that we have only *one* word here. —And if all I am attending to is grammatical rules, these do allow the use of the word "is" in both connexions. —But the rule which shews that the word "is" has different meanings in these sentences is the one allowing us to replace the word "is" in the second sentence by the sign of equality, and forbidding this substitution in the first sentence. (*PI*)

And

> §561. Now isn't it queer that I say that the word "is" is used with two different meanings (as the copula and as the sign of equality), and should not care to say that its meaning is its use; its use, that is, as the copula and the sign of equality?
> One would like to say that these two kinds of use do not yield a *single* meaning; the union under one head is an accident, a mere inessential. (*PI*)

The problem arising from these remarks can thus be formulated as follows: if the meaning of a word should be understood as its use in language, then how can a word be used in different ways and nevertheless preserve the same meaning? And if the meaning remains the same, although the word is used in different games and applied within different realms, what accounts for the difference between primary and secondary meaning? The reply to this question would help to explain the case in which an emotion term whose meaning is standardly determined by language games concerning emotions as mental states is applied to something that neither is nor has a mental state, nor – more importantly – resembles an expression. Following Sibley and Budd, this might be something slightly different from a metaphor.

If we admit that secondary meaning is not a special sort of meaning that must be explained as the result of specific psychological mechanisms, then its metaphorical nature

can be assessed.[41] If, as most philosophers agree, a metaphor consists in – to use a metaphorical phrase – exporting a term or a schema of terms to new realms of application, then there seems to be no reason to exclude secondary uses from the category of metaphors. This suspicion leads us back to the central problem, that is, to the idea that the application of emotion words to inanimate objects when one experiences them as expressive should be treated as metaphorical.

Wittgenstein explicitly denies that secondary meaning amounts to metaphorical application:

> The secondary sense is not a 'metaphorical' sense. If I say "For me the vowel *e* is yellow" I do not mean: 'yellow' in a metaphorical sense, —for I could not express what I want to say in any other way than by means of the idea 'yellow'. (*PI*, IIxi:216)

A caveat is required however. Wittgenstein does not have an explicit theory of metaphors. What is interesting of his view is his introduction of the notion of 'secondary meaning' as a further category, partially different from that of literal use and from that of metaphorical use. Accordingly, there are literal (primary) meanings, secondary meanings and metaphorical uses. Interestingly, Sibley's account of aesthetic predicates also implies that there are literal, quasi metaphorical and metaphorical meanings. On this view, we sometimes use words in a way that, despite it is not literal, does not admit for any substitution (or at best the substitution by a synonym) nor paraphrase.[42]

While metaphors are characterised by their translatability, the distinctive feature of primary meanings is that they are paradigmatic uses. Paradigmatic uses are those exemplar uses that we can employ when we want to teach or explain to someone the meaning of a word. They are those uses that rely on the features of the world that make

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[41] Wittgenstein introduces the problem of secondary meaning in order to deal with the hypothesis that the understanding of certain words could amount to the experience they trigger in us and that we take as being attached to the words as a sort of physiognomy. Without denying that this kind of experiences take place, I contend that secondary meaning is better accounted for in accordance with Wittgenstein's view of meaning as use. This being said, my primary concern here is that secondary meaning is neither replaceable like a full-fledged metaphor, nor paradigmatically literal.

[42] The latter quotation from Wittgenstein implies that the distinctive feature of metaphors is that they can be paraphrased, that is, expressed by means of other words (arguably, by means of similes). As Budd notices: "[...] Wittgenstein declares that the secondary use is not a 'metaphorical' use, understanding by metaphorical use of an expression a use which is such that you could say what you want to say without using that expression". (Budd 2006:139).

The question whether metaphors can actually be paraphrased is extremely controversial. Its discussion would lead us astray. For the present purpose, I assumed an affirmative answer that seems to me consistent with what previously said about metaphorical uses and resemblances.

the statements containing those words true. If I want to explain to someone the meaning of the world "yellow" I will point at something yellow in the environment or, lacking the concrete example, I will probably formulate sentences referring to something yellow in the actual world. Analogously, if I had to explain to someone the meaning of 'fat' I would offer examples where the word fat refers to something - or someone - actually fat. Things work differently in the case of secondary meanings. In fact, on the one hand, secondary meanings cannot be used as paradigmatic examples in order to to explain the meaning of words, like metaphors, while on the other hand they cannot be paraphrased (remember Wittgenstein saying: "I want to use these words (with their familiar meanings)", like literal uses.

If the opposite poles are paradigmatic uses to which we refer when we need to establish the literal meaning of a word and metaphorical uses that not only require that we know the literal meaning of the involved expressions to be understood correctly, but can also be expressed using different terms, without loosing their meaning, then secondary meanings are placed halfway between them. We might consider them 'literal' in the sense that we cannot replace them with any other word, but they cannot be used to explain the meaning words.[43]

Importantly, both in metaphors and secondary uses, the terms are used in such a way as to generate examples of use that cannot serve to explain the meaning of the terms themselves (Diamond 1967:192): I will not refer to days of the week to explain the meaning of 'lean' and 'fat', nor will I first refer to 'Nature' to explain the meaning of the word 'Temple'. In the case of expressive ascriptions, we would not explain the meaning of the word "melancholy" using the example of a melancholy landscape; analogously, if we were to explain the meaning of "cheerful" we would not appeal to the example of a cheerful piece of music. In both cases we would rather point at some typical behaviours or feelings, whose descriptions as "melancholy" or "cheerful" are paradigmatic. As a consequence, we would not fully understand the application of an emotion term to an artwork if we were not capable of understanding the meaning it has in case of paradigmatic applications to inner feelings or to people expressions.

[43] Clearly, once established that this is what ultimately distinguishes secondary meaning from full-fledged metaphors, one can be more liberal than Wittgenstein and allow for a more continuist approach between paradigmatically metaphorical expressions and paradigmatically literal expressions. For instance, although he also appeals to secondary meaning, Malcolm Budd is satisfied with the inclusion of secondary uses among the metaphorical ones and deems Wittgenstein's notion of metaphors too restrictive (Budd 2006:139).

In a similar vein, Roger Scruton suggests that we distinguish between two possible ways in which the application of a term can extend to domains that are not their original ones. The first is via "analogy", that is, thanks to the recognition of resemblances, whereas the second is via "paronymy": "A paronymous use is a derivative use, and can be understood only by someone who has first understood the primary employment of the term" (Scruton 1998:46).[44]

The understanding of a paronymic use is, as well as secondary meaning and as quasi-metaphor, parasitic on the literal or paradigmatic use of a word. According to Scruton, indeed, one cannot be able to use the word "sad" to describe something inanimate if one does not possess the concept "sad", i.e., if one is not able to apply it literally. Unlike the case of analogy, however, being able to apply the term literally does not depend on the capacity on has to detect resemblances.

So, by appealing to Wittgenstein's notion of secondary meaning, we can draw a distinction between metaphors and quasi-metaphors (or paronymies). I have shown that there is widespread agreement on that, in order to apply a term in its secondary use, one has to master its primary use; however, such an application is not based on the recognition of similarities, it is not an analogy, as in the case of metaphorical applications. Therefore, detectable similarities between standard perceptual properties and aesthetic properties do not account for this kind of applications. This is why Wittgenstein and his legacy can affirm that words applied in their secondary sense keep their familiar meaning, the one that we have learnt by learning their primary use. Moreover, this is why they can argue that, unlike fully-fledged metaphors rooted in similarities, secondary uses cannot be paraphrased.

All these converging perspectives allows me to insist on an aspect of expressive experience. There are uses of concepts that, despite they are not paradigmatic, nonetheless are not metaphorical either – at least in the sense in which metaphorical application requires resemblances. What do these uses apply to in the case of expressive experiences? More in particular: how can the expressive experience of a chord be described as sad if nothing in the structure of the chord resembles an expressive gesture in such a way that would allow for a metaphorical conceptual intervention?

I suggest that the appeal to secondary meaning is well suited to illuminate cases of expressive experience like these: expressive descriptions of chords and chromatic

[44] Scruton owes this idea to Austin (1979:23 ff.) who, in turn, refers Aristotle's *Ethics.*

shades exploit secondary or quasi-metaphorical uses of emotion terms, independently of resemblances and therefore in such a way that they cannot in principle be substituted nor analysed into similes.

5.5 Recognitional experiences of chords and colours

In the previous chapter, I appealed to cognitive penetration of the phenomenal character of expressive experiences in order to explain those cases in which we recognise certain perceivable patterns as expressive of emotions. I found support in the literature about expression recognition, assuming the existence of similarities between certain perceivable patterns and certain expressions. Moreover, despite I distinguished between the case of the musical gesture and the case of isolated chords and colours (addressing an admittedly problematic distinction for resemblance theories), in 3.6 and 3.7 I have argued that the phenomenology of these experiences does not justify Kivy's ad hoc conventionalist account.

I should now parallel the explanatory path that I have developed for the case of the expressive musical gesture (Chapter 4), providing a viable account for recognitional experiences of, say, mournful chords and lively chromatic shades. Hopefully, what I have said so far about core affect and affective qualities theorized by constructivism, and the way in which emotion concepts can be conceived as cluster concepts provide me with the tools for such an explanation.

What sort of work do emotion concepts perform when it comes to the recognition of a chromatic shade as being lively? More precisely: does the concept of "liveliness" enter and shape the phenomenal character of this sort of expressive experience as I argued happens for more complex perceptual patterns? I will discuss a positive reply to this question, arguing for the possibility that the phenomenal character of simple expressive experiences is cognitively penetrable.

I suggest that this kind of conceptual intervention in minimal expressive experience functions in the way of secondary meaning. As we have seen, the ability to apply a concept is standardly acquired by means of paradigmatic uses. Accordingly, one's capacity to use the concept of liveliness consists in one's capacity to use that concept to refer to one's own and others' affective states, tempers, moods, gestures, behaviours. One may also be able to use it to refer to items that are relevantly similar to the listed ones, in which case one would be using it metaphorically. Although it presupposes such a mastery

in the paradigmatic (and allegedly metaphorical) cases, secondary meaning is held to work differently.

Wittgenstein's observations on secondary meaning highlight the use of terms such as the subject having a certain "inclination" or being "willing" to use the terms in this way, or to do so "spontaneously". Secondary uses are neither the result of a learning process, nor the outcome of a perceptual recognition of similarities, but consist in the willingness to use words spontaneously in new contexts. What is more, there is a sense in which we feel forced to use those words, we do not have the possibility of using other ones.

Budd puts forward some remarks that are consistent with this point. Criticizing Peacocke's metaphorical stance, he argues that:

> the cognition is just the suitability of the alignment of the concept of sadness (rather than joy) with that character: the property revealed by the metaphorical-as perception is this suitability and nothing more. (Budd 2009:292)

Budd is claiming that – at least for some aesthetic ascriptions that Peacocke calls metaphorical – all that happens is that we perceive features as apt to be described by a certain term. A certain concept is just well-suited to capture the character and our recognition consists in such a feeling of aptness that, however, we would not be able to justify otherwise by appealing to the look of the object. Budd seems to deny that this kind of perceptual intervention modifies our perception:

> If the right concept springs to mind, is our perceptual experience thereby different from what it was when we were puzzled about the work's character? If my own experience counts for anything, when I find a characterization that for me hits off the expression of some aspect of one of Debussy's *Préludes*, the only change I am aware of as I experience the work is my readiness to come up with this characterization (much as, when looking at a colour and wondering what it is, the sudden realization that it is cinnamon leaves my perception unchanged). (Budd 2009:291)

I am not entirely sure of this being a strong denial of cognitive penetrability though. For, as we have already seen, he also admits that the acquisition of concepts can enhance our overall musical experience (e.g. Budd 2008:141). I would therefore propose a

compatibilist approach to Budd's statement, taking it to refer to the content of our perception, rather than to its phenomenal character. The sense in which one may invoke cognitive penetration here consists in that, once we feel prompted to apply a concept, then such a concept can modify the way in which the object appears to us, i.e. the phenomenal character of the corresponding experience: once I apply the concept of liveliness to the shade of orange with which I intend to paint a room's wall, the shade will seem to me especially apt for such an expressive characterisation. This proposal about the intervention of emotion concepts in the experience of expressive shades of colours seems compatible with Wittgenstein's remarks on secondary meaning, along with the use that Budd makes of them.

There is nevertheless one count on which I find this conclusion unsatisfactory – despite I can see where it stems from. Wittgenstein observes, commenting on the possible causes of this sort of use of concepts:

> Now, I say nothing about the causes of this phenomenon. They *might* be associations from my childhood. But that is a hypothesis. Whatever the explanation,—the inclination is there. (Wittgenstein, *PI*, IIxi:216)

His target is here the way in which language uses function, regardless of the underlying psychological mechanisms. My hypothesis is, instead, that the secondary use of emotion concepts in expressive experience of simple perceptual features finds its psychological explanation in something like core affect. I suggest that we deal with what Wittgenstein calls the associations that might have their origins in one's childhood by appealing to the notion of core affect as what provides a map through which we categorise affective qualities.

To consider core components of emotions as primarily located on a dimensional field makes the conceptual triggering much less coincidental and idiosyncratic than one may think, and much more rooted in our shared and developing affective life. I suggest that we recognise the expressive character of simple features that lack resemblance relations with expressive gestures, as long as we are prompted to use emotion concepts to identify them. Such triggering is due to the fact that certain low level perceptual features share with core affect a dimensional perceptual space, that is plausibly structured along the dimensions of dynamism and value. The perceptual grasping of these properties as what may alter core affect triggers the intervention of those concepts that are

paradigmatically used for self ascriptions of affective states. The conceptual intervention turns the perceptual experience into a recognitional one.

One may argue that this proposal reintroduces isomorphism. And in point of fact, I appealed to core affect and the corresponding affective qualities in virtue of the possibility to treat them as sharing a common location on a map. They would accordingly be located on corresponding points of the dimensional space defined by dynamism and valence. The affective quality of the lively shade of orange would occupy a location on the dimensional space of affective qualities that would be determined by its capacity to trigger a modification of core affect. Such a modification would occupy the corresponding location on the dimensional space defined by arousal and pleasantness.

Yet, I am sceptical about the idea that a recognitional experience of this sort can be justified in terms of resemblances or isomorphism. This is why Peacocke's intuition about the minor chord as being subdued obtains only to some extent. True, being "subdued" is a relational property that the minor chord shares with certain felt emotions, but in order for this resemblance to justify the the ascription of sadness rather than of lowness something more must be said. Peacocke is right in thinking that the kind of knowledge that is required regards felt emotions, but he does not put forward any account of the way in which such a knowledge applies.

If we take core affect theory seriously and we pair it with secondary meaning as what explains conceptual interventions, then we can get rid of resemblances, since what we actually recognise when we ascribe affective qualities to simple perceptual features is their aptness to fall under a certain concept. The coupling of affective qualities with possible corresponding modifications in core affect is not a recognisable resemblance, but rather the underlying mechanism that triggers such a conceptual application. Importantly, however, the mechanism is not an arousalistic one, that is, it does not actually mobilise the feeling component of emotions (the actual modification of core affect and the entailed phenomenology), but it can admittedly consist of a 'cold' perceptual appraisal of worldly features, dispositionally connected to such a component.

This hypothesis is highly speculative. True, one might empirically test the affective resonances of certain low level features, that is, the commonality and differences of reactions among subjects in front of colours, simple shapes, chords. This has been done, for instance, for the minor third, showing that "The Minor Third Communicates Sadness in Speech, Mirroring Its Use in Music" (Curtis and Bharucha 2010). The title of this paper preludes to an interesting approach. In short, the authors tested the hypothesis

that vocal expressions of negative emotions and the minor third share some audible structure, finding out that the relationship between the salient pitches of the sad speech samples tended to approximate a minor third. What is especially interesting about this study is that the authors do not imply the priority of vocal expression over musical expression. Instead, they vindicate the plausibility of an evolutionary as well as developmental perspective according to which:

> a communicative system comprising acoustic elements common to both language and music was an evolutionary predecessor to language and music and that the two domains evolved divergently from this common origin. (Curtis and Bharucha 2010:347)[45].

I will not commit to this view, although I find it especially fascinating; nor I am in the position to evaluate the reliability of the experimental results provided by Curtis and Bharucha. What I rather retain of their proposal, is the idea that the progressive acquisition and refinement of discriminatory capacities for emotions on the one hand and expressive qualities on the other hand, may rely on low level features that lend themselves to be experienced and conceptually integrated without necessarily requiring the detection of similarities with behavioural expressions. This can be stressed to the extent that musical and vocal features share the very same affective and perceptual components.

As to the visual field, psychologists and psycholinguists have elaborated on the possibility that very simple shapes and colours convey expressive characters that are cross-culturally captured by emotion words. Relying on Osgood's differential scale model (Osgood et. al. 1957), for instance, Takahashi (1995) and Stamatoupoulou (2008) claim that there is cross-cultural matching in the ascription of certain emotional values to non-representational, extremely simple drawings. Analogously, Adams and Osgood (1973) insisted on the cross-cultural tendency to ascribe affective values to colours.

These results are far from conclusive and I cannot take them to corroborate my view. Yet, they are compatible with what I am suggesting about core affect. Namely, they

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[45] Brown (2000) call this hypothesis the 'musilanguage', according to which "the many structural features shared between music and language are the result of their emergence from a joint evolutionary precursor rather than from fortuitous parallelism or from one function begetting the other" (Brown 2000:271). However, the main interest of Brown's view concerns the compositional and syntactic nature of both music and language, more than their emotional value.

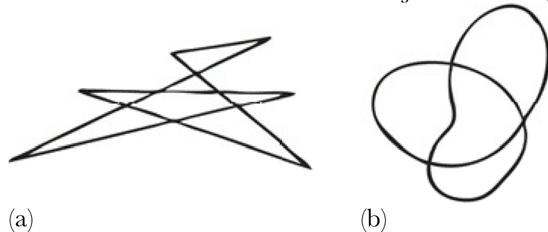
provide minimal ground to insist on the possibility to treat low level perceptual features according to a dimensional scale where they occupy a place depending on the degree of dynamism and of valence that they are taken to have.

Moreover, they are consistent with the view that occupying similar positions on such dimensional fields does not entail that the recognition of low level expressive features must occur in terms of the identification of resemblances. Rather, certain low level features are originally experienced as expressive, that is, as affectively loaded, in virtue of their perceptual structure. Such a structure is what I have tentatively described as *rythmos*, i.e. a gestaltic, cross-modal structure that can be located along the vectors of dynamism-stasis and of potentially positive-negative valence for the organism well-being.

Arguably, recognitional expressive experiences of this kind are less fine-grained than expressive experiences of the kind relying on perceptual resemblances. It is limited to simple features and to their very vague affective load. The isolated minor chord can be perceived as having a negative, dynamic value, but it is hardly experienced as "dramatic" or "desperate" – as a musical gesture can instead happen to be. Nevertheless and interestingly, this kind of low level expressive properties establishes – so to say – the lower limit to expressive ascriptions, that is, it makes so that the same perceptual feature is hardly experienced both as positive and negative, static and dynamic – at least in ideal conditions where it appears isolated from the context. Black will hardly be perceived as lively, orange will hardly be perceived as sad.[46]

Descriptions of this sort of expressive experience are not metaphorical in the sense that they rely on the detection of similarities. They are rather described in terms of secondary meanings that are not, however, arbitrarily applied. Rather, they are plausibly rooted in the way in which humans tend to experience simple patterns of visual and

[46] These tendencies revealed by psychological inquiries are of the kind of the notorious *takete-maluma* effect introduced by Wolfgang Köhler (1929). As it is well known, most people associate the word "takete" to figure (a) and the word "maluma" to figure (b). Importantly, it is not impossible that someone ascribes the labels the other way round. Yet, there is some relevant tendency to experience (a) as liable to the application of *takete* and (b) as liable to the application of *maluma*. Analogously, I would say, it is not impossible that someone experiences a minor chord as gay and a major chord as sad. Yet, there is a relevant tendency to describe minor chords as sad and major chords as gay.



(a) (b)

auditory features as being *inherently* affectively loaded, although in a quite coarse-grained manner.

5.6 Expressive experience without concepts

I hope so far I succeeded in arguing that expressive experience of simple features (i) is cognitively penetrable to the extent that emotion concepts that we apply when we perceive them turn merely perceptual experiences into recognitional expressive experiences; and (ii) that this recognitional process is not mobilised by resemblances to which concepts metaphorically apply, but it is rather grounded in core affect (and affective qualities as defined by Russell's constructivist approach). I also insisted that this is compatible with secondary uses of concepts.

The last step of my proposal concerns the possibility that we experience expressive properties without possessing – or at least using – the relevant emotion concepts to identify them. As anticipated, I intend to do justice to Budd's claim that perceiving a character is not the same as noticing a character as being such and such. Not any perception is also a recognition. My hypothesis is that, in order for a subject to undergo an expressive experience – at least in the case of the minor chord and of the chromatic shade – there is no need for conceptual intervention, not even in the form of weak cognitive penetration. Although we happen to conceptually categorise a shade of colour in terms of its affective character, the recognitional experience that I have accounted for in terms of cognitive penetrability does not exhaust expressive experience.

For this purpose, it is first useful to refer once more to the theory of emotion recognition that I have explored in the previous chapter. The combination of Marchi and Newen's theory and Block's proposal about the recognition of facial expressions, indeed, casts light on a relevant aspect of the problem of recognition. In point of fact, they agree on that conceptual intervention takes place as long as the perceptual stimulus is not clearly expressive *per se*. They indeed consider ambiguous facial displays, taking cognitive penetration to determine the phenomenal character of the recognitional experiences. Yet, they do not deny that perceptual patterns displayed by faces are already expressive of (vague or ambiguous) emotions *before* or *in the absence* of conceptual intervention.

Block (2014) is more radical on this, for he argues – and shows evidences – that even the recognition of ambiguous expressions is fundamentally perceptual and does not

require that one possesses particular conceptual abilities. This implies that, according to both views, there exists a level of expression perception that does not require concepts of emotions in order to occur.

In passing, this is especially compatible with the idea that expressions of emotions need be quickly processed for evolutionary reasons. Most views on this matter, even though they do not explicitly commit to theories of perceptual content, argue in favour of perceptual recognition. According to Darwin's study, emotions – or at least a basic set of them – are rapidly and automatically detected among conspecifics and this can be justified in terms of evolutionary advantages (1871). Following the trajectory indicated by Darwin, Paul Ekman conducted extensive and cross-cultural empirical researches (1972; 1992) arguing for the existence of a set of basic emotions whose expressions are readily recognised independent of most contextual factors. Simon Baron-Cohen (2005) postulates the existence of *The Emotion Detector* (TED), a computational mechanism responsible for the detection of basic emotional expressions. In short, TED could be considered one of the components of the mental architecture underlying the human tendency to adopt what Dennett has named *intentional stance* (Dennett 1987), along with other domain specific mechanisms assumed to handle rapidly and efficaciously with the social world – by means of which we would attribute to others mental attitudes such as beliefs, goals and desires (Baron-Cohen 1995; Castelli 2006; Gergely and Csibra 2003).[47]

These stances among others invite to consider expression recognition as a mechanism that precedes high level cognitive interventions and is deeply rooted in evolution. Along this path, that is, following the idea that low level features can be experienced as being minimally expressive without conceptual interventions, correlations have been observed between the attribution of intensity to (stereotyped) facial expressions and the co-instantiation of very low-level perceptual features such as inclination, simple geometric figures and speed (Kamachi *et al.* 2001; Pavlova *et al.* 2005). Moreover, Spelke's findings about inner structures that would allow young children to perceive objects, fruitfully enhances this view (Spelke 1995; 2000; 2007). In her theory of "Core Knowledge", she claims that we may be equipped since a very early age so as to perceptually discriminate object boundaries, cohesion of shapes, intentional or self-propelled movements, that is, to discriminate perceptual dynamic features all around our

[47] For a more extensive review of psychological theories of emotion recognition that are compatible with a perceptualist approach to expressive experience, see Benenti and Meini (2017).

environment.[48] If this were the case, then it may well be that perception of simple features as affectively loaded were linked to this sort of primitive discriminatory devices that we use to navigate the environment.

Further empirical results can be mentioned here, concerning discriminatory capacities of very young children for low level features of music, like those attested in Perani *et al.* (2010). They used functional MRI to measure brain activity in 1- to 3-day-old newborns hearing excerpts of Western tonal music and altered versions of the same excerpts. They were able to demonstrate that the infant brain has a hemispheric specialization in processing music already in the first postnatal hours. Moreover, they concluded that the neural architecture underlying music processing in newborns is sensitive to changes in tonal key as well as to differences in consonance and dissonance.

I argued that the properties instantiated by the content of expressive experiences are dynamic low-level features, nicely captured by the phenomenological notion of *rythmos*. These results seem at least compatible with the claim that low level dynamic features (in particular those of music) are discriminated since a very early age where conceptual abilities plausibly lack. These same features are among those that constitute the content of expressive experience.

Whereas I argued that the phenomenal character of recognitional experience requires the intervention of concepts, I suggest that low-level perceptual properties can be experienced as expressive without the subject possessing emotion concepts. What is rather required are elementary discriminatory capacities for core affect. These amount, on the one hand, to the possibility of *feeling* those modifications that environmental stimuli can determine on our well-being in terms of pleasure and arousal, and on the other hand to the capacity of *perceiving* properties in terms of their intrinsically dynamic structure.

Neither of these capacities requires concepts as I have defined them. The content of this kind of non-recognitional expressive experience is non-conceptual, as well as its phenomenal character is not influenced by high level cognitive interventions. However, it fixes the lower limit for enhanced, more fine-grained expressive experiences, i.e., it presents us with those properties that limit the range of possible expressive characters that can be ascribed to the same objects and features. In short: it limits response-dependence of expressive experiences, imposing some minimal constraints on it.

[48] To do justice to Spelke's view, I have to recall that she interprets her data as showing that infants possess the innate concept of object (conceived in terms of core knowledge). However, it has been argued that these data better fit with a perceptualist interpretation (Smortchkova 2017).

To sum up: we can undergo expressive experience without mobilising conceptual capacities. This is especially clear when it comes to simple expressive features such as sounds and colours. Cognitive interventions can modify the phenomenal character of this sort of experiences, so that they become recognitional. However, even lacking conceptual abilities we may perceive minor chords as sad and orange shades as lively. This is plausibly what happens to very young children presented with simple stimuli.

In conclusion and only tentatively, even if I have relied on simple features in order to show that expressive experience with a non-conceptual character is possible, the same plausibly holds for more complex patterns, like musical gestures. Experiencing a mournful musical gesture is not necessarily a recognitional experience – as Budd repeatedly claimed – but can occasionally amount to perception of low-level dynamic properties. These can be conceived as gestalten that bear a relation to core affect, namely share the same dimensional space. If this were true, the appeal to conceptual subsumption based on resemblance would hold only for recognitional cases, whereas expressive experience of patterns would be possible even in the absence of conceptual recognitional abilities.

As to this, inquiries about autistic spectrum disorders seem to support the idea that affective sensitivity to musical patterns is not relevantly different in autistic and non-autistic children (Heaton *et al.* 1999). Rather, differences emerge when it comes to label musical affective value, that is, to conceptualize it (Goerlich *et al.* 2011; *Allen et. al.* 2013). It is worth noticing that studies conducted by substituting linguistic labels with stereotyped facial expressions showed that young (Giomo 1993) and autistic children (Heaton *et al.* 1999) perform evenly well in affective ascriptions to music. This suggests that conceptual inability does not *per se* prevent from experiencing the affective value of things.

This view manages to do justice both to the idea that expressive experience is a perceptual experience whose content can in principle justify expressive ascriptions, and to the view that it relates in an interesting way to our affective life. Moreover, it is liberal enough to include a wide range of complex conceptually and culturally related ascriptions, and compatible enough with many psychological views about emotions and perceptions. What I take low level perceptual properties to do, is limiting the ways in which the same pattern can be expressively experienced. These properties can be simply perceived in the aforementioned way, or even categorized and related to one's

background knowledge about emotions, expressions and – especially in aesthetic experiences – art and creative techniques.

The same account is open to extend the same sort of explanation to more complex patterns that, so far, I had treated only as allowing for recognitional experiences influenced by concepts. Yet, I believe that the exploration of this possibility, as well as the improvement of the account based on core affect, require a stronger and more systematic empirical approach that, I hope, will be the matter for future researches.

Conclusions

The fundamental aims of this research were to cast some light on the debate about expressive experience and providing an outline for a satisfactory philosophical approach. As to the first aim, I hope that I succeeded, by presenting the analytic debate as producing misunderstandings that can nevertheless be smoothed out, such as the kind of phenomenology of expressive experience that is worth taking into account. Also, the scrutiny of various claims about the content and kind of properties mobilized by expressive experience should have presented a messy, although philosophically intriguing landscape.

Among the range of available solutions for the questions raised by expressive experience, I endorsed a perceptualist account since the beginning of this enquiry. Yet, I tried to concede as much as possible to alternative theories, highlighting their merits. In particular, I exploited Sartre's phenomenological theory of emotions in order to focus the attention on the perceptual look of inanimate objects; then I acknowledged that projectivism *à la* Wollheim had the advantage of discriminating between projection of occurrent emotions and more complex ones (those actually philosophically interesting). In the overall economy of this work, arousalism(s) served mostly as a target, but was moreover useful to keep in mind the importance of emotions, whose role in expressive experience cannot be easily discarded – as formalist approaches tend to do. Finally, I devoted much room to the discussion of imaginativist theories, for I find them particularly appealing, especially when they rely on sensuous imagination.

My account is, in point of fact, as much compatibilist as possible. It indeed stands by perceptualism, taking the phenomenal character of expressive experience to be perceptual, and its content to be constituted by low-level dynamic properties. Yet, it allows for cognitive interventions that make the resulting experience partly response-dependent. In so doing, the account opens the door to top-down contributions from imagination, both sensuous and propositional. So conceived expressive experience can be enriched and integrated.

Furthermore, the account distinguishes between cases of recognition and cases of simple perception, especially when isomorphism between perceptual patterns and human expression is not available. Although I conceded that even in these latter cases cognitive penetration is responsible for recognitional experiences, I preserved the non-conceptual

nature of elementary expressive experiences by endorsing emotion constructivism based on core affect. On such basis, I was able to suggest that expressive experience at its basic level is rooted in our core affect dimensional system.

Finally, the hypothesis that cognitive intervention is not required in order to undergo the expressive experience of the minor chord extends to the previously discussed case of the musical gesture, where expressive experience was meant to rely on resemblances. I envisage the possibility that, even in these cases, expressive experience might be undergone in the absence of recognitional capacities, but simply due to the dynamic patterns mobilised by the content and perceived as occupying a position in the dimensional space provided by core affect.

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