

Awareness of Value

Is it good or is it bad?

One of the most basic properties of matter at the atomic level is that of attraction and repulsion. Think of this as a fundamental type of 'awareness'. Even at the subatomic level within the nucleus we can calculate the action of forces that hold quarks together. When we observe the behavior of simple unicellular life forms, we note they are attracted to some things and repulsed by others, again a type of awareness. And so up the phylogenetic scale we observe actions that indicate attraction and repulsion at work. Between individual humans we are aware of behavior based both on innate biases and learned behavior. Basic sexual attraction is probably mostly innate, but variations of sexual behavior may be learned. Human attraction especially when it is learned behavior is of course a continuum from strong to weak and is influenced by an awareness of many situational and cultural factors. Thus, when we consider attractiveness as one factor in evaluating 'art' we are dealing with a multidimensional awareness that has many components.

To evaluate art, we probably need several different systems. One may look at the + or – cost when a work of art is created. This could include the psychological therapeutic value to the artist to satisfy some innate cosmic creative need for the novel and the most improbable, regardless of an actual price that the painting might fetch. Also, it includes the cost of production and the costs of disposal or erasure. (From information theory, the cost of erasure may exceed the cost of creation). In our Indo-European

culture, the cost of disposal is borne by housewives (cheap female labor?) sorting garbage for recycling.

Another important factor is how many copies are manufactured. Suppose you assemble a robot that makes 1 million copies of your design, what is your profit and your debt to society? (Used-up resources and increased pollution). In the past the awareness of the cost of pollution has been ignored, but as robots take over the manufacture of everything, and all wealth accumulates to a few robot owners, it will become obvious.

Another value dimension could consider what something is worth to a buyer. This refers to how many energy markers (dollars) it might sell for. Here we run into questions of 'worth to whom' and need to consider Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. So, let's assume food is at the top of your list of needs and you spend \$250/week on groceries. Would you sacrifice your diet for one month and eat only cabbage soup so you can buy a \$1000 painting? Or how about living in a smaller house so you can afford a larger art collection? On the other hand (as Melamid and Comer pointed out), in America you could observe two aesthetically challenged billionaires outbid each other's ego for something otherwise unworthy of artistic merit. Another important consideration is the cost of sales. On-line direct from the artist may circumvent the 40 to 60% commission charged by commercial galleries, but then the artist is left with the cost of advertising and shipping.

In our industrial society we have established some norms for compensating labor. (i.e., a minimum wage). Typically, a craftsperson could expect somewhere in the range of \$15 to \$200 per hour. So, let's assume you paint a 30x40in canvass in a total of 50 hours. Thus, the cost

of labor might range from \$750 to \$10,000. To this you must add the cost of the canvas on 1 ½” stretchers (\$50) and paints (\$50). Another method of setting a sale price is by multiplying the area of the canvas by the value per square inch. For example, one suggested price is \$2/sq.in. So, a 30x40 canvas (area=1200sq.in.) could sell for \$2400. For a professional artist to attain an annual income of \$50,000 they would need to sell about 20 paintings or 2 every month.

A large amount of art is produced by commercial printing and a 30x40 picture may sell for around \$250 (most cost is the frame). Also, a vast quantity of art is produced by part-time artists who are either retired or have another full-time income such as teaching. In situations where an artist has the luxury of creating for the sake of creating rather than putting food on the table, we might discount the cost of labor. In that case the price could include the cost of materials (\$100), the fee for entering an exhibit (i.e., \$25), a commission on sales, if any, to a non-profit organization (i.e., 35%=\$35), cost of transport (i.e., \$50), and packaging, flyers etc. (i.e., \$50). Thus, such an artist could compete with commercial printed art and sell a 30x40 picture for about \$250. Of course, if we consider the resale value of such art, it could remain \$250 or possibly increase if the author becomes famous. On the other hand, the commercial print would be worth the wholesale cost of the frame (i.e., \$25).

Dutton, in his book ‘The Art Instinct’, claims that since art is such an all-encompassing human endeavor, it cannot have a simple definition for selecting what is and what is not (good) art. To solve this problem, he suggests Cluster Criteria would best define the cross-cultural features of

the arts. He makes us aware of eleven cluster features: Direct pleasure, Skill and Virtuosity, Style, Novelty and Creativity, Representation, Presentation, Expressive Individuality, Emotional Saturation, Intellectual challenge, Art Tradition and Institutions, and Imaginative Experience. (Note 25).

Dutton then investigates what constitutes attractive art. (Assuming attraction can be equated with positive values.) He lists features arising from the Savannah Hypothesis, (our ancient homeland in the African Rift Valley), and to them adds Saturated colors, Emotional Saturation, Representation, and Novelty. (Note 26).

Personally, I would also emphasize the role of contrasts. Our brains are primarily mapping and remapping devices. (Comparators as vs Calculators). These maps are compared to each other and the results are evaluated as good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, useful or useless. All input thus has two sides; if something has a good aspect to it, it also has a bad aspect, if it is a color, then there is a contrasting color. Dutton's choice of 'Saturation' ties in well with 'Contrasts' since both emphasize and direct our awareness toward artworks. Contrasts between two saturated colours are more spectacular, (focus our awareness), than contrasts between two tints! (Note 27).

From a more practical viewpoint, the Canadian Federation of Artists arranges exhibits of member's art and needs to specify some quality criteria for accepting input. All work is now rated by three members using a 1-to-7-point system and acceptance requires 4 points minimum. Points are

allocated for design, creativity, drawing, handling of medium, concept, colour usage, and visual impact. Since this causes some artwork to be rejected, they also offer a consultation service to members in order to help them improve. This system seems best suited for 'serious' artists who are interested in producing 'quality' artwork (as defined by an Institutional Theory of art). It is, however, also subject to the personal bias of the jurors.

An example of an alternative approach was the former Kawartha Artists Gallery in Peterborough. It was established mostly by retirees as a voluntary, non-profit gallery that exhibited work by an eclectic mix of professional and amateur artists. Some feedback was provided by having visitors evaluate which artwork they liked best for each show. Workshops were arranged to help improve technique, as well as provide comradery for like-minded artists. City council sold the building and the gallery disbanded. Some people discount the value of cultural venues that attract customers for free, versus price cutting and expensive media advertising!

If there is a good smell, then there is also a stink. If there are good things, there must be bad things. God cannot exist in our selectionist brain, without the existence of a Devil. It should be considered by curators of art shows, that not all art on display need be 'good' art. It has become fashionable to have an expert jury or a curator censor what is exhibited to the public. This assumes that the 'ordinary' citizen has little ability to judge for himself as to how he should feel. (From what we know of the human brain, all sensory input passes through areas associated with the 'limbic' system where 'value' tags are added to the incoming data. We simply cannot avoid 'feelings' about *any* perception.) A hierarchical model of art appreciation requires that there be judges to judge the juries, an elite to judge the judges

of judges, and finally some God of Art at the very apex. Really, I think an eclectic mixture for a gallery display would be more in line with our variable human values. Let those who can, judge for themselves. And those who cannot appreciate what is on display, let them point out if the 'Emperor has no clothes'. A 'High Art' for the elite, will eventually build memetic structures in our cultural landscape that only the elite can interpret and only the God of Art would appreciate. In a society where what is acceptable as art is dictated by a small political elite, artistic expression will become constricted. Art is then easy to dismiss as monotonous propaganda if one is presented only with smoking factory chimneys and 'happy' peasants fulfilling 5-year plans. That which was labeled 'People's Art' was anything but. In Estonia the wonderful post-impressionist art from graduates of the prewar Pallas School was stifled in favor of paintings depicting smoking factory chimneys, happy workers laboring in coal mines and deliriously joyful marchers waving red flags. There should be thousands of impressionist paintings hung in the homes of Estonian citizens, instead of a few exemplars hidden in museums. There is an historic gap in development from Post-Impressionism to the present-day Installations. And where indeed are the artistic monuments to the victory of the Singing Revolution over the post-war suppression of Estonian culture? Military monuments last only until the victors are vanquished or the next political overthrow. Artistic cultural monuments last for millennia. Thus, the moral (value) lesson that seems to emerge (awareness) is that neither a top-down elitist art, nor a populist culture can sustain the broad landscape of all human arts.

Note that Adam Adamson's statue of an angel (Rusalka) has persisted through all political regimes because it has artistic, cultural value. The Greek military monument (Stella) 'Winged victory at Samothrace' similarly depicts an angel rather than a military figure and has persisted for thousands of years. A kingdom supported by oppressive economic power and military might begets an Empire that is despised. Greatness (value) can best be sustained when the deepest cultural aspirations of *all* segments of a population are respected.

In the great cosmic order of Absolute Everything, The Multiverse, the Mind of God, Cosmic Awareness, or whatever you personally prefer to call IT, it should be obvious that there cannot be anything that smacks only of uniquely human moral values. Human values are exactly that --- *human* values. From these values we think up religions and ascribe moral values to these religions, not the other way around as some priests and pundits for their own selfish reasons would try to convince us. Recently I read an article in a local Peterborough newspaper by a local pastor. He talked about changing societal values with clarity and conviction but then unfortunately ended by claiming that without religion, we wouldn't know good from bad. Most people are locked into the societal values of their parents and their parents' parents. It is up to those who make an honest effort to truly appreciate their environs to help others become aware of not only what is, but what could be. Physicists and philosophers assist with this task, but it is the artists who wield the power to influence the values of entire cultures by their music, their painting, their film, their art.

The concept of 'Nothing' was probably originated by someone looking at an empty container and trying to describe what it contained. So, we start out by imagining that the absence of 'Something' can be given a name --- 'Nothing'. The ancient philosophers started thinking about what surrounds atoms and some concluded that it was empty space. Presently our understanding is that space is not empty but contains stuff such as quantum fields. Of course, here we are talking about space within our own Universe, but our Universe is embedded within a more absolute nothingness that has no boundary, no size, and no time. For short this timeless, non-existent, nowhere, concept can be named NOST (NO Space, No Time). Absolute Nothing may predicate the existence of Absolute Everything, but that creates a puzzle of why the emergence of a Something does not ruin the perfect symmetry of Nothing such that the rest of Everything cannot exist. Perhaps the answer is staring us in the face. All the somethings within a perfect nothing can exist only as Somethings and Antisomethings. (Total energy = zero). Absolute NOTHINGness is maintained. Each timeless waveicle having opposing features, a rip in the fabric of NOST, possibly does not change Nothing. An eternity of Big Bangs, Ultimate Fizzles, and an Infinity of Multiverses, perhaps all fit happily within NOST. Both ends of all the strung-out MULTIVERSES and all their possible in between configurations are sitting in a timeless, space-less boundless eternally non-existent Nothing. The important observation here is that the above concept is Artistic. Science is only one of our human

arts and the above is a concept beyond scientific observation---it only has value as pure Quantum Art.

How can a monistic view of reality influence what we as artists create? First it should be obvious that our huge multiverse contains only tiny amounts of our human values (morality). We are an integral part of the multiverse hence our values are a part of our multiverse --- a very small part! Thus, it appears that our versions of right and wrong may have a rather small cosmic value. An artist can produce 'good' art, 'bad' art, or truly 'evil' art. No Great God of Arts will punish or reward tema efforts. (I use the Estonian word 'tema' meaning 'his or her or it', because the Indo-European languages get impossibly contrived by assigning sexual connotations to actions such as giving, taking, doing etc.) Someone once quipped that the greatest Russian artist of all was Stalin who created huge shifts in population structure. He also was one of the greatest proponents of the evil arts in terms of human pain and suffering. (8 million Ukrainian Kulaks starved to death, 60 million people shipped to Siberia, hundreds of millions forced under a military dictatorship in Eastern Europe after WW2). If we consider the numbers of people killed as one way of evaluating the evil arts, consider these examples of great art:

1. Count Dracula of Transylvania. Estimated 35,000 impaled on stakes.
2. The Rwandan genocide. Approximately a million slaughtered.
3. Pol Pot of Cambodia. Several million educated people exterminated.

4. Hitler's eugenics. Approximately 6 million Jews, Roma and others killed
5. British Slave Trade. Est. 20million Africans (with 50% death rate) sold into slavery
6. Stalin's 'Fascist' empire. Est. over 60 million sent to Siberia
7. Mao in China. Some estimate over 100 million killed.

Of course, there are plenty of other examples of the dark arts: The French revolution and their Guillotine, Spanish Conquistadors in S. America, Putin's destruction of Chechnya, Georgia, Crimea, Ukraine, Japanese army in Korea, Italians in Ethiopia, Serbs in Croatia, Israeli bombs in Gaza, ISIS atrocities in Syria, Americans killing off Indians, Canadians with forced residential schools for natives, etc, etc. It would seem we humans are the most destructive and vicious species since Tyrannosaurus Rex. The Human 'Mid-brain' actually, evolved as a reptilian brain. Our new Neocortex gives us an extended range of values and behaviors. Thus, we can create art, literature, empathy, and can love others and love nature. But we are given a choice. Our neocortex can also think up terrible things beyond anything our old reptilian brain could have thought. At least in our version of the universe, we appear to have a choice as to which dispositions we value enough to activate into behavior. Since everything is possible, perhaps somewhere in our multiverse you and I exist in the worst possible of worlds and yet in another world version we sit in the best of places.

So, does Heaven and Hell exist? The answer is yes, and you and I already are sitting in both. Locked into our human values of good and bad, to us this cosmic concept appears both satisfying and dismaying. Perhaps it represents one of the new quantum-age ways of understanding reality.

Somewhere in NOST is a multiverse where the Big Bully Powers on Earth have no veto in the UN Security Council. (AKA the Unsecurity Council). There is a real functioning World Court that presides over Big dictators as well as Little dictators. Perhaps you as an artist are writing a fictional novel about a strange and nasty world where Stalins, Hitlers, Maos and Putins rule the roost. As artists in our present world, we find ourselves stuck with what value-options we perceive here and now. If we design anti genocide posters or whatever 'good' artworks, somewhere along the static string of universes in the 'next' frame one version of ourselves derives pleasure because we think we achieved something good and yet in another frame one of us looks back and perhaps rues the mistake of things not done right. Our string of static 'nows' somehow propels us into our next conscious moment. Did you or I have free will to choose? Perhaps the answer is both yes and no depending upon which conscious moment sits embedded in which universe.

OK. As an artist how can I view this situation? Could NOST and the Great Cosmic Mind or The Great Cosmic Dream of God or Whatever, that contains a tiny bit of human morality, have some ultimate law or preference

or bias of tema own? Frankly, I think any shaman, priest or imam who tells you that tema 'knows', is simply ignorant, insane, or a self-serving scoundrel. Consider what the most sincere and honest priests of our age, our scientists, have discovered about our strung-out Multiverse! An overall awareness seems to be that there is a trend toward randomness and increased entropy. (In the local environs that we can investigate). At some point there appears to have been a moment of very low entropy. (Big Bang!) There appear mysterious stable structures of threes. All things seem to come with antithings. In between the low entropy and maximum randomness (Final heat death), appear local buildups of negentropy or interesting nests of high complexity. Somewhere along the static string of universes before we near the max entropy heat death, (Ultimate Fizzle), there exist maxima of local complex structures. Barbour envisions this state like a blue mist settling on points of maximal interest in a vast static monotonous configuration space. Personally, as an artist, I prefer to visualize these special structures as little interesting thoughts that exist within some Great Cosmic Awareness. I like Edelman's idea of intellect produced by comparisons of some interesting, some highlighted (valued) parts of the brain structure versus the rest of the brain structure. There is no need for a little monitor (homunculus) or computer program to represent consciousness. Consciousness *is* the total structure where some one part compares with the rest of the whole. There is no external program needed, (as in a computer), the brain is self-sufficient unto itself. Even though

applying this analogy to the Cosmic Awareness may be speculative, (to say the least), it nevertheless points us toward some ideas about what such an entity might find interesting, preferable, or valuable.

Supposing this perception of a cosmic bias (value?) holds a kernel of truth, how should it influence what an artist creates? If this bias is toward structures where local flows of energy maximize local complexity at the expense of an overall increase of entropy, we can look at various such structures (artworks) and compare them. (NOTE: Chart of complexities).

Consider historically, the art of making a computer (highly complex thing). One of the first computers (Eniac) was the size of a large room and used enough power or energy throughput to light a small village. Next, we saw the large IBM mainframes which were smaller and used less power but were more complex. Then emerged much more complex desktop computers that needed even less energy to operate. Presently we have tiny battery-operated handheld devices. At each stage we used less material and less energy to achieve more information content with increased complexity.

For example, the act of burning coal (complex hydrocarbon) to produce water and carbon dioxide can only be positively valued if the result is more complex structure. It would be silly to simply burn it for heating. Another example is the Art of War (destruction of structure). This could be justified if the resulting new structure is more complex than the previous. In this case

an agricultural society would replace a hunting society and an industrial society would replace an agricultural and an information society would replace an industrial. An information society can replace an industrial one because it is more efficient in producing more complexity with less energy through flow. At each stage these seceding structures will use larger and larger energy flows with greater increases in overall entropy, and result in huge increases in complexity. The next structure might be space colonization with the necessary GMO human adaptations.

(Note: Energy flow thru societies.)

Examples of artists working along these lines:

1. Computer programming and quantum computing
2. Doctors creating DNA modification techniques to cure diseases
3. Scientists altering DNA to enable human adaptation for space travel
3. Creators of AI artificial intelligence and clever robotics
4. Rocket engineers creating space-stations or planetary platforms
5. Mathematicians and Physicists creating new theorems
6. Producers of creative new VR environments
7. Artists creating novel, improbable entities (Installations, Virtual Realities, etc.)

Philosophers, (Plato, Hume, Popper, Searle, et al) have argued for eons about the difference between Facts and Values. From a monistic viewpoint the Cosmic Awareness = physical multiverse structures = brain structures = our human mind structure. It is all the same kind of 'stuff'. Sooo---as an artist let me show you a few pictures in my thought gallery. They are versions from the Savannah Hypothesis. First you are looking at a gently rolling plain filled with verdant vegetation. Nearby on the edge of a pristine blue lake, appear several trees laden with ripening red fruit. On your left grow berry bushes amid some large boulders. Directly in front, two rabbits frisk in the summer sunlight. And to your right, you see a herd of peacefully grazing buffalo. Immersed within this pleasant Arcadian landscape how do you feel? Next let me show you the high arctic. You are looking from the edge of the tundra toward an endless frozen ocean shrouded in arctic twilight. A blowing blizzard at -80C stings your face while your blue toes have turned numb. Now how do you feel? Finally, we hop onto my magic transporter and zip into the middle of the Sahara Desert. The blinding light shimmers over endless barren sand dunes. A breeze that must come from a blast furnace parches your sunburnt skin. Your feelings? Well, unless you are a very recent adaptation, (Eskimo wielding a harpoon, or Arab riding a camel), we all know how you value these experiences. (Mirror Neurons!). For an artist working in the visual media, there is little difference between fact and value. The perception of something (fact?)

already has a built-in value in our mind. What you see is only a trigger for what is already acceptable there.

If you wish to apply what little we think we know of any of the biases (values?) of the Cosmic Awareness to your works of art, you might want to consider some of the following:

1. Repetitive similar elements do not significantly increase interesting complexity
2. Each static frame in time is only slightly different (consider the history of art movements)
3. All artworks eventually degrade (increase in entropy) (oxidize and return to chaos)
4. There is a bonus in getting max structure with min energy (smaller and more complex)
5. There is a bonus to sexual reproduction as vs cloning (each unit is unique) (anti racial conservation)
6. Diversity of species is preferred. (GMO prefers variety to monoculture)
7. Human conservative ethics re GMO are opposite to what Nature actually seems to be doing.
8. Choice of size and substrate influences longevity of artworks. (Pyramid vs canvas)

9. Certain structures persist longer than others (triadic stability) (cultural vs individual longevity)

All structures (relationships) have a value of some sort inside a human mind and their complexity is increased by externally extending the mind (physically and/or socially).

10. From a Cosmic perspective, human art must increase overall complexity without destroying (decreasing) the complexity of our natural environs. (Extinction of other species)

11. The morality of Nature (good vs bad) is often different than man-made ethics or religious morality

12. OP art and art using depth cues and our perception of colour etc. are uniquely Human art forms. Applying our ability to employ abstract symbols, we may be able to create alien arts. (Ultraviolet paintings, Artificial mice dipped in catmint, Ultrasound symphonies for bats.)

13. 'Art' forms of Nature, Gaia, Cosmic Awareness etc. are infinitely more complex than human art. (Next time you paint a tree, think in terms of every branch, every root, every leaf, every cell within each leaf, DNA in each cell, atoms within the DNA, nuclei within each atom, quarks within the nuclei, etc.)

14. Nature may appear 'red in tooth' locally, but its cosmic features include complexity and novelty. Applied to human ethics: conservative eugenics is bad and GMO is good!?

15. From a cosmic perspective there is a fundamental value to 'art'. Especially if art creates; complexity, novelty, persistence, emotional impact, societal importance, and asks 'why'.

Confused? What we humans do is simplify, concentrate on the basics. So! The most fundamental thing we are aware of is that it all started in a low entropy Big Bang. Next, we know it is most probable that we will proceed from less complex to more complex higher entropy states. We also know that the formation of local low entropy life forms can facilitate this process of increasing overall entropy. What we don't know is why it seems necessary to create (value?) local groups of improbably unlikely low entropy, or even the original low entropy Big Bang. But from a Cosmic Awareness perspective, it is what it is!

To simplify what we see from the human perspective, compare two objects. One object is a tiny chunk of granite rock, the second is a simple unicellular life-form. The rock is an integral part of the Universe. You may sense that the Universe knows of its existence. If you made it magically disappear the entire energy balance of the Universe would be disrupted.

You may in a sense think of the Universe being aware of this rock and vice-versa. Now consider the second object, it also is intimately a part of our Universe and similarly connected. But it is also aware of its local environment. However, this is a very limited local awareness at the macro level. For example, it may be aware of the chemical composition of its

environment and if it has little appendages, it may move them until it finds chemistry that suits it better (value?).

We as artists, work to seek awareness and create value. The greater our awareness the more interesting things we can create. Our wall painting arts are now 35,000 years old and could be supplanted by GMO creations in the future. Assuming our evil side of creativity doesn't kill us first.