

Value from a Commercial viewpoint

And I give to you, and you give to me --- (but only something of equal value!)

Our intuitive sense of reciprocity was inherited from our common ancestor with the monkeys. If one monkey does another a favor, it anticipates a reciprocal favor when it needs one. In our society this reciprocity allows for differentiation of function. It allows for some to become scientists and others to become artists. "I will draw you a picture of a fine buffalo on this cave wall. You will then be able to find and hunt a fine buffalo. We will then share it." I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine! I'll pick your fleas if you pick mine! I'll give you 10 Euros (energy symbols), if you work (amount of energy expended) one hour for me! (Unless you live in an Indo-European language culture where 'He gives Him' has a different connotation than 'He gives Her'!!!)

Reciprocity assumes a sense of time and a purpose for doing something. Reciprocity underlies many works of art. Art thus can have value and purpose. Reciprocity is also associated with ideas of equality and a sense of fairplay. (For example, if someone offers 10 Euros for a painting that cost you 100 Euros in material, you will feel cheated). Hence reciprocity is a factor in developing our concepts of value and morality. Art most certainly has value. Positive or negative and any shade of grey in between!

Pinker points out that we have an intuitive engineering capacity that allows us to make and use tools. An artist who concentrates on producing work to only please customers so he can get money, (symbolic energy to enable getting things), is using art as a tool.

Picasso for instance realized that African masks were tools of war and not simply art objects. Of course, the Art of War is just another art hence the art of making masks is an art embedded within an art. Since reciprocity is such a fundamental character of our human nature, it can only be ignored by the most stubborn of artists. We romanticize people like Van Gogh and his unwillingness to compromise creativity for commerce. However, we can also acclaim other innovators such as Picasso, who was fantastically successful in his reciprocal relations with his art patrons, (and mistresses).

The most fundamental behavioral characteristic of all life, even of the lowliest amoeba, must be recognition of what is beneficially attractive and what is to be avoided. Larger brains developed to enable finer differentiation between levels of plus or minus. In our multi level remapping of sensory input within our brain, we obtain abstractions that let us conceptualize the Great Attractor, the Gods on Olympus, Buddha, Marxism, Beauty, Goodness, Truth, Eternity, Machinery, and Artistry. We are not only drawn to attractors in nature, but also to man-made artifacts. For example: body painting, clothing, stone axes, coloured beads, music, pottery, and of course drawings and paintings. Not only are we tuned in to attractors but also the repulsors. We have an intuitive sense which allows us to associate with some life-forms yet repel others. It allows us to avoid such things as arid deserts, cold mountain tops (no greenery=no food), snakes, tigers (danger), and evil smelling liquids (poisonous hydrocarbons).

When we combine reciprocity, attractors, intuitive engineering, intuitive understanding of life, and our sense of moral outrage (derived from ignored reciprocity), we end up with economics.

(Eco nomos, from the Greek “household rules”.) Unfortunately, the modern meaning of ‘economics’ has become so constricted that it now refers to monetary transactions rather than encompassing all cultural phenomena. Within this cultural milieu an artist must create his living by producing attractors, art seen by other human beings to be so attractive and thus have value. Disanayake calls this producing something “special”. VS Ramachandran identifies this as something that induces a “peak-shift” effect. We all produce ‘art’ of some kind or other but if one of us produces very special artifacts, art critics can designate this as “art” and the person who produced such artifacts is then accepted by society as an artist or at least a skilled artisan. (Institutional Theory of art).

The fundamental human awareness which is addressed by Damasio (Notes 19, 20), is the sense of self. Inputs from several initial maps, such as the map of our internal states, maps of external objects, and inputs from our autobiographical memory, (who we have been), form part of the mental model that we call consciousness. After more than a year of maturation a child develops a sense of self. This is a feeling of being ‘me’ as distinct from all the rest of the world. It provides a unity of perspective from which to evaluate external and internal events and judge the appropriateness (value) of dispositions for action. The production of works of art requires not only a self, but also an autobiographical self, to anticipate the possible future emotional impact of the art and its intended purpose. We know that all sensory inputs pass through the thalamus and are evaluated by our emotional cortex. We have a sense of other minds, (mirror Neurons), and thus we also know that others will see our art and form evaluations of it –

i.e. have emotional reactions to the art. The evaluation of art, (production of emotional response), is automatic. Only a rock or a jug of water staring at your painting will have no emotional feelings about it. Whether the response will stimulate the amygdala into a fear or disgust state, or whether it will stimulate the Medial Forebrain Bundle into a sense of pleasure, depends on the choice (intent) of the artist and the autobiographical memory of the viewer. Whether you decide to hang a picture of a beautiful flower on your living room wall, or rather enjoy the feeling from hanging a lovely porcelain urinal there, is your choice. Of course, this presumes that in the society of women who evaluate men's work, a meme has developed such that women adore male urinals and thus are inspired by extensive collections of these fine porcelain objects.

Some critics make it a point to differentiate between what is art and what is value in art. Let us suppose that someone has made an object that to others appears to have little or no value. (As an example, the artisan has collected a pile of dirty, smelly garbage, dug a shallow pit in the ground, and buried these artefacts). Let us assume that the original artisan then claims that this object is an artwork of great aesthetic value. He then hires an art critic, (who agrees with this self-evaluation), to convince a mixed jury of 100 citizens to believe in the merits of this artwork. The critic digs deep in his knowledge of art philosophy and makes profound scientific analyses of the meaning of conceptual art symbolizing the societal need to increase entropy while attempting an environmental cover-up in order to politically sustain the complexity of cultural endeavors. Unfortunately, some of the jurors are overcome by the stench arising from underground and leave before a vote can be taken. Due to this controversial outcome, the critic gets other critics to air more opinions in the media, and the artist obtains a government grant of 7000Eu. to

create a very large 'installation' of his art next to the city dump. Both artist and critic now are famous throughout the Western artworld, and become rich and respected.

Finally, a sensible female art critic (Helen?) arrives on the scene and makes the following observations:

- a. The tradition of FINE arts is only our Western worldview of art.
- b. We should not confuse the Advertising Arts with our traditional Fine Arts.
- c. Value is value whether it be of utilitarian or advertising or aesthetic consequence.
- d. It is a woman's duty to criticize men for selfish and outlandish advertising behavior.
- e. There is nothing 'special' about a big pile of garbage.

In our industrial society we have established some norms for compensating labor. (ie. A minimum wage). Typically, a craftsperson could expect somewhere in the range of \$15 to \$30 per hour. So, lets assume you paint a 30x40in canvass in a total of 40 hours. Thus, the cost of labor would range from \$600 to \$1200. To this you must add the cost of the canvas on 1 1/2" 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.) should sell for \$2400. Thus, for a professional artist to attain an annual income of \$48,000 they would need to sell 200 paintings or about 4 to 5 per week.

In reality, a large amount of art is produced by commercial printing and a 30x40 picture sells for around \$250(where most cost is the frame). Also, a vast quantity of art is produced by part-time artists

who are either retired or have some other full time income. In situations where an artist has the luxury of creating for the sake of creating rather than putting food on the table, we can discount the cost of labor. In that case the price could include the cost of materials (\$100), the fee for entering an exhibit (ie. \$25), a commission on sales, if any, to a non-profit organization (ie. \$25), cost of transport (ie. \$25), and packaging, flyers etc. (ie. \$50). Thus, such an artist could actually compete with commercial printed art and sell a 30x40 picture for about \$225. Of course, if we consider the resale value of such art, its value would still remain \$225 or possibly increase if the author becomes famous. On the other hand, the commercial print would be worth the wholesale cost of the frame (ie. Typically \$25).

Universal traits and the Perception of Value

Donald E. Brown in his book 'Human Universals', lists 373 universal traits. These universals possibly arise because the growth of our basic brain structures is genetically influenced. The reason that we have highly developed brain modules such as the Wernicke's area and Broca's area when compared with chimpanzees, is because of small genetic differences. Wernicke's area allows us to give meaning to perceptions, and Broca's area gives rise to our universal ability to form syntax. (sentence structures). It is just too much of a coincidence that hundreds of traits are universally exhibited in all the different human cultures and environments. There must be some sort of genetic factor involved in their emergence. We have a built-in universal (predisposition) to label things that we bump into as either

good or bad.

Many of these universals are directly or indirectly involved in the evaluation of our actions and artifacts. For example:

- Binary Cognitive distinction (good vs bad art)
- Corporate status (health, strength, sex, height, skin colour etc.)
- Differential valuations (different levels)
- Good and Bad distinguished (abstraction of beneficial or not)
- Imagery (symbolic judgement)
- Anticipation (knowledge of Other Minds)
- Intention (reading intent of other beings)
- Judging others (mirror neurons)
- Making Comparisons (comparative judgement of value)
- Self-image (concern what others think)
- Symbolism (ability to abstract and generalize)
- Trade (valuation and commerce)

It is important to note that when we talk about universals influencing the valuation of traditional so called 'art' objects, these same universals are also applicable to the valuation of **all** types of artifacts produced by Homo Sapiens. It is because of this inclusiveness, we must start with an overall view of all humanly produced artifacts and only then start to separate out the more specialized products. Thus, the art of 'being and doing human' becomes the primary 'art'. From this follows such subdivisions as; the art of War, the art of Pottery, the art of Body Image, the art of Architecture, the art of Decoration (abstracted from the art of changing our Body Image), the Religious arts, the Culinary Arts, and the Fine Arts of Western civilizations etc. The TOE (Theory of Everything) accepts *all* artifacts as 'art' --- the good, the bad, the mediocre, the 'special' and the not so special. This includes visual perceptions of natural objects --- brain produced artifacts in our conscious minds. An excellent example was

illustrated by Professor Stephen Hawking who used visualization in arriving at mathematical descriptions of the function of Black Holes. This is the same mental process used by artists prior to creating art objects.

Another way of looking at values is to consider what actually motivates us. In 1943 Maslow came up with the idea that we have a hierarchy of basic needs that drives us to action. If the basic physiological needs are met, then we can start to satisfy other societal needs that have more to do with others rather than the basic self. (See chart of 'needs').

Over a period of time, Maslow added more details of these needs and finally came to the conclusion that not all needs are hierarchical for all people all the time. Most people act under many simultaneous sets of needs. Some artists for example will minimize on the basic necessities in order to seek creative fulfillment. (Living in an attic and buying expensive paints). When we scrutinize the hierarchy of needs we can also visualize at each level activities that can be given different values depending upon at which level one is presently operating. For example, what is the value of your work in order to obtain your daily bread! What is the value of the work done by a police officer to keep you safe? What is the value of the carpenter who builds a house for your shelter? What is the value of a mother who gives you love? When we go up to the 'Self Actualization' at the top of the pyramid we, as a mammalian species, are different from all others. We appear to be distinct in our need for self-actualization, for peak experience, and for creative fulfillment. It is only our spiritual nature and creative arts that distinguish us from monkeys, chimps, pigs and whales! What makes us human is our search for meaning in life, our attempts at moral behavior, and our need for creative experiences with aesthetic value. The philosopher Hegel thought that

we are engaged in a process of understanding that is helical in nature. We come to a theory explaining life and then acquire new knowledge that causes us to arrive at some newer higher level until we finally meld with the understanding of god. Of course, we can never know it all, each new level is incomplete because our brains represent only a tiny fraction of what exists. To understand everything our brain may have to be bigger than the universe.

Maslow's hierarchic pyramid is another more modern version of Hegel's dialectic spiral, (or Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions), that tries to explain life's purpose in a simple graphic suitable for our small minds to comprehend.