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The body, the gaze and the theorist: remarks on a strategic distinction

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While emotions have become a relevant, even fashionable topic in Anglo-American geography in recent years, German-speaking scholars are more reluctant to take on board the lessons of emotional and sensual perception. This reluctance became especially obvious in 2001, when the German-speaking realm witnessed an unusually fierce debate over the value of the aesthetic for the discipline's system of thought. While the protagonists of emotional and aesthetic thinking celebrated an increasing significance of the 'softer' and more bodily aspects of knowledge, the antagonists criticized what they regard as a return to the traditional paradigm of *Landschaftsgeographie* and its conservative ideology. While fully sympathetic to the critique of an allegedly aesthetic 'geomantic geography', this paper demonstrates that considering questions of aesthetics does not necessarily imply a revitalization of ancient paradigms, but can lead instead to a challenging of formerly taken-for-granted epistemological foundations. To achieve this goal, this paper summarizes the German debate, highlighting the antagonists' distinction between a cognitive and scientific realm, on the one hand, and an aesthetic, pre-scientific or everyday realm, on the other. The deconstruction of this distinction leads to a more complex notion of the relations between aesthetic and cognitive spheres, or between the body and the gaze. The acknowledgement of this complexity can, in turn, be regarded as a point of departure for ways of thinking between the body and the gaze. Broadening the perspective towards such an in-between point of view does not only reveal certain absences within the dominant approaches to German-speaking geography, but provides a critical appraisal of some lines of argument within the Anglo-American preoccupation with the emotions.

In various disciplines emotions have long been a topic of research. Compared to the feelings, fears and phobias of everyday life, the emotions of researchers, particularly with regards to their objects of study, have been of much less interest. In geography, as in many other fields, these emotions have been hushed up and implicitly or explicitly regarded as *obstacle épistémologique* – as a barrier to scientific insight.¹ In recent years, though, both the subjective nature of much research and the influence of emotions on the research process have been given more serious attention. Especially in the Anglo-American realm, the (researchers') emotions have become relevant, even fashionable, both methodologically and as an area for geographical research, figuring as a focal point in written statements and oral debate.² Paying attention to 'the emotions as ways

of knowing, being and doing in the broadest sense; and using this to take geographical knowledges . . . beyond their more usual visual, textual and linguistic domains',³ the scholars concerned both criticize the traditional notion of the 'emotionless researcher' and express frustration 'with those aspects of cultural geography which seem (to some) to be esoteric, inward-looking and apparently oblivious to any real world'.⁴

Compared to what can perhaps be represented as a recent 'emotional turn' within Anglo-American geography, German-speaking scholars are more reluctant to take on board the lessons of emotional and sensual perception. This reluctance became especially obvious in 2001, when the German-speaking realm witnessed an unusually fierce debate over the value of the aesthetic for the discipline's system of thought. Although the contents of this debate have been almost as complex as the aesthetic itself, it can be reduced, if only for heuristic reasons, to two main lines of argument represented by two prominent scholars: one proposing and one opposing 'aesthetic thinking' in geography.⁵ The protagonist, Jürgen Hasse, regards an 'aesthetic rationality' as essential for any geographical reasoning in the present era.⁶ In his opinion, reality itself has fundamentally changed in postmodern times, showing more and more aesthetic qualities. As a consequence, he pleads for aesthetic instruments of apprehension, equating 'aesthetic' alternately with 'emotional', 'artistic' or 'sensual', and defining it 'as the other of reason and language'.⁷

Due to the substantial but blurred semantic dominion of the aesthetic in Hasse's writings, two figures can be introduced here. While that of the body will henceforth stand for the aesthetic, the gaze will serve as metaphor for the realm of reason. It can be assumed that Hasse would approve of these figures: the (feeling-)body stands at the heart of his emotional approach to geography, and the gaze is widely regarded as a symbol of reason. Hasse's aim, however, to renew geography on aesthetic grounds – the switchover to the body – is vehemently opposed by the antagonist, Gerhard Hard. According to Hard, Hasse's sensual approach, first, is characterized by a melancholic critique of progress and civilization and, secondly, reproduces the traditional geographical concept of 'space', epitomized in the holistically perceived *Landschaft* as the organic custodian of political, social and economic development. As such, Hasse's writings, for Hard, first and foremost represent 'a revitalization of some . . . aspects of the German *Landschaftsgeographie* of the 1920s and 1930s'.⁸

At first sight, the opponent seems to provide a consistent and resounding critique. The 'aesthetic geography' proposed by Hasse can indeed be said to show both normative and methodological parallels to the traditional paradigm of *Landschaftsgeographie*.⁹ While the critique of the 'new aesthetic geography' is hence both legitimate and necessary, closer consideration reveals some shortcomings in Hard's argument. The antagonist follows the stringent logic of a theory of science, one that replaced the paradigm of *Landschaftsgeographie* within German geography as late as the end of the 1960s. In accordance with this logic, which continues to inform the most powerful approaches within German-speaking geography, the antagonist has to discriminate strategically between a cognitive and scientific realm, on the one hand, and an aesthetic, pre-scientific or everyday realm, on the other. Put differently, along with a theoretical background that sharply discerns between the social and the material word, Hard cannot but reduce the relations between the gaze and the body to a strategic and exclusionary dichotomy of either/or.

Against this background, the following paper is an attempt to expose the unavoidable interdependence between the supposed polarities. In accordance with feminist and postcolonial strategies of challenging ready-made opposites, its theoretical position is characterized by two premises. First, underlining the complex relations between the body and the gaze is aimed neither at dialectically reconciling the two sides of the demarcation line nor at dismissing the discursive 'properties' on either side of the divide. What is at issue, instead, is an attempt to work with the antagonism in order to show that it implies a 'false dichotomy': that the demarcation line can never be fixed but always remains subject of discursive definition and redefinition. Put differently, what is at issue is making use of the antagonism to render it both productive and progressive for its own deconstruction. Secondly, and as a consequence, working with the 'properties' of either side of the demarcation line is not intended to reduce the multiple meanings of the rational and the aesthetic to a predetermined and definite content. On the contrary, the semantic diversity of both terms will be highlighted and, thus, happily endured – rather than limited.¹⁰

It is in this vein that the demarcation line between supposedly supreme scientific cognition and pre-scientific or everyday aesthetic perception will be deconstructed. In doing so, more 'circumspect' ways of coming to terms with the aesthetic will be presented, and the viewpoints of the two parties involved in the current debate will be confronted with another – an in-between – perspective. To achieve this goal, the paper consists of four steps. In the next section, I provide a discussion of the German debate, highlighting Hard's valuing distinction between a scientific realm on the one hand and an aesthetic realm on the other. The deconstruction of this distinction, undertaken in the third section, not only reveals its contingent character but leads to a more complex notion of the relations between cognitive and aesthetic discourses. Recognizing this complexity leads, in turn, to a perspective operating between body and gaze (section four). The relevance of this perspective – not only for the German-speaking context but also for the Anglo-American one where the emotions are now of considerable interest – will be sketched out in the conclusion.

Discussing the German debate

At first sight, discussion of the 'aesthetic debate' might seem of little importance. Arguments about the aesthetic dimension do not match the major paradigmatic debates, which mainly revolve around different theoretical approaches to space, place and region.¹¹ The dominant arguments are informed by social theories, most obvious perhaps in the popularity of Benno Werlen's 'social geography of everyday regionalizations',¹² sharply discerning the ontological modes of the material, the subjective and the social (as already sketched out by Popper). The related social-scientific approaches are, however, challenged from at least two sides. At the one and rather marginal side, a number of 'traditional' geographers, many of them physical geographers, still keep hold of the traditional 'one-worldism' which lacks the stringent distinction of a physical world on the one hand and a social or subjective world on the other.¹³ On the other side, there is the rather recent import of cultural theories. By replacing the distinct worlds of social science (and, of course, the holistic 'one world' of the traditional

paradigm) with a paradigmatic multiplicity of innumerable and incommensurable world views, many scholars replace the traditional notion of objective truth with the concept of situated and partial knowledge. Notwithstanding the quantity of articles meanwhile published in this guise, though, the influence of the social-scientific viewpoint on the paradigmatic debates within German-speaking geography remains strong.¹⁴

Compared to the discussions and developments at this broad level of debate, the ‘aesthetic debate’ indeed seems to be of an esoteric nature, addressing quaint topics of mere historical interest. Nonetheless, it has caused considerable turmoil in the German-speaking geographical community. Controversies over the initial intervention led to the installation of a discussion website,¹⁵ and the journal *Erdkunde* devoted an issue to questions of aesthetics, nature and *Landschaft*, containing articles from both proponents and opponents of aesthetic thinking in geography.¹⁶ In the light of these activities, one might ask whether a discussion of the ‘aesthetic debate’ is as dispensable as it might look at first glance.

What is the debate about?

One of the focal points of the debate is summarized in the title of one of the papers published in *Erdkunde*, Gerhard Hard’s ‘“Hagia Chora”: on a newly arisen geomantic tone in geography’.¹⁷ ‘Hagia Chora’ provides a resounding critique of a joint paper by Reinhard Falter and Jürgen Hasse, ‘Landscape photography and hermeneutics of nature: the aesthetics of nature in experience and depiction’.¹⁸ The latter is beyond doubt an exceptional piece of work. According to Hard, the outlook of its first author, the philosopher and geomancer Falter, is characterized by revolutionary conservatism and anthroposophical spiritualism.¹⁹ Hasse, in turn, is said to combine (a residuum of) Adorno’s dark analyses²⁰ with Hermann Schmitz’s phenomenology of the feeling-body.²¹ As the authors project these approaches onto the symbolic, emotional and spiritual meaning of (true) *Landschaft*, which, as a consequence, appears as ‘Hagia Chora’ – as ‘sacred landscape’²² – the paper conveys a sort of ‘landscape racism’, making out true and harmonious landscapes deemed superior to (supposedly) less true and harmonious ones.²³

It is absurd to ask whether these [the American] landscapes provide space for anything humane. Their impact is indestructible. As such, they provoke the aspiration of the European who has to tread carefully if he [*sic*] does not want to tread anything down. The European longs for wildness, mistaking it for crude incivility. However, one tends to forget that it is only in Europe or in contrastable landscapes (East Asia) that culture in the manner of a Mozart symphony or of a Chinese landscape picture could come into existence. . . . The American way of life [in contrast to the European or the Chinese way of life] corresponds. . . to landscapes where one cannot be at home; it derives from the fundamental incapacity still to understand at all what it means to be at home.²⁴

Since such ‘landscape racism’ entails crude landscape determinism, it is unlikely that geographical journals will provide a further stage for joint papers by Falter and Hasse.²⁵ Likewise, the following remarks will focus less on Falter’s nature-religiousness and more on Hasse’s sensualism. This is not to say that Falter alone was to blame for the political implications of the paper while Hasse’s work could be easily divorced from

the landscape-racist tendency. It is merely to say that elsewhere Hasse focuses less on the sacred spirit of particular landscapes and their alleged healing forces. Characterized by a somewhat postmodern approach to the ambivalence of 'things' in an aestheticized reality,²⁶ these other writings more broadly reflect on sensual and bodily experiences of the environment. Nonetheless, the subtitle of Hard's 'Hagia Chora' – 'on a newly arisen geomantic tone in geography' – can serve as a starting point.

The case that Hard makes is similar to the one made by Kant 200 years ago. Against 'a newly arisen noble tone in philosophy', Kant spoke out against the supposed truths of intuitive feelings regarded as somehow discharged from logical explication.²⁷ Like Kant, who stated that 'the philosopher of the vision' could not be tolerated by 'the police in the realm of science',²⁸ Hard, among other things, criticizes the intuitionism expressed in Hasse's writings. Indeed, it can be argued that the aesthetic thinking of the latter heavily draws upon intuitive and sensuous (self-)knowledge. Hasse believes himself to exist in 'medial' and 'fictionalized spaces' full of decay, 'false illusiveness' and 'ubiquitous illusion',²⁹ from which only experiences of the feeling-body – including abruptly 'awakening', 'blitz-' or 'shock-like' moments of potential reconciliation – can provide relief. Theoretically, these sudden 'awakenings' are thought to provide a way of transcending the fictions of the estranged here and now towards the utopia of a better life.³⁰ Practically, however, this utopia can never be realized, since all of its concrete features necessarily run the risk of being complicit with the very illusive fiction they are deemed to transcend.³¹

Hasse can thus be regarded (and seems to regard himself) as a 'melancholic', suffering from the ubiquitous systemic colonization of the allegedly decaying and alienating spaces of social life,³² and as a scholar whose aesthetic approach resembles the intuition (*Anschauung*) of the holistic methodology of the traditional geographical paradigm. Besides this methodological similarity, his 'aesthetic geography' echoes some normative characteristics of *Landschaftsgeographie*. For Hasse, as well as for the traditional geographers of *Landschaft*, contemporary society is characterized by fragmentation, a triumphal but destructive procession of technology, and a loss of balance and harmony. Against the lost unity of landscape and human life, (internal) nature is set as the overarching positive other, the lessons for which humankind has to show more serious consideration if it does not want to perish.³³ Like a hundred years before, it is suggested that only aesthetic thinking can lead the way to an appropriate perception of reality, because only aesthetic thinking is able to discern the spectacular (post)modern illusiveness from a mysteriously occluded ideal reality.³⁴

Remarks on the antagonist's line of argument

Against such a background, Hard's echo of Kant's 'call for the police' is legitimate, even joyous at first sight. Yet, despite its legitimacy and adequacy, Hard's critique can itself be criticized. In order to formulate his critique, Hard has to discriminate strategically between two self-contained entities: a scientifically productive realm, associated with objectification and rational cognition; and a pre-scientific or everyday realm, considered as the cradle of subjective and aesthetic irrationality. This is not to say that Hard

was not aware of the subjective nature of much research and the influence of emotions on the research process. On the contrary, scientific work, for him, is always accompanied by 'reveries and imaginative encounters',³⁵ aesthetic experiences and perceptions of the object of study. In a paper published in 1995, for instance, he sketches out possibilities for setting 'the two modes of experience in a more fertile, more subtle and sophisticated, relationship [than had been the case in *Landschaftsgeographie*]'.³⁶ And in 'Hagia Chora' he submits that 'the unconscious always participates in the research process; from its very beginning, analysis is stimulated by emotions (particularly positive ones). The emotional and libidinal appropriations of the object might alter as the research process unfolds, but in general they do not weaken but strengthen.'³⁷ Somewhat surprisingly, though, he seems to regard these appropriations as strictly separated from the cognitive process of gaining 'real knowledge', arguing that aesthetic experience of the scientific object mainly functions as an *obstacle épistémologique*.³⁸

In order to try and formulate an explanation for Hard's contradictory stance, I turn to the specific logic already mentioned: the logic that gained currency at the end of the long-winded and highly controversial process of geographical 'scientification', when the idiographic, holistic and essentialist paradigm of *Landschaftsgeographie* was finally replaced with more stringent, social-scientific methodologies. According to this logic, modern sciences tend to construct their objects of study 'beyond a *rupture épistémologique*', separating the taken-for-granted world of the everyday from the analytic and reflexive world of rational science.³⁹ The object of *Landschaftsgeographie*, in contrast, is said to stem from the aesthetic realm of the former, i.e. the pre-scientific world. *Landschaftsgeographie*, it is argued, therefore, represented a prototype – if not the exceptional example – of a modern science that combined scientific and aesthetic experience, because both scientific and aesthetic experience coincided in the study of the object – the *Landschaft*. When geography finally began to transgress its *rupture épistémologique* at the end of the 1960s, however, landscape was gradually replaced by scientific concepts (space, place and region). As a consequence, aesthetic 'entry' into the objects of study became much more difficult.

From the social-scientific point of view, many contemporary geographers are likely to compensate for the resulting lack of aesthetic experience and fulfilment by re-mystifying their objects, promoting geography as a 'hermeneutics of nature', 'social natural science' or 'ecological aesthetics of nature'.⁴⁰ The resulting outlook of a 'romantic science'⁴¹ is condemned predominantly by those scholars whose intellectual biographies are, in one way or another, linked to the defeat of *Landschaftsgeographie* at the end of the 1960s. For them, the switch-over to the body, as suggested by Hasse, necessarily represents not a renewal of but a regression in geography, which has to be contested if essentialist perceptions – and essentialist concepts – of landscape are to be foreclosed. In this vein, Hard admits that if his writings were motivated by one single concern, this would be the saving of 'the phenomenon of landscape from dull reifications in the manner of certain landscape geographers'.⁴²

While this might seem strange, from an Anglo-American perspective, endeavours to contest essentialist and reifying concepts of space and place cannot be underrated in

German-speaking geography.⁴³ It can be argued, therefore, that this is why Hard, while allowing the aesthetic dimension a positive role as a stimulus to inquiry, cannot but dismiss the aesthetic dimension as irrelevant and misleading when it comes to the actual realization of scientific research. In other words, it is because of this concern to avoid essentializing accounts of landscape that Hard cannot but regard truth as a matter of the logos and not of aesthetic perception. As a consequence, he (re)produces a specific technique of power in which the theorist draws a distinction, usurps the positive side of that distinction, and who then by design becomes the master of both sides. Criticized by postcolonial and feminist scholars, this strategy has been described as *l'englobement du contraire* ('the embracing of the contrary').⁴⁴ Like the moralist who takes the very distinction between good and bad for good, or the jurist who has no doubt that courts do right when they tell right from wrong, the social scientist knows that (s)he is right in discerning a realm of scientific truth from another one of mere aesthetic 'wisdom':

Real knowledge always presupposes a radical break with . . . inward-fantasies-in-the-outward-world, these attractive and intimate worlds of images and symbols that always have already occupied the realm of the scientific object. There is no real knowledge until the 'rupture épistémologique' has been transcended.⁴⁵

Deconstructing the dichotomy

The evaluative distinction standing at the heart of Hard's critique can be traced back to Greek philosophy. Plato, polemically banishing the poets from his ideal state in the 10th book of the *Republic*, conceptualized the perceptions of the senses as inferior to rational (philosophical) reasoning. This position was, albeit in the very different philosophical and historical context of the seventeenth century, reproduced through the writings of Descartes, who codified the Enlightenment with a specific sense of scientific rationality. Despite the fact that Cartesian philosophy has not gone unchallenged over the centuries since, the belief in a realm of scientific rationality supposedly superior to the sensuous, fictional and 'irrational' realm of the senses has become a taken-for-granted truth in many quarters.

Yet, the distinction between two separate realms represented a false dichotomy from its very beginning. It can be argued that Plato 'invented' the empire of true philosophical reasoning as the positive mirror image of poetry and art, which he blamed for offering nothing but fiction and illusion. Put differently, he required the existence of an inferior realm as a negative to 'invent' the positive sphere of philosophical truth. More adequately, therefore, the two realms should be regarded as 'imagined entities' requiring the existence of each other to come into existence themselves. The distinction between inferior sensual perception and superior scientific cognition did not 'fall from heaven'; it cannot be found in the 'objects as such', but only in the languages and imaginations of those who interpret, categorize and valorize (the objects of) the world by means of it. Involving 'aesthetics' is not meant to name a definite sphere, but to make a distinction: the distinction between 'aesthetic' and 'scientific reason'. The only truth that we can claim about this distinction is that it is 'true' neither out of reach of those who drew it nor before it was drawn. It represents a matter of context – of culture, of practice or of interest – but it 'is' not *per se*. Therefore, the scientific and the aesthetic should

be conceptualized as both interdependent and internally different spaces, not as self-contained, homogeneous entities.

These 'purely' epistemological remarks can be further underlined empirically.⁴⁶ This 'empirical deconstruction' of the demarcation line between the two realms will be undertaken by 'interviewing' – or, rather, interpreting – 'eyewitnesses' from either side of the divide. These interviews will highlight the permanent displacements to which the boundary between the realm of the body and the realm of the gaze was, and continues to be, exposed.

In the realm of the gaze

Given these deconstructionist intentions, it might seem strange to write about – and, thereby, to discern – a realm of the gaze. However, the strategy of this paper is to work with the body/gaze dichotomy in order to make it productive. Rather than representing a signifier for the pre-discursive existence of an essential realm of the gaze, the distinction hence serves as a device on the way to 'empirical deconstruction'. The ambivalence of this strategy is somehow prefigured by the term 'gaze' itself, denoting both conceptual ocularcentrism and one of the senses.

Accordingly, the first eyewitness to be interviewed did not write solely about the gaze. On the contrary, he disapproved of the ideal of Cartesian science and annexed the concrete, the particular and the individual to philosophy, thus upgrading the supposedly inferior capability of the senses. It was Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten who, in his 'Aesthetica' (1750), qualified conceptual truth as poor, abstract and unable to embrace reality.⁴⁷ Against the program of 'exact science' and conceptual thought, he introduced the aesthetic to enhance perception by systematic training of the 'inferior' senses – a project which, as Eagleton argues, had a stimulating impact on the philosophical *Zeitgeist* of the eighteenth century:

It is as though philosophy suddenly wakes up to the fact that there is a dense, swarming territory beyond its own mental enclave which threatens to fall utterly outside its sway. That territory is nothing less than the whole of our sensate life together – the business of affections and aversions, of how the world strikes the body on its sensory surfaces, of that which takes root in the gaze and the guts and all that arises from our most banal, biological insertion into the world. The aesthetic concerns this most gross and palpable dimension of the human, which post-Cartesian philosophy, in some curious lapse of attention, has somehow managed to overlook.⁴⁸

Parallel to its emphasis on the 'dimension of the human' – the subjective, the individual, the sensual and the emotive – Baumgarten's aesthetic also claimed cognitive grounds. Defined as the science of how an object was to be perceived sensually, it was thought of as a complement to traditional philosophical apprehension of the world. 'True' cognition, in this approach, was conceptualized as a combination of aesthetic perception and logical cognition.

Philosophy's claim to the body, i.e. the aesthetic dimension within cognitive discourses, became even stronger in the aftermath of Baumgarten's intervention. According to the 'oldest systematic programme of German idealism',⁴⁹ the true and the good are united only in the beautiful. The 'highest act of reason' was stated to be an 'aesthetic

act', and the 'philosophy of the mind' (*Geist*) was regarded as 'aesthetic philosophy'.⁵⁰ The new hegemony of the aesthetic was repeated, for instance, in the philosophies of art of both Hegel and Schelling, where the dynamic of the beautiful resulted from its very capability to reconcile the true and the good.⁵¹ The fact that both Hegel and Schelling not only 'domesticated' the arts for philosophical purposes but paradoxically discredited sensual perception⁵² does not undermine the argument that the demarcation line between the two realms was shifted far into the realm of the gaze; it points to the internal differences of the various discourses in the realm of the gaze.

These differences, in turn, highlight the impracticality of subsuming the manifold discourses in the realm of the gaze under the umbrella of one overarching definition. What unifies the discourses specified above, though, is their embracement of aesthetic perception. According to these discourses, the true cannot unfold without the beautiful, and neither without the good. The involvement of the latter is revealed, for instance, in the 'Critique of the power of judgement'.⁵³ Despite being regarded – paradoxically or not – as the foundation of aesthetic autonomy,⁵⁴ the teleological impetus and the moral imperative of Kant's philosophy can be easily revealed.⁵⁵ Many philosophical discourses, it can be summarized, are imbued with aesthetic implications – as well as with moral ones.

In the realm of the body

After having explored the lack of essence in the realm of the gaze, the reverse will now be done for the body. As in the previous subsection, the act of reinforcing the empirical existence of such an entity merely serves as a strategic move to highlight the contingent nature of the body/gaze distinction and, thus, of the realm of the body itself. In contrast to the previous subsection, however, the eyewitnesses are no old philosophers but young artists who have recently been interviewed for a research project dealing with politically and socially committed practices of public art as a possible means to revitalize urban landscapes.⁵⁶ Above and beyond its applied aspects in the context of urban planning, this project also focused on the degree to which artists still work according to the traditional divide that represents the art world as the province of fiction and illusion, providing 'loopholes' of emotional escapism and relief from the hard facts of everyday life.

When I asked the artists about how they perceived themselves and their work, all distanced themselves from the romantic preconception of the artist as the special curator of feelings and emotions. For instance, Glasgow-based sculptor Kenny Hunter stated that there is

a perceived notion of the artist being . . . romantic, being individualistic. Artists are seen as flighty and mad; that is still a very old, a romantic perception of the artist. Whereas to some degree, actually, people like myself who work in the public field, probably know more or are exposed to more of the world. Through my work, I had to . . . communicate with people from different areas. So, to some degree, the artist is open and should be open to different view points and life styles, which kind of works against . . . the stereotypes.

Moreover, many of them underlined the importance of research for their work, thus suggesting a decisive closeness to academia. According to Glasgow-based artist Graham Fagen, the research

takes a long period time, sometimes years And maybe for a scientist, it's the same. Surely, you have an aim or a goal or a subject area, you spend a very long time researching, and then, once you know what you can do with it, you can very quickly publish results. But to publish the results is a relatively short and quick thing, but it's at the end of a period of research. And I think that's what I do.

So, are the preconceptions of the sensitive, inward-looking artist all wrong? Where is the place of emotions in the art world? Kenny Hunter replied that there

is an artist called Anselm Kiefer, and he said that, in order to make art, you needed three things, feeling, thought and will. And first you must start with a feeling. And then the thought process is to judge whether that feeling is, you know, important enough . . . or, does it connect with your subject? . . . You're gonna have to think about that feeling. And then you need the will to make it happen, to make it physical.

If one needs both feeling – embodied passion – and thought – disembodied rationality – then the question is how they are mediated in the process of doing art. How do they work together? Graham Fagen asserts that there are

lots of artists who work out with the matter of fact. Work made with that kind of thinking can be very dry, . . . and obviously very matter-of-fact. And maybe work that is more about emotion, on the other extreme, can be . . . ridiculous [*laughs*], because it's not checked, it's not thought about in a way that other people might be able to communicate with. And I guess, like any of these sorts of opposites, the best thing you can go for is that both things work together and that you find a bit . . . half of one and half of the other to make a decision.

These are only a few examples, but they indicate how it can be argued that any preconception of the art world being the special curator of emotions is as inadequate as the image of science as the custodian of 'emotionless' rational cognition. This claim returns us to the assumption that the body's realm is dependent on the existence of a realm of the gaze, and that the realm of the gaze, in turn, has always been subjected to sensual temptations. This conclusion is supported by Plato's biography. Plato, who downgraded the perception of the senses and wanted to expel the poets from the ideal state, was not as clear about assessing the value of the body and the gaze as is often thought.⁵⁷ He himself had to be persuaded by Socrates to become a philosopher (and not a poet), and at the end of the polemic in *Republic*, he confesses that he articulated his polemics as a spell to prevent himself from falling again for his old passion: poetry.

Between body and gaze

What are the consequences of – and what are the lessons to be learned from – these deconstructionist endeavors for the current discussion within and, of course, outside of German-speaking geography? What are the possible ways of dealing with the aesthetic in the light of this deconstruction? The search for an answer to these questions, which will be given in the conclusion of this paper, can begin with a detour into their opposite: how should the aesthetic not be conceptualized? The shortest answer to this question is perhaps: 'As in the case of the new aesthetic approach to German-speaking geography'. Taking into account the antagonist's reinforcement of the traditional predominance of cognitive and scientific rationality, Hasse's approach might seem congenial because it takes the side of the oppressed. However, it cannot stand as an

option after the supposed dichotomy between the gaze and the body has been deconstructed. Apart from the fact, of course, that it now has become difficult to renew geography on aesthetic grounds, in that such a project would re-establish the dichotomy between the two realms, there are two principal reasons why this is the case. In order to explicate them, I will examine the work of the philosopher Wolfgang Iser, himself one of the main protagonists of an alleged 'aesthetic movement' – the so-called 'aesthetic turn'⁵⁸ – and a strong influence on the writings of Hasse.

First, Iser regards the present as being essentially aesthetic. In the 'general process of the aestheticization of reality', he witnesses an 'aestheticization on the surface' as well as an 'in-depth aestheticization'.⁵⁹ While the former refers, among other things, to the 'face-lifting' of our cities or the hedonistic and spectacular relish of our culture, the latter 'concerns basic structures of our reality as such: of our material reality as a consequence of new technologies, of our social reality due to its medial intermediated-ness, and of our subjective reality due to the replacement of moral standards with self-stylization'.⁶⁰ What is problematic with this analysis is that the author projects his assumptions onto the world, where he finds them necessarily validated.⁶¹ Put differently, the problem is that the author mistakes his observations, assumptions and imaginings of the reality for reality.⁶² In so doing, Iser reproduces the paradoxical logic of visibility, in which a particular *order of things* is made visible and naturalized because it is seen in the way it is seen.⁶³ After the previous section, one is, moreover, tempted to ask what such an essentially aestheticized reality might actually look like – or, more precisely, what might allow us to discern an aestheticized reality from its rational, cognitive or non-aesthetic antecedent.

The second reason to question the 'aesthetic turn' is even more acute. On the basis of the postulated 'ontological' or 'empirical aestheticization', Iser testifies to, and indeed demands, a subsequent aestheticization of thinking, an 'epistemological aestheticization'. If reality becomes more and more aesthetic, so it is argued, then philosophical exploration and investigation have to draw upon aesthetic categories. As a consequence, we are invited to develop the epistemological aestheticization as it is said to have already materialized in the writings of Lyotard, Derrida, Foucault, Baudrillard, Vattimo, Cacciari and, in the German-speaking context, Kamper and Sloterdijk.⁶⁴ The aesthetic is regarded as the new *prima philosophia* or 'first philosophy' which is said to encompass both moral and logical dimensions.⁶⁵ The problem is that the scholar, who, like Iser, postulates an empirical aestheticization and demands, as a consequence, an epistemological aestheticization does not only involve a dubious causality,⁶⁶ but reproduces the same effect as the scholar who postulates the dominance of cognitive or scientific rationality. Nonetheless, there is still a key difference, in that, whereas the latter regards the truth as the property of rational reason, the former regards the truth as the property of the aesthetic:

What is crucial... is that the aesthetic pertains to... the basic dimensions, precisely the fundamentals. 'Rationality', in contrast – the second essential moment concerning truth – is the decisive factor only with regards to resulting processes on the basis of strictly aesthetic foundations.⁶⁷

The idea of truth independent from position and context, however, has been abandoned by various theorists. Whether it be for Foucault how knowledge is linked to power, or for Derrida how nothing exists outside differential references, or for Rorty how discourse represents not a reflection of but an intervention in the world⁶⁸: in their writings, there is no truth conceivable which is not partial and not somehow dependent upon the perspective of the actual speaking position. Likewise, for many postcolonial or feminist scholars, postulating objective truth on the basis of either the cognitive or the aesthetic equates to a theological operation, because reality is then observed from the perspective of nowhere. In this vein, Donna Haraway criticizes the ‘god trick of seeing everything from nowhere’;⁶⁹ the god trick of the gaze that ‘makes the unmarked category claim the power to see and not to be seen, to represent while escaping representation’.⁷⁰

Writings such as Haraway’s – writings that take into account the significance of partial and preliminary thinking – can be regarded as writings between body and gaze. The reason for this is not so much that they deal with aesthetic phenomena or that, due to their aesthetic qualities, they can be consumed like art, as argued by Welsch.⁷¹ Rather, it is because they break with logocentrism, anthropocentrism, monosemy and the primacy of the gaze – the traits of rational reason – without falling for the supposed truth of aesthetic perception or aesthetic thinking.

Conclusion

What can be learned, against such a background, from the deconstructionist endeavours according to which there is no such thing as cognition without the body and no such thing as sensation without the gaze? If the empirical existence of a ‘superior’, objective and scientific realm, on the one hand, and an ‘inferior’, subjective and aesthetic realm, on the other, merely represents the outcome of a discursive distinction, and did not exist until that distinction, for whatever reasons and in whatever context, was made, then the rationale of ‘either rational or emotional’ should be replaced with an in-between perspective. Post-structuralist writings that are aware of the situated and contingent nature of knowledge, it has been argued, can be conceptualized as such writings between the body and the gaze, breaking with the traits of rational reason without falling for the supposed truth of an ‘aesthetic rationality’. Such writings can offer alternative ways of dealing with the supposed dichotomy between the body and the gaze – both within German-speaking geography and beyond.

In the German context, what is in order is a dual strategy that, first and foremost, criticizes the supposed supremacy of scientific cognition as it is conveyed by the antagonist of aesthetic thinking in geography, but also critiques a simple replacement of scientific cognition by aesthetic thinking, since such a move would reinstate the dichotomous notion of two separate realms. Questioning the gaze’s supremacy should lead instead to a challenging of the theorists’ reclamation of truth either in the name of scientific rationality or in the name of the aesthetic. The impetus is that we not only carefully analyse our own positionality (our ‘situatedness in time and space’), but acknowledge what Pierre Bourdieu termed ‘a much more fundamental and pernicious alteration’.⁷²

our own involvement in the 'invention' of our objects, which, in turn, is linked to particular theoretical and practical interests at particular times and in particular places.

This impetus also has consequences for some lines of argument within the current Anglo-American preoccupation with the emotions. Taking into account the interrelatedness of the body and the gaze, I am uneasy about the recent attempts to strengthen the subjective or the emotional in geography, especially when they are combined with calls for 'non-constructivist approaches – approaches associated with being and doing, with ways of knowing that depend on direct experience . . . more so than reflection, abstraction, translation and representation'.⁷³ Such calls can be problematic for three interrelated reasons. First, they can lead to a – willing or unwilling – restitution of the traditional dichotomy between the body and the gaze. Secondly, they run the risk of simply exchanging the gaze's supremacy with a superior body – a risk that is even higher when these calls suggest the possibility of 'coming closer to truth' by 'the disclosure of things subterranean'.⁷⁴ Thirdly, although my unease does not derive from the social-scientific logic for which the emotions represent a barrier to real knowledge (but rather from the insight that there is no 'real knowledge' at all), it seems to me that 'non-constructivist' or 'non-representational' approaches to the social world can, as in the case of the German-speaking context, prepare the ground for a return to the reifying logic of traditional geographical world-views. These world-views have been overcome, and should not be introduced again to a discipline talking about a 'policy turn' and trying to give 'the concept of [social and political] relevance a new lease of life'.⁷⁵

Against this background, it finally becomes obvious that a discussion of the 'aesthetic debate' within German-speaking geography is not as dispensable as it might look at first. Far from debating quaint topics of mere historical interest, the lessons learned from the deconstruction of the body/gaze dichotomy can indeed be valuable with regards to the paradigmatic level of debate. It is perhaps *vis-à-vis* an increased popularity of poststructuralist – or in-between – approaches within German-speaking geography that Gerhard Hard self-critically asks whether his pronounced reference to social theory is still relevant in the face of contemporary trans-disciplinary discourses, where the differences between philosophical, anthropological and social-scientific approaches are blurred and dissolve into the broader discourse of the humanities.⁷⁶ Answering this question is difficult: there are good reasons for insisting on the stringent epistemology of social theory that forecloses reifications of space by rigorously differentiating between the ontological modes of the material, the subjective and the social world. Certainly, taking into account the deterministic logic of the traditional, holistic world-view, either still unchallenged or (potentially) revitalized by the protagonists of aesthetic or emotional approaches to the geographies of contemporary life, it is surely not the worst strategy. Nonetheless, it seems to be somewhat outdated.

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Notes

- ¹ For an account of the ‘epistemological break’ between scientific cognition and non-scientific (e.g. emotional) perceptions, see G. Bachelard, *La formation de l'esprit scientifique: Contribution à une psychanalyse de la connaissance objective* (Paris, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1938).
- ² For written statements, see e.g. K. Anderson and S. J. Smith, ‘Editorial: emotional geographies’, *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers* n.s. **26** (2001), pp. 7–10; L. Bondi *et al.*, *Subjectivities, knowledges, and feminist geographies: the subjects and ethics of social research* (Lanham, MD, Rowman & Littlefield, 2002); R. Widdowfield, ‘The place of emotions in academic research’, *Area* **32** (2000), pp. 199–208. Oral debates took place, for instance, at the ‘Emotional geographies conference’ (Lancaster University, 23–25 Sept. 2002) and the ‘Spatializing emotions sessions’ (AAG, 4–8 Mar. 2003).
- ³ Anderson and Smith, ‘Emotional geographies’, p. 8.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- ⁵ While both the protagonist and the antagonist are professors at German universities and play important roles in the theoretical debates within German-speaking geography, there are, of course, more geographers involved in the ‘aesthetic debate’ than just the two of them. Although it is actually impossible to draw a clear-cut demarcation line between those who are drawn into the argument and those who are not, I would like to mention at least another two relevant authors. On the one hand, Jürgen Strassel pleads for the upgrading of ‘aesthetic perception’ in geography: Strassel, ‘Vier Plätze in Barcelona. Zum Erleben ästhetischer Umwelten’, *Die Erde* **125** (1994), pp. 243–60; ‘Umwelterfahrung, Gefühl, Natur. Thesen zu einem geographischen Verhältnis’, in J. Hasse, ed., *Gefühle als Erkenntnisquelle* (Frankfurt a. Main, Universität, Institut für Didaktik der Geographie, 1995), pp. 140–58; ‘Den Platz als Ort verstehen’, in Y. L. Holland and J. Strassel, eds, *Zur semantischen Analyse neuerer öffentlicher Plätze in europäischen Städten* (Oldenburg, agis, 1996), pp. 9–27. On the other hand, Eva Gelinsky strongly argues against the ‘aesthetic turn’: ‘Die Lust und die Melancholie – Ästhetisches Erkennen in der postmodernen Geographie. Die Renaissance eines traditionellen Paradigmas?’ (Göttingen, unpublished thesis, 2000); ‘Ästhetik in der traditionellen Landschaftsgeographie und in der postmodernen Geographie’, *Erdkunde* **55** (2001), pp. 138–50.
- ⁶ See J. Hasse, *Ästhetische Rationalität und Geographie. Sozialräumliche Prozesse jenseits kognitivistischer Menschenbilder* (Oldenburg, Universität Oldenburg, 1993); *Erlebnisräume. Vom Spaß zur Erfahrung* (Vienna, Passagen, 1994); *Mediale Räume* (Oldenburg, Universität Oldenburg, 1997).
- ⁷ Hasse, *Ästhetische Rationalität*, p. 11; all quotes from German or French literature are translated by the author of this paper.
- ⁸ G. Hard, ‘“Hagia Chora”. Von einem neuerdings wieder erhobenen Ton in der Geographie’, *Erdkunde* **55** (2001), p. 173. See also G. Hard, ‘Von melancholischer Geographie’, *Geographische Revue* **2** (2000), esp. pp. 56–61.
- ⁹ *Landschaftsgeographie*, landscape geography, had been the dominant approach to German-speaking geography from the early 1920s onwards. Finally defeated as late as the end of the 1960s, it was replaced by the paradigm of ‘geography as a spatial science’. Within

Landschaftsgeographie, landscapes were conceptualized as individual and unique parts of the earth's surface. The key interest behind their examination was an assessment of the relationship between the socially and culturally formed 'levels' of a given landscape (*Kulturlandschaft*), on the one hand, and the purely natural 'levels' (*Naturlandschaft*), on the other. According to the scientific *Zeitgeist* of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, natural factors were regarded as the determinants of political, social and economic development. Nature even gained normative power, in that the natural *gestalt* of a *Landschaft* was regarded as giving directions to its people (*Volk*). Methodologically, the landscapes under scrutiny were both scientifically examined (as products of causal interrelations) and aesthetically perceived (as internally harmonious and unique organisms). For a detailed account of the traditional approaches within German-speaking geography, see H.-D. Schultz, *Die deutschsprachige Geographie von 1800 bis 1970. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte ihrer Methodologie* (Berlin, Geographisches Institut, 1980).

- ¹⁰ There is a certain danger of romanticizing the theoretical position at work in this paper – a danger which is even more substantial in the face of the associations of the word 'happy'. It should hence be underlined that the aim of 'happily enduring diversity' explicitly tries to avoid conceptualizing heterogeneity as a romantic vision to be longed for. What is avoided, likewise, is the similarly inappropriate conception of diversity as a looming programme stimulating melancholic thoughts of a lost identity. In contrast to romance or melancholy, this paper regards (internal) differences as mere 'facts' that provide, as Edward Said notes with regards to the postcolonial critique, an appropriate starting point of the 'real' work; see E. Said, 'The politics of knowledge', *Raritan* **11** (1991), pp. 17–31.
- ¹¹ See the contributions to a special session at the *Deutscher Geographentag 1999* (German Meeting of Geographers 1999), 'Paradigms of human geography in the 21st century: a theoretical discourse', published in H. H. Blotvogel, J. Oßenbrügge and G. Wood, eds., *Lokal verankert – weltweit vernetzt. Tagungsbericht und wissenschaftliche Abhandlungen* (Stuttgart, Steiner, 2000), pp. 461–505; W. Sahr, 'Der Ort der Regionalisierung im geographischen Diskurs. Periphere Fragen und Anmerkungen zu einem zentralen Thema', in P. Meusburger, ed., *Handlungsorientierte Sozialgeographie. Benno Werlens Entwurf in kritischer Diskussion* (Stuttgart, Steiner, 1999), pp. 43–66.
- ¹² B. Werlen, *Sozialgeographie alltäglicher Regionalisierungen*, vol. I: *Zur Ontologie von Gesellschaft und Raum* (Stuttgart, Steiner, 1995); B. Werlen, *Sozialgeographie alltäglicher Regionalisierungen*, vol. II: *Globalisierung, Region und Regionalisierung* (Stuttgart, Steiner, 1997).
- ¹³ By 'disregarding' the distinction between the material, the subjective and the social world, the scholars concerned continue to project phenomena of the subjective and the symbolic worlds onto physical locations, and thereby reify these phenomena. Against this move, the social-scientific logic insists on replacing the notion of (material) spatial structures and 'spatial containers' with strictly social concepts of space, focusing on how the latter is constructed and dealt with as a means of representation.
- ¹⁴ See e.g. the review essays of Werlen's geography compiled in P. Meusburger, ed., *Handlungsorientierte Sozialgeographie*.
- ¹⁵ See <http://www.geographische-revue.de/index2.htm>
- ¹⁶ *Erdkunde* **55** (2001).
- ¹⁷ Hard, "'Hagia Chora'".
- ¹⁸ R. Falter and J. Hasse, 'Landschaftsfotografie und Naturhermeneutik. Zur Ästhetik erlebter und dargestellter Natur', *Erdkunde* **55** (2001), pp. 121–37.

- ¹⁹ Falter, who also publishes in a weekly newspaper rated ‘extremely right-wing’ by the German Ministry of the Interior, is associated with the ‘Hagia Chora School for Geomancy’ in Mühlldorf am Inn and lectures on ‘the perception of the divine qualities of landscapes’ (see Hard, ‘Hagia Chora’, p. 172; <http://www.geomantie.net>). For a more detailed exploration of Falter’s ideology, his intellectual background and political aims, see Hard, ‘Hagia Chora’.
- ²⁰ T. W. Adorno, *Aesthetic theory* (London, Kegan, 1984).
- ²¹ H. Schmitz, *Neue Grundlagen der Erkenntnistheorie* (Bonn, Bouvier, 1994); H. Schmitz, *Der Leib, der Raum und die Gefühle* (Ostfildern, ed. tertium, 1998). For a critique of Hasse’s understanding of phenomenology, see Hard, ‘Von melancholischer Geographie’, esp. pp. 51–6.
- ²² Hard, ‘Hagia Chora’, p. 174.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 178.
- ²⁴ Falter and Hasse, ‘Landschaftsfotografie und Naturhermeneutik’, p. 131.
- ²⁵ It has to be noted, though, that the journal *Erdkunde* published another joint paper by Falter and Hasse and a rejoinder by Hard: R. Falter and J. Hasse, ‘Geographie und das Mensch-Natur-Verhältnis’, *Erdkunde* **56** (2002), pp. 81–94; G. Hard, ‘Eine einfältige Erzählung. Zu Falters und Hasses Text über “Die Geographie und das Mensch-Natur-Verhältnis”’, *Erdkunde* **56** (2002), pp. 95–104.
- ²⁶ The following quote gives an account of Hasse’s approach to contemporary reality: ‘The ambivalence of postmodernity positions new possibilities – and it broadens differences. In its philosophical and cultural dimension, postmodernity organizes the prospect of a fairer democracy – a chance which runs the risk, however, of being undermined politically and, above all, economically by the power/knowledge (Foucault) of the more powerful. In its aesthetic dimension, postmodernity fortifies the arts as a form of *rational* apprehension, and provides new, auto-referential arenas of experience. At the same time, however, postmodernity, in its aesthetic dimension, perfects possible strategies of vanishing through processes of anaestheticization [*sic*]. In its technological dimension, finally, postmodernity, on the one hand, prepares tools for coming to terms with the illusiveness [*Schein*] of reality... On the other hand, new technologies and new media lead us into a “frantic deadlock” [*l’inertie polaire*] (Virilio), which freezes the poly-morphology of the world onto the surface of a screen (Baudrillard)’; citation from J. Hasse, *Heimat und Landschaft. Über Gartenzwerge, Center Parks und andere Ästhetisierungen* (Vienna, Passagen, 1993), p. 85 (emphasis original).
- ²⁷ I. Kant, ‘Von einem neuerdings erhobenen vornehmen Ton in der Philosophie’, in *Kant’s gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, vol. VIII (Berlin, Reimer, 1968), pp. 387–406.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 403–4.
- ²⁹ Hasse, *Mediale Räume*.
- ³⁰ As such, these ‘awakenings’ perhaps remind readers of the resisting potential of the sublime as formulated by Adorno.
- ³¹ See Hard, ‘Von melancholischer Geographie’, pp. 39–66.
- ³² See Hasse, *Mediale Räume*, p. 178.
- ³³ See Hard, ‘Von melancholischer Geographie’, pp. 56–9.
- ³⁴ See Gelinsky, ‘Ästhetik in der traditionellen Landschaftsgeographie’, p. 143.
- ³⁵ G. Hard, ‘Geographische Zugänge zur Alltagsästhetik’, *Kunst + Unterricht* **124** (1988), p. 9.
- ³⁶ G. Hard, ‘Szientifische und ästhetische Erfahrung in der Geographie. Die verborgene Ästhetik einer Wissenschaft’, in S. Wälty and B. Werlen, eds, *Kulturen und Raum. Theoretische Ansätze und empirische Kulturforschung in Indonesien* (Chur, Rüegger, 1995), p. 45.
- ³⁷ Hard, ‘Hagia Chora’, p. 187.

- ³⁸ Hard, 'Erfahrung in der Geographie', p. 57.
- ³⁹ G. Hard, 'Ästhetische Dimensionen in der wissenschaftlichen Erfahrung', in P. Jüngst and O. Meder, eds, *Aggressivität und Verführung* (Kassel, Gesamthochschulbibliothek, 1995), p. 362.
- ⁴⁰ Hard, 'Erfahrung in der Geographie', p. 56.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² Hard, 'Hagia Chora', p. 187.
- ⁴³ The particular vigilance towards essentialist notions of space that characterizes the social-scientific point of view and other advanced discourses within contemporary German-speaking geography can perhaps be regarded as a late result of the German past in general and of the affinity of *Geopolitik* and *Landschaftsgeographie* with the ideology of national socialism, in particular. This is not to say, however, that I would address all interests and concerns of individual German-speaking geographers to the history of the discipline.
- ⁴⁴ L. Dumont, cited in N. Luhmann, *Die neuzeitlichen Wissenschaften und die Phänomenologie* (Vienna, Picus, 1996), p. 21.
- ⁴⁵ Hard, 'Erfahrung in der Geographie', p. 57.
- ⁴⁶ For a more detailed elaboration of the 'both epistemological and empirical approach' deployed in this paper, see J. Lossau, 'Die Politik der Verortung. Eine postkoloniale Reise zu einer anderen Geographie der Welt' (Bielefeld, transcript, 2002).
- ⁴⁷ A. G. Baumgarten, *Aesthetica* (Frankfurt a. d. Oder, Kleyb, 1750).
- ⁴⁸ T. Eagleton, *The ideology of the aesthetic* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1990), p. 13.
- ⁴⁹ See C. Jamme and H. Schneider, eds, *Mythologie der Vernunft. Hegels 'ältestes Systemprogramm' des deutschen Idealismus* (Frankfurt a. Main, Suhrkamp, 1984).
- ⁵⁰ See W. Welsch, *Ästhetisches Denken* (Stuttgart, Reclam, 1990), p. 141.
- ⁵¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: lectures on fine art*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975); F. Schelling, 'Philosophie der Kunst', in F. Schelling, *Schriften zur Identitätsphilosophie 1801–1806*. 3. Hauptband von Schellings Werke, ed. Manfred Schröter (Munich, Beck, 1927), pp. 375–582.
- ⁵² See Welsch, *Ästhetisches Denken*, p. 141–2.
- ⁵³ I. Kant, *Critique of the power of judgement*, ed. P. Gyer, trans. P. Gyer and E. Matthews (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000).
- ⁵⁴ See W. Welsch, *Vernunft. Die zeitgenössische Vernunftkritik und das Konzept der transversalen Vernunft* (Frankfurt a. Main, Suhrkamp, 1996), p. 465.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 465–76.
- ⁵⁶ My research project, 'Rebuilding the living city', was funded by the European Commission and pursued at the Department of Geography of the University of Glasgow. In summer 2002, I interviewed six artists who do work in the Scottish public realm, asking them about their work in general, the place and 'public-ness' of their artworks, and about their motivations and possible frustrations.
- ⁵⁷ See W. Welsch, *Grenzgänge der Ästhetik* (Stuttgart, Reclam, 1996), pp. 103–4.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 94.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 10–17.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- ⁶¹ See also Gelinsky, 'Ästhetik in der traditionellen Landschaftsgeographie'.
- ⁶² This is not to say that Welsch was generally uncritical about the ontological status of reality. The contrary is true, especially when he explicitly states that any reality cannot be more than a 'reality under a [certain] description' (Welsch, *Vernunft*, p. 700 n.). Implicitly, however, he

(more often than not) seems to 'forget' that a certain reality is dependent on the perspective of those who observe and frame it. In Welsch's writings, therefore, the present essentially aestheticized reality mostly appears, not as a reality under a certain description, but as 'true' and substantial.

⁶³ For a more detailed description of this paradox of visibility, see A. Nassehi, 'Die Paradoxie der Sichtbarkeit. Für eine epistemologische Verunsicherung der (Kultur-)Soziologie', *Soziale Welt* **50** (1999), pp. 349–62.

⁶⁴ See Welsch, *Ästhetisches Denken*.

⁶⁵ In becoming the new *prima philosophia*, however, the 'non-foundationalist' nature of the aesthetic is said to both dismiss the traditional meaning and penetrate the traditional form of a 'first philosophy'; see Welsch, *Grenzgänge*, pp. 94–7.

⁶⁶ Most poignantly, this causality has been criticized by Martin Seel, who argued that, if we were to follow this logic, our research would become more and more xenophobic, (only) because reality is becoming more and more xenophobic. See M. Seel, 'Wider das ästhetische Denken', *Akzente* **40** (1993), pp. 561–73.

⁶⁷ Welsch, *Grenzgänge*, pp. 95–6.

⁶⁸ J. Derrida, 'Différance', in J. Derrida, *Margins of philosophy*, trans. A. Bass (Brighton, Harvester Press, 1982), pp. 1–27; M. Foucault, *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison*, trans. A. Sheridan (London, Penguin, 1977); R. Rorty, *Philosophy and the mirror of nature* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1980).

⁶⁹ D. Haraway, 'Situated knowledges: the science question in feminism and the privilege of the partial perspective', in J. Agnew, D. N. Livingstone and A. Rogers, eds, *Human geography: An essential anthology* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1996), p. 115.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p. 114.

⁷¹ This is actually why (some of) the scholars which I read as authors between body and gaze, are represented as 'aesthetic thinkers' by Welsch. See Welsch, *Ästhetisches Denken*, pp. 42–5.

⁷² In his 'Outline of a theory of practice', Bourdieu states that knowledge 'does not merely depend, as an elementary relativism teaches, on the particular standpoint an observer "situated in space and time" takes up on the object. The "knowing subject", as the idealist tradition rightly calls him [*sic*], inflicts on practice a much more fundamental and pernicious alteration which, being a constituent condition of the cognitive operation, is bound to pass unnoticed: in taking up a point of view on the action, withdrawing from it in order to observe it from above and from a distance, he constitutes practical activity as an *object of observation and analysis, a representation*'; citation from P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a theory of practice*, trans. R. Nice (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 2 (emphasis original).

⁷³ Anderson and Smith, 'Emotional geographies', p. 9.

⁷⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 9.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7. For the recent debate on (political) relevance, see e.g. N. Castree, 'Border geography', *Area* **34** (2002), pp. 103–12; D. Massey, 'Editorial: practising political relevance', *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers* n.s. **25** (2000), pp. 131–3.

⁷⁶ G. Hard, 'Raumfragen', in Meusburger, *Handlungsorientierte Sozialgeographie*, pp. 133–62; see esp. p. 134.