Susanne K. Langer's General Theory of Art

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SUSANNE K. LANGER'S GENERAL THEORY OF ART

by

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LIFE

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. THE CONTEXT OF SUSANNE LANGER'S GENERAL THEORY OF ART</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassirer's account of the <em>animal symbolicum</em>—The new key: symbolic mentality—Susanne Langer's position in aesthetics.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. SUSANNE LANGER'S SEMANTIC THEORY: THE FOUNDATION FOR THE PRESENTATIONAL SYMBOL OF ART</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signific functions—Symbolic functions—An examination of presentational and discursive symbolism—The grist of symbolic projection—Discursive projection and its logical beyond—The real distinction—The presentational order.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. SUSANNE LANGER'S PHILOSOPHY OF ART</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical hazards and bogeys—The theory: a telescopic view—The meaning of music—The issue—The meaning of &quot;experience&quot;—Is music possible as a symbol?—Is music possible as a symbol of experience?—Is music actually a symbol of experience?—Conclusions of Susanne Langer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. CRITICAL REACTIONS TO ART AS A SYMBOL OF FEELING</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance in art is immediate—This immediate significance is the pattern of sentience—The pattern signifies by being isomorphic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. THE REAL ANSWER: A CONCLUSION THAT SUSANNE LANGER NEVER DREW</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

THE CONTEXT OF SUSANNE LANGER'S GENERAL THEORY OF ART

Susanne Langer has developed a philosophy of art which, at best, is difficult to evaluate and estimate accurately. Part of the difficulty is that the genesis of her theory occurs within the range of not one, but three separate works published over the span of fifteen years. Another obstacle is the metaphorical level at which some of her crucial ideas, even after fifteen years of flowering, find expression. But what makes her theory most incomprehensible to anyone beginning the plunge into it, is the unique background from which the theory is derived and against which she silhouettes her conclusions. Hence it is advisable to focus initially on this varied backdrop, "triangulating," as it were, her position by describing three streams of thought from which her general theory emerges, viz., Ernst Cassier's historical account of the "animal symbolicum;" her own recounting of the new concept of human mentality as symbolic; and the stream of aesthetic theory up to the present.

CASSIRER'S ACCOUNT OF THE "ANIMAL SYMBOLICUM"

The first part of Ernst Cassirer's little work entitled An Essay on Man is "What is Man?" However different the tenets of varying philosophical schools, the "fixed and immovable center of all thought" has remained the question of

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self-knowledge which man perennially puts to himself: What is man?  

The modern world shook under the revolutionary answer given to this question in the work of Charles Darwin and the subsequent development of evolutionary theory. Here man was viewed in the same continuum with animals, a common progenitor forming the basis of the continuum.

Yet, in spite of this apparently unified view given by genetic biology, modern theory of man is disparate. Nietzsche's "will to power" professed to explain and define man; Freud's theory of sexual instinct claimed the same; Marx's economic theory then made its attempt to produce a unified cosmology and anthropology. But no longer was there even a common matrix spawning systems and theories to answer the question, "What is man?" "Metaphysics, theology, mathematics, and biology successively assumed the guidance of thought on the problem of man and determined the line of investigation." No single matrix was able to outdistance the career of the field of knowledge dismembered into individual sciences. No single science was in a position to guide investigation. No one discipline had such powerful credentials. " 'We have a scientific, a philosophical, and a theological anthropology that know nothing of each other.' " A consistent perspective is missing.

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2 Ibid., 15.
3 Ibid., 36.
4 Ibid., 39.
A clue has been found, however. Using, by way of example more than by way of demonstration, Uexkull's biological concept of a Funktionskreis, Cassirer introduces the allied concepts of a Merknetz (the receptor system) and a Wirknetz (the effector system) in working toward the notion of the animal symbolicum. Man is an organism, and like all organisms, he has both a receptor and an effector system for dealing profitably with the environment. But what distinguishes the functional circle from that of every other animal is the qualitative difference injected between the two systems. Between the receptor system and the effector system, there is a "symbolic system" interposed. Although man appears to be in a qualitatively similar position with brute animals, he is not. His life is totally modified by this symbolic system. Animals live in a world in which response to stimuli meets their needs. Man's universe, on the other hand, is a symbolic one. It is a universe of language, myth, art, and religion. The animal symbolicum does not deal with reality face to face, as it were, but rather through symbolic structures. "Instead of dealing with the things themselves, man is in a sense constantly conversing with himself. He has so enveloped himself in linguistic forms, in artistic images, in mythical symbols, or religious rites, that he cannot see or know anything except by the interposition of this artificial medium."6 Susanne Langer advert to this structuring of experience in a consideration of artistic understanding. "There is no understanding without symbolization, and no symbolization without abstraction. Anything about reality, that is to be expressed and conveyed, must be abstracted from reality. There is no sense in trying to convey reality pure and simple.

6Cassirer, Essay, p. 43.
Even experience itself cannot do that. What we understand, we conceive, and conception always involves formulation, presentation, and therefore abstraction. 7

From this point of neo-Kantian view, the classical definition of man can be enlarged. Man indeed is still the rational animal as his myriad sciences will attest. But since "reason is a very inadequate term with which to comprehend the forms of man's cultural life . . . we should define him as an animal symboligum. By so doing we can designate his specific difference, and we can understand the new way open to him—the way to civilization." 8

THE NEW KEY: SYMBOLIC MENTALITY

What defines diverse philosophical traditions are the new questions which an era of philosophers will put to its experience.

A great epoch of philosophy which was begun in the seventeenth century flowered but in time was eclipsed by a prodigiously active age of science and technology. Positivism, as a sort of scientist's metaphysic, maintained an unshakable belief in the concept of "fact." This naive faith in sense-evidence furnished strong convictions about the ultimate nature and truth of fact. Facts were something everyone can observe and identify. "Knowledge from sensory experience was deemed the only knowledge that carried any affidavit of truth; for truth became identified, for all vigorous modern minds, with empirical fact." 9

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8 Cassirer, Essay, p. 44.
9 Langer, 25.
As science and technology progressed, the influence of non-empirical disciplines (as they were termed) rapidly deteriorated. Logic, metaphysics, aesthetics, ethics, and theology, were all dishonored. But, for Susanne Langer, "the truth is that science has not really fructified and activated all human thought. If humanity has really passed the philosophical stage of learning, as Comte hopefully declared, and is evolving no more fantastic ideas, then we have certainly left many interesting brain-children stillborn along the way. But the mind of man is always fertile, ever creating and discarding, like the earth. There is always new life under old decay . . .. And beneath our rival 'isms,' our methodologies, conferences, and symposia, of course there is something brewing, too." ¹⁰

For in the hue and cry of "fact, fact, fact," mathematics was going its way unnoticed, at least unnoticed by anyone except the empirical scientist. Although mathematics lacked the one thing the scientist demanded, empirical basis, the scientist harbored it because mathematicians "deal only with items whose sensory qualities are quite irrelevant: their 'data' are arbitrary sounds or marks called symbols." ¹¹ Here were physicist who prided themselves on their dealing only in empirical facts, accepting without question the fictitious entities of mathematics. The reason for this is that mathematicians did not profess to say anything about things, but just about the possibility of symbolizing things. The entities they deal with are only concepts, for "numbers and

¹⁰ Ibid., 26-27.
¹¹ Ibid., 27.
degrees and all their ilk only mean the real properties of real objects,\textsuperscript{12} since they do not assert that some real "X" has these properties, but only "suppose that X has these properties."

The more scientists dealt their conclusions out in mathematical terms, the less observation of fact controlled the scene. The collection and classification of data have been replaced by a "process of assigning possible meanings, merely supposed real entities, to mathematical terms, working out the logical results, and then staging certain crucial experiments to check the hypothesis against the actual, empirical results. But the facts which are accepted by virtue of these tests are not actually observed at all . . . . Observation has become almost entirely indirect; and readings take the place of genuine witness."\textsuperscript{13} The concept of fact has now given way to a regulative concept of symbolization, where index needles, revolving drums, and sensitive plates "symbolize" unobservable "facts." The propositions of modern science find their basis in "little photographic spots and blurs, or inky curved lines on paper. These data are empirical enough, but of course they are not themselves the phenomena in question; the actual phenomena stand behind them as their supposed causes."\textsuperscript{14} What is directly observable, therefore, is treated as a sign mediating physical fact. All of this requires intelligent inquiry and interpretation. Science has thus revised its notion of fact. Now "not simply seeing is

\textsuperscript{12} Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art. 2nd ed. (New York, 1951), p. 28.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 28-29.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 29.
believing, but seeing and calculating, seeing and translating." The problem of observation has turned into a problem of meaning, and now, all at once, human knowledge developed in modern science is seen to be not a vast agglomeration of sense reports, but rather a structure of "facts that are symbols and laws that are their meanings." Scientific method has, as a result, provided the data for a new generative idea in philosophy: the power of symbolism. Conceiving human knowledge as a process of symbolization is the new concept of mentality both in philosophy and in psychology.

Psychology originally thought sense was the chief factor—to the point of being the exclusive factor—in knowledge. Knowledge was conceived as a function of impression, memory, and association. The thorn in this theory soon appeared when there was no way of explaining man's use of symbols to attain and organize belief. "The use of symbols to attain, as well as to organize, belief . . . alters our conception of intelligence at a stroke. Not higher sensitivity, not longer memory or even quicker association sets man so far above other animals that he can regard them as denizens of a lower world: no, it is the power of using symbols—the power of speech—that makes him lord of the earth." This understanding caused a "thematic shift" in psychology, from the acquisition of experience, to the uses to which data could be put: the functions of conception and expression.

Psychology treated mental process as the adaptive response to environment.

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 Langer, Key, p. 33.
The use of signs was found to be indicative of intelligence in animals, and the
stimulus-response arc became the physiological pattern of the animal mind.
"Man's superiority in the race for self-preservation was first ascribed to his
wider range of signals, his greater power of integrating reflexes, his quicker
learning by trial and error; but a little reflection brought a much more funda-
mental trait to light, namely his peculiar use of 'signs.' Man, unlike all
other animals, uses 'signs' not only to indicate things, but also to represent
them." 18 Man differs from brute animal because man alone uses his vocables to
talk about things, and not merely to react to things.

And yet, in spite of the suggestion of this difference between man and
animal, an evolutionistic theory of mind persists in seeing man and animal in a
similar light. Animals learn cumulatively and constantly have to check their
experience realistically, and yet "this selective process does not always op-
erate in the case of human beings. The old are sometimes wise, but more often
they are stuffed above average with superstitions, misconceptions, and ir-
rational dogmas." 19 From a standpoint of efficiency, therefore, man's dealing
with his environment is rather inept. If the evolutionistic hypothesis of mind
were correct, viz., that man's mentality evolved from an inferior form of sign-
using to merely a more complex form of responding to conservational needs of
environment, then how did the serious and silly activities of magic, ritual,
art, and religion arise? In terms of environmental responses, these activities
are pointless, since "men who can use symbols to facilitate their practical

18 Ibid., 37.

19 Stuart Chase, The Tyranny of Words (New York, 1938), pp. 46-56, quoted
in Susanne Langer, Key, p. 40.
responses, but use them constantly to confuse and inhibit, warp and misadapt their actions, and gain no other end by their symbolic devices, have no prospect of inheriting the earth . . . . The cat's world is not falsified by the beliefs and poetic figments that language creates, nor his behavior unbalanced by the bootless rites and sacrifices that characterize religion, art, and other vagaries of a word-mongering mind . . . . If a savage in his ignorance of physics tries to make a mountain open its caverns by dancing round it, we must admit with shame that no rat in a psychologist's maze would try such patently ineffectual methods of opening a door. 20 Because of the great quotient of error in human mentality, to regard such an instrument as the product of progressively more successful responses to environment seems misguided. This theory of mind must end up regarding artistic activity as play, a luxury of the mind. To this Susanne Langer answers that artists generally do not come from a leisure class, and we, moreover, take art far more seriously than mere play. 21 Such a theory finds it difficult to account for the love of magic displayed in primitive cultures, the high development of ritual in every culture, the seriousness of all peoples toward art, and the useless activity of symbolization in dreams. Because of this failure in the evolutionistic hypothesis, "philosophers, psychologists, neurologists, . . . substantiate the claim that symbolism is the recognized key to that mental life which is characteristically human and above the level of sheer animality. Symbol and meaning make man's world, far more than sensation; Miss Helen Keller, bereft of sight and hearing . . . is capable of living in a wider and richer world than a dog or an ape with all his senses

20 Langer, Key, pp. 41-42.
21 Ibid., 42.
To account for the constant symbolic activity of man, Susanne Langer can only make her confession of faith that symbolization is a primary, basic need in man. "Our power of symbolic conception has given us each a glimpse of himself as one final individualization from the great human stock . . . . If our individualization must be brief, we want to make it complete; so we are inspired to think, act, dream, our desires, create things, express our ideas . . . ." Symbolization is the fundamental process of man's mind, and man, the thinking organism is continually furnishing symbolic versions of experience. Symbolization is an act essential to thought, the essential act of the mind which works the material furnished by the senses into symbols, our elementary ideas. Sheer expression of ideas is the typically human form of overt activity, speech itself being the readiest mode in man's drive to symbolically transform experience.

And there are other modes besides speech through which man symbolically transforms experience. One of these is ritual, an act neither practical nor communicative, though effective and communal. Part of ritual is magic, whose origin is not practical, and whose "central aim is to symbolize a Presence, to aid in the formulation of a religious universe . . . . Magic is never employed in a commonplace mood, like ordinary causal agency; this fact belies the widely accepted belief that the 'method of magic' rests on a mistaken view of causality. After all, a savage who beats a tom-tom to drive off his brother's malaria would

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22 Ibid., 34. Italics mine.


24 Langer, Key, pp. 45-48.
never make such a practical mistake as to shoot his arrow blunt and forward or bait his fishline with flowers." 25 Magic, a part of ritual, has little to do with practical desires. It is a language, a language of religion.

It was Sigmund Freud that early recognized that ritualistic acts were primarily not instrumental, but expressive. He saw that these acts "are motivated primarily a tergo, and carry with them, consequently, a feeling not of purpose, but of compulsion. They must be performed, not to any visible end, but from a sheer inward need." 26 These acts can, to some extent, be explained as practical, but only when considered expressive as well are they explained fully.

It is this apparent pointlessness in man's abundant, impractical, and senseless activity which ends in no overt advantage to the organism, that sets man off categorically from his phylogenetic inferiors. This would seem to justify the description of man as an animal symbolicum.

SUSANNE LANGER'S POSITION IN AESTHETICS

One of the most ancient and venerable positions in art has been that art is "imitation." Plato subscribed to this tenet when he considered art as a third-rate reality, a second remove from the really real of the eternal forms. Aristotle, as traditionally interpreted, falls under this same heading, and for him, art was a second-rate reality, once removed from the sensible world. 27 The theory of "imitation" ascribed to Aristotle, however, Susanne Langer sees

25 Ibid., 52.
26 Ibid., 53.
27 Cassirer, Essay, pp. 177-78.
as close to her notion of "apparition" or "semblance." The modern expression of the theory of imitation falls in the writings of the neo-classicists of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Refining the old opinion, art seemed, to men like Abbé Batteux, not only a reproduction of "la belle nature," but more than that, a beautifying corrective to vagaries of geology and genetics.

Both Plato and Santayana felt that art had much to do with pleasure. For this reason Plato outlawed certain forms of art from his ideal state. For Santayana, "beauty is pleasure regarded as the quality of a thing." A position similar to this was assumed in psychology when men such as Helmholtz, Wundt, and Stumpf "based their inquiries on the assumption that music was a form of pleasurable sensation . . . . This gave rise to an aesthetic based on liking and disliking, a hunt for a sensationist definition of beauty, and a conception of art as the satisfaction of taste."

Analogous to this position is the assumption of various studies in psychology, that art is primarily a stimulus of feeling. The responses which persons will give to art, particularly music, have been tabulated principally by Schoen and Gatewood, and Neven. A check list of adjectives was developed to cor-

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31 Langer, Key, pp. 179-180.
relate feeling responses with certain musical compositions.\textsuperscript{32} The basic question was this: is there any difference in a person's reported affective response to a quiet lullaby and the response to the family kitten purring at the person's feet. Actually, these experiments would seem to be self-destroying. If the studies could connect a characteristic work of art with a characteristic affective response, the center of inquiry would become the art work itself and what makes it "characteristic." At the level at which the investigations were carried out, the only possible way of treating the artistic stimulus was to obliterate its characteristic differences and take it as simply a stimulus like any other stimulus of emotion. Hence, the experimenters could not go much beyond ranking music with automobile horns. Such experiments added "very little to the well-known fact that most people connect feelings with music, and (unless they have thought about the precise nature of that connection) believe they have the feelings while they are under the influence of the music, especially if you ask them which of several feelings the music is giving them."\textsuperscript{33}

With Rousseau and Goethe a stand crystallized in aesthetics, asserting that art is the spontaneous indication and overflow of feeling. More than one interpretation, however, has been put to the simple proposition that "art is the expression of feeling." One can show another person that he has a feeling by saying "such" or resorting to an oath. Art as this type of expression of feeling has been the subject of some of Rudolph Carnap's statements, viz., that art, lyrical verses for instance, is generically the same as expressions such as

\textsuperscript{32}Cf. Langer, \textit{Key}, pp. 180-82.

\textsuperscript{33}\textit{Ibid.}, 79.
Dr. Langer classes this theory as one of "self-expression" as opposed to a different method of the expression of feeling, that of "logical expression." Baldly put, this theory of "self-expression" treats art as the telling to the world that one's feelings are going on or have gone on, and implies that art says very little about exactly what the feeling was like. To some extent this seems to be R. G. Collingwood's position, since in the opinion of Cassirer, Collingwood did not make a clear distinction between spontaneous indication of the presence of a feeling and controlled expression of it.  

Susanne Langer maintains a theory of "logical expression," and in so doing, enters an embattled arena in aesthetics. This is a semantic theory, one of signification or the "symbolization" of feeling. The semantic theory of art is "perhaps more deeply rooted in American intellectual soil than any other theory of art current in this country . . . . [and] in its present form, an American product--almost completely unknown in Europe." This viewpoint of inquiring aestheticians Rieser considers a "genuine contribution to aesthetic theory," and one with a singular methodological merit, for "it is--which is rare in aesthetics--an empirical and scientific approach to art, and can be understood without reference to any metaphysical theory." Some of the Romantics were "symbolists"--Schelling, Hegel, and Schopenhauer, to mention a few--but these are not to be confused with modern semiotic aestheticians, for the latter have

34 Ibid., 79.
35 Essay, 182.
37 Ibid.
their intellectual roots in the anthropological works of Ernst Cassirer, the logical works of Russell and Whitehead, the Vienna Circle, notably Wittgenstein and Carnap, as well as the writings of Ogden and Richards, the European Gestalt psychologists, the behaviorist Mead and the pragmatist Peirce. The principal exponents are Susanne K. Langer, Charles W. Morris, Abraham Kaplan, and John Hospers. 38

Before going on, a few of the terms to be encountered along the way should be given some translation, if not definition. In a semantic the cry of art, the prime point at issue is the meaning of the work of art. Now, one can maintain that the work of art has no meaning at all. This forces the theoretician into the assertion that the point of art is some sort of "play" which has as its purpose some sort of satisfaction for the artist as well as the interpretant. If this position is carefully sifted, I believe it will be found to be, in itself, "inexplicable" in that it presupposes, ultimately, some meaning grasped in the work of art. To fully explain, therefore, it needs a theory which concedes a "meaning" to the work of art. But what kind of meaning does the art work have? Regardless of the locus of the meaning in the work of art, discussion centers around what purports to be two qualitatively different kinds of "meaning": intellectual and emotional. A theory conceding an intellectual meaning to art will be called "formalistic," and its opposite number, conceding an emotional meaning, will usually be termed "expressionistic." Then the question arises as to where the meaning of the work of art is. Prescinding from the type of meaning the art work has, a theoretician may deny that the artistic

38 Ibid., 13.
product has any meaning except that contained within the four confines of its own premises. Meaning is thus only within the art work for the "absolutist" or "autonomist." This position rules out artistic validity for outside influences, such as images evoked in the imagination by mere association, all wissenschaftlich references to place, time, or intestinal picture of the poet in connection with a poem, an so forth. A reference outside the work of art is to be regarded, on this view, as out of bounds. If a person wishes to keep a validity for some sort of referential meaning in the aesthetic response, he must consider himself a "referentialist" or "heteronomous" since for him, there is valid artistic meaning which is not found within the art product and yet is to be thought of as relevant. 39

And before continuing, we must grapple with some bogeys in semantic theory itself. The word "meaning" has a peculiar connotation in semiotics as it is usually presented. It has always been used as the correlative of a vehicle of meaning, a symbol, in which the relation between the symbol and its meaning is one of conventional association. In Susanne Langer's theory this is just the meaning of "meaning" that is denied the work of art. "Meaning" for her is entirely within the art work, and although critic after critic has read her theory as heteronomous, it is an autonomist position, and only seems heteronomous, because her words "symbol" and "meaning" signify, in every context but hers, correlates in a relation of conventional association. It was not until Problems of Art that Professor Langer finally felt that going against the current built up against her use of these two words was becoming intolerable, and

she changed "symbol" to "expressive form," and "meaning" to "import" in order to neutralize the acid reception usually given her theory.\(^{40}\)

Most semanticists, therefore, can ill conceive that an art theory can assert that there is "meaning" within the work of art, since meaning is customarily outside the vehicle. For the same reason, the art work can hardly be called a "symbol" as Mrs. Langer names it, for "symbol" can only mean for them that meaning is outside the work of art and associated with it only by convention. Semantics has dealt exclusively with this type of symbol, and hence a "semantic" theory of art is tautologous with "heteronomous" or "referential," while, in the perspective of semanticists, to align "semantic theory of art" with "autonomous" or "absolutist" is a contradiction. Rieser misreads Susanne Langer's when he lumps her with other semiotic aesthetician, by saying: "Semantic theorists conceive the works of art as signs, just as the words of human language are signs, and the meaning of the works of art in this sense need not be symbolic at all."\(^{41}\)

It is, therefore, easy to see how the autonomous semiotic position is consistently being confused and confounded with a heteronomous position because it is thought that if the art work is to be a sign or a symbol, it must get its meaning from a referent and not from itself. Self-significance to these writers is a contradiction. But the theory of art which Susanne Langer espouses is, for better or for worse, to some extent one of self-significance. The basic tenet is that works of art are structurally similar in pattern to psychological pro-

\(^{40}\) Problems, p. 127.

\(^{41}\) "The Semantic Theory of Art in America," p. 12
cesses, and in virtue of this iconicity, this isomorphism, the work of art is symbolic of psychic processes and of the life of feeling. Whether or not this is possible remains to be seen, as well as whether the theory is a lasting contribution to aesthetic theory. Max Rieser will most ably sum up for the prosecution:

The semantic theory of art could be regarded as the aesthetic counterpart of the philosophy of language that dominated to a great extent philosophical thinking in the first half of the twentieth century. But it is also the theoretical reflection of abstract art, of non-objective painting and sculpture, that emerged in the course of this century as the dominating form of plastic arts. So long as plastic arts "represented" or mirrored reality, "realistically" there would have been little sense in thinking of these art products as signs. They were "representations." When, however, a form of art came into its own that did not represent but paralleled reality in its own right, the question arose about the relationship of this art to reality. The semanticists found in accordance with their linguistic philosophy that the relationship was that of a sign to its referent . . . . In this sense the semantic theory of art is a time-bound phenomenon and a symptom of what happened in the world of art.42

Since to judge whether or not Susanne Langer's aesthetic is "time-bound" one must confront the theory and the theoretician, we turn, accordingly, to both.

42 Ibid., 25.
CHAPTER II

SUSANNE LANGER’S SEMANTIC THEORY: THE FOUNDATION
FOR THE PRESENTATIONAL SYMBOL OF ART

The general theory of art which Susanne Langer proposes rests on a rather unique account of what is called the "presentational symbol." The concept of the presentation symbol, however, is derived from her semantic theory where the presentational symbol is distinguished from the discursive symbol, and the two of these symbols are in turn differentiated from the realm of signs. To understand, therefore, what she means when she says that the work of art is a presentational symbol, one must first understand the difference between symbols and signs, and then go on to grasp the distinction between the discursive symbol and the presentational symbol. There is a further reason why these semantic characters must be clarified. Later on in the theory of art, Mrs. Langer will wish to distinguish the positivistic theory of art as "self-expression" of feelings from her own theory of "logical expression" of feeling. The sign-symbol distinction against becomes relevant because the "self-expression" theory treats artistic expression as a sign of feelings, whereas the Langer theory treats artistic expression as a symbol of feeling embodying the latter's logical relations. Since her general theory of art is a semantic theory, its foremost and fundamentally distinctive trait derives from the difference between knowledge through signs and knowledge through symbols.
The third chapter of Philosophy in a New Key is entitled "The Logic of Signs and Symbols." The author of this thesis is deliberately avoiding this hypostatic terminology because a great deal of confusion results if "signs" and "symbols" are thought of as things which are in some way distinct from each other. Signs and symbols are not distinct things. They are distinct functions, and so it would be more accurate to name them functions, signific functions and symbolic functions. Susanne Langer does not take care to obviate the eventual confusion, even when she notes that the "logic of signs and symbols" concerns functions. But any given thing may function both ways, significantly or symbolically, and that is the point of terming the pair "functions." To say that a "significant thing" may be either a sign or a symbol is to obscure the ubiquitous possibility that it can be both a sign and a symbol at the same time. Interpretation makes it one or the other since interpretation can apprehend in either of its two functions.

Semantic theory studies semantic functions, the myriad relations which signs have to their significata. This development in philosophy grew out of the whole interesting question of the possibility of valid mediated knowledge. To Susanne Langer, the relation between the sign and the signified is simple: both are associated to form some sort of pair, that is, "They stand in a one-to-one correlation." A novel twist in semantic theory, as it is recounted by Dr. Langer, is that the sign as "sign" and the signified as such are distinguished really only by the interpreting subject. They differ only because the "subject

\[\text{2} \text{Langer, Key, p. 58.}\]
\[\text{3} \text{Ibid., 58.}\]
for which they constitute a pair must find one more interesting than the other, and the latter more easily available than the former.\(^4\)

There are, in general, four distinct semantic functions, two "signific" functions and two "symbolic" functions. The two kinds of signs, or better, signific functions are the so-called "natural sign" giving a knowledge of existence through its relation to a cause, and the "artificial sign" giving knowledge of existence through a stipulated conventional association. The two kinds of symbolic functions are the "discursiven symbol" which mediates through conventional association not knowledge of existence or occurrence, but a concept, and another type of symbol, the "iconic" or "presentational symbol" which embodies in its own concrete vehicle the relations which are its meaning.

**SIGNIFIC FUNCTIONS**

Signs indicate merely the existence of the signified, and do not, as symbols do, permit the subject to conceive the signified.\(^5\) A term functions as a "natural sign" when sign and signified are in a causal (usually efficient) relation. Although Susanne Langer does not assert this, she implies it when she exemplifies natural signific functions by a series of causal instances.\(^6\) In deriving knowledge from a natural sign, the subject learns the sign first, and makes the correlation to the signified by drawing on rationalized experience for the appropriate conjunction. Signified and natural sign are related as cause

\(^4\)Ibid., 59. Italics in original.


\(^6\)Langer, *Key*, p. 58.
"Artificial signs" on the other hand, are correlations of sign and signified by arbitrary conventional association. The crucial cognitional leap from signified to artificial sign is not made by understanding so much as memory. Paul Revere could have missed the significance of the two lanterns in the belfry by forgetting which convention meant "by land" and which "by sea," but the knowledge that the lanterns did not put themselves in the belfry was not a memorized and conventionalized experiential conjunction, but a rationally understood one, and this is the difference between natural and artificial signs.

This chapter deals with two semantic processes, signification, or the mediation of "existence" or "occurrence" by signs, and symbolization, the mediation of "concepts" or "intelligibility" by symbols. These two functions not only mediate characteristically different types of knowledge, but they also function in characteristically different processes.

The structure of the signific process, as opposed to the symbolic process, is three-termed and constituted by a subject in relation to a sign and a signified. What is peculiar about sign-process is that, first of all, in it the sign is apprehended in its own intelligibility, and because it is apprehended in its own right, its relatedness to something else is known.

When smoke functions as a natural sign for some subject, the first step in the process of semantic knowledge is that smoke is known as what it is, viz., plain smoke. Smoke goes on to function as a sign when the subject hearkens to

7 Ibid., 59.
8 Langer, Key, 63.
understood experience and understands that smoke, thus far in his experience, has always been correlated with lit cigarettes, burning cigars, or other forms of combustion. The first step in the knowledge mediated by signs is the apprehension of the sign in its own right. The completion of the process comes when the sign's place is found in the correlated network of understood experience. In signific functioning, the signified is not obtained from the sign by way of reading, as it were, only the formal intelligibility of the sign itself, for in signific functions the thing signified is not the intelligibility of the sign itself, but the sign's "relatedness." One goes from the sign to its signified by understanding the sign itself and in its relatedness to something else, where this relatedness was set up either by the understanding of a causal situation, as in natural signs, or the stipulation of an arbitrary convention, as in artificial signs. Susanne Langer's statement, therefore, that a "sign indicates the existence—past, present, or future—of a thing, event, or condition" does not mean that there is no knowledge of a formal intelligibility in this type of function. It just means that signific functions complete their task only when they are understood in themselves and in their relatedness to something else. The relatedness is what indicates the existence of a "thing, event, or condition" i.e., the existence of a correlative. The sign does not give the intelligibility of the signified. Experience as understood gives that.

SYMBOLIC FUNCTIONS

The interpretation of signific functions is not the mark of man alone, for

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9 Ibid.
it is the very basis of animal intelligence. The experiments of Pavlov have their basis in the fact that animals can respond both directly and indirectly to stimuli, methodically building up knowledge through trial and error, punishment and reward. It is, rather, the use of symbolic functions which distinguishes man from brute animal.

"Symbols are not proxy for their objects, but are vehicles for the conception of objects." Facing the symbol, the subject conceives the intelligibility of which the symbol is the vehicle, instead of the intelligibility of some other things, for "it is the conceptions, not the things, that symbols directly 'mean'." The relations inherent in symbolization make the latter a four-termed affair, embracing a symbol, a concept, a subject, and an object. The symbol is associated with the concept of some object, and this association is grasped by a subject.

Susanne Langer relies heavily on Wittgenstein of the Tractatus for the structure of all symbolization.

"The logical theory on which this whole study of symbols is based is essentially that which was set forth by Wittgenstein, some twenty years ago, in his

10 Ibid., 59-60.
11 Cassirer, Essay, pp. 45-46.
12 Langer, Key, p. 61.
13 Ibid. Original in italics.
14 Langer, Key, p. 64.
Wittgenstein has written that each word or name stands for a single thing, and in connection, the words build up a picture of the atomic fact. But this picture is not necessarily an imaginable image but rather a "logical picture." This "logical picture" founds the structure of all symbolization whether of the discursive type or the presentational, and it is through this unique structure that signs are distinct from symbols. For a picture to represent something, it must have a proportion of salient features logically similar to the thing represented. Thus a blueprint will represent but not copy the projected building, or a mercurator projection map will represent the globe, although not visibly looking like it. Hence all versions of the thing represented will have but one thing, perhaps, in common: an identical proportion of salient parts, or a single logical form. In order to function as a symbol, the symbolic vehicle must have, or refer to, a logical form congruent with what it symbolizes.

Now the symbol mediates intelligibility. The grasp of intelligibility is the grasp of relationships, and a complex of relationships is called a "logical picture." There are two ways of presenting this complex of relations, and they correspond to the two types of symbols. In one type of logical picture, the intelligibilities of the various relationships in the "picture" can be named, i.e. a symbolic vehicle can be assigned or associated with each relationship of meaning. In this instance we have an example of a logical picture mediated by words which are built up into the total "picture" of the proposition. A prop-

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15 Ibid., 182.
16 Key, 67-69; 75-76; Problems, p. 20.
osition is a complex constellation of all connotations, held together by syntax. In being a "logical picture" of the world, the proposition fits the facts not only because it has names for elemental facts, but because propositional structure somehow mirrors the structure of those facts. Syntax is nothing more than the logical form of our language, which copies as closely as possible the logical form of our thought. To understand language is to appreciate the analogy between the syntactical construct and the complex of ideas, letting the former function as a representative, or 'logical picture,' of the latter. Hence, "a proposition is a picture of a structure—the structure of a state of affairs. The unity of a proposition is the same sort of unity that belongs to a picture, which represents one scene, no matter how many items may be distinguishable within it."

Propositions and pictures, therefore, both present a unified structure. And this brings the discussion to the second type of logical picture, one mediated by the presentational symbol. A logical picture presented by a discursive symbolism such as a proposition, is mediated by a vehicle associated with the logical relations symbolized. A logical picture presented by a presentational symbol, however, is not mediated by a symbol associated with it. It is mediated by the concrete relationships inherent in the symbolic vehicle itself. Thus the above-mentioned four-termed relation in symbolization holds only for discursive symbolism because the presentational "logical picture" is not associated with any concept. It directly exhibits its complex of meaningful relations.

The structure of symbolization, therefore, contains two methods of mediating, or "projecting" a state of affairs. One is a discursive projection of associating symbolic vehicles with the state of affairs to build up a logical picture of the fact. The other is a presentational projection of exhibiting directly in the symbolic vehicle the logical picture of the fact.

**AN EXAMINATION OF PRESENTATIONAL AND DISCURSIVE SYMBOLISM**

We will now turn to a careful examination of the two types of symbolic functions, the discursive symbol and the presentational symbol. This is the second distinction to be made on the way to an understanding of Susanne Langer's theory of art. The distinction between the two is highly important because if the difference between the two symbols is not valid, her theory of art cannot stand on that distinction. The Langer theory is justified on these grounds: that the discursive symbolism of language cannot mediate everything that is open to a symbolic projection. Because of this shortcoming, she will argue, there is room for another type of projection besides the discursive symbolism of language and that is presentational projection.

Two of the most widespread dichotomies current in the theory of language have been "emotive-cognitive" and "informative-evocative." The former classification dates back to Locke and Hobbes; the latter owes its formulation to Bertrand Russell. These categories traditionally cover the field of semantic expression in the way indicated by this diagram:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human Semantic Expression</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Semantic Functions:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Functional Uses:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Semantic Vehicles:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphysics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific Language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Susanne Langer's symbolic theory is an attempt to dismantle these categories based on the uses of language, and erect in their place a trichotomy founded on the logical form of language. In the area which the old dichotomies covered, she marks off a new set of boundaries: the logical form called "discursive"; a second form termed "presentational"; and a third form more a use of language than a logical form of expression, that of "self-expressive." This trichotomy submits to the following diagram:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic Functions:</th>
<th>Signs</th>
<th>Presentational Symbol</th>
<th>Discursive Symbol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functional Uses:</td>
<td>Self-expression of feeling</td>
<td>Logical expression of feeling</td>
<td>Logical expression of concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic Vehicles:</td>
<td>Linguistic, artistic, ritualistic discourse</td>
<td>Artistic, mythological discourse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discursive form encloses but a fraction of the area spanned formerly by the cognitive use, just as the self-expressive form covers only part of the field of emotion. Spanning that field left free by the new restrictive re-location of boundaries is the logical form of the presentational symbol, a logical form of the life of feeling and emotion which, by reason of the logical form involved, is accessible to intelligence in a way the old categories of "emotive" and "cognitive" never allowed. The presentational symbolic form constitutes a radical revision of semantic boundaries, at once introducing a semiotic into the area of feeling and emotion and extending the scope of intelligence.

The purpose of the diagrams above was to show exactly how the new semantic categories of Susanne Langer are designed to intrude into the area of semantic expression. If her trichotomy can be verified, the old duality of emotive expression and cognitive expression must fall. The positivistic theory of mean-
ing dictated that only scientific language was able to communicate knowledge: only these linguistic expressions were "informative" or "cognitive." The rest of semantic expression was persuasive, emotive, spontaneous feeling. Thus statements of metaphysics and ethics, art works, religious truths, were merely the record of the fact that a person felt strongly about the proposition in question. These linguistic vehicles simply did not carry a meaning. They were emotive, not cognitive expressions. For Susanne Langer the findings in philosophical anthropology, the new concept of mentality in psychology, and the testimony of cultures and their artists, all go together to testify against the simplistic emotive-cognitive duality. The logic of man's intelligence is not restricted to the area which is definable by linguistic projection. The field of emotive life if open to a logic which is beyond the logic of discourse. It is open to a presentational logic. If this last statement is true, the way is open to founding a theory of art on this logic of the imagination and its presentational symbol.

Max Rießer traces the categories of discursive and presentational forms back to familiar German writings of Kant and Hegel. "Discursive" thus appears as "begrifflich" and "presentational" as "anschaulich." Kant's "Deutlichkeit" or "logical clarity" would fall under the topic of discursive form, and his "anschaulich" is translated as "presentational." In Hegel, also, the two forms are found in his expression, "sinnliches Scheinen der Idee." "Idee" comes under discursive and "sinnliches Scheinen" under presentational.20

20 Max Rießer, "The Semantic Theory of Art in America," p. 14. In the opinion of critics, however, the new terms Susanne Langer introduces are hardly justifiable. Max Rießer considers the distinction between discursive and presentational symbolic forms to be sweeping, and justified only on the
THE GRIST OF SYMBOLIC PROJECTION

We are treating the two modes of symbolic projection, the discursive and the presentational. In order to expand the old "cognitive" category into "discursively-cognitive" and "presentationally-cognitive," there must be a radical distinction between the two. The deep cleft of separation begins in the material or grist which each type of symbolic projection will work on. Here, in the material of experience which man symbolically transforms, will be found the beginning of the distinction between discursive and presentational symbol.

Susanne Langer considers the concrete state of affairs which we experience to be unique in each instance, in the sense that each experience, taken exhaustively, does not add up to any other experience. No matter how similar, no two experiences are ever identical.21 Experiences which we call similar are

20 dubious grounds of Gestalt psychology, and further, that the entire framework of such symbolism is constructed in order to fit art into a set of pre-conceived definitions (Ibid., 13, 24). Paul Welsh believes that Mrs. Langer must introduce the presentational symbol because an image-theory of language logically demands it; without such a theory, her philosophy of art is both untenable and unnecessary (Paul Welsh, "Discursive and Presentational Symbols," p. 192). Dispensing with this empiricist approach to language, Susanne Langer could recognize according to Welsh, a simple two-pronged fact: that language has two, but only two, obvious functions, cognitive and emotive. Arthur Szathmary too, discounts the importance of the framework Dr. Langer feels called upon to set up, saying that it is best understood simply as a reaction against the old categories of "emotive" and "cognitive." (Arthur Szathmary, "Symbolic and Aesthetic Expression in Painting," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XIII [September, 1954] p. 89).

In response to Max Rieser, I believe Mrs. Langer would say that her philosophy of art depends minimally on the Gestalt theory. Her theory of art grows far more out of the comprehensive work done in epistemology and anthropology by Ernst Cassirer, than any lesser bias. Arthur Szathmary's comment is most accurate; Susanne Langer's framework is a reaction—not biological, but intelligent.

21 Langer, Key, p. 129.
really analogous—they have the same general form. "A little reflection shows us that, since no experience occurs more than once, so-called 'repeated' experiences are really analogou occurrences, all fitting a form that was abstracted on the first occasion."22 According to Gestalt psychology the formal analogies existing between unique experiences begin in structuring facilities of the human sense apparatus. Whether or not hypostatizing and grouping is due to the uniqueness of the concrete experience being lost on the gross sensory equipment of the human being, or due to the drive of human understanding to unify, the Gestaltists are not prepared to decide. What they would like to imply, however, is that man understands in universals because he begins the knowledge-process by seeing, hearing, and touching in structured groups, or Gestalts.23

The unification and grouping of the data of experience may be called the "intellectual disregard for the irrelevant." In Susanne Langer's epistemology, this is called "abstraction" and what the process of abstraction produces is the form, or category, of whatever is intellectually relevant. The grasp of such forms or categories of understanding is expressed in the class-names of language.

The question then comes as to how the "irrelevant" is specified. If one seriously asks this question, one can see how it is the question itself which determines the relevant and the irrelevant. And since the potential variability of questions is indefinite, if not infinite, the concrete data of experience are capable of exhaustive classification. One possible classification of

22 Ibid., 83.
23 Ibid., 83-84.
the experienced and enigmatic world is "red data" as opposed to "non-red data."
This is a possible though highly unfruitful way to categorize experience. Per-
haps the same can be said for some of the other venerable dichotomies of phil-
osophy which have been canonized with a capital letter.

Now language could name, theoretically, every possible category of classi-
ification. Languages developed by people in chillier moderate climates could
make the same twelve classifications of snow that the Eskimo language makes,
presumably, if found necessary for survival or some other reason.

Categories, however, are abstractive units of understanding, and the con-
crete world is the sum total of them. What has been traditionally called form
can just as easily be called, it seems to me, a "category" in the neo-Kantian,
not the Kantian, sense. Such a category is the unified answer to the point of
view of a question. As unified, this result of understanding precludes from all
that lies outside its unification. To categorize, to abstractly understand, is
to leave behind, to disregard. Hence, in naming the result of understanding,
the form, or category, human expression must be piecemeal. In order to assert
the concrete world which is the sum total of all possible categories of unifi-
cation, the human expression which is language is unalterably committed to a
"successive" mode of symbolization, for "we cannot talk in simultaneous bunches
of names." The so-called "discursive" property of language rests, therefore,
on the abstractive nature of what is to be symbolized, that is, the categorial
nature of the operation of understanding. It is this operation of understanding
which is categorial, not the whole process of knowledge as Kant held.

\[24\] \textit{Ibid.}, 76.
DISCOURSE PROJECTION AND ITS LOGICAL BEYOND

In the opinion of Susanne Langer, the differentia between the presentational form of symbolic projection and the discursive form is the latter's property of discursiveness. "All language has a form which requires us to string out our ideas even though their objects rest one within the other. . . . This property of verbal symbolism is known as discursiveness; by reason of it only thoughts which can be arranged in this peculiar order can be spoken at all; any idea which does not lend itself to this 'projection' is ineffable, incommunicable by means of words."25 Here Professor Langer is arguing that the reason for the discursive form of language is that the meaning presented in language has a successive, or serial character. But, as Welsh notes, one cannot argue from the discursiveness of language to the discursiveness of thought, saying that if an idea cannot be presented serially, language could never project it. 26 Welsh attributes such an argument to Mrs. Langer's supposed positivistic theory of language, but if the quotation from Philosophy in a New Key directly above will be scrutinized, it can be seen that no such argument is attempted. She says that it is the form of language which requires discursiveness (or rather dictates it.) The objects symbolized can rest "one within the other." Thus an idea may be, for lack of a better expression, "concentrated" and yet, to be projected into the form of language, require being "strung out." She does not therefore, argue that the idea itself must be strung out.

25 Ibid., 77.
only that it eventually must undergo this if it is to be projected into discursive language. At this point the distinction between discursive and presentational forms of symbolization rests totally with form and not content. Discursive, or successive form is distinct from its logical opposite, presentational, or concentrated form.

But for Rudolph Carnap, a concentrated form of projection was an impossibility. The discursive form of language was not a form among forms of projection. It was the sole form of projection. Anything falling outside this type of projection was not true or false; it was simply unthinkable. It could not be held in the human head. All those other verbal combinations which seem to mean something or other are only symptomatic expressions, signs of the presence of emotions or desires. Many of our linguistic utterances are:

analogous to laughing in that they have only an expressive function, no representative function. Examples of this are cries like 'Oh, Oh,' or, on a higher level, lyrical verses. The aim of a lyrical poem in which occur the words 'sunshine' and 'clouds,' is not to inform us of certain meteorological facts, but express certain feelings of the poet and to excite similar feelings in us. . . . Metaphysical propositions—like lyrical verses—have only an expressive function, but no representative function. . . . But they are, like laughing, lyrics and music, expressive.

What seems to be clear from the context of Carnap's statement is that he thinks art has nothing more to it than the equivalent of an extended "ouch."

Here Susanne Langer "can see only a complete failure to apprehend a fundamental distinction." If Mrs. Langer's interpretation of Carnap is correct, the

27 Langer, Key, p. 78.


29 Langer, Key, p. 81.
latter is saying that there is a **beyond** connected with the discursive form of language. It is the forbidding realm of emotive life, desires, and feelings. We use language in the service of these desires and feelings, but these uses are **intractable** and **formless**. They have no **logical form** for positivists like Carnap, Russell, and Wittgenstein, and hence it is quite natural for these men that the realm of emotions is **unthinkable** because inexpressible.

There is, however, another camp in the battle. Myth, ritual, the arts of all peoples, seem to be articulations carried out by peoples everywhere, and yet these must be relegated to that zone beyond the thinkable? There are many more viewing the battle from this camp: Schopenhauer, Dewey, Delacroix, Whitehead, in addition to Ernst Cassirer.\(^{30}\) But at this point, Susanne Langer resorts not to demonstration, but to simple assertion. "Clearly, poetry means more than a cry. . . . and metaphysics is more than a croon with which we might cuddle up to the world in a comfortable attitude."

Some sort of demonstration, though, is not long in coming. In the work of the Gestalt psychologists there is a clue to a new kind of logic. It is human sense equipment which initially gives us what we call "**things**." Sense structures the kaleidoscopic flow of data into **Gestalten**, determining, initially, things for us. Dr. Langer's conviction on this point is that "unless the Gestalt-psychologists are right in their belief that Gestaltung is of the very nature of perception, I do not know how the hiatus between perception and conception, sense-organ and mind-organ, chaotic stimulus and logical response, is

\(^{30}\)Ibid.

\(^{31}\)Ibid.
ever to be closed and welded. A mind that works primarily with meanings must have organs that supply it primarily with forms."\textsuperscript{32}

Our sense life, seeing, hearing, touching, is thus \textit{formulative}. The theory propounded by the Gestalt-psychologist thus carries rationality into processes that have been thought of as pre-rational, and opens the possibility of a logic which is non-discursive, but rational nevertheless.\textsuperscript{33} This is the "beyond" of Carnap, Russell, and Wittgenstein, being found to be articulate, but living by a logic and a logical form radically unlike the discursive form of language.

\textbf{THE REAL DISTINCTION}

There are a crop of distinctions related to discursive and presentational symbols and although Susanne Langer herself brings most of them in for discussion, most of them end up being strangely inoperative in her theory. The following discussion purports to sift the wheat from the chaff.

The original context of the presentational symbol was a consideration of forms in Gestaltist accounts. Starting from visual forms as a central example of the non-discursive symbol, Susanne Langer states that "the most radical difference is that visual forms are not discursive. They do not present their constituents successively, but simultaneously, so the relations determining a visual structure are grasped in one act of vision."\textsuperscript{34} It is difficult to know

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 84.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 84-86.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 86.
what the word "constituents" means in this text, I will take it to mean the "constituents of form" are presented successively, and not "the constituents of meaning" are so presented. This is done in the interests of showing that the differentia of "discursive" or "successive" cannot apply just to the mere form of the symbolism, whether discursive or presentational, but must be used with reference to the meaning and its emergence. Mrs. Langer can thus be interpreted as saying that it is a formal property of being strung out, and this alone, which distinguishes her two symbolisms. But this would seem to be untenable.

Susanne Langer's paradigmatic instance of artistic significance is to be found in music. And music, like all the arts, involves presentational symbols. But music is an instance in which (if there is a precision from the emergence of meaning.) the form is strung out in discursive fashion. Merely to consider the form in trying to distinguish presentational from discursive symbolism seems to lead into a blind alley. It must be remembered that this discussion deliberately prescinds from how the meaning of the symbol is presented, in order to bring home the point that it is not strictly true to say that a strung-out form makes the discursive symbol. The point also comes across in reverse. In the passage above Susanne Langer says the presentational symbol's meaning is typically grasped in "one act of vision." The emphasis here is on "one act." But the meaning of words seems to be grasped in the same way, and they are not presentational symbols, but elemental discursive ones.

Another distinction Professor Langer seems to press into service in the theory is one based on the differences in the combinability of the elements involved. "Language, written or spoken, is a symbolism, a system of symbols; a work of art is always a prime symbol. . . .[which] can never be constructed by
a process of synthesis of elements, because no such elements exist outside it."

In this later work, elements are said to occur only in "total form" in works of art. The implication is that this is not so in discursive projection. "Total form" is readily related to the grasp of "one act of vision" above, and both of these phrases will go far toward a real distinction between presentational and discursive symbolisms, once we consider the meaning involved in each.

The question to be put to the passage just cited is that of the meaning of an "element" in both presentational and discursive forms. In her first work, there seemed to be no distinction between the two forms on the basis of combinability of elements. "Visual forms—lines, colors, proportions, etc.—are just as capable of articulation, i.e., of complex combination, as words. . . . The same symbols—qualities, lines, rhythms—may occur in innumerable presentations; they are abstractable and combinatory." This passage seems to admit that the elements in both symbolisms are equal on the score of combinability, whereas the passage previous to this one appears to deny this. The solution occurs when it is seen that the former passage (from Feeling and Form,) is written from the viewpoint of the meaning of the presentational as opposed to the discursive symbol. The passage from Philosophy in a New Key considers only the elements as formal constituents. Words are just as combinable as slashes of burnt umber and blue notes, but words have meaning which they retain during combination, whereas burnt umber and blue notes have no artistic meaning until combination.

Hence it is not until the question of meaning and the emergence of meaning

35 Langer, Feeling, p. 369.
36 Langer, Key, p. 87.
comes up that a real distinction between discursive and presentational symbols emerges. When considered purely as formal elements, the elements in art works seem to be as independent as words are in discourse. As forms these elements antedate combination fully as much as words antedate phrases, clauses, and propositions. They are just as distinguishable, analyzable, as words are.

But on the level of meaning there is a significant difference. Discursive and presentational elements have articulate forms before combination, and in this respect they do not differ. But only discursive elements have and retain a meaning before and during combination. Presentational elements do not have a symbolic meaning until they enter into combination. This is what Susanne Langer means by saying that elements—meaningful elements—in the art work occur, emerge, only in total form.

There is an objection. A splash of red, a minor seventh, a single concrete arch, a gesture, are all distinguishable elements in the total art work. They mean a red splash, a seventh, an arch, and a gesture, independently and before combination. But to argue further, maintaining that their emergent artistic meaning preserves this so-called antecedent "meaning" seems to run up against the position that artistic meaning, whatever it is, occurs as an undifferentiated entirety, an integral, total form. "Consider the most familiar sort of non-discursive symbol, a picture. Like language, it is composed of elements that represent various respective constituents in the object; but these elements are not units with independent meanings. The areas of light and shade that constitute a portrait, a photograph, for instance, have no significance by themselves. In isolation we would simply consider them blotches." 37

37 Ibid., 87.
In isolation, it is true, they have a "blotch-significance" but what Dr. Langer means is that this isolated significance is not the significance that emerges when one blotch is related to another blotch to form a total significance. This type of meaning is dependent upon every element being present in order for any element to acquire meaning.

Perhaps an example is in order. The word "transition" is definable. Entering into combination in a proposition, its meaning does not change. "He made a slipshod transition" and "Transition is an English word" are propositions with two different meanings, but "transition" has the same meaning in each proposition. Now, to take artistic significance, an artist may be unable to assign any meaning whatever to a painting except, let us suppose, "transition" or a similar term. Perhaps the feeling he was trying to get on canvas was that of changing lanes in heavy traffic, and to do this he simply painted a red square next to a blue square. All the painting means is, in a limping word, "transition." Now the elements in this painting are clearly the square of red and the square of blue, but they are incapable of meaning "transition" because there is no variation within their respective colors. But in combination they acquire this meaning of "transition" which is untraceable to either the blue or the red. The "meaning" in this instance is a function of the elements of the blue square juxtaposed with the red square. In this way, the elements in the presentational symbol acquire meaning only in combination while the elements in discursive symbolism have a meaning before combination and retain it during combination. At least one basic distinction, therefore, between discursive symbolism and the presentational symbol is that of a serially presented meaning as opposed to a simultaneously presented one. The meaning of the present-
tional symbol is instantly grasped whether the form of the symbolic vehicle is serial or static. 38

Another fundamental distinction concerns the locus of meaning in the two types of symbol. Words, the elements in discursive symbolism, are instrumental, functioning only to call up meaning from elsewhere. Their meanings are beyond the symbol, and not truly in the symbol, for it is by conventional association, not the inspection of the spoken or written word-vehicle, that words acquire the meanings they have. The elements of language thus have fixed meanings, and it is stipulation which makes them so. The host of distinctions which Susanne Langer introduces, the lack of a defining or translating dictionary in art, for instance, the absence of comparative meanings for presentational symbols, all come from one characteristic: conventional meanings are not assigned to the jogs and splashes in art. 39 The meaning in art does not accrue by association; it does not accrue at all. It is immanent in the work of art. It is the articulation of the work of art, the relationships that make up its perceptual material. It is interesting to note that although convention does not assign meanings to the elements which could make up a work of art—various chords in music, for instance—this does not mean that they could not conceivably function as a language in a cumbersome way. Do not the Chinese come close to using the scale as a semantic vehicle when they employ pitch differences to convey meaning?

The basic differences between discursive and presentational symbols, then,


39 Langer, *Key*, pp. 87-89.
appear to be: (1) the locus of meaning, associated as opposed to immanent; and (2) the emergence of meaning: sudden versus successive, and (3) the material of meaning: abstractive versus concrete.

THE PRESENTATIONAL ORDER

Before leaving the presentational symbol, some salient characteristics must be granted a hearing. The presentational order concerns perceptual forms. Language's connotations are general, but the presentational order "cannot convey generalities."\(^{40}\) It is on the level of sensible and concrete subjective experience, the immediate plane of imagination.\(^{41}\) Its forms are non-verbal forms, such as line, color, and sound. Some of its articulations are distinctness, relatedness, congruence, correspondence of forms, constraint, synthesis, and perceptual Gestalten.\(^{42}\)

These Gestalten are given by sense perception, and abstracted by the ear and eye.\(^{43}\) Such forms are the meaning of the symbol which is a single complex of articulated sensible relations\(^{44}\) in which there is no independent unit of

\(^{40}\) Ibid., 89.

\(^{41}\) Langer, Feeling, p. 241.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 377-78.

\(^{43}\) Langer, Key, pp. 83, 86.

\(^{44}\) Langer, Problems, p. 68.
meaning. Their perception is thus single and specific, and of a whole. Individual parts fuse into a unity, and the elements are affected by their function in the whole. These forms can condense by intersection, contraction, elision, and suppression. Finally, the laws of the articulation of the presentational order are the laws of imagination—differences of "meaning" must be imaginable differences. The cardinal principle therefore is "exhibitability." The percipient must have the meaning given him in an experiential manner.

In summary, a discursive symbol, such as a word, has its meaning associated with it; its unit of symbolism, the proposition, has a successively emerging meaning, which logically entails that the meaning itself be abstract. The presentational symbol, on the other hand, contains its meaning within the symbolic vehicle; this meaning is seen integrally, because it is not abstractive but concrete.

45 Langer, Key, p. 89.
46 Langer, Problems, p. 69.
47 Ibid., 68.
48 Langer, Key, p. 89; Feeling, p. 31.
49 Ibid., 244.
50 Ibid., 241.
CHAPTER III

SUSANNE LANGER'S PHILOSOPHY OF ART

The interpretation that Susanne Langer gives to the work of Rudolph Carnap demonstrates that for Carnap art is the expression of emotion in exactly the same sense that spontaneous cries of pain, anger, pleasure, and exhaustion are. These are simply some of the emotive uses that language, being artistic material, can be put to. Susanne Langer, following Ernst Cassirer and others, agrees, but adds that these are only some of the uses that language can have in the field of feeling. Cassirer has studied language as a symbolic form of understanding, fruitfully discovering it to be like other symbolic forms such as rite, ritual, myth, and art. These latter symbolic forms differ from language in that language has both presentational and discursive roles. In scientific and philosophical expression, its presentational use is minimal. The verbal arts employ symbolic terms principally in a presentational use, where a meaning emerges from the perceptual relations involved in the language vehicle, a meaning which occurs suddenly, totally at once, and which is not due to the informative role of language in the art.

The trend of thought in Mrs. Langer's aesthetics is that the work done in the human symbolic forms of understanding must generate new questions which eventually turn on the position requiring that human expression need be only "cognitive" or "emotive." Facing and answering such questions, she would assert, will disintegrate the "emotive-cognitive" position, and suggest that there is a
realm of sensible and perceptual forms intruding between the categories of "emotive" and "cognitive," a realm of forms and relations which splits the former "emotive" classification in two: a new "patterned-emotive" and the former "spontaneous-emotive." Susanne Langer's theory of art is an assertion that the patterned-emotive segment of life is an expression which is meaningful in a way in which neither the cognitive nor spontaneously-emotive segments are. Her conviction is that "under the aegis of scientific method, social science, and popular semantics, we have missed a trick, I think, in the philosophy of language. Most of our interest in language has been prompted by needs and problems of communication. Consequently communication by words has been the key concept of our studies of language."¹

This conviction that semanticists have "missed a trick" enables Dr. Langer to begin exploring the possibilities that the "presentational order" of perceptual forms may have a significance which transcends the mere blotch of paint or bodily gesture they appear to be. Her profession of faith that art is more than mere splashes and blotches, that it is, in fact, a symbol of the sentient life of human living, comes as the avowal of an assumption which has all along enabled her to define examples from the presentational order as "presentational symbols."² At the point at which such examples were named "symbols" it yet remained, as it still remains, to be seen how such a description is justified.

The initial development and exploration began with the eighth chapter of Philosophy in a New Key entitled "On Significance in Music." Here Susanne

¹Langer, Problems, p. 147.
²Langer, Key, p. 90.
Langer bargained for a lodging for music in a "significant" logical beyond, spurred by the staunch belief that "we are not talking nonsense when we say that a certain musical progression is significant." Her subsequent book, *Feeling and Form*, fulfills the promise of a critique of art made in the treatment of symbolism in the earlier work. The two books should really be considered two volumes of the same work since the philosophy of art laid out in *Feeling and Form* "rests squarely on the above-mentioned semantic theory" of *Philosophy in a New Key*. In the later work, she generalizes the theory which had been specific only of music in the first work, because "the more one reflects on the significance of art generally, the more music theory appears as a lead." She fires some exploratory generalizations in the pages immediately following, all the while realizing that it is "dangerous to set up principles by analogy, and generalize from a single consideration." Although subject to some risk, this is the proper way to construct a general theory, that is, by extending the conclusions of a special theory. Not starting with such a special theory would constitute the "fallacy of hasty generalization--of assuming that through music we are studying all the arts, so that every insight into the nature of music is immediately applicable to painting, architecture, poetry, dance, and drama."  

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3 Ibid., 93.  
5 Ibid., 24.  
8 Langer, *Key*, p. 178.
This may well be true in the end, that music will provide fruitful leads into other arts, "but as a foregone conclusion, a dogmatic premise, it is dangerous because it discourages special theories and single-minded, technical study. General theories should be constructed by generalization from the principles of a special field, known and understood in full detail. Where no such systematic order exists to serve as a pattern, a general theory is more likely to consist of vague generalities than of valid generalizations." 9

In the study of a specific art, music, it was found that "the basic concept is the articulate but non-discursive form having import without conventional reference, and therefore presenting itself not as a symbol in the ordinary sense, but as a 'significant form,' in which the factor of significance is not logically discriminated, but is felt as a quality rather than recognized as a function." 10 This is what music was found to be. Music is an articulate perceptual form, the meaning of which is non-discursive in the exact sense justified in the preceding chapter. It is articulate by reason of experiential differences, not abstractly definable ones. Middle "C" differs from international "A" in the same sense that red differs from green. There is a discernible, articulate, difference between the two notes or colors. But red and green "mean" something as articulately different colors only to a person with eyes open to the chromatic spectrum, just as "C" and "A" mean something different only to a person with ears sensitive to the chromatic scale. This type of meaning arrives only with experience. The blind man does not open up

9Ibid., 179.

10Langer, Feeling, p. 32.
a chromatic world of color by running his fingers down a column in a braille
dictionary, nor does a deaf man unlock a chromatic world of sound by fingering
a piano keyboard. No one can communicate the articulate differences found on
the level of experience to anyone unable to experience it for himself. This is,
however, only part of the gamut of "meaning," for there are, after all, braille
dictionaries and finger alphabets which do open up the abstractly definable
world to the blind and the deaf.

The "basic concept" in art, as Susanne Langer gives it, has a meaning which
she calls "import" in order to avoid confusion with the use of the word "meaning"
in traditional semantic literature, where "meaning" usually connotes a commun-
icable intelligibility associated with the symbol by conventional reference.
This is the reason she terms this "articulate form" a symbol, but not one "in
the ordinary sense." This passage quoted above is a fine instance of Mrs.
Langer's attempt to carefully shape a definition of a new type of symbolic form
which will take its place alongside the well-known discursive symbol, yet be
accepted as distinct from the latter with its conventionally associated
"meaning."

Now, "if this basic concept be applicable to all products of what we call
'the arts,' i.e., if all works of art may be regarded as significant forms in
exactly the same sense as musical works, then all the essential propositions
in the theory of music may be extended to the other arts, for they all define
or elucidate the nature of the symbol and its import."¹¹ At this point one
might expect a sensitive exposition of the "essential propositions" of music,

¹¹Ibid., 32.
showing in a cursory way their involvement in the other arts, but instead of such a time-consuming program—the rest of the book constitutes such a extended clarification—she immediately notes that the "crucial generalization is already given by sheer circumstance: for the very term 'significant form' was originally introduced in connection with other arts than music, in the development of another special theory."\(^{12}\) This special theory was one concerned with the visual arts, and is, of course, Clive Bell's notorious phrase. Susanne Langer had been playing hide-and-seek with the theory propounded by Clive Bell all along, but in an effort, apparently, to make her findings in music seem all the more valid for being independent of any other theory, she delays acknowledge-
ment of his influence until this point. This could seem to be a naive peek-a-
boo attitude on her part, but as a matter of fact the stage of development to which Mr. Bell brought the notion of "significant form" was so embryonic that he was bludgeoned by critics because he said art was "significant" but could not say what it was significant of. Dr. Langer tries to accomplish the pene-
tration of that eary swamp that Bell could but point to: the significance of art.

From this juncture and viewpoint, Susanne Langer investigates all the arts to see whether or not they will yield a sort of "unified field theory." "The concept of significant form as an articulate expression of feeling, reflecting the verbally ineffable and therefore unknown forms of sentience, offers at least a starting point for such inquiries."\(^{13}\) She feels that there is some

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 32.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 39.
chance of success since "the many leading ideas in aesthetic theory that are
current today, each seeking to thread a different path through the mysteries of
artistic experience, and each constantly evading or perforce accepting some
paradoxical post, really all converge on the same problem: What is 'signifi-
cance' in art? What, in other words, is meant by 'Significant Form'?"14

THEORETICAL HAZARDS AND ROGUES

Perhaps the most far-reaching hazard which most theoreticians encounter but
somehow never face—the most far-reaching after logical and philosophical care-
lessness—is that of the two fundamentally different viewpoints in art theory.
In trying to answer the basic question "What is art" the train of inquiry in
the history of art has characteristically bifurcated at this point. There is
a "gallery-minded" school which interprets this question as "What am I respond-
ing to?" Its opposite number—let us call it the "studio" school—traditionally
interprets the question to mean "What is the artist producing?" The former
have consistently considered the art work primarily as an object, for they have
encountered it principally as an object. The latter have defined the work
rather as an artistic product, having in mind the process antecedent to the
product. One perspective sees it, the art work, as an expression; the other
takes it as impression. "From the former standpoint one naturally asks: 'What
moves an artist to compose his work, what goes into it, what (if anything) does
he mean by it?' From the latter, on the other hand, the immediate question is:
'What do works of art do, or mean, to us?'"15 Because she feels that theories

14 Ibid., 22-23.
of expression are more fertile than studies of impression, 

16 Susanne Langer

makes her choice. "Philosophy of art should, I believe, begin in the studio, not the gallery, auditorium, or library." 17 This does not rule out of court an aesthetic based on the experience of the "gallery, auditorium, or library" because "the dominant ideas occur in both types of theory, but they look different when viewed from such different standpoints." 18 This surely adds to the confusion already rampant in aesthetics, but only because philosophers of art have not troubled to cross-reference their ideas developed from one viewpoint with the occurrence of similar notions in the opposite perspective.

To experience the state of confusion in aesthetic theory, one need only to pick up any anthology of aesthetic theory. "One aesthetician speaks in terms of 'Significant Form' and another in terms of dream. One says that the function of art is to record the contemporary scene, and another maintains that pure sounds in 'certain combinations,' or colors in harmonious spatial disposition, give him the 'aesthetic emotion' that is both the aim and the criterion of art. One artist claims to paint his personal feelings, and the next one to express Pythagorean truths about the astronomical universe." 19 This blurred view of art would not be hazardous if it remained blurred, awaiting only a better focus. But theoreticians have customarily attempted to resolve their field of vision by drawing out their inductile positions to the length of crystalline paradoxes. The field of aesthetics thus seems to be a riot of heterogeneous weeds.

16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., ix.
18 Ibid., 14.
19 Ibid., 15.
Another hazard in aesthetic theory is to approach art with common-sense questions. Philosophy is thought to deal with "general notions"—are not (it is urged) the conclusions of philosophers generally applicable? And so the questions put to art are mistakenly general. Such questions are the obvious ones, "immediately proposed by common sense, and regarded as 'basic' because of their obviousness. Such questions are: What are the materials of art? Which is more important, form or content? What is Beauty? What are the canons of composition? How does a great work of art affect the beholder?"20 These questions must be considered illegitimate simply because of one flaw. They are barren. They lead nowhere not because someone with a bias predicts that they lead nowhere. They are barren simply because in centuries of use they have never opened up controlling ideas, and they have given but scant solace to the original perplexity from which the question was broached. There may be other writs of error issued against these queries of common sense, but pragmatic reasons can stand alone in this case, summing up a defense in the tautology: such questions are barren because they have engendered no living offspring.21

A third hazard is the strange fact that each art is open to certain peculiar misconceptions. The traditional bogey in music is its somatic effects, that of literature its relation to propositional truth, and that of drama, its proximity to moral questions. The dance's sensual interest, and the problem of reference in the visual arts of painting and sculpture present peculiar misconceptions. It must be admitted, however, that Susanne Langer's use of the word

20 Ibid., 4.
21 Ibid., 4-5.
"bogey" and "misconception" constitutes an attempt at persuasion. They are bogeys for her because they are the initially obvious topics of inquiry in these arts. After they have been found to lead nowhere—arguments and examples of their short life are to be found throughout Dr. Langer's three works on art—but rather obscured the really fertile issues, they can perhaps justifiably be considered bogeys and misconceptions because they have been seen, finally, as false leads.

It is difficult to appreciate Susanne Langer's position in art without grasping the fact that a large portion of the evidence for that position is dialectical: it is built on the contradictions which other theories run into. One of the most prevalent theories to which she will ascribe contradictions when taken as a total view, is the conviction that art is "aesthetic pleasure." To Professor Langer, "the relation of art to feeling is evidently something subtler than sheer catharsis or incitement," for if the business of aesthetics is "to contemplate the aesthetic emotion and its object... there would be little of interest to contemplate. It seems to me that the reason for our immediate recognition of 'significant form' is the heart of the aesthetical problem." The aesthetic emotion, moreover, is not in the work of art, but in the percipient. To say a percipient's emotion is the essential in aesthetic experience may be true, but it can hardly be essential to the work of art in its own rite, for it tells little about the work. And finally, Susanne Langer

22 Ibid., xi.
23 Langer, Feeling, pp. 18, 33.
24 Ibid., 395.
adds, if art were merely the short and long of aesthetic pleasure, chefs, perfumers, and upholsterers would be rated as torchbearers of culture and inspired creators—which they are not. 25

Nor can the positivistic doctrine that art is "spontaneous self-expression" hold up long, for if this were true, one would necessarily hold, for example, that in order to dance "dread" the dancer must be in mortal fear. But neither critics nor performers are heard to assert this.

A traditional answer in music to the question of music's nature, has been Hanslick's classic "tönend bewegte Formen." 26 The implication which can be found in this theory is that the purpose of musical artistry is essentially the aim of play. Hanslick in effect says just this: that composing is tossing tonal forms. But this leaves the genesis of the canons of the musical art cut in the cold, for it must take them as self-explanatory, which they are not. It is true that art is manipulation, craft, but here Susanne Langer's basic question is extremely relevant: what has been created after the manipulation is done? Or is this question not to be answered? Finally, if art is nothing but playful craft, why is it so culturally important? Would people as soon die to preserve baseball's Hall of Fame as to preserve the Louvre—on the basis of the objects therein?

The perennial favorite of Sunday afternoon drawing rooms is, of course, that "art is beauty." But in response to "What is art?" the reply "It's

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25 Ibid., 28.

beauty,' is simply to beg the question, since artistic value is beauty in the broadest sense." But the most damaging criticism of this position is the obvious resort to an inexplicable intuition for explanation. Beauty, in this type of theory, is really assumed to be known and explained; the theory usually ends pointing out its location.

THE THEORY: A TELESOPIC VIEW

At two characteristic junctures, one in Philosophy in a New Key, the other in Feeling and Form, Susanne Langer commits what may be termed a "methodological veer." In the first work, in the chapter on musical significance, and then again in the second book where the full-scale elaboration of her theory begins, she appears to try to leap clear of objections in order to prevent her theory from getting off to a shaky start. These swerves come always at the end of a consideration of alien theoretical positions which have come up for criticism. At this point in the chapter on music, she introduces her position by saying, "For the sake of orientation, let us now explicitly abandon the problems of music as stimulus and music as emotive symptom, since neither of these functions ... would suffice to account for the importance we attach to it; and let us assume that its significance is in some sense that of a symbol." It is this type of apriorism which is most fearful in her theory—at least the critics would wonder if this is not an instance of her philosophical method of logical construction: finding a meaning for our statements,

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27 Langer, Key, p. 174.
28 Ibid., 186.
"a way to think about the things that interest us." The other example comes in her second volume. "So, instead of studying the 'slight changes of stimuli,' which cause 'unpredictable and miraculous changes' in our nervous responses, we might do better to look upon the art object as something in its own right, with properties independent of our prepared reactions." The first defense for these salient is that they come at the exhaustion of the motive concepts of other theories. It is after these positions are entrenched in apparent paradox that Mrs. Langer abruptly abandons further consideration of them. As for the critics' fears of aprioristic methods, they should be unfounded. Fear of preconceived notions comes with an epistemology equipped with only the area of the "origins of knowledge" functioning as veridical check. Such epistemologists deny validity to a concept such as E=mc² because nowhere in the world is there light going at the speed of itself squared. In this view the element of c² has no basis in reality. In an epistemology of "judgment" where the axiomatic question of veracity amounts to "Does it work?" there is no relevant question of the origins of the intelligibility to be checked out. The only question is, "Does the intelligibility fit the data—regardless of origins?"

Susanne Langer, then, starts directly from the viewpoint of the artist in the studio. Her method, as has been shown, is to use a special theory, detailed to explain a restricted area, and to see if the theory is capable of wider extension, i.e., of generalization. For it is characteristic of a good theory that it is both powerful enough to be fertile, and sound enough to be

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29 Langer, Problems, p. 2.
The momentum in Mrs. Langer's philosophy of art builds up from what she calls the central problem in art: the problem of creation. The question "what is created?" in Susanne Langer's opinion swings all the fundamental questions in art around into a freshly accessible position. Morris Weitz, however, finds at most an "aperçu here, a hint there, perhaps, but not an illuminating, concrete analysis of the art." For Susanne Langer, however, an answer to the question of creation will be found, surprisingly, to specify a meaning for words like "expression," "creation," "symbol," "import," "intuition," "vitality," and "organic form," words whose meaning "both professional philosophers and intellectually gifted artists ... hear and use, but find—to their surprise—they cannot define because when they analyze what they mean it is not anything coherent or tenable." Weitz's answer to this is to recognize that we must despair of analysis in aesthetics, because, after all, "can we really define 'tragedy,' 'comedy,' 'poetry,' yes, 'art' itself? Have not our definitions been either honorific slogans or disguised persuasive ones. ... To paraphrase Waismann, 'Let's forget the definition and look for uses, in order to distinguish critical uses from honorific ones.'

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32 Ibid., 9-10.
34 Langer, Feeling, p. viii.
35 Langer, Problems, p. 3.
of distinguishing critical from honorific uses of words does not itself violate the assumptions of this later-Wittgensteinian epistemology—what would happen if no critical uses could be found? And what would then be used to prove all these uses were honorific? And now what does "critical" mean?

This question "What is created?" structures the whole of Mrs. Langer's theory of art, and "grows into a complex of closely related questions: what is created in art, what for, and how? The answers involve just about all the key concepts for a coherent philosophy of art: such concepts as apparition, or the image, expressiveness, feeling, motif, transformation."  

For Professor Langer, what is intriguing in this basic concept of art as a "creation" is that "all the major problems of art show up in relation to it, not one by one, but in direct or remote connection with each other: the autonomy of the several arts, and their very intricate relations to one another, which are much more than the possession of some common features or equivalent elements; the origins and significance of styles; historical continuity, tradition and revolt, motivation and conscious purpose and extraneous aims, self-expression, representation, abstraction, social influences, religious functions, changes of taste and all the problems of criticism, the old wrangle about rules of art, and the depreciation of 'mere technique.'"  

The answer to what is created is lengthy, to be sure, covering as it does the larger part of three books, but it is explicit, nonetheless. What is created is a "logical picture," a "semblance" or "virtual image," and finally,
at its greatest resolution, an "apparition." It is an image, a virtuality, an apparition, because given only to the imagination and to nothing else. The work of art has this one purpose: to be given to the imagination of the interpreter for his contemplation. This means it is not given to his judgment, primarily. Nor to his wallet or his information-seeking mind. Thus it is disengaged from the sphere of morality, and all other desires, economic or geographically informative.

Because given only to imaginative contemplation, the work of art is a vehicle for conception, i.e., a symbol. The artistic purpose is to create "forms symbolic of human feeling." It is an "expressive form created for our perception through sense or imagination, and what it expresses is human feeling." It "presents feeling ... for our contemplation, making it visible or audible or in some way perceivable through a symbol, not inferable from a symptom." What the work of art expresses, to be more explicit, is "vitality, in all its manifestations from sheer sensibility to the most elaborate phases of awareness and emotion." It exhibits the "matrix of mentality."

What is contemplated in the art work is not an actual feeling but, for lack of more informative expression, the structural pattern of actual feeling.

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39 Langer, *Key*, p. 188; *Feeling*, p. 46; *Problems*, p. 5.
Actual feeling is the emotional organization about the human Ego. The art work sets forth such an organization, and hence can be called an idea of feeling. This is the logical expression of feeling—the exposition of the pattern, not the communiqué of the presence, of feeling. The pattern of actual feeling is abstracted in its logical form, and projected into an imaginable equivalence. This drawing of "logical analogies", the noting of structural similarities, is called "transformation," of which a prime instance is metaphor.

The aim of art is thus insight, and Susanne Langer's aesthetic is not one of sensibility but rather a specifically human aesthetic, one of understanding. A dog could have an aesthetic built around "aesthetic pleasure." Mrs. Langer believes that the "aesthetic emotion" and the emotional content of a work of art are two very different things; the 'aesthetic emotion' springs from an intellectual triumph, from overcoming barriers of word-bound thought and achieving insight into literally 'unspeakable' realities. ... 'Aesthetic pleasure,' then, is akin to (though not identical with) the satisfaction of discovering truth.

Susanne Langer's theory concerning the unity and diversity of the arts is certainly the entire preoccupation of her work, and undoubtedly her securest

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45 Langer, Feeling, p. 59.
47 Ibid., 92.
48 Ibid., 60.
49 Langer, Key, pp. 219-220. Italics mine.
claim to originality, especially the latter theory of the diversity of the arts. The unity is, of course, that "all art is the creation of perceptible forms expressive of human feeling." The diversity is built on the above-mentioned characteristic of "apparition." The artist creates something which is a reproduction of nothing else in the world. The art work is thus not a picture of an actuality, no matter how close a copy of something actual. Drama, artistic photography, painting, the dance, none of these occur as they are given to the world by the artist. There is something uniquely created, made up, something of the poema in the Greek sense. The photograph is of something actual, but Nature does not crop a photograph or select a scene; she merely provides the materials.

Professor Langer's distinction for the different arts derives from her theory of "illusion" or "apparition." Each art has a specific type of illusion which it peculiarly creates. But this is readily countered by the age-old distinction provided by the differing materials used in the arts. Both Melvin Rader and Morris Weitz, and undoubtedly countless others in Susanne Langer's muter public, reject her distinctions based on the "virtualities" and return to the venerable basis in materials. This is one of the "previous theories" which Mrs. Langer considers to be "half-baked." Although she gives no reason

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50 Langer, Problems, p. 80.
52 Langer, Problems, p. 86.
for this, the present writer believes there is good reason why materials can never adequately distinguish the great orders of art. The reason is that such a distinction really presupposes a previous distinction. To distinguish the arts by materials relies on the fact that the distinction between the arts is already known, and hence is not in need of any further distinction. If one asks what distinguishes sculpture from painting and the answer comes back as "materials," a further question is in order. How does one know that these particular materials are the materials of sculpture rather than painting? The reply will probably be because sculptors or painters use them in making sculpture and paintings. But how does one know that these are sculptors and painters? Because they are making sculptures and paintings, a simple case of "by their works ye shall know them." So one distinguishes arts by materials, materials by their users, and users by their products. The products in turn are distinguished by the materials used in them. Thus materials distinguish users distinguish products distinguish materials distinguish users . . . and so on. It may be objected that this is not the proper sequence for the vicious circle. Materials really distinguish products, not the makers of the products. But here again, on a little reflection, it will be seen that throwing this material into this category, and that one into another category really presupposes that both categories are already defined.

What really defines these categories of the great orders of art, Susanne Langer would offer, before the materials operate in defining the arts, is the "primary illusion" with which each order deals. The primary illusion of music is virtual time, that of painting is a virtual

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53 Langer, Feeling, p. 113.
scene.  

Sculpture's illusion is that of virtual kinetic volume, architecture's is that of a virtual "ethnic domain." The basic illusion that the dance creates is the image of "power" while the poet creates the image of the factualness of life. The comic rhythm in drama is the image of life governed by Fortune; the tragic rhythm that of life overshadowed by Fate.

Time will test the validity of these criteria. But at least Susanne Langer does not reject the problem of the unity and diversity of the arts out of hand because everyone else seems to have got nowhere in its examination. This method at best yields an article of faith. "But the way to establish these articles of faith as reasonable propositions is not just to say them emphatically and often and deprecate evidence to the contrary; it is, rather, to examine the differences, and trace the distinctions among the arts as far as they can be followed. They go deeper than, offhand, one would suppose. But there is a definite level at which no more distinctions can be made; everything one can say of any single art can be said of any other as well. There lies the unity. All the divisions end at that depth, which is the philosophical foundation of art theory."  

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54 Ibid., 86.
55 Ibid., 89.
56 Ibid., 95.
57 Ibid., 201.
58 Ibid., 212.
59 Ibid., 352.
60 Langer, Feeling, p. 103.
From this preliminary view of Susanne Langer’s philosophy of art, the direction of thought will turn to a concrete instance of one of her analyses of an art, the art she uses as a paradigm for the other arts, music.

THE MEANING OF MUSIC

Since it is impossible to treat the analyses of each art which Susanne Langer elaborates throughout her three volumes on art, and yet in order to grasp the workings of the theory in sufficient detail some attempt should be made. The logical solution is to treat the special theory of music which she generalizes to all art. This means, therefore, that the other arts—dance, painting, sculpture, architecture, all the literary forms, the film—must go almost entirely unnoticed. The risk involved in this at first would appear to be too great a price, for some of the most extended criticism of Dr. Langer’s philosophy of art comes from literary critics. The risk, though, is not as great as it seems. Although the literary critics generally strike out from the circle of literature, they in fact aim at the roots of Mrs. Langer’s theory, the semantic interpretation of art. Since Susanne Langer considers music one of the most accessible experimental laboratories for her philosophy of art, it is natural to take up her treatment of music in preference to the other arts in order to study her theory, as it were, “on location.”

Probably the most influential and intelligently held the cry of music is that of Eduard Hanslick, published over a century ago. Music, as Hanslick put it, is the "motion of tonal forms," or, "tönend bewegte

Formen."62 Musical history has been a continuity of "more and more integrated, disciplined and articulated forms,"63 and it is the patterning of these acoustic forms, on Hanslick's view of the matter, that characterizes music. That music should be the expression of emotion is quite out of the question, for "definite feelings and emotions are unsusceptible of being embodied in music."64 Further, "music consists of successions and forms of sound, and these alone constitute the subject. . . . Music speaks not only by means of sounds, it speaks nothing but sound."65 Hanslick, however, granted a logical analogy—a common, univocal structure—between music and emotive life "but he did not realize how much he had granted. Because he considered nothing but conventional denotation as 'meaning', he insisted that music could not mean anything."66

This common structure Hanslick describes as:

A certain class of ideas . . . quite susceptible of being adequately expressed by means which unquestionably belong to the sphere of music proper. This class comprises all ideas which, consistently with the organ to which they appeal, are associated with audible changes of strength, motion, and ratio: the ideas of intensity, waxing and diminishing; of motion hastening and lingering; of ingeniously complex and simple progression, etc. The aesthetic expression of music may be described by terms such as graceful, gentle, violent, vigorous, elegant, fresh—all these ideas being expressible by corresponding modifications of sound.67

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62 Ibid., 48.
63 Langer, Key, p. 184.
64 Hanslick, The Beautiful in Music, p. 21.
65 Ibid., 119.
67 Hanslick, pp. 22-23.
These ideas:

though not occurring as feelings, are yet capable of being fully expressed by music; and conversely, there are feelings which affect our minds but which are so constituted as to defy their adequate expression by any ideas which music can represent. What part of feelings, then, can music represent, if not the subject involved in them? Only their dynamic properties. It may reproduce the motion accompanying psychical action, according to its momentum . . . but motion is only one of the concomitants of feeling, not the feeling itself. . . . [Music] cannot reproduce the feelings of love, but only the element of motion; and this may occur in any other feeling just as well as in love, and in no case is it the distinctive feature.68

For Hanslick, music can characterize "dynamic properties" of feelings, but not "definite feelings" as felt by a person; it can deal in the "element of motion," and in "one of the concomitants of feeling," but it cannot deal in the "feeling itself." As Susanne Langer notes above, Hanslick was not a complete absolutist in the sense that tonal patterns in music could have no logical correspondence with certain characteristics in the life of feeling. He grants that properties of music are like properties accompanying the life of feeling lived by an individual person. But it is one thing to maintain the logical similarity between patterns of music and patterns of feeling, and quite another, according to Hanslick, to say that a composer puts into music his understanding of the potentiality or actuality of the life of feeling. Hanslick denies the latter, the thesis of Susanne Langer. "The ideas which a composer expresses are mainly and primarily of a purely musical nature. His imagination conceives a definite and graceful melody aiming at nothing beyond itself."69

The fundamental question to which we now turn is that of the crucial issue

68 Ibíd., 24.
69 Ibíd., 23.
between Hanslick and Mrs. Langer: does the composer of music merely manipulate tonal materials for the sake of exploring in themselves the possibilities of purely acoustical properties, relations, and meaning, or is he really manipulating tonal materials to make them reflect (or embody) his understanding of the subjective life of experience and feeling? Or does the mere exploring of the possibilities of acoustical relationships and meaning beg the question of meaning? "As long as a work of art is viewed primarily as an 'arrangement' of sensuous elements for the sake of some inexplicable aesthetic satisfaction, the problem of expressiveness is really an alien issue."70 The problem of expressiveness involves the finality of the creative process. Before the answer to creative finality as "aesthetic satisfaction" can be called "inexplicable," the problem of expressiveness must have evidence that it is not basically an "alien issue."

THE ISSUE

There is no doubt that Hanslick's analysis is acute. The composer's product seems to be a moving pattern of acoustical forms. What an absolutist like Hanslick finds hard to accept in a referentialist theory is the idea that there is anything to be understood from the concrete tonal relations found in music except the sensory relations of this timbre played off against that one, this rhythm penetrating that rhythm, this melodic form weaving in and out of its counterpoint.

An extreme referentialist will assert that:

70Langer, Feeling, p. 58.
to rise in pitch is to express an outgoing emotion; . . . and we
have established that the major third is the note which "looks on
the bright side of things," the note of pleasure, of joy.\textsuperscript{71}

To leap from the dominant up to the tonic, and thence to the major
third . . . is equally expressive of an outgoing emotion of joy . . .
In general we may say that 5-1-3, aiming at the major third, is more
expressive of joy pure and simple; and 1-3-5, launching farther out
from the tonic, more expressive of a sense of exuberance, triumph,
or aspiration.\textsuperscript{72}

But to such intuitively gifted interpreters of the content of music,
Hanslick demands that they "play the theme of a symphony by Mozart or Haydn,
an adagio by Beethoven. . . . Who would be bold enough to point out a definite
feeling as the subject of any of these themes? One will say 'love.' He may
be right. Another thinks it is 'longing.' Perhaps so. A third feels it to be
'religious fervor.' Who can contradict him? Now how can we talk of a definite
feeling being represented when nobody really knows what is represented?"\textsuperscript{73}

Such extreme referentialism as assigning "wonder" to the fifth, "longing"
to the sixth, and "despair" to the major seventh, would seem to be untenable in
the light of the conflicting interpretations given such intervals. Confusion
is inevitable in the attempt to assign specific meanings to music relation-
ships, but Mrs. Langer throws out this challenge to the strict absolutists who
deny that music is a language of feeling in some sense: music must suddenly be
considered to be "significant or meaningless. And while they [the absolutists]

\textsuperscript{72}\textit{Ibid.}, 119.
\textsuperscript{73}\textit{Ibid.}, 29.
fiercely repudiate the proposition that music is a semantic, they cannot assert that it is meaningless. . . . Musical form, they reply, is its own content; it means itself. This evasion was suggested by Hanslick . . . but his successors have found it harder and harder to resist the question of content, and the silly fiction of self-significance has been raised to the dignity of a doctrine." 74

But there can be two meanings to "significant" as opposed to "meaningless." Why cannot the relations in music be of purely acoustical significance in the sense intimated above; timbres modify timbres, rhythms intersect rhythms, and melodies compenetrated melodies. The purpose of the composer could quite easily be to explore and expound the acoustically possible. Susanne Langer's censures assumed that the concrete field of acoustical relations which in music is so inexorably bound up with the subjective life of feeling that any determinate relation in the former is automatically a symbolized "projection" of the latter. Music may be purely of acoustical significance through the interplay of tones and timbres, and this, it would seem, is what Hanslick is emphasizing.

We have seen, however, that Hanslick conceded slightly more than this. He agreed that music could function as a semantic to the extent that it could embody certain concomitant properties of feelings, such as waxing, waning, and motion. 75 Susanne Langer appears to echo the great purist in saying that "what music can actually reflect is only the morphology of feeling." 76 It reflects

74 Langer, Key, p. 201.
75 Hanslick, pp. 22-24.
"not actual feeling, but ideas of feeling."77 This morphology, or structure of feeling, I think I am correct in taking to be Hanslick's dynamic and concomitant properties of feeling. Hanslick maintains just this, that there is "a certain class of ideas . . . quite susceptible of being adequately expressed . . . by music proper,"78 while Susanne Langer goes beyond this and asserts that this "certain class of ideas" has a reference of a sort, and is in fact the "composer's knowledge of human feeling."79

The rest of this chapter will be a consideration of the evidence which can be brought to bear on the proposition that music not only bears a logical similarity to the morphology of human feeling, but in fact is based upon, and derives from the composer's understanding of human feeling. This proposition can also be put: "Art is the creation of forms symbolic of human feeling."80

Art is indeed the creation of forms, but forms symbolic of human feeling?

THE MEANING OF "EXPERIENCE"

The discursive symbol, as we have seen, does not bear a structural similarity to the abstract conception it connotes. It is merely applied by convention to the complex of abstract, understood relationships we call a concept. Experiential consciousness, however, is concrete, for the level of experience is characterized by sensing, perceiving, and imagining. Distinction and relation-

77 Langer, Feeling, p. 59.
78 Hanslick, p. 22.
79 Langer, Key, p. 188.
80 Langer, Feeling, p. 40.
ship within the confines of experiential consciousness will, accordingly, be not abstract, but concrete. If these concrete, sensible relations are to be symbolized, they will be symbolized only by imbedding the distinctions and relations in concrete materials. Such a symbol presents directly the structural complex it means; its meaning is found not by hearkening to a conventionally applied association, but rather by examining the concrete symbol itself. It does not need to be applied to a concept to acquire its meaning. As such, the presentational symbol—as this is—is sharply distinguished from the discursive symbol. If the subjective experience of life, as subjective, is ever to be adequately portrayed by a symbol, only the presentational symbol with its meaning of its own concrete relationships will be able to carry the meaning.

But to come directly toward the topic, what does "experience" mean?

There is a great deal of experience that is knowable, not only as immediate, formless, meaningless impact, but as one aspect of the intricate web of life, yet defies discursive formulation, and therefore verbal expression: that is what we sometimes call the subjective aspect of experience, the direct feeling of it—what it is like to be waking and moving, to be drowsy, slowing down, or to be sociable, or to feel self-sufficient but alone; or to have a big idea. All such directly felt experiences usually have no names—they are named, if at all, for the outward conditions that normally accompany their occurrences. Only the most striking ones have names like "anger," "hate," "love," "fear," and are collectively called "emotion." But we feel many things that never develop into any designable emotion. The ways we are moved are as various as the lights in a forest; and they may intersect, sometimes without cancelling each other, take shape and dissolve, conflict, explode into passion, or be transformed. All these inseparable elements of subjective reality compose what we call the "inward life" of human beings.81

The life of experience is a constant succession of forms, "forms of growth and attenuation, flowing and stowing, conflict and resolution, speed, arrest,

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81 Langer, Problems, p. 22.
terrific excitement, calm, or subtle activation and dreamy lapses ... the greatness and brevity and eternal passing of everything vitally felt."32 Life as we experience it is a constant succession, besides, of rhythmic patterns. "Every feeling contributes, in effect, certain special gestures which reveal to us, bit by bit, the essential characteristic of life: movement ... All living creatures are constantly consummating their own internal rhythm." This rhythm, the essence of life, is the steady background against which we experience the special articulation produced by feeling."33 Moreover, "rhythmic continuity is the basis of that organic unity which gives permanence to living bodies, a permanence that ... is really a pattern of changes. Now the so-called 'inner life'—our whole subjective reality, woven of thought and emotion, imagination and sense perception—is entirely a vital phenomenon. ... In its highest operations, the mind still follows the organic rhythm which is the source of vital unity: the building-up of a new dynamic gestalt in the very process of a former one's passing away."34 Our human experience is characterized by the grouping of data into Gestalten, by the transformation of subjective life into a pattern of feeling.

That pattern of life as felt is quite private, however, Subjective experience, precisely as it is of a subject, cannot be communicated. The proof of this is the failure of every attempt. Kant could give you his hundred real thalers, but in a thousand attempts he could not give you his experience of

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32 Langer, Feeling, p. 27.
34 Langer, Feeling, p. 127.
having them. The most that could be done would be to name an example from which you could draw a like experience, for "ordinarily we have no precise 'logical picture' of affects at all: but we refer to them, chiefly by the indirect method of describing their cause or their effects. We say we feel 'stunned,' 'left out,' 'moved,' or 'like swearing,' 'like running away.' A mood can be described only by the situation that might give rise to it: there is the mood of 'sunset and evening star,' the mood of a village festival, or of a Vienna soiree."85 Furthermore, current psychology asserts that "behavior reactions are essentially undifferentiated, becoming characteristic only in certain stimulus situations, and . . . affect itself is basically undifferentiated."86 Much emotional behavior, "though habitual and hence seemingly automatic and natural, is actually learned."87 The situation in addition to the reaction determines the name or word used in designating an emotion.

With this account of what is meant by "experience" we are prepared to address the major question: is music a symbol of this experience, that is, does music symbolize the life of feeling?

IS MUSIC POSSIBLE AS A SYMBOL?

Musical forms have certain properties to recommend them for

85 Langer, Key, p. 204.
87 Ibid., 17.
symbolic use: they are composed of many separable items, easily produced, and easily combined in a great variety of ways; in themselves they play no important practical role which would overshadow their semantic function; they are readily distinguished, remembered, and repeated; and finally they have a remarkable tendency to modify each other's characters in combination as words do, by all serving each as a context. 88

Thus music is a highly negotiable medium of meaning. Yet such a medium as music is has no assignable meaning or connotation as ordinary language has. Convention does not assign a connotation such as "foreboding" to a diminished seventh, although conscientious analysts of music still publish their doomed dictionaries of musical meaning. 89

Susanne Langer compared music to discursive language and, noting the lack of assignable meaning in the former, concluded that music should be considered an "unconsummated symbol" 90 which in the reflection of later years she felt to be somewhat short of the mark. 91 An unconsummated symbol is one of which "the actual function of meaning, which calls for permanent contents is not fulfilled; for the assignment of one rather than another possible meaning to each form is never explicitly made." 92 Mrs. Langer postulated the music symbol as essentially ambiguous, and therefore, compared with discursive language, unfinished, or unconsummated. But it seems that if one is to argue that music is

88 Langer, Key, pp. 193-94.
90 Langer, Key, pp. 203-04.
92 Ibid., 204.
a language in any sense, it cannot be totally ambiguous. Music when compared to abstract, discursive language may seem ambiguous because indefinite, but it should be recognized that it actually is definite with the sensible definiteness of the concrete, but not abstractly definable. Red and green do not "mean" anything as such, but the normal person can distinguish them, and in this sense they are definite, although not abstractly definable.

As a sensuous semantic, then, music would seem to be a capable symbol. It has discrete elements which are combinable in myriad ways; these elements have no confusing utilitarian function aside from music; and there is a definiteness which makes these elements distinguishable.

IS MUSIC POSSIBLE AS A SYMBOL OF EXPERIENCE?

Hanslick objected that it was impossible for music to function as a semantic of emotional life, for "a definite feeling (a passion, an emotion,) as such never exists without a definable meaning which can, of course, only be communicated through the medium of definite ideas. . . . The definiteness of an emotion . . . [is] inseparably connected with concrete notions and conceptions, and to reduce these to a material form is altogether beyond the power of music." 93 To Hanslick this goes without saying, since "to 'represent' something is to exhibit it clearly, to set it before us distinctly," 94 and to "'represent' something 'indefinite' is a contradiction in terms." 95 For Hanslick, "definiteness" here is inseparably linked with "abstract definability."

93 Hanslick, p. 22.
94 Ibid., 29.
95 Ibid., 37.
But this kind of definiteness is true of abstract thought and its associated discursive symbolism only. Presentational symbols are definite with the definiteness of red versus green, here versus there, rhomboid as opposed to trapezoidal, but not the definiteness of two squared as opposed to two cubed. The former are concrete relations, understood only within the range of experience, while the latter are abstract, understood apart from that range.

Precisely as a symbol of this range of felt life, music will function adequately because both felt life and music exhibit concrete relations. Neither music nor the life of experience can be formulated abstractly, yet both are known.

As a symbolism, however, more is required of music than merely that its relations and those found in what is to be the symbolized be concrete. These relations must also have a similar logical form i.e., the symbol must be "isomorphic" with respect to the symbolized. That is, life and music must have similar logical patterns if one is to be the symbol of the other. Susanne Langer illustrates logical patterning with the example of a map.96 A city, however haphazard its layout of streets, parks, buildings, and homes, nevertheless presents a structure of concrete relations which shows itself ensemble in an air photo of the city. This is the same logical structure of relations which the citizens, from mayor to housewife, use in getting about town and in orienting themselves within the city's confines. What relation, then, does a map have to this city? It is not strictly an air photo with its miniature but recognizable buildings. It is rather what the air photo would be if it were pared down to

96 Langer, Feeling, p. 31; also Key, p. 69.
nothing but the set of logical relations which the business districts bear to
the residential areas, and the streets bear to the avenues. The map is a symbol
of the city, not a photograph nor a detailed scale model. Any such symbol
would have to have, first of all, formal characteristics which were analogous
to whatever it purported to symbolize; that is to say, if it represented any-
thing, e.g., an event, a passion, a dramatic action, it would have to exhibit
a logical form which that object could also take.97 A "formal analogy" or
congruence of logical structures is a prime requisite for any relation between
the symbol and the meant. Both must have a common logical form.98 In this
sense, too, the microscopic patterns the magnetic head of a tape recorder ar-
granges on the oxide coating of the tape correspond to the logical arrangement of
relations heard in the music (or voice) recorded. The reason the tape recording
sounds like the stimulus to which it was subjected, is that both the tape and
the music have a corresponding logical structure. And this logical congruence
or formal identity of two sets of relationships is prerequisite to an adequate
iconic symbolism, although this is not required in an associational type of
symbolism such as language.

Now, is music isomorphic with respect to our "inner," subjective life of
experience so that it could function as a symbol of that life? "There are
certain aspects of the so-called 'inner life'--physical or mental--which have
formal properties similar to those of music--patterns of motion and rest, of
tension and release, of agreement and disagreement, preparation, fulfillment,

97 Langer, Key, p. 191.
98 Langer, Feeling, p. 27.
excitation, sudden change, etc. "99 Psychologists have recognized the same fact. "The inner processes," says Wolfgang Köhler, a Gestalt pioneer, "whether emotional or intellectual, show types of development which may be given names, usually applied to musical events, such as crescendo, and diminuendo, accelerando, and ritardando."100 Meyer carries the same thought out when he elaborates his general theory of affect. "Musical experiences of suspense," he says, "are very similar to those experienced in real life. Both in life and in music the emotions thus arising have essentially the same stimulus situation: the situation of ignorance, the awareness of the individual's impotence and inability to act where the future course of events is unknown."101 And again, "both music and life are experienced as dynamic processes of growth and decay, activity and rest, tension and release. . . . For instance, a motion may be fast or slow, calm or violent, continuous or sporadic, precisely articulated or vague in outline."102

Thus, from the field of psychology and music itself, there seems to be evidence that patterns in music are formally similar to the patterns in the life of feeling. The pertinent question now becomes, not is music possible as a symbol of experience, i.e., could it function semantically? but rather the

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99 Langer, Key, p. 193.


101 Meyer, p. 28.

102 Ibid., 261.
question becomes one of fact. Does it function semantically?

IS MUSIC ACTUALLY A SYMBOL OF EXPERIENCE?

The reason for this section is that it is difficult to see how showing the possibility of music's functioning as a semantic, and noting the fact that music and the life of experience have structural similarities, combine to demonstrate necessarily that music is a symbol of the life of feeling. In order to prove that this is actually what is happening, one would have to argue cogently that this must be the composer's purpose--his primary purpose,--in constructing a composition. This section will investigate what Susanne Langer says about the nexus between music and feeling, and to what extent this answers the question of the finality of artistic process.

Why must the concrete patterns in music be explained as a composer's symbolization of subjective life? The sum total of evidence that Mrs. Langer brings to bear on this intricate point, as far as this writer can determine, is first of all, the connection between art and feeling is commonly made; secondly, the emotive content theory is the most persistent theory; and thirdly, the testimony of artists seems to bear in this direction.

First, there is the "well-known fact that most people connect feelings with music." Moreover, "every good philosopher or critic of art realizes, of course, that feeling is somehow expressed in art." But why the philosophers and critics of art connect music and feeling is left to intuition and not demonstration. The theory behind this perhaps is based on the statement one is

103 Langer, Key, p. 181.
104 Langer, Feeling, p. 58.
liable to hear from a person just after some musical encounter: "When I hear this, it reminded me of a meadow in the morning," or "this passage gave me a feeling of exhilaration." Now any art theory derived from such statements will naturally define art as intimately connected with emotion. If music stimulates emotions, they would argue, it should be defined at least as the cause of emotion. The fact that more stimuli than art works can cause emotion, however, invalidates such a definition as specific of art. But this theory can be carried further by maintaining that there is a causal nexus between the affect produced and the art stimulant. If emotion can be got out of art, emotion must be in it in the first place. But this begs the question of the causal relation itself, for the whole issue revolves around the validity of "if emotion can be got out of the art work." The question is, how can one show that emotion is being derived from, and not merely in response to, the art work? It will not suffice to answer that the critics and philosophers assume that it is obvious.

Second, that music "expresses primarily the composer's knowledge of human feeling . . . . is the most persistent, plausible, and interesting doctrine of meaning in music, and has lent itself to considerable development." That this emotive content theory is persistent may be in part due to Susanne Langer's persistence in writing about it. That the theory is plausible or interesting remains to be seen. There is, however, no doubt that the mere fact that the theory keeps persisting, and is "interesting," that is, seems to open up rewarding questions, makes one pause to examine it. Ultimately such persistence cannot prove anything; it can only lead inquiry on.

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105 Langer, Key, p. 188.
Third, in corroboration, Wagner is brought in to testify that "what music expresses . . . is passion, love, or longing in itself," 106 (as opposed to the longing, etc., felt by an individual.) Now, "despite the romantic phraseology, this passage states quite clearly that music is not self-expression but formulation and representation of emotions, moods, mental tensions, and resolutions." 107 As such, this is just a statement, and not the articulation of evidence. But it is significant as being the report of a professional composer giving a description of what, as far as he can tell, he is doing. The emotive content theory persists in giving the autonomists trouble, probably, because composers continue to make reports which the autonomists must somehow answer.

If a composer submits the statement that what he thinks he is dealing with is the life of feeling in general, what can one do? Ask him to read in the absolutist theories?

CONCLUSIONS OF SUSANNE LANGER

The opinion of this writer is that the arguments given above are just majors and minors—they do not lead to a conclusion. The conclusions must be given separately since the evidence Mrs. Langer adduces does not seem conclusive. But casting aside arguments and evidence for the moment, it should be enough to end this chapter by making more explicit the emotive significance theory of Susanne Langer.

106 Richard Wagner, "Ein glücklicher Abend," cited in Langer, Key, p. 188.

107 Langer, Key, p. 188.
In instrumental music without dramatic action, there may be a high emotional import which is not referred to any subject, and the glib assurance of some program writers that this is the composer's protest against life, cry of despair, vision of his beloved, or what not, is a perfectly unjustified fancy; for if the music is really a language of emotion, it expresses primarily the composer's knowledge of human feeling, not how or when that knowledge was acquired; as his conversation presumably expresses his knowledge of more tangible things, and usually not his first experience of them.  

In other words, music symbolizes an idea just as much as language does. Just as language is not the embodying of a once-understood idea as once-understood, but rather as understood irrespective of the moment in which it was understood, so too, music symbolizes an idea of the logical pattern of feeling, which need not imply that the symbolized pattern is that to which the composer was subject during the music's composition. The structure of this pattern of feeling "has been symbolized for us, and what it invites is not emotional response, but insight."  

Music is "not the symptomatic expression of feelings that beset the composer, but a symbolic expression of the forms of sentience as he understands them. It bespeaks his imagination of feelings rather than his own emotional state, and expresses what he knows about the so-called 'inner life' and this may exceed his personal case, because music is a symbolic form to him through which he may learn as well as utter ideas of human sensibility."  

Music thus has "import, and this import is the pattern of sentience—the pattern of life itself, as it is felt and directly known." The import is not

108 Ibid., 188.
109 Ibid., 190.
110 Langer, Feeling, p. 28.
111 Ibid., 32.
self-expression, but formulation and representation of emotions, moods, mental tensions, and resolutions—a "logical picture" of sentient, responsive life, a source of insight, not a plea for sympathy. Feelings revealed in music are essentially not "the passion, love, or longing of such-and-such an individual," inviting us to put ourselves in that individual's place, but are presented directly to our understanding, that we may grasp, realize, comprehend these feelings, without pretending to have them or imputing them to anyone else. Just as words can describe events we have not witnessed, places and things we have not seen, so music can present emotions and moods we have not felt, passions we did not know before.112

And finally:

The basic concept is the articulate but non-discursive form having import without conventional reference, and therefore presenting itself not as a symbol in the ordinary sense, but as a "significant form" in which the factor of significance is not logically discriminated, but is felt as a quality rather than recognized as a function. . . . Music is "significant form" and its significance is that of a symbol, a highly articulated sensuous object, which by virtue of its dynamic structure can express the forms of vital experience which language is peculiarly unfit to convey. Feeling, motion, and emotion are its import.113

Feeling and emotion are music's import because art objectifies the patterns of internal experience. Motion is included in the import because this is, as it is termed, the "primary illusion" of music. To say that art creates illusions has nothing to do with make-believe, truth, reality or anything else like an unreality. In nature there are certain merely apparent objects. The most familiar is, perhaps, the "reality" given in the mirror's reflection. One's reflection seems to project a space backward through the surface of the mirror. Standing four feet from the mirror, one seems confronted with another person

112 Langer, Key, p. 189.

113 Langer, Feeling, p. 32.
eight feet away. This person, however, stands in a sort of "virtual space," or "illusory space," manufactured by the mirror.

Music, too, creates an illusion "which is so strong that despite its obviousness it is sometimes unrecognized because it is taken for a real, physical phenomenon: that is the appearance of movement. Music flows; a melody moves; a succession of tones is heard as a progression." 114 This is impossible to explain in terms of physical vibrations, motions of membranes, etc., for "we do not hear vibratory motions in music, but large linear movements, mounting harmonies, rhythms that are not at all like physical oscillations. We hear marching, flowing, or driving progressive motion. Yet in a musical progression there is nothing that is displaced, that has gone from somewhere to somewhere else. Musical movement is illusory, like volumes in pictorial space." 115

This auditory appearance of motion is the correlative of our internal experience of time. Music's motion, therefore, might be termed the "objectification" of experiential time, or felt time. 116 Musical motion is not the correlative of scientific time, for the former:

has a sort of voluminousness and complexity and variability that make it utterly unlike metrical time. That is because our direct experience of time is the passage of vital functions and lived events, felt inwardly as tensions—somatic, emotional, and mental tensions, which have a characteristic pattern. They grow from a beginning to a point of highest intensity, mounting either steadily or with varying acceleration to a climax, then dissolving, or letting go abruptly in a sudden deflation, or merging with the rise or fall of some other, encroaching tension. . . .subjective time seems to have a density and volume as

114 Langer, Problems, p. 29.
115 Ibid., 37.
116 Ibid.
well as length, and force as well as rage of passion. 117

Music, in conclusion, "unfolds in a virtual time created by sound, a dynamic flow given directly and, as a rule, purely to the ear. This virtual time, which is an image not of clock-time, but of lived time, is the primary illusion of music. In it melodies move and harmonies grow and rhythms prevail, with the logic of an organized living structure. Virtual time is to music what virtual space is to plastic art: its very stuff, organized by the tonal forms that create it." 118

In summary, the general lines of Susanne Langer's theory of music and art in general are the following notions.

Every man is aware of himself as the subject and source of his own acts. This primordial experience of one's inner life is not a single fabric of whole, undifferentiated cloth, but rather is a texture of patterns which constitute the morphology of the life of feeling. This life of feeling is not limited to what is usually thought of as "emotional life" because "emotions" name not the whole of experienced life, but rather the concentrated high points within experience. Emotions are the peaks in the range of inward life, not the whole range.

The discursive symbol has a meaning of abstract relations associated with it, and is translatable into some other symbol because its relations are abstract, dissociated from particular materials. The presentational symbol cannot be translated into some other symbol because its relations which make up its

117 Ibid., 36-37.
118 Ibid., 41.
meaning, are concrete, constituting the sensuous symbol itself. Such relations are found in the symbolic medium itself, and are not merely associated with the symbol.

Music is an example of presentational symbolism. It satisfies the requirements of a semantic for it is variously combinable, it has units which can serve as parts of relationally meaning, and it can present concrete relations by varying the combination of its elements.

Now, with regard to the composer's assertions that he is not merely manipulating tonal materials, but further, expressing emotions, there is this to say. If he claims to be "pressing out" (expressing) of the tonal materials, a definite emotion of a definite person, then the weight of common experience is against him. But it is just as unreasonable to be thrown into the absolutist lair since, if all a composer is doing is tossing tonal salad, it is quite difficult to meet the serious question of why peoples and cultures, composers, musicians, and audiences, take music so seriously. Serious audiences and serious musicians do not seem to be engrossed in obtaining or stimulating some sort of pleasure. Conveying knowledge seems to be the only adequate answer to the question of the finality of the artistic process.

The question then turns around the subject matter of this knowledge, and its prerequisite conditions. The conditions are the possibility of a deft symbolism and the possibility of logical similarity between the symbolism and the subject matter of the knowledge conveyed. Music seems to fulfill these requirements.

The central question which leads to all other questions, is that of the finality of the artistic process. Why do composers compose? Answering this,
one answers what is happening in the artistic process which, when known, defines
the method of that art. The method of music, in this chapter, has been taken
broadly, but its central axis has been the finality of the composing process.
It is this question which has been aimed at, for finality starts the process
off. This process is defined by its operations, and these in turn are deter-
mined in the light of what the process is meant to do. The finality which
determines what the process is meant to do, does so in relation to the product
to be wrought. Thus answering finality, one answers all else.
CHAPTER IV

CRITICAL REACTIONS TO ART AS A SYMBOL OF FEELING

The previous chapter demonstrated in what sense Susanne Langer's philosophy of art is a semantic theory and how it derives from her theory of music. But one may still ask, as the last chapter hinted, how is one to tell that this is art's purpose? Susanne Langer has promised that the question "what is created in art?" will afford an answer to the question of finality in artistic process.¹ Furthermore, if the purpose of art is truly found to be one of symbolizing, or signifying, how does one prove that it is precisely feeling that is expressed?

Professor Langer's theory of music, at least, ends up short of answering the questions above. Music is seen to be, perhaps, a possible symbol of the life of feeling, for it has patterns like the patterns of felt life. But is similarity, iconicity, isomorphism--call it what one will--between two patterns enough to imply that one is the expression or symbol of the other?

Susanne Langer answers with a ringing "yea." The work of art "seems charged with feeling because its form expresses the very nature of feeling. Therefore it is an objectification of subjective life. . . . [and] the reason it can symbolize things of the inner life is that it has the same kinds of

¹Langer, Problems, p. 4.
relations and elements." So it is merely in virtue of similarity that the work of art is asserted to be an expressive form, and a symbol of felt life. And it is precisely here that the critics join implacable battle.

However original and insightful Susanne Langer's theory of art, it is, nevertheless, uncrystalized and darkly argued at certain crucial points. Philosophy in a New Key was definite but overly global in its statements, and although Feeling and Form was considerably more developed, the clearest address and definition of key issues had to await Problems of Art, published a full fifteen years after the first volume. She recognizes that this is inevitable—as should any reader—for "really new concepts, having no names in current language, always make their earliest appearance in metaphorical statements; therefore the beginning of any theoretical structure is inevitably marked by fantastic inventions. There is an air of such metaphor, or 'philosophic myth' in the treatment of musical 'meaning,' which I think I could improve on were I given another fling at it today." 

The theoretician must, therefore, traffic in traditional terminology while trying to alter the old categories and ways of thinking about art. She must recognize, though, that she runs the omnipresent risk of being misinterpreted. Although Mrs. Langer had used "expressive form" as a synonym for "symbol of feeling," her cherished expression ends up being "symbol of feeling."

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2Ibid., 9. Italics mine.
4Ibid., 174, 176.
This practice continued in *Feeling and Form* but the word "symbol" underwent such a storm of protest and a torrent of misunderstanding as to its meaning, that she reverted, at the suggestion of Melvin Rader in his review of *Feeling and Form*, to the use of the more neutral "expressive form," to name her notion. So too, by the publication of *Problems of Art*, Susanne Langer abandoned the stereotyped "meaning" and now clarifies her idea of "import" by saying that art can have both "meaning" (associated connotations) and "import" (immanent patterns of the art work perceived to be congruent with the patterns of sentience.)

The situation became almost comical for the mis-reading critics. "In *Feeling and Form* I called it [the work of art] 'the art symbol.' This aroused a flood of criticism from two kinds of critics--those who misunderstood the alleged symbolic function and assimilated everything I wrote about it to some previous, familiar theory, either treating art as a genuine language or *symbolism*, or else confusing the art symbol with the *symbol in art*, as known to iconologists or to modern psychologists; and secondly, critics who understood what I said but resented the use of the word 'symbol' that differed from accepted usage in current *semantic* writings." This is what the theory of Susanne Langer is up against all along. To say the least, the critical public was highly unprepared for her use of terms. And for the most part, almost all the critics to a man have misinterpreted her philosophy of art, in some important department or

6 *Langer, Problems*, 127.
Arthur Berndtson, in an article of more presentational value than discursive, generally enlarges upon the notion of semblance in the Langerian theory, producing a rather well-wrought statement of a large-scale—larger than Langer-scale—theory of illusion. At times one is mystified by Mr. Berndtson—he appears to understand Mrs. Langer's semantic hypothesis, but in the end he remains on the other side of that difficult bridge, the understanding of Susanne Langer's new use of terminology. He is, I think, particularly misguided in his criticism of Dr. Langer's "logical expression" ruling out what will be seen as Berndtson's cherished "self-expression." As Berndtson interprets the "logical expression" of Susanne Langer, it is distinguished from "self-expression" in being abstract, rather than concrete form. "The concreteness of the emotional form is a correlation of existence, as the abstractness of the form in logical expression is a correlation of the symbolic function." To be symbolized at all, the so-called emotion must be in some sort of abstract form, symbolized only by an association with the art symbol. Logical expression aims at an "expression as formed into universal essence for impersonal contemplation. . . . The method of logical expression is to 'conceive' the emotion. . . . [and] precludes the existence of the emotion, and thus makes symbolism mandatory while the other kind of expression [self-expression] involves the existence of the emotion and thus either makes signification contingent or denies it altogether." Because for Berndtson "symbol" means a "vehicle associated with a meaning," he thinks

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8Berndtson, p. 500.

9Ibid.
that Mrs. Langer is saying that the work of art is a symbol mediating a concept. He claims for his "self-expression" theory generally the same characteristics that she claims for "logical expression." He says that "the self-expression theory does not specify that the character of the emotion be merely abstract; on the contrary, this theory would doubtless envisage concrete forms of emotion . . . discernible only in the medium at hand."\(^\text{10}\) It is difficult to see how this latter theory differs from Susanne Langer's support of Baensch's "objectified emotion."\(^\text{11}\) Berndtson's misinterpretation is fundamentally due to confusing all symbolic expression with discursive symbolic expression. He never advertts to the fact, but this distinction is quite relevant to the question of logical as opposed to self-expression.

Donald Davies reviewed Philosophy in a New Key in a thoroughly disillusioned article, building his whole argument on what he envisioned would be the theory of art to be derived from the eighth chapter of that book. Unfortunately he found, on his own admission, that he was a little precipitous, and publicly made this selfless retraction in a review of Feeling and Form: "I can only withdraw all my earlier criticism and proceed, in all humility, to expound her thesis."\(^\text{12}\)

Margaret MacDonald takes Susanne Langer's treatment of virtual time in music and manages to confuse it with precisely the kind of time that Mrs. Langer

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\(^{10}\) Ibid.

\(^{11}\) Langer, Feeling, pp. 19-21.

\(^{12}\) Donald Davies, Review of Feeling and Form, Twentieth Century, CLVI (August, 1954) 161.
tried to separate it from. "Why virtual or 'illusory' time? Time occurs in music only during performance. Only then, surely, is time involved, but then it is ordinarily real, clock time. The concert took three hours of which the symphony occupied one."¹³ One is tempted to think that such a critic is reviewing not a half-, but a quarter- or an eighth-read book.

Max Rieser's unsympathetic article is an example of more one-sided reading. For instance, he says that "from a psychological standpoint, the statements of Mrs. Langer are questionable, since it is common knowledge that music may and does serve as 'a stimulus to evoke emotions' . . . and that it often is a 'cure of feelings.'"¹⁴ A careful reading would have shown that Mrs. Langer acknowledges all these uses as extant and legitimate, but are inadequate as a complete explanation because they do not answer why composers compose.¹⁵ Of course, to critics of Rieser's ilk, any theorizing at all about anything at all, rubs their epistemology the wrong way, which allows meaning to arrive in statistical tables tracking the uses of words, and there alone. From these tables—no one troubles to make them up, however—such a theory of cognition can publish a sort of Amy Vanderbilt-manual to guide the sceptical empiricist through his blooming, buzzing, and confusing world. So for Rieser, Feeling and Form is a set-back in aesthetics since it "marks . . . no progress in her semiotic conception despite the fact that she terms it a continuation of Philosophy in a New

¹³Margaret MacDonald, "Critical Notice: Feeling and Form," Mind, LXIV (October, 1955), 552.
¹⁴Riser, p. 15
¹⁵Cf. Langer, Key, p. 186.
Key. On the contrary, the book constitutes rather a relapse into traditional aesthetic writing and even into unavowed metaphysics.\(^\text{16}\)

The article by Richard Rudner is based on, once again, the assumption that Susanne Langer means the traditional notion by her term "symbol." His thesis is that all semiotic theories holding that aesthetic experience is immediate involve a contradiction.\(^\text{17}\) In the traditional use of the words "semiosis" or "signification," what is meant is Charles Morris' "mediate taking account of." To say, therefore, that aesthetic experience is immediate, that values in aesthetics are immediately perceived, and yet these values are "significant" is to put the "meaning" of aesthetics somewhere beyond the objet d'art. But the significance of art is maintained by these theories to be the immediate values. Values, however, if immediate, cannot "signify" in the technical and customary sense of that word. The misapprehension in Rudner's article is readily apparent. Susanne Langer is making an option for a new type of signification, not the old, and although Rudner brings up good criticism against a looseness in Morris' aesthetic, his basic argument is that iconicity cannot signify because signification means a "mediate taking account of." Although Rudner purports to direct his article especially against Charles Morris and Susanne Langer, with regard to the latter, his article could not have been more misdirected.

Ernest Nagel's criticism\(^\text{18}\) is that Mrs. Langer is confused on the con-

\(^{16}\) Rieser, 18.

\(^{17}\) Richard Rudner, "On Semiotic Aesthetics," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, X (September, 1951), 57-77.

ditions for signification in saying that a sign can signify by being somehow analogous in pattern to the signified. This criticism is well-aimed, for the single most dissatisfying point in her theory is the absence of a thorough treatment of how, by iconicity alone, the art work symbolizes feeling. At the point where it should logically come up, Susanne Langer, instead of proving how the art symbol must be considered symbolic of feeling and how one can tell that it is, dogmatically says that it is symbolic. The present writer thinks that there is a clear proof of her thesis and this will be undertaken in the next chapter.

Arthur Szathmary uses Dante's Paolo and Francesca to exemplify what Susanne Langer means by "symbol." His argument is that since such use of symbols in literature marks such a difference from anything in music, there can be no generalization from music to the other arts. A careful reading of Feeling and Form would have shown that Dr. Langer recognizes both Szathmary's mentioned uses of symbol, and that she does not postulate the associative symbolism (which Paolo and Francesca represent) for her thesis on literature, but a new type of symbolic function. Szathmary cautions the reader that his article is aimed at Philosophy in a New Key since Feeling and Form was brought out while the article was in preparation. This is undoubtedly the root of the inappropriateness of the whole article although he feels the second book represents no radical change in direction. In Szathmary's case, however, this means that the misinterpretation of one book became, in the end, that of two. Taking Susanne Langer to be a heteronomist, he thinks he scores a point when he attributes to her the view that "simple delight in the organization of colors and forms of a Braque design
would not be a response to the art of Braque—or is Braque not an artist?" 19

He falls into a well-prepared trap when he says that it is accurate to call a certain structure "wild." If a spiral structure is called "vital"—a spiral with the aesthetic character of motion,—"the spiral can become through a process of association, a representation of life. This would happen, however, only if a conceptualization such as that expressed by Dr. Langer had intervened. Without it we would have simply the perceived spiral with its property of vitality." 20 But to call something "vital" or even "wild" means that it affects us as "vital" or "wild" behavior does, but "why this is so, I do not pretend to know." 21 But by the time Szathmary penned this agnosticism, Susanne Langer had written two volumes trying to explain "why this is so." We call structures "wild" or "vital" because they exhibit a pattern logically congruent with the logical pattern perceived in "wild" or "vital" behavior.

So much for the mis-reading critics. The remainder of this chapter will consider what these critics have to remark about Mrs. Langer's central thesis: that the meaning of art is the expression of the life of subjective feeling.

SIGNIFICANCE IN ART IS IMMEDIATE

This section intends to counter any doubt that Susanne Langer is on the autonomous side of art. Art signifies nothing beyond itself, because that would require art to signify something actually existing outside itself. Art does not

19 Szathmary, p. 89.
20 Ibid., 92.
21 Ibid., 94.
signify something actual but only something possible, a possible pattern of feeling, because the art work is organized like a state of feeling. It signifies because its pattern serves to remind one of how the life of emotion and feeling is organized. Art mocks emotional structure.

Mrs. Langer is as clear as one could wish on this point. "Significant form" is associated with the immediate qualities of the art work. The processes of sense and emotion are directly contained in the work of art for "we never pass beyond the work of art, the vision, to something separately thinkable, the logical form, and from this to the meaning it conveys, a feeling that has this same form. The dynamic form is seen in the picture, not through it immediately; the feeling itself seems to be in the picture." The art product is a "qualitative direct datum," a symbol, but not one that points to something beyond itself. Its import seems to be directly contained, not brought to the symbol by association.

THIS IMMEDIATE SIGNIFICANCE IS THE PATTERN OF SENTIENCE

Susanne Langer formulates her fundamental contention in almost a flood of phrases, all more or less equivalent. The significance of art is "significant" or "living" or "expressive" form, the "morphology of feeling," the "pattern of

24 Ibid., 34.
26 Langer, Problems, p. 67.
27 Ibid., 132; 43.
sentience," the "matrix of mentality," or "an objectified feeling," an "idea of feeling."

Hence, (at the risk of being redundant,) the work of art gives the pattern found in the life of human feeling, or more accurately, a pattern that could be found in that life. She recognizes, however, that "there are many difficulties connected with the thesis that a work of art is primarily an expression of feeling—an "expression" in the logical sense, presenting the fabric of sensibility, emotion, and the strains of more concerted cerebration, for our impersonal cognition—that is, in abstracto."\(^{28}\) The art symbol, the expressive form:

is not a symbol in the full familiar sense, for it does not convey something beyond itself. Therefore it cannot strictly be said to have a meaning; what it does have is import. It is a symbol in a special and derivative sense, because it does not fulfill all the functions of a true symbol: it formulates and objectifies experience for direct intellectual perception, or intuition, but it does not abstract a concept for discursive thought. Its import is seen in it; not, like the meaning of a genuine symbol, by means of it but separable from the sign. . . . [T]he art symbol is the absolute image—the image of what otherwise would be irrational, as it is literally ineffable: direct awareness, emotion, vitality,\(^{29}\) personal identity—life lived and felt, the matrix of mentality.

The term "living form" is justified by a logical connection "that exists between the half-illusory datum, and the concept of life, whereby the former is a natural symbol of the latter; for 'living form' directly exhibits what is the essence of life—incessant change, or process, articulating a permanent form."\(^{30}\) To keep a permanent form, then, "is the constant aim of living matter. . . . But 'living' itself is a process, a continuous change; if it stands still the form

\(^{28}\) Ibid., 125–26.
\(^{29}\) Ibid., 139.
\(^{30}\) Langer, Feeling, p. 65.
disintegrates—for the permanence is a pattern of changes."\textsuperscript{31} It is significant that in the literature of artists, there is a continual reference to the "living" work of art, the "animated" surface.\textsuperscript{32} What makes the art work live is its "tensions." In plastic art, these are "the relations of masses, the distribution of accents, direction of lines, indeed all elements of composition set up space-tensions in the primary virtual space. . . . Not juxtaposed parts, but interacting elements make it up."\textsuperscript{33} In these tensions and resolutions the morphology of feeling is reflected. The art work conveys "the general forms of feeling,"\textsuperscript{34} and does so through the singular form given to perception. But it is "a special kind of form, since it seems to be more than a visual phenomenon—seems, indeed, to have a sort of life, or be imbued with feeling, or somehow, without being a genuine practical object, yet present the beholder with more than an arrangement of sense data."\textsuperscript{35} The "import" of the artistic work "is not one of the qualities to be distinguished in the work, though our perception of it has the immediacy of qualitative experience; artistic import is expressed, somewhat as meaning is expressed in a genuine symbol, yet not exactly so. The analogy is strong enough to make it legitimate, even though easily misleading, to call the work of art the art symbol."\textsuperscript{36} The work

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 66.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 79.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 370.
\textsuperscript{34} Langer, \textit{Key}, p. 202.
\textsuperscript{35} Langer, \textit{Problems}, p. 129.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
of art is so much like a symbolic function that it is difficult to call it anything else but a "symbol." But so misleading was this term in its new semantical use, that Mrs. Langer reverted to "expressive form."

Artistry can also be termed an "objectified feeling." What a picture, for instance, "has" is beauty, which is our projected, i.e., objectified pleasure. But why is subjective pleasure not good enough? Why do we objectify it and project it into visual and auditory forms as 'beauty,' while we are content to feel it directly, as delight, in candy and perfumes and cushioned seats? Perhaps the answer can be found in what art does, and this is to present not actual feelings—as direct consciousness does for the individual human being—but ideas of feeling. Through the work of art the creator lays out his ideas of immediate, felt, life. He sets forth "the course of sentience, feeling, emotion, and the \[s\]lan vital of life itself—[which has] no counterpart in any vocabulary." It expresses "not feelings and emotions which the artist \[h\]as, but feelings and emotions which the artist \[k\]nows; his insight into the nature of sentience, his picture of vital experience, physical and

\[37\] Ibid., 126.
\[38\] Ibid., 127.
\[39\] Langer, Feeling, pp. 18-19.
\[40\] Ibid., 59.
\[41\] Langer, Problems, p. 8.
\[42\] Langer, Feeling, p. 374.
emotive and fantastic." The work of art "objectifies" subjective experience; it presents the pattern of that experience for our contemplation in a perceivable form. Art symbolizes feeling because "artistic form is congruent with the dynamic forms of our direct sensuous, mental and emotional life; works of art are projections of 'felt life,' as Henry James called it, into spatial, temporal, and poetic structures. They are images of feeling, that formulate it for our cognition. What is artistically good is whatever articulates and presents feeling to our understanding."

The expressive form, however, must be presented "so abstractly and forcibly that anyone with normal sensitivity for the art in question will see this form and its 'emotive quality.'" The import of the art work is seen and grasped "in toto" with an "intuition of the whole presented feeling." The form is set off in order to make it clearly apparent, ejected from the context of normal employ.

This symbolized content of feeling invites "not emotional response, but insight," for insight is the aim of art, and not pleasure. This under-

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43 Langer, Problems, p. 91.
44 Ibid., 25.
46 Ibid., 371.
47 Ibid., 51.
48 Langer, Key, p. 190.
49 Langer, Problems, p. 92.
standing of the work of art "begins with an intuition of the whole presented feeling. Contemplation then gradually reveals the complexities of the piece, and of its import."\(^{50}\) This knowledge can hardly be pointed out as founded in the work, for giving a foundation would be demonstration, and the "meaning" of art is given in perceptual form, immanent in the concrete symbol, and impervious to abstraction. What is intuited is "in a very naive phrase, a knowledge of how feelings go."\(^{51}\) It is more accurate, though, to say that art gives a knowledge of how feelings could go, since art "can present emotions and moods we have not felt, passions we did not know before."\(^{52}\) Symbolization offers the beholder a "way of conceiving emotion."\(^{53}\) Even artistic performers have an artistic, interpretative function, even though the performer "need not have actually experienced every feeling he conveys, he must be able to imagine it, and every idea, whether of physical or psychical things, can be formed only within the context of experience. That is to say, a form of sentience, thought, or emotion that he can imagine must be possible for him."\(^{54}\) So too, in the first instance, the feeling that the artist creates, for example by discursive language, is "neither his, nor his hero's, nor ours."\(^{55}\) It is nobody's. It is simply the meaning of the symbol. The artist does not need to have undergone

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\(^{50}\) Langer, *Feeling*, p. 379.

\(^{51}\) Langer, *Key*, p. 207.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 189.


\(^{54}\) Ibid., 146.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 211.
the feelings he objectifies. "It may be through manipulation of his created
elements that he discovers new possibilities of feeling, strange moods, perhaps
greater concentrations of passion than his own temperament could ever produce,
or than his fortunes have yet called forth. For, although a work of art reveals
the character of subjectivity, it is itself objective; its purpose is to object-
tify the life of feeling." 56

Arthur Szathmary, in criticizing the subject of this foregoing necess-
arily tedious but comprehensive section, replies that when Susanne Langer says
that the expressive import of art is not grasped by a sensory or affective re-
response, she is joining a trend to outlaw feeling from the aesthetic realm. 57
Szathmary wishes to affirm that art is the "controlled creation of structures.
So far we may agree. But that these structures are symbols of concepts of
feeling we must, I think, deny." 58 That Susanne Langer would also deny that
the structures in art are "concepts of feeling which are somehow symbolized,"
should be fairly obvious, at this point, from her theory. To make the art
symbol a symbol of a concept turns the art symbol back into a discursive symbol
with associated import. In speaking of a Chinese calligrapher's art, Szathmary
mentions that "the one thing the calligrapher cannot express is anything resem-
bliing the concepts of feeling. He may, of course, entertain such concepts, but
if he uses artistic and not philosophical or scientific media, he cannot--unless

56 Ibid., 374.
57 Arthur Szathmary, p. 39.
58 Ibid.
If a symbolic convention or connection be established—express them."59 It is apparent from this citation, that for Szathmary, concept means abstractable form, and symbolization for him is associative correlation. This alone should explain his interpretative view of Susanne Langer.

THE PATTERN SIGNIFIES BY BEING ISOMORPHIC

It is one thing to say that the art work is a symbol of the life of feeling; it is a second thing to show how this must be. Susanne Langer has been seen to do the first of these, invading the sea of aesthetics from different angles to give her philosophy of art the benefit of many indexes of refraction. What Mrs. Langer must make good in her exposition is that the art work not only can signify, but actually does so. She will say that it does so in virtue of its being made up of a pattern which is congruent with the pattern of feeling. As Monroe Beardsley has put it, this theory has two tenets. The first is that art can be iconic with psychological processes. The second is not like unto the first and is that in virtue of its iconicity art is a symbol of these processes. 60

That Susanne Langer believes that isomorphism, or the logical congruence between the pattern in the work of art and the patterns to be found in the life of feeling, is sufficient evidence for saying that art symbolizes these latter patterns, is abundantly clear from her writings. She will say that "an expressive form is any perceptible or imaginable whole that exhibits relation-

59 Ibid., 96.

ships of parts, or points, or even qualities or aspects within the whole, so that it may be taken to represent some other whole whose elements have analogous relations." The symbolic status of the work of art develops from nothing else than the recognition of congruence. "Once the work is seen purely as a form, its symbolic character—its logical resemblance to the dynamic forms of life—is self-evident." Susanne Langer had not really faced directly the criticism levelled at a symbolic theory such as hers until Problems of Art. There she makes her mind clear, and shows that she is aware of the criticism but does not take it seriously. In her opinion, isomorphism is sufficient for symbolization. Because the work and feeling are congruent, the work "is an objectification of subjective life." In order to achieve this objectification, the artist must "articulate its form to the point where it coincides unmistakably with forms of feeling and living." Hence the only conclusion to be drawn is that the meaning of art is just this: it looks like a subjective experience which has been "brought out into the light so we can look at it." It is the pattern of experience objectified.

The essential objection rified at this theory of symbolization is that no signification can exist on the basis of formal analogy alone because there is no way of telling which pattern is symbol and which is the meant. On this view, the pattern of feeling could just as easily be the symbol of the work of

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61 Langer, Problems, p. 20.
62 Ibid., 42.
64 Langer, Feeling, p. 68.
art! Susanne Langer realizes that somehow the two must bear a distinction, for "there must be a motive for choosing, as between two entities or two systems, one to be the symbol of the other. Usually the decisive reason is that one is easier to perceive and handle than the other."65

The far greater portion of criticism against Dr. Langer's theory of art weighs squarely on this point. Art, the critics will say, can never signify in the technical sense that word carries in semantic theory. And even if it could, it could never do it merely by being similar to something as Susanne Langer asserts. In a capsule, this entire thesis comes into focus only here, at the point where Mrs. Langer must answer the objections of the semioticians.

The focal question now is, how can anyone say that art signifies. Max Rieser answers this succinctly: no one can say it. "Any theory that sees in a work of art a sign runs into considerable difficulty. If it is a sign, it must be a sign of something else. Of what? and where is then the locus of artistic value? In the sign of elsewhere, Where? Now the semiotician is driven to the extremity of saying that the sign denotes 'itself.' But this is a contradiction."66 To Max Rieser, Susanne Langer's position is likewise a contradiction. We have seen that she holds to value of the art work to be immanent in it, not associated with it. Yet it is a symbol. But since the meaning of the art work is within, the only possible conclusion to be drawn after saying it is a symbol, is that it symbolizes itself. And to tie everything up neatly,

65 Ibid., 27.
66 Max Rieser, p. 25.
Mrs. Langer herself has called the doctrine of self-significance a "silly fiction." Max rieser evidently does not think the arguments of symbolization which Mrs. Langer advances warrant her conclusion. Isomorphism can be translated as "symbolization" in no language as far as rieser is concerned. We have seen that the meaning of the work of art is immanent, immediate, and not elsewhere than the work of art, in Dr. Langer's view. Saying the work can be a symbol constitutes rieser's "contradiction."

Monroe Beardsley sees logical congruence as insufficient for signification. He grants music--his criticism of her theory occurs in a chapter on music--as iconic with psychological processes, but without something more definitive of the semantic situation, mere isomorphism is unable to define art as a symbol. He treats her theory as a "map theory," since on two occasions she uses such examples to prove that iconicity can signify. But, as Beardsley says, even though a map is iconic, it does not refer unambiguously to anything unless it is entitled. "We can know a painting depicts a woman even if there are no words to help us, but we cannot know what a design signifies--let's say a crude map of a pirate treasure--unless there is at least one proper name or description, such as 'Treasure Island.'" A consideration, however, that Beardsley would agree to is that such a design or crude map would, without further specification, fit every island with Treasure Island's shape. This

67 Langer, Key, p. 201.
68 Beardsley, p. 333.
69 Cf. Langer, Key, p. 69, and Feeling, p. 31.
70 Beardsley, p. 335.
represents a corollary to the theory of Susanne Langer to which she did not pay much attention. Since logical congruence is sufficient for symbolization or signification, any given pattern in the art symbol is conceivably iconic with many other perceivable patterns throughout the world of our experience. From this point of view, then, Mrs. Langer must offer a criterion for distinguishing these non-artistic patterns (i.e., ones not actually found in a work of art) which, it so happens, are iconic with feeling, from the artistic patterns. The latter are called symbols of feeling, while the former, the patterns scattered about in the field of experience—and yet are not called "symbols" of feeling—are called nothing of the sort. It is on these ordinary, unsuspected perceptual patterns of the everyday that artistic photography thrives. And photography will serve to illustrate the criterion which Susanne Langer's theory affords. Artistic photography lives by one thing, and that is selection.

Crippling, perspective, angle— all these perform the task of setting off an indigenously found pattern from its surroundings. This makes the pattern into an apparition, an illusion, or a "semblance" in the terminology of this thesis. The pattern is disengaged from the "conative self" of needs, desires, and utility, by photographic techniques of selection. The pattern thus severs relations with its environment in order to present itself purely for perception. This disengagement from utility and natural surroundings distances the pattern of the photograph in a "psychic perspective," produces the photograph's function of "illusion," and constitutes the intuited distinction between artistic iconic patterns and perceptual patterns having a use or a location in a natural environment. So the angle of the new Ford windshield, however genuine its aesthetic values, still has a purely functional use of being a satisfactory "non-glare"
angle. It becomes presented purely for perception alone when, for instance, it is cut off from the rest of the car in a Ford Times "photo-quiz" with a request for recognition.

The final parting shot by Beardsley is less steady than his former criticism. "If we allow that music signifies every mental process to which it is iconic, then since many qualitatively different mental processes may have the same kinetic pattern, musical signification is bound to be incurably ambiguous ..... Perhaps it only show the limitations of musical signification, but the limitations are severe."\(^71\) Perhaps Susanne Langer would answer that only those patterns in the art work are significant which are self-evident; otherwise the artist has not been successful. She recognizes an ambiguity in the pattern given by art, and for that reason she states that art presents the general forms of feeling.\(^72\) Even further, she would probably question the meaning of the words "qualitatively different mental processes" in Beardsley's exposition, for as we have seen, psychologists find that stipulations in the fabric of emotive life come from external situations, and not from any variation in internal experience.

Arthur Berndtson assails the same fallacy, saying that iconicity, or logical congruence between the art product and the forms of feeling, is not sufficient for signification. But it is obvious why he would say this when he maintains that "an essential characteristic of signs is transcendence, whereby attention passes from the literal vehicle of symbolism to whatever it is that is

\(^{71}\)Ibid., 336.

\(^{72}\)Cf. Langer, Key, p. 204, 202.
meant." The same denial of the tag of "symbolic" to the work of art occurs when Berndtson shows himself quite on the side of Susanne Langer in other respects. "The emotive content is not something distinct from the form, but is experienced as identical with it. In the hearing of music, it is equally appropriate to say that one hears feelings, that one feels sounds; there is no distinction within the experience. The emotive content is not only actual in the experience but immanent in the form. The notion of transcendence does not apply to such an experience of fused feeling-form, and therefore the function of form is not to be a symbol of feeling." What is apparent is that Berndtson actually is accord with Langer's thesis of "objectified feeling." He also agrees that there is no transcendence in aesthetic perception. But here Susanne Langer would disagree that such an absence of transcendence precludes terming art symbolic. Mrs. Langer's option is for a new use for "symbol" and Berndtson denies that logical congruence provides ample evidence.

Melvin Rader is one of the most perceptive of Susanne Langer's critics. Recognizing her special definition of presentational symbol, he tactfully asks whether "symbol" is the proper word, for "it is almost always used to denote reference." He recognized, also, a point that Mrs. Langer would have done well to emphasize. Although unclear on the point, "Dr. Langer evidently means that the pattern of sound or color has a possible resemblance or reference to a

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73 Berndtson, 501.
74 Ibid.
75 Rader, 396.
life-pattern even when it has not actual resemblance or reference." If E. G. Ballard had recognized this point, he would not have, perhaps, felt held to go to the lengths of his image-reproduction theory in order to justify Professor Langer's position. His theory ends in the psyche producing an icon of feeling because the image produced is in the psychic range of feeling in the first place. This, however, goes against Mrs. Langer's theory since it makes the art work "mean" the image reproduced in the psyche which is an actual internal state of affairs, not merely a possible pattern of sentience.

In a word, Max Rieser is bored with Susanne Langer's theory. He is bored, probably, because this is just another theory which does not square with his assumptions, and which, more seriously, does not cause him to attempt a proof of his claims. Such assumptions permit certain critics to think that a true theory of art can be attained by picking and choosing. Theirs is a pragmatic picking and choosing of which of, for instance, Susanne Langer's questions must be answered, instead of investigating all the questions she or anyone else can advance. Because such thorough investigation has not been done, we have aesthetic theories based totally on the "aesthetic emotion," or "aesthetic pleasure." Susanne Langer shows these to be partial theories, ones that will never answer all relevant questions in a thousand doomsdays. These critics will also pick and choose among the arts, admitting her theory here, denying it entrance there, without seeing that thereby they have abandoned a unified theory.

76 Ibid., 397.

of the arts. And they want a unified theory of the arts, even if it is one saying that the arts can be reduced to this: that they have no unification. It is more or less typical that such critics should proliferate without proof categorical propositions such as this one of Rieser: "no matter what can be said to remedy this difficulty, the verbal arts cannot be fitted into the straitjacket of iconicity or presentational symbolism."78

Most of the article by Richard Rudner79 is written against the semantic theory of art of Charles Morris and his "iconic sign." His criticism applies in almost equal measure to Susanne Langer because her presentational symbol is in many important respects the same as Morris' iconic sign.80 Rudner reaps contradiction upon contradiction from Morris' aesthetic theory because Morris has defined signification as a "mediate taking account of." Rudner argues that no art theory which considers the art product itself as the aesthetic object, can at the same time be a specifically semantic theory of art. "Semantic" implies "sign" and this involves transcendence and mediation. Meaning is beyond the semantic vehicle. But the theories of Morris and Susanne Langer at the same time predicate meaning within the semantic vehicle. These are contradictory, and hence "Mr. Morris and Mrs. Langer's positions have been held to be

78 Rieser, p. 21.


defective because they force us to regard (upon presentation of an art work) something other than the art work as an aesthetic object." For Mrs. Langer, the art object contains its meaning. It does not refer to an actual thing, but to a possible thing. It presents a structure, a pattern which in its form, is organized like a given set of other things. The other things are variations in the sentient, in the subjective, experience of the human organism. As a structure, the art work can be said to refer—to the only possible reference it could have in the world. This actual structural reference is the extremely general pattern which is characteristic of every human experience viewed subjectively: the structure of experience as patterned around the Ego. All this is given by experiential consciousness. But the structure of the art work has an actual referent only on this very broad and general level of form. It refers to actual feeling only because it, like actual feeling, has an organization. But with respect to what is organized, how the organization is worked out in this artistic instance, the art work has no reference because it is unique and an entirely new instance of the way concrete materials can be organically related. This is an instance of a "freshly-minted feeling" which has no analogue—at least, it need have none—in anything outside itself.

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81 Rudner, p. 76.

82 Rader, p. 397.
CHAPTER V

THIRD ANSWER: A CONCLUSION THAT SUSANNE LANGER NEVER DREW

We began this thesis with a study of the context of Susanne Langer's philosophy of art. We saw her triple dependence on the philosophical vantage of Ernst Cassirer and his anthropological view of man as a symbol-maker, on the partially philosophical, partially psychological development of the new concept of mentality as symbolic transformation, and finally on previous positions in the history of aesthetics. Within this context we analyzed the foundations of the Langer theory of art, taking up in detail her view on signific and symbolic functions, the logic of terms, and the logic of discourse. We watched Mrs. Langer distinguish from the vehicle of discourse, the discursive symbol, the symbol which she believes fills the void beyond the logic of discourse, the presentational symbol. Susanne Langer then presented her general theory of art which she developed around this presentational symbol, and which finds, perhaps, its most convincing verification in the art of music.

Turning to her critics, we listened to them question the possibility of such a theory built around such a symbol. But in almost all instances, the critics pushed home a point which landed wide of the mark. Because they misconstrued her terminology with its necessarily delicate nuances, because they took as complete arguments various stages which made up only a part of the developing argument spread over three volumes and fifteen years, and finally
because the critics misread or overlooked entirely the principal arguments she
gave, the critics were seen to have no more an argument against, than Mrs.
Langer has one for, the thesis that all art is an expressive form giving a
logical picture of the way it subjectively feels to undergo human life.

Our purpose in this concluding chapter will be a defense of this basic
theme in the Langer theory by using a number of related analyses which Susanne
Langer makes, but which she never uses in the powerfully probative function
they can and should have.

The thesis to be proved can be stated quite simply. If art is symbolic
of human feeling—actually, not merely possibly—what exactly does this mean,
and how is it proved?

The first analysis is one which flashed initially in an offhand phrase
in Philosophy in a New Key. There Susanne Langer remarks that "in music we
work essentially with free forms, following inherent psychological laws of
'rightness.'"¹ In Feeling and Form she notes that the artist must work accord-
ing to the "canons of intelligibility"² in order to produce a work of art with
the proper "rightness and necessity."³ Artists and critics of art traditionaely
recognize and demand a logic in the work of art, and this demand for logic, for
a certain conformity to a norm, is the first stage in a conclusive argument.
Because this demand for a logic within the work of art is universal through
epochs and cultures, it points to a transcendental structure of artistic

¹Langer, Key, p. 203.
²Langer, Feeling, p. 18.
³Ibid., 39.
process.

The strength of this single point, the demand for a consistency in the work of art, will become evident if the artistic process itself is examined. The artist about to construct a work of art does not, of a summer afternoon as it were, slide into the articulate production of a perfect product. He may dabble and dawdle, but when, and only when, artistic insight seizes his imagination does he produce good art. This insight can be called a "kernal idea," a "generative concept," or even, to use Susanne Langer's term, a "commanding form." The reason this form is called a form is because it dictates in a formal way, the decisions made in the course of producing the art work. The artist begins with an idea, but this idea is heuristic, unspecific but definite. It guides the art work through to completion, but it must be interpreted in order to do so. It guides, but does not do the work. The initial idea may dictate that the key in a musical composition should be major, in a lower register, and harmonically in the European tradition. But at the outset, it does not predict how the composition will end, continue, or even begin. But as composition progresses, successive decisions more and more determine what the composition will be like. Each decision elaborates a little more of the context for the next decision, and as the composer goes on, he must base his decisions on a larger and larger field. In the ultimate analysis of the complete work of art, let us say a musical composition, at each stage the composer could be asked, "Why did you select this chord?" or "Why did you modulate to this key?" Part of his answer will be that the piece worked out to this point so structured the possibilities that his range of choice at this point was quite limited. There was, as the work progressed, something of the "inevitable" about his choices. Each
jog and turn in the art work can be traced to the demand of the context worked out to that point, and all parts of this context can in turn be referred back to, ultimately, the "commanding form" which initiated the whole process.

It may be thought that the entire art work can be thus explained by what the commanding form implicitly contained. But this is but a partial truth. The question, "Why this rather than that?" can be partially answered by the demands of commanding form and the context it evolved. The fundamental question, however, is this: Why is the form commanding? Who demands that it be followed throughout the composition? Why does the art work have to be consistent, organically unified as we say? Only this demand on the part of artists, critics, and interpretants, answers why the art work maintains a formal continuity. It is this demand for organic unity that prevents the composer from suddenly changing harmonic horses—going from the European to the jazz tradition, for instance—in the middle of everything.

Insofar as the artist is held, by his own standards, to make the work of art consistent and organically unified, he is doing what, whether he knows it or not, whether he likes to admit it or not, Susanne Langer says he is doing: trying to make a logical picture of an organism.

The watchword in art is the phrase "living form." Just as frequent in art circles is the expression "vitality." Raising tedium, this writer would prefer to quote directly a somewhat lengthy description of the organism. Susanne Langer's contention that art is symbolic of feeling, that it is an objectified picture of sentience, demands that she show that organic unity which is characteristic of the work of art is structurally the same as the unity of a living organism. She says:
All living matter that we have identified as such is organic; living creatures are organisms. They are characterized by what we call organic process—the constant burning-up and equally constant renewal of their substance. Every cell, and indeed every part of every cell (and the functionally distinct parts are infinitesimal), is perpetually breaking down, and perpetually being replaced. The cell, the tissue composed of diverse cells, the organ to which the tissue belongs, the organism that subsumes the organ—that whole vast system is in unceasing flux. It actually has no sameness of material substance from second to second. It is always changing; and if the exchanges of matter stop for even a few seconds, the effect is cataclysmic; the system is destroyed. Life is gone.

An organism, which seems to be the most distinct and individual sort of thing in the world, is really not a thing at all. Its individual, separate, thing-like existence is a pattern of changes; its unity is a purely functional unity. . . . It is a functional identity, a pattern of physical and mental process, a continuum of activity.

And to conclude citation, she offers this: "because we are organisms, all our actions develop in organic fashion, and our feelings as well as our physical acts have an essentially metabolic pattern. Systole, diastole; making, unmaking; crescendo, diminuendo. Sustaining, sometimes, but never for indefinite lengths; life, death."

We as organisms are patterned, but the pattern is not a helter-skelter one. We are organically patterned. The pattern has a center around which everything unifies. Our mental life as well as our biological life is drawn into an organization, a grouping of the totality of event around—what shall we say but—around us. We are a center. Our operations, activities, work out from us. What characterizes our structure as human organisms, bits of rational biology, is this centering of all our operation around us, the Ego.

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4 Langer, Problems, p. 47.
This is each human being's perspective of himself. This is the viewpoint of subject as such, the knowledge of subjectivity. Subjectivity, being on the "level of experience," is concrete. It is not opaque and dumb but rather variegated, articulate. Man's subjectivity has a pattern. And because this pattern is not disparate but constantly in reference to the Ego, this pattern is organic. Man, from the viewpoint of subjectivity, therefore, is experiential, patterned, and organically unified. The thesis of Susanne Langer asserts that artistic process is the creation of forms which articulate a logical picture of human subjectivity. The argument earlier in the chapter showed that critics, artists, and interpretants all demand of the art work that it exhibit something structural, and that was organic unity. What they demanded to be so unified was a perceptual pattern. Thus the demand is seen to be that art works exhibit the three structural characteristics of human subjectivity: 1) that it be experiential, that it 2) be patterned, and 3) that its pattern be organically unified.

Hence art is the creation of forms symbolic of human feeling because art is on the concrete, experiential level just as human subjectivity is on that same level; because art is patterned just as human subjectivity is made up of rhythmic and static patterns; and finally, because art is organically unified, wrought around a center, just as human subjectivity is organized around the center of the Ego.

With this, the defense rests.
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The thesis submitted by Francis V. Hillebrand, S.J.

has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Philosophy.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

December 1, 1962

Date

Signature of Adviser