WORLD HYPOTHESES AS EPISTEMOLOGIES OF PERCEPTION:
METAPHYSICAL PROBLEMS OF ABSTRACT ART
IN THE PUBLIC EYE

by

Wendy D. Barrett

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto

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ABSTRACT

This study is set in the context of art education and emerges from public controversy about the place and merit of abstract art. The broad context of the study concerns the perceived lack of public understanding concerning abstract art. The research context of the study, and the central problem the study addresses, concerns the lack of systematic, philosophically grounded frameworks for examining and addressing the relationship of the public to abstract art. A foundational argument of the study is that art educators' ability to educate will be enhanced by having comprehensive.
philosophically rigorous frameworks for exploring the phenomenon.

The study argues that one of the reasons the educational task is so complex is that understanding the phenomenon of the general public’s response to abstract art depends on insights at the fundamental level of peoples’ perceptions of the nature of reality and their experience of the world, their world views. Accordingly, this study develops and applies a framework for the understanding of epistemological orientations operating in viewer responses to works of art based on Stephen Pepper’s systematic and comprehensive analysis of world views in *World Hypotheses: A Study in Evidence* (1942) and his subsequent *Basis of Criticism in the Arts* (1945). The precision and scope of the framework developed in this study is examined in a demonstrative analysis of Francis Bacon’s *Study after Velázquez’s Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (1953).

The analysis presented in this study is used to: demonstrate how different world views generate particular sets of responses, illustrated in the analysis of a work of art; expose the nature of the phenomenon of the public’s problematic relationship with abstract art; and indicate how the framework is suggestive of educational strategies in viewing art.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Of the organizations that provided information I thank particularly the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Des Moines Art Center, and the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Thanks also to Joe Kotler at Moveable Type for such high quality colour reproductions with which to illustrate my text.

In the extended process of completing a thesis there are many who contribute not to the thesis itself, but to the life that surrounds it. In particular, I thank my mother for her unwavering support and understanding along the way. I also express my heartfelt thanks to Mark, who has patiently watched the process, generously given encouragement and support, and travelled with me on the doctoral journey.

There are many others who have willingly endured Tales of the Thesis over the years and wished me well. I remember them all with thanks and appreciation.
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<tr>
<td>AAM</td>
<td>American Association of Museums</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGO</td>
<td>Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DBAE</td>
<td>Discipline-based art education</td>
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<td>DFE</td>
<td>Department for Education</td>
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<td>MoMA</td>
<td>Museum of Modern Art, New York</td>
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EDITORIAL METHOD

1. I have followed a system of parenthetical author/date citations in this thesis with the following exceptions:

   • Where I have referenced newspaper articles I have included the author, title of newspaper and date of publication in the citation in order that the particular newspaper and the authors (who are sometimes quoted more than once) can be recognized by the reader and the quote can be placed within a particular timespan. Full references are included in the Reference List.

   • Works of art are referred to in the text by title and italicized, followed by date of production where appropriate. Full details are included in the List of Plates.

   • As this thesis refers often to the work of Stephen Pepper and to two of his works in particular, World Hypotheses: A Study in Evidence (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1942) and The Basis of Criticism in the Arts (Cambridge, Massachusetts: University of Harvard Press, 1945), I have used title abbreviations (WH and BC respectively) for instant recognition of which work is being cited. Full publication details are included in both the List of Abbreviations and the Reference List.

2. I have followed the British practice of enclosing quotations in single quotation marks. Quotations within quotations are enclosed in double quotation marks.

3. Pepper uses the male pronoun exclusively in his writing. In this respect, Pepper's work is a reflection of its time. The reader should nonetheless assume that the quotations from Pepper cited in this thesis are gender inclusive.
Plate 1:  MARK ROTHKO, No.16, 1957. Oil on canvas, 265.5 x 293cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.
INTRODUCTION

Coming into Focus

Modern art in the public eye is problematic: whether it be Rothko’s *No.16* (Plate 1) in the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, Jackson Pollock’s *Blue Poles* in the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra, or Carl Andrés ‘bricks’ (*Untitled*, 1965) at the Tate Gallery in London, U.K., controversy often follows.

This study deals with how people look at art, and how the different outlooks people have on life affect not only how they see things, but also what they see. These outlooks or ‘world views’ influence how the nature of reality is perceived, or to some degree, chosen. I will argue that particular orientations of world view reflect certain patterns in the perception of reality, which in turn result in consequent patterns of interpretation. Although world view affects perception and interpretation of all art forms (and all experience), this study focuses on how world view affects views about visual art, and examines world view as a useful concept for understanding attitudes to *abstract* art evidenced in controversies such as that arising from the National Gallery of Canada’s acquisition of *No.16* by Mark Rothko (announced 15 July 1993).

This study is set in the context of art education and emerges from public
controversy about the place and merit of abstract art. The broad context of the study concerns the perceived lack of public understanding concerning abstract art. The research context of the study, and the central problem the study addresses, concerns the lack of systematic, philosophically grounded frameworks for examining and addressing the relationship of the public to abstract art. A core argument of the study is that art educators' ability to educate will be enhanced by having comprehensive, philosophically rigorous frameworks for exploring the phenomenon.

In order to explore these issues, this study articulates a conceptual framework that facilitates the identification of six different world views, and describes what the characteristics of those world views are in the context of viewing visual art. This framework functions as a tool with which to understand the epistemological orientations operating in viewer responses to works of art.

The framework presented in this study is based on Stephen Pepper's systematic and comprehensive analysis of world views in *World Hypotheses: A Study in Evidence* (1942, also referred to as WH) and his subsequent *Basis of Criticism in the Arts* (1945, also referred to as BC). Pepper titled his book 'world hypotheses' (rather than 'world views') in order to emphasize that although world 'views' are profound and pervasive, they are, after all, *hypotheses* about how the world works, not certainties. He argued that each world hypothesis emerges from what he termed a 'root metaphor'. (For example, the root metaphor for mechanism
is the machine.) He presented his initial definitions of multiple world hypotheses in the context of philosophy and metaphysics, with examples drawn from science to illuminate meaning (Pepper 1942). Pepper subsequently explored his general theoretical framework specifically in relation to literature (Pepper 1945). Through an analysis of Pepper’s work, this study is concerned with reconfiguring his theory of world hypotheses specifically with respect to visual art and then applying the framework developed in a demonstrative analysis of Francis Bacon’s painting: *Study after Velázquez’s Portrait of Innocent X* (1953, Plate 10).

The problems addressed in this study are conceived as educational problems, and it is as an educator that I approach them. I argue that an understanding of viewers’ differing world views and their underlying epistemological assumptions offer the educator not only an analytical tool for identifying the nature of some of the problems viewers have with abstract art, but also offer a means of developing a practical educational response.

**Formative Encounters with Art**

This study began about fifteen years ago while I was working as a curator in a museum with collections of fine and decorative art. My office had a door in one corner opening onto a room in the museum. I could hear the comments visitors made as they looked at the victorian oil painting of a wedding reception that hung just outside the door, but could not be seen by visitors while working at
my desk. One day, two retired ladies stopped by to admire the ‘painting’. They talked about the painting for about five minutes - a long time compared with average viewer attention of often only a few seconds - and at the end of their long discussion, they concluded that they must be looking at a photograph, because the museum would not hang the real painting.¹ I was stunned, not only because of what their conclusion implied about the museum and its displayed collections, but also because as far as I was concerned, the painting was very obviously just that: there was some impasto on the surface and visible brushwork, it was painted in oils and had the glossy, varnished finish commonly associated with oils or what many visitors think of as a ‘real painting’. Furthermore, it was framed in the sort of frame you would expect to see around such a painting and was accompanied by a full label. I was so amazed I took an early lunch. What did visitors think we had in the museum? Did people think everything was fake or reproduction? How did they make sense of the collections? How did they approach the paintings? What was their experience with art prior to coming to the museum that they should reach these conclusions, having taken the time and trouble to think about it?

Without realizing it at the time, this experience in the museum clinched an existing interest in education generally and also in the various types of educational

¹ According to a research study sponsored by the Getty Center for Education and the J. Paul Getty Museum, this confusion over the originality of the collections is quite common amongst first-time visitors, who often think there are copies in the galleries (J. Paul Getty Trust 1991, 120).
provision to be found in museums and galleries in particular. Subsequently I trained as a teacher, taught in a primary school, and then worked as a specialised art advisor for a Local Education Authority in Britain, working with many primary school teachers and their pupils. In the course of providing studio instruction, curricular advice, in-service training for teachers, and support for initial teachers, I became occupied with the place of art in schools and the nature of the art curriculum.

In many ways, this thesis synthesises these two areas of my professional experience as a curator and an educator: I find myself looking at the gaps between the viewer, the art work, the artist and the cultural institutions of the museum and the school, wondering what rôle education has to play.

Over the past few years I have become increasingly interested in public controversies surrounding works of art. During my academic studies in Canada, there have been several controversies concerning gallery acquisitions and the display of abstract art which have generated a great deal of public anger and outrage. These protests have been so vocal and intense that they warrant further examination.

**Terms and Meanings**

Confusions of meaning and usage come into focus in a study such as this which juxtaposes expert and lay uses of art terms. While an art historian or critic
would use art terms within conventional parameters, a lay viewer might well use the same terms more loosely. For example, 'modern' might be used to indicate works that included abstract works, or to refer to works that are completely abstract. As an educator, it is important to recognize the potential scope of such terms and to particularize the meaning and use of such terms to avoid confusion. I will therefore define the terms 'modern', 'abstract' and 'museum' as they are used in this study.

**Modern and Abstract Defined**

The unrelenting popular rejection of abstract art is more than the shock of the new. In one sense, the problem of public rejection of 'modern' abstract art could be described as an old problem that simply will not go away. 'Modern' in a general sense is often used indiscriminately to refer to the contemporary: if something is said to be modern, it is considered contemporary or recent to the statement. 'Modern' is also frequently used in generalized rejections of any abstract art produced from the late 19th-century onwards with no appreciation of the specific connotations of the term.

In the history of art, 'modern' is used specifically to refer to the style and ideology of art produced between approximately the 1860s and the 1970s. It is this specific use of the term 'modern' that I employ in this study. Public outrage expressed against modern art that is perceived to be a contemporary phenomenon,
is therefore confused within the terms of the field of art history.

I should also distinguish between the notion of 'modern' and the movement of art known as Modernism, which is 'a critical approach that stresses innovation over all other criteria [and] is characterized by the imperative to seek new solutions to pictorial problems, and consequently, by its rejection of the examples of the past' (Duro and Greenhalgh, 1992).

In this study I am using the term 'abstract' to indicate my particular attention to non-objective or non-representational work: art which makes no attempt to 'look like' anything (as seen in the work of the Abstract Expressionists or Suprematists). As Herbert Read points out, in one sense all art is 'abstract' (quoted in Whitford 1987, 8), but the work on which this study focuses is art that demonstrates an abstract approach: one lacking in identifiable subject-matter.

**Museums or Galleries?**

Art galleries are generally understood to be institutions that display mainly works of art (and predominantly paintings). However, galleries can also be referred to as 'institutes', 'centres', and particularly in North America as 'museums', with or without the qualification 'art' museum. Museum research will often use the term 'museum' to indicate institutions including museums and galleries. Much of the museum research referenced in this study comes out of American art galleries which are called 'museums'. I therefore use the term
museum in a generic sense in this study to include art galleries.

Organization of the Study

I begin this study by reviewing the range of protestations and endorsements regarding Rothko's No. 16 in order to present the nature and scope of the problems surrounding viewer responses to abstract art. I then define a set of epistemological frameworks, based on Pepper's concept of world hypotheses (WH and BC), but extended specifically to viewing art. I summarize my definition of each world hypothesis in relation to visual art in a set of tables. I then analyze a painting using the framework developed to demonstrate how the differing epistemological orientations affect the values and preconceptions viewers bring to a viewing experience and in turn influence their responses to art. Finally, I return to the instance of the Rothko controversy to reflect on how an understanding of multiple epistemologies gained in the process of the analysis not only helps in clarifying the nature of the issues, but also offers a tool for understanding and structuring a response in an educational context.

The first part of this process, then, is coming to grips with the numerous issues embedded in the reactions to the National Gallery of Canada's purchase of Mark Rothko's No. 16 (1957).
INTO THE FRAY:
PUBLIC RESPONSES TO ABSTRACT ART

At the Scene: Rothko's No.16

On July 16th 1993, the day after the National Gallery of Canada unveiled its acquisition of a large, modern, abstract work called No.16 by Mark Rothko, the headline in the Toronto Sun ran: 'You paid $1.8m ...for this?' This, the latest in a series of art controversies at the time of beginning this investigation, provided the touchstone for my study.

The vociferous public objections to the National Gallery's purchase of the Rothko No.16 (1957) painting were not without precedent. Three years before in 1990 the Gallery had announced the purchase of a large Barnett Newman canvas (Plate 2) entitled Voice of Fire (1967), which had engendered a similar public furore, followed by another public outcry on the exhibition of Jana Sterbak's Vanitas: Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic (1987, Plate 3).

However, it was at the moment when the Rothko controversy erupted that I made the conceptual connection between the problems of widespread lack of appreciation of abstract art, and the explanatory potential of the philosophical work of Stephen Pepper. In looking at viewer reactions to Rothko's No.16, I began to
see that the problems were not solely related to the abstract nature of the art itself (although this was the crucial sticking point for many viewers); they were also tied to the assumptions and values held by viewers that they brought to the viewing experience. In fact, in reviewing the objections raised in the Rothko controversy it became clear that the objections themselves were rather narrowly defined and resonated closely with the sets of epistemologies, or ‘world views’, described in Pepper’s *World Hypotheses* (1942).

I believe that Pepper’s framework offers not only a means for understanding the varied elements in play in the Rothko and similar controversies, but also a predictive potential as to where gaps in understanding are most likely to occur and in what form. In combination, these features offer educators a tool with which to construct understanding and formulate strategic action in an educational setting. It is for these reasons I have chosen to explore the potential of Pepper’s epistemological prolegomena in this context.

In this chapter I will review a broad spectrum of opinions expressed in the press following the announcement of the National Gallery of Canada’s purchase of Rothko’s *No.16* in order to examine commonalities and contrasts of belief and value that indicate differing epistemologies at work in viewers’ responses to the acquisition of this painting.
Reactions to the purchase of Rothko’s *No. 16*

There was no shortage of arguments for or against the purchase of the Rothko painting by the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa when the acquisition was presented to the public in July 1993. In fact, if anything, much of the difficulty in teasing out the bases of objections to the Rothko and other controversial purchases is not a lack of argument or reason, but more an overwhelming preponderance of opinion.

One of the most commonly voiced objections raised against the Rothko purchase was that it was a waste of money - that in some sense the painting was not ‘worth’ the money paid for it. This was the viewpoint the *Toronto Sun* presented in its coverage the day after the public announcement of the National Gallery’s Rothko acquisition with its headline that ran: ‘You paid $1.8m ...for this?’ (*Toronto Sun*, 16 July 1993). Another journalist commented, ‘At least we got three stripes of color for the $1.8 million we paid for Voice of Fire’ (*Durkan, Toronto Sun*, 21 July 1993).

There were broadly two areas of debate with regard to the sum paid for the Rothko: one centred on arguments concerning the use of public money, and the other on the actual amount paid for the Rothko as a piece of ‘art.’

With regard to arguments concerning the use of public money, Peter Worthington was appalled that taxpayers’ money was being spent ‘so recklessly and frivolously’ (*Toronto Sun*, 27 July 1993, 7), while others thought the money
would have been better used to feed hungry children, reduce the deficit, or buy Canadian art (respectively: Victor Hayes, *Toronto Star*, 3 Aug. 1993, A14; James Bennet, *Globe and Mail*, 29 July 1993, A20; Roger Botting, *Toronto Star*, 20 July 1993, A16). One *Toronto Star* reader argued that the art budget could not be used to feed the hungry precisely because it was the art budget and not the welfare budget, and that regardless of what people thought of the Rothko, it would be spent on some form of art whatever the state of the economy (Amy Herskowitz, *Toronto Star*, 11 Aug. 1993, A18).

Others argued against this sum being paid for Rothko’s *No.16* as a work of art. Ian Harvey, a *Toronto Sun* journalist, asserted that even though he did ‘not know much about art’, he knew he was ‘getting ripped off’ (*Toronto Sun*, 17 Aug. 1993, 12). Harvey also voiced a widely held belief that artists and the art community (together forming the membership of what he dubbed ‘Club Art’) generate and perpetuate a self-serving means of supporting themselves and their art through grants of public funds, amounting to ‘fraud…intellectual larceny…an assault on the nature of societal values’ (*Toronto Sun*, 17 Aug. 1993, 12). This is perhaps one of the most frequently voiced criticisms of the Rothko painting and other non-representational art - that it fails as art in any grand sense because it is elitist: an art produced by artists for artists, critics, and the art market which deliberately alienates and confuses those not ‘in the know’ (Lynne Wright, *Globe and Mail*, 29 Nov. 93, A15). Harvey argued that grants should be abolished and
that ‘the market decide what art is and what it’s worth. And to hell with the rest of it’ (Toronto Sun, 17 Aug. 1993, 12). Of course, his assumption was that the bottom would fall out of the market.

Alan Fenton agreed that market value was the only realistic way of determining the ‘value’ of a work of art, but used the purchase of the Rothko to demonstrate that not only were market forces operating in the purchase of No. 16, but that they also proved what a real bargain the purchase was (Toronto Star, 20 Aug. 1993). By consulting Leonard’s Annual Price Index of Art Auctions, Fenton established that based on the sale prices of the previous four years of Rothkos from the same period (1957-1958), the average price of a work by the artist at the time was $3.41m, and therefore the No. 16 acquired by the National Gallery for $1.8m was in fact worth twice what was paid for it. Fenton further argued that if the painting were considered an investment for the people of Canada, then the Art Gallery had chosen very well and that any accusations concerning financial mismanagement were ‘patently false’ (Alan Fenton, Toronto Star, 20 Aug. 1993).

However, even if auction records could prove the financial responsibility of the Rothko purchase, there was still a huge amount of resistance to the money paid for the Rothko as a work of art. It was not that the amount of money in itself was too much to pay for a work of art - after all, the year before the Rothko acquisition the Gallery paid almost double that sum for Guido Reni’s Jupiter and Europa and there was barely a whimper of dissent - it was rather a very strong
feeling that it was too much to pay for a work that *looked like* the Rothko. The arguments against the purchase of the Rothko as art and the counterarguments supporting it spoke to fundamental issues concerning the nature of art, its meaning and its purpose and how these were embodied or lacking in the Rothko painting.

Some viewers had problems thinking of abstract art as ‘art’ at all. Peter Worthington argued that *No.16* did not *mean* anything, and that if - as he believed - art were about communicating, Rothko’s painting missed the mark completely (*Toronto Sun*, 27 July 1993, 11; also Martin Berkovitz, *Globe and Mail*, 8 Sept. 1993, A18). Jason Scovell saw things differently: for him Rothko’s work was ‘a message communicated through symbolic brushstrokes and color melding’ (*Toronto Star*, 21 July 1993, A20). Scovell went further to explain that he thought that Rothko’s style was unique ‘because the message hidden by it…[did not]…reveal itself to the careless and superficial eye’ (*Toronto Star*, 21 July 1993, A20). Patrick Maheu was really not bothered: ‘whether or not I understand any hidden meaning, I find that all are able to entertain’ (*Globe and Mail*, 18 Aug. 1993).

There was much difference in opinion and confusion concerning not only what the art should ‘do’ for the viewer, but also what the artist should ‘do’ for art. Martin Berkovitz was clear concerning who should do what in the artist-art-viewer ménage à trois, maintaining that it was the job of the artist ‘to establish basic meaning and content’ and the viewer’s to interpret. Any refusal or failure on the part of the artist to play his or her part was rejected by Berkovitz as ‘artistic abdication’ (Globe and Mail, 8 Sept. 1993, A18).

The idea that the artist has in some way failed to do his or her job and not only abandoned the viewer, but even actively rejected the viewer as a participant or partner in the art experience, has engendered a distrust in the viewing public. This distrust is not only visible in the perception of the artist as a self-serving charlatan, but also in the distrust of those institutions and professionals who are deemed to support them. In fact, distrust of professional art experts is now so great in relation to the acquisition of abstract and contemporary art that in the Des Moines Art Center, Iowa, the gallery has produced a handout of relevant questions and answers to address concerns of visitors regarding: how the gallery decides which works of art to buy; how purchases are funded; how the gallery knows if it is paying a fair price; who makes money when a work of art is bought; receiving gifts of art; why a gallery like the Des Moines focuses on contemporary art (as opposed to old masters and mistresses); what the ‘hidden expenses’ of having an art collection are; and why any gallery has a collection at all. The Des
Moines Gallery is committed to the purchase of mainly contemporary art and the strategy of having material explaining the policies (and particularly the collections policy) of the gallery available to visitors seems a good way of making public some of the essential thinking operating in the management of a collection. It is, however, itself a revealing indication of the level of public concern and confusion concerning the workings of museums and galleries and their staff.

The distrust of the professionalism of the artist is even more acute than that of art experts. There is a commonly voiced belief that contemporary art does not involve a high level of skill (Weinrich, *Globe and Mail*, 13 Nov. 1993, D7; Richard Gratton, *Globe and Mail*, 1 Oct. 1993, A28; Lynne Wright, *Globe and Mail*, 29 Nov. 1993, A15). In the context of the Rothko controversy these factors precipitated comments such as: ‘a child could do just as well’ (Jean McLarty in Jonathan Kingstone’s article, ‘It’s p-arty time!’ in the *Toronto Sun*, 31 July 1993); ‘The Ottawa paintings lack the great color combinations and artistic style of those from a four-year-old,’ (Tim Reed in Jonathan Kingstone’s article, ‘It’s p-arty time!’ in the *Toronto Sun*, 31 July 1993), and endless assertions that various children’s parents knew their progeny could do better (e.g., Ashley’s mother quoted in the same article). Linwood Barclay, a columnist for the *Toronto Star* attempted to prove the point by giving his two children markers and paper with which the siblings dutifully produced their versions of *No.16*. The *Toronto Star* then ran a mini-quiz showing the children’s pictures and the original in black and
Plate 4: ASHLEY CHALLINOR, aged 8, *Rainbow*, and JESSICA REITIG, aged 9, *No. 8.*
Reproduced from *The Saturday Sun*, 31 July 1993, 23.

Plate 6: JONATHAN TAMIN, aged 12, No. 16. Reproduced from The Saturday Sun, 31 July 1993, 23.
POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENT
... Lawrence Szewciw, 11, and his dog Bear, right, combined for an impressive recreation of Rothko's No. 16. That's Bear's signature at the bottom, by the way.

Plate 7: LAWRENCE SZEWCIW, aged 11, No. 16.
Reproduced from The Saturday Sun, 31 July 1993, 23.
Plate 8: JAY BROWN, aged 11, No.16.
Reproduced from The Saturday Sun, 31 July 1993, 23.
white same-size reproductions with a challenge to its readers to identify the Rothko original amongst the three images.

The *Toronto Sun* went one stage further and launched a wholesale challenge to children aged between 3 and 12 years to send them their efforts based on the title ‘No. 8’. The published winning entries are predictable: a colourful rainbow (Plate 4), a literal representation of eight circles balanced in a strong design (Plate 4), and a number of would-be *No.16s* (Plates 5 and 6), one or two incorporating some expression of their makers - the footprint of a favourite pet (Plate 7), or the bold inclusion of a flower (Plate 8).

Children were not the only would-be Rothkos: on 17 July 1993 the *Toronto Sun* ran a half-page photo of Oliver Went of Scarboro, claiming he had ‘done’ a *No.16* with a paint roller and a sheet of drywall in 7 minutes. The caption ran: ‘MASTERPIECE II... it took Oliver Went of Scarboro just seven minutes to paint this replica of the $1.8million artwork No.16’. Mr. Went’s seven-minute Rothko was painted on a 4’ x 6’ sheet of drywall with a paint roller and was therefore considerably smaller than the original, painted on the wrong material, with the wrong paint and the wrong type of brush. The composition was also inaccurate and no acknowledgement was made of any intellectual or artistic enterprise Rothko had brought to the making of the original. Hardly a replica, but the bravado and confidence with which this imitation was publicly presented revealed the lack of any acknowledged skill or technical know-how in Rothko’s original work.
This issue of skill and training in art was addressed by Richard Gratton in the Globe and Mail, who argued that although historically artists were required to have skills acquired through rigorous apprenticeship for several years, contemporary artists have abandoned ‘finely tuned skills’ in favour of ‘a priority on self-expression and imagination’, resulting in ‘the sophomoric exploration of creative energy’ (Richard Gratton, Globe and Mail, 1 Oct. 1993, A28).

The technical skills of contemporary artists is not addressed well in the media. Some months after the Rothko controversy had subsided, the Globe and Mail ran a column in its ‘Facts and Arguments’ feature written by a reader essentially complaining about the appearance of art college students at lunchtime outside a reputable art college in Toronto, and then asserting (with no reference to any specific work) that they did no work, produced nothing of value and had no talent. Such writing serves only to emphasize public ignorance about what art is, what ‘doing it’ involves, and apparently what art students of today learn at college.

The visible technical skill of the artist is so crucial to what is popularly conceived of as ‘art’ that if a viewer deems artistic skill to be absent, the artistic worth of a painting is immediately brought into question. This issue of skill is brought into focus most sharply in abstract art, which deliberately denies any attempt at representing specific subject matter. Rather than seeing non-representational art as art with a different agenda, non-representational art is
popularly denied the nomination to art at all, and problems with modern or contemporary art polarize around this issue of representation (the Art Gallery of Ontario is constantly lobbied to exhibit the work of photorealist naturalists, for example).

In addition to its perceived lack of meaning and technical failings, other viewers rejected the Rothko as failing to: generate emotion (Rudy Buller, Globe and Mail, 10 Aug 93 - this contributor does not include exasperation as an emotional response); engendering no feelings of universality or human experience (Lynne Wright, Globe and Mail, 27 Nov. 93); lacking in detail and depth (Patrick Maheu, Globe and Mail, 18 Aug 93); and communicating obscurely if at all (Martin Berkovitz, Globe and Mail, 8 Sept. 93).

On the other side, there were those who argued that they were 'overwhelmed by the unnameable spirituality' of Rothko's work (Jonathan Bordo, Toronto Star, 23 July 93, A23), that No. 16 was 'a message communicated through symbolic strokes and colour melding' (Jason Scovel, Globe and Mail, 21 July 1993, A20), or as Earla Alexander put it, 'Art is a mind/body/spirit thing; and don't forget the spirit lift. It is there and the game is to find it' (Globe and Mail, 28 Aug 93, D7).

Game indeed. In the case of examining the controversy surrounding the purchase of Rothko's No. 16, it appears that for every position statement in the newspapers, there can be found an argument and counterargument. One journalist
in the *Toronto Star* articulated the seeming impasse:

How do we understand this outrage, this repeated outbreak of popular resentment against modern art? How does one understand the schism in consciousness that surrounds the modern work of art between those who experience it and dwell within its medium of meaning, and those who experience only its naked materiality and are overwhelmed by its apparent simple-mindedness?


Glen Lowry, the director of the Art Gallery of Ontario at the time of the Rothko controversy, also acknowledged the divide between those who supported contemporary art and those who rejected it, and attributed the absence of any meaningful exchange to have been ‘the result of our collective failure to have developed a means of talking about troubling issues and ideas’ (Glen Lowry, *Globe and Mail*, 3 Nov. 1993, C2).

The difficulty in examining the controversy concerning the painting is not one of finding arguments or opinions, but rather finding a mechanism to deal with the seemingly bewildering plethora of differing and often contradictory ideas voiced by viewers. What is needed is a way of analysing viewer responses to art, not merely in the sense of what they say, but in terms of the nature of the underlying assumptions revealed in voiced opinions. The opinions laid bare in the Rothko controversy are related to the purchase of the painting, but most
importantly are rooted in values: values concerning the worth of art; what constitutes great art; the value of art in society; the values of a society; the value of culture and the institutions charged with preserving and representing culture, and so on.

Dealing with the problems raised in the context of the Rothko controversy presents the art educator with a need to be able to understand the different sets of values operating in viewer responses to art. This is particularly important when initial responses lead to hasty judgement and rejection of a work of art, inhibiting future experiences and the potential for effective educational provision. One way of examining the values held by viewers is by looking at viewers’ assumptions that arise from fundamental ideas about how the world works: their ‘world views’. An understanding of viewers’ differing world views and their underlying epistemological assumptions offers the educator not only an analytical tool for identifying the nature of some of the problems viewers have with abstract art, but also the potential for developing a practical response.

**World Views**

This study is premised on a recognition that although there may be individual differences of interpretation with regard to art, there are nevertheless patterns in experience and interpretation which are socio-culturally determined.

This study is concerned with developing a conceptual framework that could
be used as a pedagogical tool for identifying different world views operating in viewers' experiences in viewing art, and exploring the ramifications of their inherent epistemological assumptions.

The conceptual framework developed in this study is based on the work of Stephen Pepper (1942, 1945). Pepper defined a range of world views (or world hypotheses, as he termed them), which reveal different ideas about the nature of reality and the ways in which that reality is known. These differing world views operate on both an individual and a social level within a culture: they operate for the individual in determining individual perceptions of the world, but these individual perceptions then affect and determine wider socio-cultural attitudes.

According to Pepper, people organize the information they acquire according to broadly drawn metaphorical frameworks which describe particular epistemological orientations (Pepper 1942). He proposed that different philosophical positions (world views) generate different ways of interpreting experience and making claims concerning knowledge or belief based on various forms of evidence. Each world view describes a particular propositional understanding of the nature of reality. Pepper identified six world hypotheses: mechanism, formism, contextualism, organicism, animism, and mysticism.

Each world hypothesis is characterized by a root metaphor. These are respectively: the machine in mechanism; similarity in formism; the historic event in contextualism; integration in organicism; spirit in animism, and love in
mysticism. These metaphors generally characterize the understanding of experience and determination of action for anyone operating largely under one of the hypotheses. Accordingly, the formist generally looks for similarities, perceives value in relation to ideal norms, and bases truth in the correspondence of elements.

Pepper did not claim that people should be or are consistent in their subscription to one hypothesis. In fact, he advocated 'rational clarity in theory and reasonable eclecticism in practice' (WH 330).

What Pepper’s theory offers is an opportunity to explore some of the parameters of the philosophically consistent positions he outlines and how these imply particular consequences. In effect, Pepper offers us several pairs of glasses which reveal different ways of perceiving the world. Pepper invites us to try on these different frames and to become aware of the bases of different ways of understanding.

Summary

The phenomenon of recurring controversies involving abstract art such as the National Gallery of Canada’s purchase of Rothko’s No.16 reveals a persistent popular inability to accept abstraction as a valid form of art. The range of objections voiced in the course of the Rothko controversy seem consistent with the distinct epistemological orientations as originally defined in Pepper’s World Hypotheses. Using the concept of world view it is possible to go beyond the more
limited understanding of noting the differing types of objection or the frequency of particular objections that people have voiced in this particular case, and to assess the underlying world views that generate those particulars. An understanding of world view offers not only the possibility of more generalized comprehension of the epistemological bases of responses to abstract art, but also a broader appreciation of the nature of the controversies themselves.

In an educational setting, the ability to see the bases on which both we as educators and our students as learners hold our views is essential in the process of becoming aware of what we know and how we know it. As teachers, we should understand the fundamental bases of what we are teaching. The concept of world views can be used as a framework to begin to analyze underlying reasons for differences in knowledge, belief and notions of truth, and to recognize particular perspectives and their concomitant assumptions.
CONTEXTS FOR LOOKING:

HEART AND MIND

In the previous chapter I established the need for a mechanism to understand viewer responses to abstract art in relation to what viewers brought to a viewing experience of such art. I argued that the different world views operating in viewers' experiences in viewing art carried with them different sets of epistemological assumptions that could be better understood using a framework such as Pepper's *World Hypotheses* (Pepper 1942). With an understanding of the underlying world views that generate responses to art, the phenomenon of recurring controversies surrounding abstract art in the public eye can not only be better understood, but also anticipated. Such understanding has potential use for the educator in planning educational provision.

In this section I look at the ideas and research that surround understanding public controversy over abstract art, and indicate how they have helped to determine the shape of this study. I concentrate my scrutiny in three primary areas: viewer response to art and abstract art in particular; educational provision; and the notion of world views. The emphasis here is not so much *how* people look at art as a process and the many methods to encourage looking as a means to
understanding, nor the differing types of responses viewers have as foci of interest in and of themselves. My emphasis is rather on what it is that viewers bring to a viewing experience and how existing assumptions and expectations shape and affect the responses people have to art. A fundamental premise of this study is that an understanding of viewers' starting points will help the educator to choose an appropriate strategy for extending viewer encounters with art.

The trigger for this study is visible in public reactions to abstract art displayed in or acquired by public galleries. The implications of the study have ramifications for educational provision in both the museum and formal educational settings. My review reflects this duality.

**Viewer Response**

My intention in this domain is to examine studies pertaining to viewer response to art, and where possible, particularly abstract art. I have considered the contexts of the museum and the school.

**Viewer response - the museum perspective**

Studies pertaining to viewer response to art in a museum context usually take the form of surveys, with or without personal interviews, and are generally undertaken by particular museums relating to their collections and their specific audiences (NEA 1985, Nichols 1990). Generally, this is done for two reasons:
first, so that the museum can assess and address the needs of its actual visitors; and second, so that the museum might attract new visitors by assessing and addressing other needs that may not currently be being met.

In reviewing the available literature on viewer response I concentrated my attention on the literature dealing with viewer responses to art in museums, paying particular attention to whether the available research dealt with broader issues of viewer beliefs, rather than particular responses relating to specific collections. In the context of this thesis, I am less concerned with visitor response in specific museums to particular works of art (see my discussion later in this section on the benefits and limitations of doing this in relation to the example of Barnett Newman's *Voice of Fire*) than I am in understanding patterns of viewer response to abstract art. With such an understanding I will argue that it is possible to uncover the underlying reasons for the consistency of the phenomenon of recurring controversies about abstract art, anticipate potential problems and formulate appropriate educational responses.

One of the most extensive studies on visitor response was conducted by Melora McDermott-Lewis at the Denver Art Museum (McDermott-Lewis 1990). This is a useful study to examine in the context of this thesis, as the Denver study concentrated on the expectations and responses of 'novice' viewers and the majority of the public would be categorized as 'novice' under the criteria of the
study. The purpose of the Denver project was to try to discover more about the ideas and reactions of novice viewers in order to devise appropriate programming for them. Although the collection at the Denver Art Museum is a general collection and not specifically a modern one, the findings do reveal trends in expectations and responses of novice viewers which are useful when examining problems of audiences with abstract art.

Given the characteristic expectations, attitudes and experiences of novice viewers found in the Denver study, some of the public reactions to modern and abstract art are predictable. For example, the Denver Report found that 85% of novices in the study wanted the 'peaceful and the positive' (McDermott-Lewis 1990, 2), the pleasant (ibid., 2). They generally avoided works that startled them or made them feel uncomfortable. Furthermore, 56% expected a visit to have therapeutic value, while 69% regarded a museum visit as a 'little corner of revitalization' (ibid., 3). Generally novices discussed the terms 'appreciate' and 'enjoy' (ibid., 3). This being the case, it should come as no surprise that work that does not provide these will not please.

Similarly, the Report found that:

- 90% of novices took a very reactive stance in their looking.
- 93% concentrated on 'the perceptually obvious', the more concrete and

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1 Novice viewers were defined in the Denver study as 'visitors with moderate to high interest in art, but little or no formal background' (McDermott-Lewis 1990, 1).
self-evident aspects of a work. Mainly they focused on subject matter.

- 80% wandered through the galleries until something ‘caught their eye’.
- Novices were quick to form judgements about what they liked and disliked or whether something was ‘good’ or ‘bad’ and frequently confounded the two.
- In general, 85% of novices wanted works to be pleasant, to show ‘talent’, and to have an easily accessible meaning.

Novices defined ‘talent’ in paintings as:

1) realistic or ‘lifelike’ (85%),
2) detailed, intricate, or painstaking (60%),
3) something they themselves were not capable of doing (50%).

- 95% thought that having an emotional response to a work of art was a large part, if not most, of their experience of that piece.

- 90% novices wanted the art they looked at to ‘touch some spot in [their] life,’ to ‘relate to something [they had] done, seen, or felt’.

- 80% used works of art as touchstones of personal associations, memories, or what one woman called ‘life thoughts’.

- The meanings novices derived from works were often very personal and frequently idiosyncratic.

(summarized from the Denver Report, McDermott-Lewis 1990)

There are obvious problems in viewer strategies relying on the recognition of subject matter when dealing with abstract art. If novices concentrate on what they can recognise (particularly in the case of subject-matter), and at the same time are looking for realism and detail, then the large, abstract canvases in which
technique may be used towards more expressive or technical ends rather than illusory potential, are more likely to be rejected. Much Post-Impressionist art is not rooted in traditional aesthetic principles of beauty and pleasure. Often, abstract art is art about art; art which challenges the idea of art itself and denies traditional media or presentation. It can be art to inspire dissent, controversy or discussion. As Ronnie Boudreaux, the famously infamous exponent of 'Pathetic' art said,

The image may be simple, even stupid, but the concept is not....And if viewers have to think to figure out why it is art, so much the better.

(R. Boudreaux, Globe and Mail, 5 December 1992)

The reactions of novice viewers in the Denver study indicate that novices do not necessarily want to 'think to figure out why it is art'.

These problems of unmet personal expectations and established patterns of response are only in part problems of negative reaction to individual pieces. The Denver Museum used the information gained in this study to try to counter dismissive responses in novices by devising labelling which used questions to encourage interactive engagement between the viewer and various (particular) paintings in the collections. The questions were carefully designed to exploit the results of the study. For example: recognising the interest of novice viewers in the artist behind the picture, labels were designed to raise aspects of a painting that might reveal information about the artist; acknowledging the desire of novice
viewers to feel personal connection with works, questions deliberately tried to afford opportunities for viewers to associate personal memories with particular works. These strategies present very specific, blow-by-blow solutions for perceived issues relating to individual paintings in the Denver collection. On a practical level, such provision demands a high level of professional resources. In planning provision generally in the museum setting, it would be very helpful to have a broader, principle-based understanding of the problems at hand, such as I argue are afforded by an understanding of world views.

A further issue in expert-novice museum research relates to its being a top-down model of knowledge transmission from those most-in-the-know, to those lesser-in-the-know, but who can be brought ‘up to snuff’ if they follow a program devised to encourage following in the path of the expert experience of looking at art. This expert-novice paradigm assumes that the expert experience is best, and that ultimately all viewers want the type of experience an expert has. As Weil states, ‘this notion of the "museum as transmitter" both over-estimates the role of the museum’s intentions and underestimates the wealth and emotional range of visitor responses’ (Weil 1990, 63). Weil goes on to say that the assumption that ‘the facts, values, and skills possessed by those responsible for its [the museum’s] operation are consistently superior to the facts, values and skills possessed by its

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2 See the work of Csikszentmihalyi for the most long-term, extensive and sensitive exploration of the expert-novice model (Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson, 1990).
visitors' is unacceptable and that we need to develop a much broader vision of what the experience of the museum can be, arguing that 'museum goers may legitimately be seeking frivolous diversion, consolation, social status, an opportunity for reverence, companionship, solitude, or innumerable other group or individual goals' (Weil 1990, 63).

The need for a better understanding of the visitor is a central problem for museums and galleries. In their extensive review of the state of museum education in twenty American art museums, Eisner and Dobbs (1986, 61) reported that 'numerous interviews of museum educators indicated that they wished they had a better understanding of how people learn to see', and that one museum educator wanted 'to see some people who are basically social psychologists look at audiences and come and tell us what kinds of things audiences constantly seek in this kind of an environment and with objects'.

It is appropriate to mention here that following the earlier controversy of the National Gallery of Canada's announcement of its purchase of Barnett Newman's Voice of Fire (Plate 2) in 1990, a book was finally published in 1996 reviewing the debacle (Barber, Guilbaut and O'Brian 1996). This book, Voices of Fire, looked at the context of the controversy, chronicled the media coverage and events, and included scholarly essays and the proceedings of a symposium organized by the National Gallery of Canada that took place six months after the controversy erupted. In the preface to the anthology the editors state their
intentions to be:

to describe the controversy as fully as possible, providing both a historical account of the outcome of the National Gallery’s purchase of the painting and an understanding of why the gallery’s actions provoked such strong opinions and feelings. We also intend to address the peculiar and paradoxical character of abstract art in general and the problems it consistently poses for viewers. The work of Barnett Newman is presented as the focus of these concerns.

(Barber, Guilbault and O’Brian 1996, viii)

While the volume certainly succeeds in giving a rich and interesting account of the context of the Barnett Newman controversy, it is less successful in its general reflections and in particular in dealing with why abstract work is a problem for viewers. One reason for this is that the focus is indeed on the painting and its particular context rather than on the viewer. Having sifted through the historical context of the Voice of Fire controversy and presented a chronology of events, collection of cartoons, reports, letters and other public exchanges in the media relating to the painting, the editors present a section of critical essays in which ‘each of the three essayists locates his arguments within a separate discourse on modernist culture, thereby offering a very different account of the controversy and its significance’ (Barber, Guilbault and O’Brian 1996, ix). The editors go on to summarize the three contributions:
In ‘Vox Ignis Vox Populi,’ Thierry de Duve reflects on the social processes by which art becomes art, and considers two pastiches made after *Voice of Fire*, one by an artist, the other by a non artist. He argues that the pastiches are important not only for what they can tell us about *Voice of Fire*, but also for what they say about the aesthetics of modernity. In ‘Thalia Meets Melpomene,’ Bruce Barber focuses on the role of print media - writers, editors, cartoonists - in shaping public opinion about art - how, for example, they can productively (or not so productively) contaminate institutional discourses about aesthetic matters. In ‘Who’s afraid of Barnett Newman?’ John O’Brian considers the demonization of *Voice of Fire* in 1990 against the backdrop of the world’s fair in Montreal, Expo 67, for which Newman produced the painting. He argues that the different cultural frames established for the painting in Montreal and Ottawa were paramount in determining the gazes levelled at the work.

(Barber, Guilbaut and O’Brian 1996, ix)

It is clear from these summaries that the essays (written respectively by a professor who has authored a number of works on modern art; a professor, artist and writer on culture; and a professor of art history) are directed at the immediate controversy and the painting, and while they deepen and enrich our perception of the Barnett Newman controversy itself, the mode of discussion is closer to the gallery and academia than it is to understanding the concerns of the confused viewer.

The book concludes with the four papers that were ‘delivered by experts on
Newman’ [my italics] at the symposium organized by the National Gallery, and here again, it could be argued that the experts usurp the space of the ‘vox populi,’ rather than creating a space for its understanding. Only at the very end is there an exchange between the speakers and their audience in the context of a general discussion concluding the symposium and an opportunity to see real concerns voiced and specific responses. The editors state that ‘each of the four speakers investigates value systems that are articulated by Voice of Fire, arriving at markedly different conclusions’ (Barber, Guilbaut and O’Brian 1996, ix), but what is really missing are the value systems of the viewers that underlie the problematic reception of abstract art in general.

In order to examine the expectations and pre-conceptions the viewer brings to an art experience, it is necessary to go beyond the limited responses identified in ad hoc studies and look beyond immediate experiences to the underlying world views that generate those particulars. This requires a pluralistic framework that addresses not just the concerns of art or science, but is able to look at all areas of experience and knowledge including art. It is this need that this study addresses.

Viewer response - the school perspective

In contrast to the largely informal educational milieu of the museum, the school system is a formal educational setting in which viewers are likely to have received varying degrees of visual education.
Within the context of the formal school system, research concerns focus on learning to look at art and eliciting student responses, rather than concentrating on the preconceptions of students. Some educators think that it is in fact easier to work with children on abstract art because they are more open-minded and do not yet have the hang-ups that adults often bring to looking at art (Cole 1996). The issue of strong negative reaction is not only less likely, but also less damaging in the school milieu in the sense that pupils cannot choose not to attend lessons because they do not want to look at certain works of art, and attendance and grades are often important motivators for participating in critical art activities regardless of personal judgement.

There are essentially three starting positions regarding viewer response to art (Clark 1994). The first supports the theory that looking at art is a cognitive activity (Fry 1956, Bell 1958, Smith 1970, Eisner 1972, Broudy 1976, Taylor and Andrews 1993); the second, that looking at art is an intuitive and emotional activity (Read 1943, Bullough 1959, Santayana 1959, Kierkegaard 1959), and the third, that looking combines elements of cognition and emotion (Bergson 1911, Dewey 1916, Tolstoy 1959, Chandler 1965, Parsons 1986, Weltzl-Fairchild 1991, and Best 1996). These positions lead to two broad educational thrusts: that 'looking' can be taught to varying degrees, resulting in curricula including instruction in visual literacy (Dondis 1973, Lanier 1982 and 1990, Matoba 1985, Mansell 1991, Pearse 1992); and that looking is an individual and personal
enterprise (Abbs 1996).

Current educational trends in art curriculum development reflect an emphasis on cognitive elements of visual response (Dobbs 1992, DFE 1995, Ontario Ministry of Education and Training 1995). There are now numerous studies within the field of art education defining what it means to be 'visually literate' and what particular skills, knowledge and understanding this might entail and what strategies and methods can be used to encourage informed looking (see above).

Historically, however, there has also been emphasis on intuitive responses to and in art evident in the 'child art' proponents of the early-mid twentieth century (Rugg and Schumaker 1928, Cane 1932, Cizek in Viola 1936 and 1942, and Richardson 1946). The work of these 'creative self-expressionists' (Efland 1990) was revised and reinvigorated through Read (1943), Lowenfeld (1947), and Gaitskell and Hurwitz (1958), with whom the focus shifted from personal expression to personal development with the possibility of transforming not only the individual, but potentially society as well.

While I would argue that there are bodies of information one can learn about art which can inform and enrich a viewer's response to art, there is no denying the importance and effect of a 'gut reaction' to particular paintings rooted in personal experience. Preference should be allowed to be personal; judgements about the worth of art in an educational context need to be grounded and
Dealing with the problems raised in the context of the Rothko controversy presents the art educator with a need to be able to identify the foundations on which opinions are based in order to help the viewer articulate his or her own position, while at the same time, presenting alternative frames of reference for the acknowledgement of possible alternative perspectives of value. It is important that a teacher have a working knowledge of different approaches and understands their epistemological foundations, because although a curriculum may be based on coherent foundations, such foundations may be at odds with the operating frameworks of the viewer. (For example, a curriculum that favours a cognitive approach when a viewer places priority on emotional response to a work, or vice versa.) An inability to understand or address such differences may leave viewers without a starting point and educators without an appropriate base from which to work.

Although there have been educators who have analyzed different instructional methods and orientations to the art curriculum, they have not accounted adequately for the differing epistemological orientations of the viewers or students concerned. Pepper provides a tool with which to achieve this.
Educational provision

The counterpoint to viewer response to art in an educational context is the educational provision, or curriculum, set up for the viewer.

I deal with the literature pertaining to educational provision in two sections: the museum and the school. Although there is some overlap in the two fields, they increasingly generate their own literature as a result of the very different educational contexts in which the research is both conducted and deployed.

Educational provision - the museum perspective

The museum is a very specific arena for educational provision, with unique qualities. The museum is an elective educational institution in the sense that although it is generally mandated to make educational provision for its visitors, the visitors themselves are obliged neither to visit nor to learn. The museum-going audience is only a small percentage of the general population. Those who do visit may only do so occasionally and may not be in the museum for long, thus diminishing the opportunities for potential educational experiences. The museum has to cater for viewers with wide ranges of experience with art (most of whom are novices), and has to deal with them primarily 'as they come'. The Denver study shows that not only do novices dislike anything other than 'light' learning experiences (McDermott-Lewis 1990, 3), but they also do not look at any work for very long (McDermott-Lewis 1990, 8).
Most museums attempt to affect and extend the experiences of a visit through tours, lectures or other programming. Of course, visitor contact time with tour guides or curators is generally limited, as is the availability of time and the funding for training such staff. Practical constraints such as security, gallery space and visitor circulation also factor into provision. Furthermore there is also the difficulty of attempting to make provision for individuals or groups of unknown backgrounds and levels of expertise. Following its study of novice and expert viewer responses to art, Denver Art Museum decided to concentrate on its labelling provision to encourage extended interactive engagement between the viewer and various paintings on display in the galleries (see pp.37-38 above for details).

However, if a viewer believes strongly that his or her immediate emotional response is the all-important factor in deciding whether a work has worth or not, then it may be beside the point how carefully an educational programme has been developed, because if it is totally at odds with the operating values employed by a viewer, he or she could well reject the program provision outright. For example, 40% of novice participants in the Denver study felt knowledge was not necessary for their enjoyment of a piece, and that sometimes it was irrelevant, while 15% believed knowledge could ruin their experience with a work of art. These viewers are unlikely to read labels however carefully constructed by the museum. An understanding of world views would afford museum educators a
philosophically rigorous framework with which to identify viewer values, and a tool with which to plan educational provision that would both accommodate but also critically examine different value systems.

The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York has undertaken an extensive study which indicates that the scope of a viewer’s prior experience in looking at art greatly affects learning experiences and that the initial stages of growth for the art viewer are very demanding (Housen, Miller and Yenawine 1991). Growth is facilitated once the foundations have been built, but the study indicates that it is extremely difficult in the museum setting to get novice viewers to make any progress at all in aesthetic development. MoMA uses an expert-novice model as the basis for its educational provision, with an emphasis on acquiring ‘visual literacy’ through a carefully structured process (Housen, Miller and Yenawine 1991, i). In the MoMA Research and Evaluation Study - Year 1 (Housen, Miller and Yenawine 1991), teachers in the Teacher Workshops are advocated ‘to suspend making judgments until after we have gathered as much visual information as possible’ on the grounds that ‘if we begin our examination with a particular interpretation in mind, we may screen out information that does not fit within our preconceived hypothesis’. However, those preconceptions are likely there whether the viewer is aware of them or not. It may be the case that without an appropriate acknowledgement and follow up of a viewer’s initial response, there may be no meaningful further interaction.
Any curricular provision which does not deal with the bases for initial (often emotional) viewer response is unlikely to be able to address problems of outright rejection, however generally successful a programme is.

One interesting and, I believe, radically different approach to educational provision has been piloted at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) in Toronto as the ‘Ask Me’ program. This programme was started in 1993 ‘geared to developing visitors’ confidence in looking at contemporary art by demystifying the viewing process...achieved by answering specific questions from visitors immediately, on site, and geared directly to their individual level’ (Inwood and Topp 1993, 1). Docent training was spent partly with curators, who gave information on the contemporary installations; much time was also spent on ‘the introduction and practice of animateuring strategies, such as how to initiate contact with visitors and how to guide discussions’ (Inwood and Topp, 1993, 4).

Interestingly, the report on the ‘Ask Me’ program identified the most difficult problems being some of the principle objections that have been raised in the Rothko controversy:

The most difficult types of enquiries to deal with are those that require justifying why a certain work is in the collection, or having to rationalize why these objects are works of art. Also identified as problematic

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3 Interpretative strategies included: compare and contrast; describe, analyze, interpret and judge (see Chapman 1992, Feldman 1987); look to the media, images and ideas; use your imagination, and make up a story.
are those visitors who are angry or confrontational about the works or the Gallery; trying to defuse their negativity has proven challenging and in many cases frustrating.

(Inwood and Topp 1991, 10)

A coherent understanding of differing world views would be useful to the museum educator in giving a broad overview as a preliminary for finding a starting point to deal with initial viewer reactions. For initiatives such as the AGO 'Ask Me' program, an understanding of pluralism would offer a philosophically consistent underpinning for the orientation of the program and a coherent conceptual framework on which to base strategies for dealing with the different value perspectives of viewers.

Another way in which a knowledge of world views would meet a voiced need in museum and gallery provision is in its ability to foster an understanding of pluralistic outlooks on a fundamental but coherent and consistent level. Earlier museum reports stressed the need for structural pluralism within museums and galleries as institutions:

It is the obligation of inherently pluralistic institutions such as museums to ensure that their organizational structures reflect cultural diversity and equal opportunity.

(AAM 1984, 32)
Although there is still major concern that museums as organizations should reflect the pluralism of society, more recently real concern for answering the diverse learning needs of pluralistic audiences has arisen (AAM 1992, 3; Anderson 1997, 29). While museums and galleries have long paid attention to educational learning research (e.g., the review articles by Dierking 1991; Kropf 1989 and Wolins 1993), without some overarching metaperspective from which to view the various options, choices are still susceptible to being random. Systematic pluralism may help in giving the decision-making process concerning provision in galleries and museums a supporting structure.

Educational provision - the school perspective

In addition to studio activities, many school curricula now advocate the inclusion of critical, historical and aesthetic aspects of art acknowledging the different forms and purposes of art: Discipline-Based Art Education in America (Crawford 1987, Kleinbauer 1987, Risatti 1987), the National Curriculum in Britain (DFE 1995) and the Common Curriculum in Canada (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training 1995) are major curricular initiatives that include provision for these areas in art.

Although this bodes well for educational provision in theory, in practice, teachers are often unable to support the requirements of including critical, historical and aesthetic aspects of art education into their teaching. There are a
number of reasons for this. Teachers' own experiences of art in school are often very different from the types of experience they are now being advised to provide, not only in the content of material, but also in the varied classroom organization and pedagogical practices the recommended breadth of provision requires. In practice, this means teachers cannot address the new requirements by drawing on their own experiences. There is also insufficient time in teacher training courses (particularly the one-year postgraduate courses) to acquire the knowledge and practical skills needed in order to deliver a broader curriculum, and there are increasingly restricted opportunities for in-service professional development to address the professional implications of implementing a comprehensive art curriculum. Increasingly limited resources are also problematic for teachers trying to establish broad curricular provision requiring not only disposable studio materials, but also audio-visual equipment and reference books.

While many of the current educational initiatives acknowledge the importance of being able to appreciate different forms and purposes of art, the literature in both museums and schools tends to produce strategies for looking (see viewer response section above) or case study examples of educational practice with specific works or types of works in specific situations (see Newsom and Silver 1978 - a collection of reviews of 105 programs chosen from 71 institutions).

Many of the educational programmes in place that cater to modern art, be they expert/novice driven programmes that have been generated in different forms
by museums such as Denver or MoMA, or the Discipline-based art education programmes advocated by the Getty Museum for the school system, are applied curricular provisions which do not necessarily deal with the bases for initial (often emotional) viewer responses. The point I am making here is not that these educational programmes or curricula are bad: carefully organized curricula which support critical, historical, aesthetic and studio elements of art education in either the museum or school are valuable resources for the art educator. However, the initial emotional response, acknowledged to be an important starting point for the viewer (Parsons 1987, Clark 1994), is also a potential block for the educator, and it is the failure to deal adequately with these initial responses that lies at the centre of controversies such as that surrounding Rothko’s No. 16.

There is therefore an educational need for understanding the differing ‘starting blocks’ of the viewer as a potential learner. Systematic pluralism offers the teacher a tool, not only to identify several different epistemological frameworks, their assumptions and attendant logical conclusions, but also to challenge from within a coherent analytical framework those assumptions on the part of the viewer that close down a learning experience and generate the reaction: ‘I don’t like this painting; it’s rubbish’.

Discussion in art education concerning the ramifications of the many different forms of visual expression we now have access to falls broadly under the umbrella of ‘critical studies’. Within critical studies there is widespread
acknowledgement of the pluralism of societies and cultures and the need for art education to reflect the differing forms of visual expressions produced at different times and in different places, although the degree to which this should happen and the methods of practice are contentious (see Swift 1996).

The issue of terminology is important in reviewing art educational research. When ‘pluralism’ is referred to in the context of this literature, it is most commonly used to refer to a ‘plurality’ of elements (often a plurality of cultures and cultural practices and embedded in multiculturalism), as opposed to the type of structural philosophical pluralism I will go on to distinguish later in this chapter. For example, Swift (1996) defines a ‘pluralist’ position as one of six positions on cultural identity:

This [pluralist] view accepts the multiplicity of cultural values and artefacts, but rather than attempting to classify by superiority, examines and entertains the richness that diversity allows. It refrains from making judgements based on those from ‘alien’ cultures or from narrow aesthetic positions, and seeks to contextualize any experience in order to better understand and appreciate its quality. In this sense it is open to a variety of impressions, to all forms of visual making, to both ‘high’ and ‘low’ art, and its value judgements are contextualized rather than claiming universality.

(Swift 1996, 13)

It is clear from this definition that this position is truly pluralist in the sense of acknowledging a plurality of cultural values and artefacts. Swift’s resistance
to judge is typical of a pluralist stance that prefers to contextualize and set objects and values side by side rather than hierarchically.

This lack of comparative evaluation and judgement in pluralism concerns Meecham (1996):

The bewildering variety of cultural practices and, crucially, the lack of a language with which to deal with them, particularly in the visual arts, has led to some disparate and desperate solutions....An alternative has been to abandon any notion of evaluation and opt for a cheerful diversification that sees every object and crucially every interpretation of an object as worthwhile. There is a growing tendency to deny art work any autonomy, encouraging a system of 'looking' that is profoundly ahistoric.

(Meecham 1996, 71)

Part of the difficulty of dealing with the variety of cultural values is identified by Meecham as 'the lack of a language with which to deal with them' (Meecham 1996, 71). She states that it is necessary 'to acknowledge that other cultures do exist and are cultures worth working with...[and] to accept that other cultures do not operate on the same value systems' (Meecham 1996, 74). Significantly, she also argues:

If pluralism is to mean anything...a future art history/art practice that really does embrace knowledge and understanding will have to broaden its agenda and crucially re-evaluate its hidden assumptions and desires.

(Meecham 1996, 74)
It is precisely the examination of 'hidden assumptions and desires' that this study explores: an examination that I argue is supported by an understanding and application of world views.

Speaking from a Western perspective, one of the most significant aspects of the theory of world hypotheses is that it enables us to come to a better understanding of our own frames of thinking which determine those values we already have, for without an understanding of our own 'hidden assumptions and desires' it is unlikely we will muster the conceptual flexibility to begin to understand other cultures and their artefacts. Moore (1996, 103) argues that 'teachers need to make themselves ever newly aware of this variability [of the perception and representation of different realities through sign systems in different cultures], and in particular to 'distance' themselves from their own cultural preferences as a prerequisite for understanding and appreciating the cultural preferences of others'.

This brings me to an important point. The heart of the difficulty here is understanding one's own value systems and being able to place and frame the sometimes very different value systems of others. There is much discussion on the appropriation of culture and who has the right to talk about what. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to lay bare these controversies, but what is clear is that there needs to be some mechanism to begin the process of understanding, and it is clear from instances such as the Rothko controversy that there is little broad appreciation
of the differing value systems operating within even a Western outlook itself. Given the slight understanding we appear to display of the traditions of thinking that have dominated our education systems and cultural institutions in the West thus far, it is necessary to understand more about those values we currently apply as well as grappling with alternative systems.

Rather than simply setting cultural values and artefacts side by side, Pepper’s theory of world hypotheses offers the opportunity to begin to understand some of the broad but fundamental differences underlying the bases on which different value systems are structured and provides a means within which to support debate.

World Views

The phenomenon of recurring controversies involving abstract art such as the Rothko No.16 reveals a persistent, popular inability to accept abstraction as a valid form of art. This study suggests that although there may be individual differences of interpretation in response to art, there are patterns in experience and interpretation which reflect differing sets of epistemological assumptions operating in viewers’ experiences in viewing art. For the purposes of this study, I am calling these assumptions ‘world views’. This study is concerned with articulating a conceptual framework that could be used to identify different world views and explore the ramifications of their inherent epistemological assumptions and how
these affect and determine the responses viewers have to art.

The conceptual framework developed in this study is based on the concept of World Hypotheses expounded in the work of Stephen Pepper (1942, 1945). Philosophically, Pepper’s constitution is that of a ‘systematic pluralist’. **Pluralism** refers to there being more than one way of looking at the world, as opposed to a monistic viewpoint which argues from a single critical stance (such as modernism, structuralism, deconstructionism, feminism and so on). Even postmodernism, which is broad and eclectic by nature, is monistic in that it is identified by a set of characteristics that distinguish it as being a particular critical position as opposed to any other (notwithstanding that postmodernists have difficulty in agreeing on a definition of postmodernism (Clark 1996)). The difference between World Hypotheses and a monism is that World Hypotheses is a pluralistic metatheory. World Hypotheses is a tool with which *any* theory can be examined as to what sort of value system it represents. World Hypotheses as a form of systematic pluralism looks at a set of values (such as those of postmodernism or modernism) and asks what *type* of value system a set of values represents, whereas individual monisms argue *for* a particular set of values. In the context of this thesis, where many different value systems contribute to the problem addressed, a metatheory that can examine *all* the values operating is essential in the process of understanding the phenomenon under scrutiny.

**Systematic** refers to the different modes of looking at the world as being
orderly, systematic and coherent. Systematic pluralism is not, therefore, a thoroughgoing relativism that would allow any way of looking at the world in limitless variety. Systematic pluralism anticipates commonalities in potential perspectives which reflect limited numbers of world views organized according to groups of particular and coherent characteristics.

Systematic pluralism (sometimes referred to as simply ‘pluralism’) is distinguished in philosophical writings from ‘plurality’. Plurality acknowledges plural ultimate values (Garver 1990); pluralism acknowledges competing ultimate plural values, but also that these are equally possible and adequate. As Garver says,

The challenge to pluralism in philosophy...is to treat competing reasons as reasons while still holding that they are competing. Pluralism requires a commitment to taking other people’s most fundamental and most diverse reasons simultaneously as other and as reasons....Systematic pluralism differs from mere tolerance, relativism or plural monisms by refusing to treat the inside and the outside by different rules: treating one’s own reasons as reason and the outsiders’ reasons as prejudices....

(Garver 1990, 399-400)

Watson (1990) supports this thinking, but also argues that this need to acknowledge the validity of others’ value systems makes systematic philosophy a particularly rewarding frame for reading texts:
Pluralism does not require an abandonment or alteration of one's principles, or any weakening in one's adherence to them. It requires only the abandonment of the unwarranted privileging of one's own philosophy, which is the result of an illusion of its superiority, which is the result of the fact that we understand our own philosophy better than we understand the philosophies of others. A key factor in the development of pluralism is therefore a more accurate and sympathetic reading of texts.

(Watson 1990, 357)

Watson goes on to explain that the 'texts' concerned need not be limited to philosophical texts. Text in Watson's sense could certainly include a work of art, and this draws closer to the problem of this thesis of understanding and addressing the multiple perspectives encountered in viewing particularly abstract art. The disagreements surrounding abstract art are about values, and systematic philosophy has the potential to provide us with a strategy with which to approach different points of view.

Systematic pluralism is a relative newcomer to philosophy and although there are several forms of systematic pluralism (Reck 1990, Watson 1990), there have been comparatively few systematic pluralists. Two are particularly prominent: Stephen Pepper and Richard McKeon. My decision to focus on the work of Stephen Pepper in this study rests on pragmatic considerations. This study is formed within an educational context. I see its potential use in offering
educators a general means of identifying differing hypotheses operating in their teaching situations (for example in fast-moving discussions of works of art), so that operating assumptions may be challenged from some coherent formulation of the problem in hand. In the context of a discussion, the educator needs a general scheme - a broad brush, if you like, to begin to see the boundaries at work. This context does not permit for the fine-tuned and painstaking analysis required by McKeon’s pluralistic scheme (Ford 1990). Furthermore, even though the particulars of Pepper’s writing are sometimes difficult to access, the overall idea of his framework is fairly easily grasped and vitalized through the theory of root metaphor, which is his original contribution (Reck 1990). By contrast, the many distinctions in McKeon’s work would make it very difficult to use his framework without a good deal of information to flesh out the categories he defines. Ford (1990) characterizes Pepper as a ‘lumper’ and McKeon as a ‘splitter’, which captures the broad bent of their individual styles well. As Ford (1990) says, in the event of being able to teach about pluralism, there is much to be said for teaching the outlooks of both Pepper and McKeon (or indeed others) by way of illustrating that consistent with the notion of pluralism, there is a ‘pluralism of pluralisms’. As Watson (1990, 351) states, ‘It is not strange or mysterious that our philosophies differ; it is what we should expect’. For the purposes of this study, the differences in judgement relating to Rothko’s No.16 indicate the need for a structure within which to understand those differences, and as I aim to demonstrate, Pepper’s
World Hypotheses will serve this need well.

Pepper defined six world views, which describe different perceptions about the nature of knowledge, experience, belief and forms of evidence. He termed these world views ‘world hypotheses’ to reflect that each view describes a propositional (or hypothetical) understanding of the nature of reality. (I use both terms throughout this study: world hypothesis is Pepper’s term, but the idea of an individual’s ‘world view’ is more accessible and popularly understood and I vary my use of each according to the context of writing.) The six world views defined by Pepper are: mechanism, formism, contextualism, organicism, animism and mysticism. Each world view is characterized by a root metaphor, which encapsulates the metaphysical understanding of an individual broadly subscribing to that view. These metaphors are: the machine in mechanism, similarity in formism, the historic event in contextualism, integration in organicism, spirit in animism, and love in mysticism.

Pepper did not greatly elaborate on the animistic and mystical world views in his work, as he regarded these hypotheses as inadequate because of the lack of cognitive evidence with which claims within these world views are made. I have defined their categories and characteristics in Chapter 3 and included some discussion of them in Chapter 4 to illustrate why in practice animism and mysticism pose particular problems for the educator.
Applications of World Hypotheses

Pepper's full exposition of his theory of world hypotheses was first published in 1942 in the context of philosophy and metaphysics, using illustrative examples from the field of science. The theory of world hypotheses has been taken up and explored in different contexts: science education (Geddis 1985, Kilbourn 1974, 1998, Ting 1982); learning theory (Davis 1985, McNaughton 1992); medicine (Curtin 1985); psychology (Bethel 1975, Gillespie 1982, Harris, Fontana and Dowds 1977, Parry 1984); speech communication (Axley 1981, Snyder 1982); literary criticism (Caraher 1982, Harakas 1982, Herold 1982); music (Shott 1964); education (Geddis 1982, Kilbourn 1980-81, Long 1990) and widely in philosophy (see citations in World Views section above).

That work which touches on aesthetics has had various foci. Hoeflin (1987) undertook a philosophical investigation of five of Pepper's metaphysical systems (formism, mechanism, contextualism, organicism and selectivism) to demonstrate that each system provided a particular perspective on the issues of truth, beauty and goodness. He contended that formism was aesthetic, mechanism inductive, contextualism ethical, organicism deductive, and selectivism epistemological. The orientation of this study is not to demonstrate that the nature of aesthetics falls

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4 Selectivism was a metaphor developed by Pepper (Pepper 1967) after the principal publications of his World Hypotheses theory (Pepper 1942 and 1945). I discuss selectivism and why I am not including it in this study in Chapter 3.
under any one particular theory, but rather to demonstrate that the aesthetic values of an individual will vary according to whichever theory he or she subscribes to.

Laing (1976) explored a world hypotheses inquiry method to describe the quality of the verbal art critique between a group of students and their tutor at the end of a college course in ceramics. Laing's focus was not the critique of students' ceramic pieces, but the end-of-term critique orchestrated by the tutor, who wanted to engage the students in discussion of issues such as the relative status of the potter against other artists (e.g., painter, sculptor, musician), and what contribution they, as students, made to culture. Laing was interested in whether a contextualist framework could help describe the quality of the discussion as an event itself. He was not investigating the nature of the comments vis-à-vis art or art as experience, but as elements in a discussion. Laing was head of an art department when he undertook the research, but in fact, his study could have worked with another field if that had been his experience. Laing's study, although set in an art classroom, is clearly very different from this study, where the focus is directly concerned with discussion about and response to art and how world views directly affect the nature of the interaction.

Butler (1982) examined the nature of organicism in the context of Mondrian's aesthetics. In discussing Mondrian's aesthetics, Butler argued that:

Mondrian's theories of art and history embody an implicit critique of Pepper's account of organicism in
World Hypotheses…. It is the passage from conflict to integration that Pepper’s theory of organicism does not adequately account for... because it fails to take account of violence as a means of overcoming violence....

(Butler 1982, 425-6)

In Pepper’s acceptance of ‘blocked expectations’ or unexpected juxtapositions in organicism as he defined it, I see no exclusion of the possible rôle of violence in the integration of experience (see Chapter 3 for a detailed account of Pepper’s theory of organicism). Butler’s argument falls outside the focus of this study. However, I will comment in passing that although Mondrian argues for unity and equilibrium, his unity requires the rejection of the past and in particular, mimetic traditions in art. With exclusion of the past and figurative art as prerequisites for Mondrian’s very particular vision of unity and beauty, it could be argued that Mondrian’s proposed organicism is more formist than organicist in Pepperian terms. The end result of Mondrian’s violent rejection of the figurative tradition is not the realization of a non-figurative art as the greater art in an organic process, but the supplanting of all prior figurative work by a superior art.

In concluding this section, I will now turn to the work by Pepper himself that speaks directly to experience in art. As a preliminary to looking at his writing on art, I will briefly mention a few biographical details of Pepper’s, which contextualize his writing and teaching to some degree.
As Efron (1980, 5) tells us, Pepper's father was an artist and between the ages of two and eight Pepper grew up in Paris, where his father was attending art schools. Pepper literally grew up with art and artists and in 1926 published an article, 'The Influence of Japanese on European Painting' even before his first published article on metaphor in philosophy (Efron 1980, 12). During his academic career, Pepper taught an aesthetics course at Berkeley in 1939, based on Shakespeare’s sonnets and was Chairman of the Art Department there between 1938-1952. According to the painter Erle Loran, Pepper actively brought artists into academic positions and supported modern and progressive arts teaching in the face of departmental opposition, some of which was specifically directed towards Abstract Expressionists who had begun teaching at Berkeley (Efron 1980, 13). After he had completed his term as Departmental Chairman, Pepper published an article, 'Is Non-objective Art Superficial?' in the Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism (Pepper 1953), in which he concluded that although a lack of representation did not necessarily result in superficiality, it often did. What is interesting about Pepper’s background is that as Efron says, it is not common for an aesthetician and metaphysician to have such direct and lived experience in the art world. What is perhaps surprising, is that given his life-long connection with art, Pepper wrote relatively little about visual art itself and often chose literary examples when tying back his theoretical writing to real experience.

With regard to his writing on visual art, Pepper did publish an analysis of
Plate 9: HIROSHIGE. *The Shono Station.*
a Japanese print (a print from Hiroshige’s Tokaido series called *The Shono Station*, Plate 9) (Pepper 1980). In his fourteen page analysis, Pepper concentrated on clarifying the meaning of the term ‘aesthetic quality’ in contextualism. In order to clarify the nature of quality in an aesthetic event (in this case, that of Pepper viewing the Japanese print hanging on his wall), Pepper first describes his experience and what runs through his mind as he views the work. The description is about 250 words long, and I quote the opening to give an indication of the tone of the analysis:

I am sitting and looking at a Japanese print on my wall, a print from Hiroshige’s Tokaido series known as *The Shono Station*. An event occurs in which I am aware neither of a separate self, nor of a separate picture, nor of a wall, nor of an intervening space. What I sense is a rectangular composition of opposing forms on the diagonals, with vigorous movement leftward, upward, and inward, contrasted with various contrary movements as foils, I sense a driving rainstorm, and wet trees in receding rows bending in the wind, becoming dimmer and dimmer in the distance, I see thatched roofs of a village and feel the shelter beneath them….

(Pepper 1980, 86)

Pepper then reflects on the perceptive event of his looking at the print. He

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examines the 'physical conditions' that underlie the aesthetic event (by which he means the physical structure of the work of art: the location of the object, the location of the viewer, and the relationships between each). Finally, Pepper turns his attention to the object itself and examines the nature of the work of art, arguing that the work of art is not merely the physical presence of the object itself, but rather 'the cumulative continuity or train of perceptions of it' (Pepper 1980, 96).

Pepper explains:

An individual work such as the Shono print is a progressive coupling together of many single perceptions. Each of these perceptions is a given event, and each of these events has its own unique quality slightly different from every other given event, even from the immediately preceding perception of the same print...earlier perceptions have effects upon later ones, and the event quality of each successive perception becomes gradually enriched. This is called funding.

(Pepper 1980, 94 and 96)

It is clear from this quote that Pepper uses the Shono print to talk about the structure of contextualism. Pepper provides a detailed and valuable account of a contextualistic viewing experience and uses that experience to clarify the categories of the theory rather than focusing on the print itself as a work of art (see Chapter 3 for an explanation of contextualism). By contrast, in this study I will use a painting to demonstrate the particular implications of each of the differing world views for viewing a work of art.
In 1949 Pepper published a book on fine art called *Principles of Art Appreciation*. It is a fairly technical book, describing the potential sources of pleasure to be gained from an understanding of the formal elements of art and Pepper is clearly comfortable discussing the formal properties of perspective, volume and composition. He states the purpose of the book to be 'to enlarge our understanding of the arts and thereby to increase our appreciation of them' where he defines appreciation as 'having vivid pleasant experiences' (Pepper 1949, 3). He discusses principles of art in terms of how they are realized in 'vivid pleasant experiences' (Pepper 1949, 3). The principles in question are principles of design, pattern, type, emotion, colour, line, mass and volume. When Pepper discusses how these principles are expressed in different art forms, he examines painting, sculpture and architecture. In the section on painting, Pepper refers to the *Portrait of Pope Innocent X* by Velázquez (Plate II) in his explanation of how light and shade are used to indicate depth in a painting by employing a system of shading as an organizing principle in the picture as a whole. So for example, following a discussion of the relationships between illumination, shadow, reflected light and highlight, Pepper cites the Velázquez *Portrait*:

The best picture reproduced in this book to show the principles just described is the Velasquez [sic] portrait of Pope Innocent X....The spectator is more in front of the object than in Fig.48b [a diagram showing how light falls on a cylinder], and he is on the other side of
the object, so that the shadows are seen on the left rather than on the right. But the areas of local color, half shadow and full shadow with the transition between, are clearly indicated as are also the highlights and some effects of reflected light. And the power of light and shade as a depth cue to model the head and shoulders and the details of all the features is plain to see.

Velasquez, as this illustration shows, follows the laws of light and shade rather faithfully. And a close observance of these laws has a great unifying and integrative effect on a picture, because as we have seen, every object becomes related to every other object in terms of illumination.

(Pepper 1949, 230)

To give an indication of how he ties his discussion together, I quote the conclusion of the discussion concerning light and volume:

In short, light and shade may be an enveloping organizing principle and an enveloping type in the recognition of which a large part of the delight of the painting consists, or again it may be merely a casual depth cue to round out the shape of some object, merely one element among others in the picture, like a color contrast or a line movement contributing its mite to the value of the whole.

(Pepper 1949, 231)

The Principles of Art Appreciation (Pepper 1949) is a book about sources of pleasure in the formal elements of art and how an understanding of these
elements add to the appreciation of a work of art. *Principles of Art Appreciation* is not framed in terms of world hypotheses and so has a very different orientation to that of this study. However, in his emphasis on vivid experience, the nature of the work of art as both a physical object and an object of perception, and the process of *funding*, Pepper is writing from an implicit contextualistic standpoint. *Principles of Art Appreciation* is a rich, interesting book of discursive character and an important, almost voyeuristic insight into Pepper’s thinking on art and how he struggles with the (contextualistic) tension between the individual elements of a work of art and the experience of them as a totality in ‘vivid awareness’ (Pepper 1949, 25).

Shortly after the publication of *Principles of Art Appreciation* (Pepper 1949), Pepper published another book on art, this time the explicitly contextualistic *The Work of Art* (Pepper, 1955). *The Work of Art* (Pepper 1955) is a sequel to *Basis of Criticism in the Arts* (1945). At the end of *Basis of Criticism in the Arts*, Pepper wrote a supplementary essay entitled ‘The Aesthetic Work of Art’ (BC 142-171) in which he amplified the contextualistic analysis in the main body of the book and focused on ‘works of art’. In the course of his analysis, he briefly touched on painting, sculpture, music, literature, theatre and dance. In *The Work of Art* (Pepper 1955), Pepper returns to contextualism to address the problem of defining what a work of art is and what the object of criticism is from a contextualist standpoint.
The emphasis in this study is on understanding how each of the differing world hypotheses has particular implications for viewing a work of art, and that the educational imperative is an understanding of all the world hypotheses.

**Summary**

In this chapter I have examined research findings related to viewer response to art and found that while research addresses different methods of looking and examines the types of responses viewers have to art, there is a voiced need to be able to understand different points of view and the different ways in which people look at art. In this study I suggest that using a conceptual theoretical framework such as world hypotheses enhances understanding of differing viewer assumptions in a viewing experience, furthers understanding of public controversies over abstract art, and increases the potential for appropriate educational provision.

The second need met by this study is a clear articulation of what the theory of world hypotheses means specifically for viewing visual art. Although Pepper himself wrote on world hypotheses and 'the arts' in *Basis of Criticism in the Arts* (Pepper 1945), he used examples from literature in his discussion of the theory. His exposition was rooted in literature, and an understanding of, for example, formism in literature is not the same as understanding formism in visual art.

In the next chapter I will examine each world hypothesis in turn and articulate what each theory means in the context of looking at art.
EXTENDING THE THEORY OF WORLD HYPOTHESES:
DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK FOR ART

This study supports a need for understanding the disposition (world view) of a viewer in looking at art in order to understand the kinds of epistemological assumptions at work and consequently enable a practical educational response. This need is visible in public outrage directed at abstract art works of art, as evidenced in controversies such as that surrounding the National Gallery of Canada’s acquisition of Mark Rothko’s No. 16.

In examining the responses to the Rothko painting published in the newspapers at the time of the controversy, I was struck by the patterns of objections and commendations clustered around fundamental values concerning the nature of art. Moreover, the opinions expressed about abstract art and specifically the Rothko purchase were often tied to other issues that contextualized the debate. Value in art is one set of values we hold in the context of multiple value systems we use in assessing all aspects of our lives. In order to deepen our understanding of the controversy surrounding the Rothko purchase, this study contends it is necessary to move beyond individual comments to look at the underlying value systems, or world views, that generate the particulars.
In this chapter I use the work of Stephen Pepper (1942, 1945) to describe a set of world hypotheses and their accompanying criteria. I define each hypothesis as it relates to visual art experience and generate a set of criteria with which viewer expectation and experience can be reviewed. I present summaries for each world view according to their implications for viewing art in a tabulated form for easy comparison of the definitions. This addresses a number of problems with Pepper’s *Basis of Criticism in the Arts* (1945), namely: it focused on literature as a means of exploring the hypotheses; it is awkwardly written and not easily accessible without prior knowledge of his earlier work of 1942; Pepper’s focus is directed to the work of literature and not the reader, so my re-presentation of the world views in the context of visual art enables me to refocus the application of the theory on the viewer looking at a work of art; and there are no easily comparable summaries in the original text.

In order to demonstrate how the theory of world hypotheses works in practice, in the next chapter I use the conceptual framework articulated in this chapter to analyze a painting to illustrate how someone viewing a painting from each of the differing world views might approach looking at a work of art, and how the values and preconceptions they might bring to a viewing experience potentially affect their subsequent evaluations of an object.

I begin here by outlining Pepper’s general theory and then the specific parameters of its application in visual art.
Pepper’s Theory of World Hypotheses

The conceptual basis of this study is rooted in systematic pluralism and the work of one of its exponents, Stephen C. Pepper. Systematic pluralism as a school of philosophy recognises multiple ways of viewing the world, but holds that there are patterns of perception, and so denies unmitigated relativism. Within Pepper’s theory, these patterns in human experience and interpretation of the world are socio-culturally and physiologically determined.

In his two major works of 1942 and 1945 (World Hypotheses and Basis of Criticism in the Arts respectively), Pepper defined a range of world views, which delimit different ideas about the nature of reality and the ways in which that reality is known. These different world views describe different, internally consistent propositional understandings of the nature of reality - hence Pepper’s use of the term ‘world hypothesis’ in relation to each epistemological framework.

Pepper originally defined six world hypotheses: animism, mysticism, mechanism, formism, contextualism and organicism. Subsequently, he added a seventh hypothesis: selectivism. Of the original set of six hypotheses, Pepper considered it possible to make robust claims concerning belief rooted in cognitive evidence only from within the hypothetical frameworks of mechanism, formism, contextualism and organicism. He regarded animism and mysticism as cognitively inadequate because of the lack of cognitive evidence with which claims are
supported in these world views.¹

In the context of this thesis and within the school setting, opinion supported by cognitive evidence is important if dogmatism (or utter scepticism) is to be avoided (see WH 1-38). In some situations, a lack of cognitive evidence might be less important (and perhaps this is arguable in the elective educational context of the museum), but schools are specific milieu where unjustified or unjustifiable claims require careful scrutiny. It would be folly, however, to overlook the fact that in many senses, elements of animism and mysticism are central to some art practice and that some viewers wish for a viewing experience that is precisely ‘other-worldly’ and mystical according to Pepper’s definition. Furthermore, this dichotomy between experience and cognitive reasoning with relation to art education is embedded in its theory and practice (see Chapter 2). For these

¹ I have not included selectivism in this study as I regard it a problem in principle. In World Hypotheses (1942), Pepper points out the confusion arising from mixing the theories, in the sense that if they are autonomous, then they are also mutually exclusive (WH 104). Pepper added selectivism, based on the root metaphor of the purposive act, in his book Concept and Quality (Pepper 1967). Herold (1982) has noted that selectivism is very similar to the eclectic definition presented in Basis of Criticism in the Arts (Pepper 1945, 141). Selectivism lacks the distinctiveness of a unique, internally coherent theory, and instead combines various features of previously defined theories. It seems to me that selectivism is more an attitude or approach (or the theoretical formulation of that practice) than it is a coherent hypothesis, and Efron (1980) has argued that this subsequent hypothesis does not significantly extend Pepper’s earlier articulations. I have decided to follow the general stand Pepper declared in World Hypotheses for ‘rational clarity in theory and reasonable eclecticism in practice’ (WH 330), rather than eclecticism in theory, which seems to undermine the very structural coherence of the separate theories with their categories and qualities. For these reasons I have not included selectivism in this study.
reasons, I have included animism and mysticism in the definitions of the world hypotheses, and also in the demonstrative analysis in the next chapter, where the difficulties of working with these world views are made apparent.

Each of the world hypotheses in Pepper’s theory is characterised by a root metaphor which generally typifies the understanding of experience and determination of action for anyone operating largely under one of the hypotheses:

A man desiring to understand the world looks about for a clue to its comprehension. He pitches upon some area of commonsense fact and tries if he cannot understand other areas in terms of this one. This original area becomes then his basic analogy or root metaphor. He describes as best he can the characteristics of this area, or, if you will, discriminates its structure. A list of its structural characteristics becomes his basic concepts of explanation and description. We call them a set of categories. In terms of these categories he proceeds to study all other areas of fact whether uncriticized or previously criticized. He undertakes to interpret all facts in terms of these categories.

(WH 91)

These root metaphors are respectively: the machine in mechanism; similarity in formism; the historic event in contextualism; integration in organismism; spirit in animism, and love in mysticism. Thus a formist, for example, generally seeks out similarities and deems value according to the degree to which elements approach ideal norms.
I have kept my writing as close to Pepper’s work as possible, with extensive paraphrasing from his explanations of the theory in *World Hypotheses* (Pepper 1942) and *Basis of Criticism in the Arts* (Pepper 1945), and have cited the source locations in Pepper’s work as heavily as possible for accurate reference and clarity. One reason for this is to keep the explanation of the theory true with as little interpretive distortion as possible; another is that Pepper’s own text is complex and very formally written, and the descriptions offered here I hope will make the theory more widely accessible.

In the course of explaining the world hypotheses in this chapter I have turned to either *World Hypotheses* (Pepper 1942) or *Basis of Criticism in the Arts* (Pepper 1945) to provide a reader with the clearest articulation of a particular point in Pepper’s original works. It happens that in some of the hypotheses the referencing tends to one text more than the other.

I will now present each of the six world hypotheses (namely mechanism, formism, contextualism, organicism, animism and mysticism) as they relate to visual art. I have highlighted in bold the essential terms and categories Pepper uses in his theory to reinforce the link to the original writing and make clear that the terms are being incorporated into my description.

**Mechanism**

The essential metaphor of the mechanistic hypothesis is the *machine*. The
mechanist searches for the workings of a mechanism, perceives value in effectiveness and bases truth in cause and effect: the adjustment of functioning in response to stimuli (causal relationships).

The nature of a machine is that of a number of discrete particulars that may be linked or combined to form larger mechanisms. The particularity in mechanism is emphasized in each particular having 'a local habitation, a place and a time or a place-time' (BC 37). The basic category of mechanism is the space-time field in which the particulars are located (BC 37). Pepper explains these relations in terms of atomic theory:

Some form of physical atomism is thus characteristic of mechanism, and the form of this atomism described for our times is the familiar hierarchy of subatomic elements, chemical atoms, molecules, cells, and organisms....The universe is thus conceived as a huge aggregation or system of essentially separate individuals.

(BC 37)

In the context of visual art, the mechanism in question is one of stimulus and response: the stimulus provided by the art object and the response by the spectator viewing that object. The stimulus is the aesthetic object within the field of aesthetic values. The object as the stimulus in its entirety is comprised of a combination of visual parts (colour, line, tone, texture, shape and proportion), expressed in a medium (print, watercolour, etc.), tied together by principles
(balance and repetition, harmony and contrast, theme and variation).

Pepper defines the aesthetic field as one of ‘things liked or disliked for themselves’ (BC 44) and aesthetic values in mechanism as ‘feelings of immediate pleasure or displeasure’ (BC 45). The aesthetic object in mechanism is then that which produces or attracts feelings of immediate pleasure or displeasure (BC 44). Although the response to an object may be one of immediate pleasure or displeasure, the aesthetic value of an object is judged by a hedonistic principle of pleasure and the amount of pleasure an object can engender. It follows that the quantity, duration and intensity of pleasure derived from an aesthetic object will determine the degree of its aesthetic worth. Baldly stated:

Two pleasures are better than one, a longer pleasure than a shorter one, and an intenser pleasure than a weaker one, and conversely with displeasures as negative values. The more of immediate pleasure in an experience the greater the aesthetic value, and a great work of art is one that can be relied upon to produce a great deal of pleasure.

(BC 45)

A negative aesthetic response (one that produces displeasure) has no value for the mechanist.

Pepper is mindful of the seeming superficiality of a hedonistic position and makes two useful comments. First, that any qualities that appear to be lacking in this set of criteria are simply beyond the scope of a hedonistic mechanistic
hypothesis (BC 46). Second, that the importance of feelings in aesthetic response is sometimes overlooked in a search for intellectual refinement (BC 46). ‘Let us take our aesthetic pleasures straight’, says Pepper, ‘Let us accept them without a blush for all they are worth’ (BC 46).

Mechanism is an intensely individualistic disposition (BC 38). Human values are individually determined and bounded within the person (in the sense that it is not possible to feel exactly what another person is feeling). Aesthetic judgements are individually determined, and are also ‘variable according to the emotional or physiological state of the viewer’ (BC 46). It is important to remember that time and place (or the field of location, as Pepper puts it), are fundamental categories of mechanism, and that a different moment will necessarily mean a different response.

This individual emphasis together with the variability of potential response raises the question of how anyone can judge or assess how much pleasure has been experienced by someone else. It would seem obvious that only the individual can assess the strength and worth of the feeling experienced (BC 38). At worst, this results in an ‘I-like-it-and-that’s-all-that-matters’ opinion, and at best, a swift, refined, sensuous discrimination that can be articulated (BC 43).

However, it is a mistake within this world hypothesis to believe that a mechanistic aesthetic judgement is merely a subjective feeling that cannot be the object of reflection. The feeling is itself the empirical fact (there is no doubt that
it happened) which forms the basis of judgement, and like any fact (as opposed to an inviolate truth or something irrelevant to truth) it can be examined as to its integrity (BC 47). Mechanism bases its notion of truth in causality, and the feelings generated by an aesthetic object can be traced to their causal roots in the primary qualities of a work (the visual particulars), and articulated (a causal-adjustment theory of truth). In this way feelings, or preferences, can be examined and are not indubitable. This is not to say that feelings are not subject to potential error of interpretation, and Pepper makes a distinction between the cognition of a feeling and someone’s introspective reflection on that feeling (BC 47). The feeling itself may be a genuine fact, but any introspective report on the feeling may be subject to error. An error of judgement in a mechanistic sense is therefore a false interpretation or reflection of a fact of feeling.

The variability of the emotional and physiological state of the viewer affords for the possibility of different judgements being made at different times. It is also possible for a sophisticated mechanist to ‘acquire’ pleasure in an object over time (BC 49-50). An individual may acquire an understanding of visual mechanism and become capable of deriving pleasure from the perception. In fact, in this world view, the individual is obliged on principle to try to derive as much pleasure as possible from an experience (BC 49).

It is the rôle of the critic, and by extension the educator, to assist and support the viewer to derive as much pleasure as possible from a viewing
experience (BC 50). Within this individualistic world view, the nature of a judgement is an individual assessment of how much pleasure has been derived from a particular object; or, an assessment of how effective the constituent particulars of the mechanism (the visual vocabulary of colour, line, tone, texture, shape and proportion) have been in the context of the mechanism in its entirety (the object). A critic or educator can articulate what pleasures may be had from a work and thereby help viewers to refine their own powers of sensuous enjoyment and discrimination (BC 50). The greater the discriminatory powers of the viewer, the greater the potential pleasure (BC 52).

Pepper argues that it is possible to predict experiences of aesthetic pleasure on the basis of biological similarities in people and similar capacities for intellectual, emotional and sensory development, and also common cultural experiences which generate similar reactions. It follows that these similarities facilitate not only the prediction of patterns of uniformities of reaction, but also of differences (BC 48). With this understanding it is possible to predict objects that will engender immediate enjoyment and ways of increasing a viewer's pleasure in an object (BC 48-49). Important for the educator is that these patterns of response make it possible to predict not only objects that are likely to produce negative aesthetic responses, but also an understanding of the bases of the reactions and thereby an opportunity to develop an informed pedagogical strategy.
Summary of Mechanism

The essential metaphor in mechanism is the machine. In aesthetic terms, this is played out as the viewer response to the stimulus of a work of art.

The mechanist aesthetic is based on a hedonistic principle of enjoyment of an object. The greater the immediate pleasure an object engenders in the viewer, the greater the object’s perceived worth. Judgement of an object is individually determined and variable according to the state of the viewer at the point of viewing. The basis of a judgement is the feeling experienced supported by the articulation of that feeling, which can then be examined as an empirical fact.

The rôle of the critic is to increase the amount of sensuous pleasure a viewer can derive from an aesthetic encounter by revealing what there is to enjoy in a work and by helping a viewer to refine his or her own discriminatory powers.

Comment on Mechanism

When Pepper talks about mechanism in World Hypotheses, he speaks of it in the context of the workings of a literal machine in keeping with the exposition of his theory using scientific examples to explain the categories. However, when Pepper elaborates on how mechanistic epistemology works in a literary exploration of two sonnets in Basis of Criticism in the Arts, his explanation contains few of the categorical terms from the initial definition and consequently, although I have kept close to the spirit and intention of the theory, the highlighting of categorical terms
in this section is sparse.

Although there is no intended hierarchy of betterment concerning the four relatively adequate world hypotheses, there is a tendency, particularly in the context of contemporary emphasis on connectedness, to see the order of presentation of ideas as 'culminating' in an organicist world view. This is to be resisted. Pepper makes the distinction between various levels of sophistication of application of any one of the hypotheses (e.g., the naive and mature formulations of mechanism WH 221-228). Each hypothesis should really be viewed as representing a continuum of theoretical sophistication ranging from unrefined at one extreme to refined at the other, and each person operating largely under one of the hypotheses as applying somewhere between a naive and mature formulation of the theory.

Pepper may have unwittingly undermined the power of mechanism as a world hypothesis when he used the example of a lever as the machine for mechanism's root metaphor. The lever is a very simple machine, but sophisticated mechanism would embrace a complex linking of numerous parts in the formation of a mechanism. If this notion of the range of potential experience within any of the world theories is brought to bear on a mechanistic experience of art, it would encompass responses ranging from a simple pleasure derived from a straightforward work a viewer liked, to a refined appreciation of an elaborately constructed work in which the viewer had a detailed understanding of how the
various elements within the painting contributed to the work as a whole and how they served to effect a particular response.

**Formism**

The essential metaphor of formism is similarity. The formist searches for similarities, accords value in the exemplification of norms and grounds truth in the correspondence of two or more elements.

Similarities of form produce two types of formism according to Pepper: **immanent formism** (in which immediately apparent similarity - such as perceiving two sheets of yellow paper of the same characteristics - is recognised (WH 151)), and **transcendent formism** (in which the similarity comes from made and natural objects being built or growing according to a plan (WH 162)).

In immanent formism, similarity between individual items (particulars) indicates that they share (or participate in) various characteristics (characters) (WH 152-154). Particulars merely state how many objects are being considered. Characters refer to qualities of individual objects (such as colour, shape, texture, size). **Relations** (WH 154) describe the physical relationships of objects with one another (for example, two pieces of yellow paper, side by side). In Pepperian terms, the process of classification accordingly identifies a group of particulars that participate in one or more characters (class). Aesthetic value in immanent formism would be judged according to the degree of similarity of characteristics
in individual items, or the degree to which a number of items share one characteristic.

In transcendent formalism, the focus of similarity is not so much between object and object as between an object and the ideal form of that object (WH 163). Here, the idea of a form or blueprint for an object exists beyond the material object (hence transcendent). Transcendent forms establish bases for value judgements in the form of norms; the closer a work of art comes to the realization of a norm, the greater its perceived formistic value. These norms are neither averages nor completely determinate sets of characteristics, and so while they are limited in their tolerance of extreme characteristics, they nevertheless allow for wide variations in qualities and relations. Norms are expressed in materials or matter and are affected by circumstantial factors (e.g., the skill of the artist in using the materials; the way an artist has fashioned a piece of furniture to fit a curved wall).

Pepper defines three types of conformity to norms in the context of traditional formistic aesthetics. The first defines aesthetic value as the representation of a norm (BC 105). This position forms the basis of theories which define beauty as mimetic. Representation in this context does not refer to an imitation of a particular individual or object, but to 'the norm which the individual represents' (BC 105). It is not then the particular that is the goal of the artist, but rather the 'the essence, the real character of things' (BC 105). The
value of a work of art is determined by how successfully an artist has been able to capture 'the universal implicit in the particular' (BC 105).

The second traditional formistic tenet defines aesthetic value as the representation of 'the norm implicit in the art object itself' (BC 106). This refers to how successfully an artist has been able to use his or her skills to exploit the intrinsic properties of the materials used to realize the ideal form of the object. Within this aspect of formism, value is determined according to the degree to which form and function are synthesized in an object, and also to what extent an object conforms with a genre or style (BC 106).

The third traditional tenet of formistic aesthetics defines aesthetic value in proportion to the extent to which a work of art is expressive of its age and culture (BC 106). The problem with this facet of formism is that if aesthetic value is accorded 'in proportion as it gives expression to its age' (BC 106), those values can slip into relativism if, as in our times, the age itself is seemingly unstable or confused. Pepper addresses this problem by arguing that if the age is relatively unstable, there may be satisfaction derived from objects representative of the times, but dissatisfaction with elements in it that may be sensed as unstable (BC 110).

Pepper consolidates these three traditional foci of formism (conformity to explicit norms of external form, conformity with implicit norms of materials and how they are worked, and conformity to contemporary cultural norms) into one
definition which embraces these three senses of conformity: aesthetic value defined as ‘the exemplification of a norm’ (BC 107). He also adds one other definition: that value is also defined by ‘perceptions satisfying in themselves to the normal man’ (BC 107). By doing this, Pepper not only emphasizes ideal forms (norms) as they relate to an object (be they explicit, implicit or cultural), but also norms of perception on the part of the viewer. The inclusion of norms of perception has two significant components: one is that of the ‘normal’ person being able to recognise a norm because it can be recognised against his or her own background of normality, but also that a knowledge of the norm allows for the recognition of the abnormal. Pepper asserts that the normal person holds this power for recognition because he or she has within him- or herself the very ‘impulses that have become exaggerated in the abnormal man and he resonates to the impulses and directly feels their exaggeration’ (BC 108).

This inclusion of the norm of perception has an important impact on formistic aesthetics and the nature of formistic representation. Pepper argues that a norm can be represented not only by the norm, but also by the abnorm.

The representation of the norm is not necessarily in the manner of the direct, naive conception of the process - namely, a depiction of heroic man. A caricature can

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2 See: Comment on Formism below, p.76.
strikingly represent the norm if the artist's comment is implicit in the picture and tells just how abnormal the depiction is.

(BC 109)

Tragedy, then, is representative of the norm in its illustration of the abnormal, the flawed, and the tragic figure one who has greatness but for a debilitating weakness or flaw (BC 109). Art in its ability to represent the abnormal with the result of reaffirming or readjusting the normal perception and normality of the viewer takes on a normative power and becomes a potential instrument in not only reflecting but establishing for the individual the 'satisfactions of normality' (BC 112). (This is the basis for catharsis as a process of normalization.)

The rôle of the critic is to examine 'the effectiveness and worth' of an object in establishing emotional balance in the viewer and engendering normal satisfaction (BC 112-113).

Summary of Formism

The essential metaphor of formism is similarity. The formistic aesthetic is rooted in the recognition of similarity. This similarity finds expression in two broad definitions: in the exemplification of norms (where a norm is defined as an ideal form), and in perceptions satisfying in themselves to the normal individual
(BC 107). The exemplification of norms embraces three major foci: explicit norms of external form; implicit norms of materials and how they are worked; and cultural norms of contemporary forms. Norms of perception allow for the identification of both the normal and abnormal and facilitate the adjustment of emotional balance, as in cathartic experience. The value of a work of art is judged according to the extent to which it successfully represents norms and elicits perceptions of norms, and it is the rôle of the critic to examine and articulate this achievement.

Comment on Formism

Of course, the definition of the normal person in society is as complex as the definition of the 'reasonable person' in the context of legal decision making. It is perhaps timely to note here that Pepper's concern with the normal person relates to his definition of norms within a species (BC 100) and the notion of the survival of a species being determined by norms of the species which allow for a 'condition of vital equilibrium' (BC 103), which is to say that the norm of a species is not rigidly fixed in terms of a determinate set of characteristics, nor in the definition of an average, but rather represented in organisms which present 'clusters of characters which have such stability that they are able to survive and live in their environment' (BC 101). What is recognised here, however, is that norms have to be dynamic in the sense that in order to survive, an organism must
be able to adjust to environmental pressures, and so norms are determined by context/nature and over time these norms are apparent in the 'survival of the fittest' where this means the most successfully adapted to the circumstances in which they have to live.

In art, this thinking is embodied in enshrined canons of excellence and the assumption that over time there will be a natural fall-out of the less significant or important pieces of art produced in any one period and that the best will survive. The works then acquire the status of 'classics' and become the cultural canons of their times and cornerstones of formistic criteria.

This notion of norm which is so readily accepted in art and so controversial in a psycho-sociological context is a good example of how the popularity and application of world views changes, and also how the different world views can be seen to be more appropriate to some spheres of experience than others at various moments in history.

**Contextualism**

Contextualism roots experience in its metaphor of the **historic event** (WH 232). By this, Pepper does not mean the historic past, but rather the context of activity or an event taking place in the present (WH 232); the present situation in its context, affecting the future with its roots in the past. **Change and novelty** are fundamental categories of contextualism, which recognises an ever-changing
present situation with any action changing the total situation in some way (including the participants and the circumstances). Aesthetic quality in contextualism rests on ‘voluntary vivid intuitions of quality’ (BC 56); aesthetic value rests on the vividness and intensity of experience perceived through the senses. Pepper states that the ‘voluntary intuitions of quality’ are tantamount to ‘enjoyable intuitions of quality’ (BC 56) in order to distinguish aesthetic experience from other kinds of sensations - for example, involuntarily endured pains such as toothache (BC 56). A contextualistic aesthetic experience is ‘either pleasant or finds something so satisfying in the situation that it absorbs the pain’ (BC 57). ‘The distastefulness of the experience is irrelevant, so long as it has vividness and depth and can be dwelt upon’ (BC 132), but if the experience becomes ‘unendurable’ (BC 132) and the respondent turns away or terminates the interaction, there can be no further intuition of aesthetic quality. Pepper refers to the notion of maintaining ‘psychical distance’ (BC 66) in order not to be engulfed by an experience, but at the same time, being able to maintain an active connection with it:

A man cannot get aesthetic value out of an experience that draws upon his emotions unless he can maintain an attitude that will keep these emotions from bolting into action. You can appreciate a storm as long as you are not prompted to look for a lifeboat....

(BC 66-7)
There is no negative aesthetic value in contextualism; if an experience is too intense or vivid, it ceases to be an aesthetic experience at all:

Beauty is found in a vivid realization of the quality of a situation, and, where vivid realization fails, beauty is absent. What we call ugliness, on this [contextualistic] view, is a drab or painful situation calling for practical action, which we deplore because we feel morally that it ought to be beautiful. Ugliness is moral disapproval of the absence of aesthetic value in a situation.

(BC 58)

Looking at a picture is a 'perceptual situation' (BC 69), a confluence of the work of art and the spectator. In fact, Pepper stated that the work of art itself is 'the cumulative succession of intermittent perceptions...not continuous, but intermittent' (BC 71). The quality of a picture can only be realized when it is actually perceived (BC 70), each visual conjugation funding the previous perception and adding something new to the experience 'so the picture increases in breadth and vividness of quality from perception to perception' (BC 70). Perceptions in contextualism are not isolated and discrete as in mechanism, but rather fingered into the past and carried forward into the future.

Although individual viewers participating in an event will perceive each perceptual event with a different quality, Pepper argues that amongst connected events (such as the successive viewings of a particular work of art) there exists a 'connectedness of contexts' for the contextualist which presents itself in the
qualities of the events.

The quality of an event is 'a fusion of its interrelated details' (BC 61): it is the 'personality' of an event. This fusion is 'something ultimate, and unanalyzable, and immediate' (BC 61) in which individual textures are difficult to separate. Highly fused events are perceived as an immediate intuition of the whole in a viewing experience. Richness of experience derives from many strands of experience coalescing to form textural qualities in an event, and 'the more vivid the experience and the more extensive and rich its quality, the greater its aesthetic value' (BC 57).

The shut down or obstruction (blocking) of an aesthetic experience inhibits not only the experience of a particular encounter, but also the cumulative and referential nature of contextualistic aesthetic experiences in general. The relations of strands to one another will be studied in the event of a conflicting or intrusive strand in an experience (WH 269). A hypothesis will be constructed and tested to resolve the problem ('satisfy' the conflicting strand) and facilitate the continuance of the experience. This process of resolving new qualities or novelties in events (WH 256-260) leads to a theory of operational truth in contextualism, where truth is seen as successful action, which is verifiable in terms of its structural relation to the event and is consistent with the intuited quality of an event (WH 268-279).

There is a tension in contextualism between the vividly fused immediacy of
a perceptual event and the individual strands, context and references that form textures that combine to form the fused experience (WH 252-255). Pepper refers to the fused quality of an event as an 'emergent' (WH 257). The fused experience may be the result of an assemblage of elements, but as a whole, takes on a distinctive character which cannot be reduced to its constituent elements alone: 'like the separate notes of a chord which fuse in the specific character of the chord' (BC 61). The individual elements of a fused event can be identified and analyzed (i.e. the contents), but this pulls against a richly fused experience and dulls the vividness of quality so essential to aesthetic value in contextualism. If the aesthetic features of a situation are characterised by their quality, unity intuition and fusion, then analytical features are correspondingly concerned with relations, detail, analysis and diffusion (BC 58). Practices that dull a potentially powerful experience are accordingly: habit, convention or tradition; practical activity in achieving goals or problem solving; and analysis (BC 65).

This tension between the vivid intuition of a fused event and the individual strands that combine to create the entity as a whole can be exploited by the critic or educator in an educational situation. The critic can help to increase the vividness of an experience by uncovering the structure and details of a situation to increase appreciation of the spread of quality in an event. For example, a critic may examine the elements of pattern, design and composition in a work of art to clarify how their internal organization contributes to the fused power of the work.
as a whole.

The critic will also record the aesthetic judgement of his or her times and show the relation of the work to its social context. The importance of present context in contextualism (with its temporal spread) is that it roots art in its age, which can inhibit vividly realized experience in another. The contextualist accepts 'shifting contexts of value' (BC 72) and does not accept permanence in aesthetic values. If a work has 'spread' the artist may have explored aspects of human experience that although not read in the same way or even valued for the original reasons, are in some sense 'perennially contemporary' to human concerns and become part of the reflective knowledge of another age (BC 68).

Ultimately, it is the work of many critics to contribute to the fullest realization of a great work of art (BC 73).

**Summary of Contextualism**

The dominant metaphor of contextualism is the historic event, or the immediate context of activity. Historical change denies permanent aesthetic values and shifting contexts modify experience through a cumulative succession of periodic perceptions. Aesthetic perceptions are experienced as 'voluntary vivid intuitions of quality' (BC 56).

The contextualistic aesthetic is based on the intensity of vividly fused experience. The greater the degree of fusion and the more extensive and rich its
quality, the higher its aesthetic value.

The rôle of the critic is to reveal the context of the work, and to analyze its structure and intrinsic details with a view to funding the fullest possible realization of a work of art.

Comment on Contextualism

Of all the world hypotheses, contextualism has attracted the greatest attention in the context of arts criticism. Pepper himself wrote more on contextualism in relation to various art forms than he did any other individual hypothesis (see Chapter 2, pp. 68-72). However, it should not be assumed that contextualism is the best theory for arts criticism. In some sense, the success is historical in that the context of Pepper's writing was Dewey's overtly contextualistic *Art as Experience* (Dewey 1934), which is still reverberating in art education thinking today. Contextualism is a useful frame of thinking in a range of choices, and Pepper's own bias should not undermine the understanding that each world hypothesis will function as a critical context.

Pepper himself warned against allowing the inevitable bias of an author's own predilections to undermine the adequacy of theories:

The eccentricities of authors may be separated from the development of the theories themselves. It is not what any author thinks about his theory that counts in
determining its inadequacy, but what the theory itself in terms of its own logic thinks of itself.

(WH 116)

In reading both *World Hypotheses* and *Basis of Criticism in the Arts* (Pepper 1942, 1945) there are numerous instances where Pepper voices a personal value judgement in the context of a theoretical description. These are the personal punctuations in his writing and are interesting in the bias they reveal, but should be read for what they are, opinions that lie outside the main theoretical structures.

**Organicism**

Organicism roots its metaphor in integration. Fragments of experience are inherently connected to other fragments and are internally driven towards integration with other fragments that complete them (WH 291). The internal drive of a fragment is its nexus (WH 291), and the dynamic integration of fragments implies both an inevitability of connections and also the 'implication of wholeness contained within them' (WH 292). Fragments combine to form larger fragments that ultimately become integrated into a larger coherent whole (WH 283). Contradictions or conflicting experiences are unconnected fragments which are resolved and integrated at higher levels.

In the context of aesthetic experience, the integration in question is one of
organized and coherent feeling, where feeling refers to the qualitative characteristics of experience and is 'attached, annexed, to the quality of some object' (Bosanquet in Pepper, BC 76). While in simple experiences of pleasure or pain the nature of feeling is relatively easily comprehended, at more sophisticated levels of integration, emotional connections merge with other kinds of connections, such as ethical or logical (BC 78).

Value is perceived proportionally in relation to two factors: the degree of integration of the various fragments or feeling connections in an aesthetic object (BC 84-85), and the amount of material integrated (BC 79). An organic unity is achieved when 'every detail of the object calls for every other and no feeling demands are unfulfilled...it is a condition where no detail can be removed or altered without marring or even destroying the value of the whole' (BC 79). An organic unity is a thoroughgoing connection of the feelings embodied in an aesthetic object.

When Pepper talks about the amount of material integrated in an aesthetic object, he argues that although size and length of a work are not necessarily indicative of greatness, the greatest works are often physically large:

The greatest fiction is among novels rather than short stories; the greatest poetry is among epics and dramas rather than sonnets, the greatest pictures are among oils, temporas [sic], and frescoes rather than
miniatures; the greatest architecture among tombs, temples, and cathedrals rather than domestic houses.

(BC 80)

I think this is misleading, and Pepper acknowledges the problem of comparing, for example, a ‘highly integrated jewel box’ with a ‘poorly integrated cathedral’ (BC 80). Aesthetic material is not limited to the superficialities of surface area, volume, or sheer duration. Aesthetic material engenders a web of feeling connections which embrace ‘the meanings and emotions below the sensory surface’ (BC 79). It is then possible that the brief Haiku may embody a profound comment in only three exquisitely wrought lines.

In a highly integrated work the fragments of experience are consistent and do not contradict each other; they verify judgements based on observations and afford verification of predictions (WH 308-311). The aesthetic judgement is based on the internal coherence of elements forming a whole, free from contradictions. The greater the coherence of the cluster of fragments, the more powerful the judgement, and the greater the degree of objectivity in the judgement. The ‘proof’ of a judgement in organismic lies with the internal coherence of the facts: it lies in the material facts of feelings embodied in a work of art, as opposed to merely dissociated thoughts or feelings (i.e. not rooted in an object). It follows that in a highly integrated work of art it is relatively easy to corroborate judgements, but
in a more disintegrated work, the judgement is less secure as the lack of cohesion leaves fragments and their relationships more open to question (BC 81).

This is not to say that there is only one correct judgement, or only one correct interpretation. The value of a judgement will be determined by the degree of internal coherence of the facts. It is possible for sets of facts to be coherent with different emphases. This is as true of analyzing and drawing conclusions from statistics as it is in viewing a work of art. The premise of an organic whole is that the truth will out in the end because 'every detail is organically related to every other' (BC 86). In other words, however you come to it, you will ultimately come to a true understanding (WH 294).

It is the critic's rôle to articulate and expose the internal organic coherence of a work. The critical process is intimately bound to the object and is not an abstract, intellectual exercise. The process for the critic and the spectator is the same and requires an active engagement with the materials of the work to realize the organic connections within an object and render an 'imaginative satisfaction' in the experience (BC 87-88). Pepper argues that there is no difference in the process of criticism and what a viewer may think of as a full appreciation of a work, and therefore 'an understanding spectator is a critic, and a critic is simply

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3 Theoretically in organicism there exists the possibility of ultimate understanding in an all-encompassing whole, an Absolute. Practically, this is unlikely to be the honour of any individual mortal.
an understanding spectator who is perhaps a little more articulate in communicating the experiences he has in a work of art’ (BC 88). This process of viewing for both the critic and the viewer is a similar process in kind: it is both creative and cumulative.

Pepper takes the similarity between the critic and the spectator one step further and argues that the difference between the artist and spectator is broken down in organicism. He contends that ‘the only difference is that the artist had to bring the materials together and construct a whole that did not actually exist before, while a spectator may follow the guidance of the artist’ (BC 88). I believe this is a big difference that cannot be brushed aside under the guise of all parties searching for ‘the satisfaction of all elements in a total mutual fulfilment’ (BC 88). While it may be true that ‘the artist creates, the spectator recreates’ (BC 88) in the sense of the spectator following the process of the artist, creation also requires the conceptual drive for the work, so while it is possible to trace the development and use of materials in a work, it is not possible to recreate the newness of thought, for in the light of the work, this newness is forever old.

In the process of understanding the tensions, connections and demands of a work of art, it may happen that the fragments do not seem to hang together; Pepper regards these as blocked expectations (BC 88). Unexpected juxtapositions are the lifeblood of art, but if conflicting experiences are not resolved at a higher level of integration, the fulfilment of imaginative satisfaction in the aesthetic
experience is denied. Organicism offers three explanations for a lack of aesthetic satisfaction: a weak spectator, a weak critic, or a weak work of art (BC 92-93).

If a spectator finds that something in a work of art jars, the spectator must seek out confirmations of the imaginative construction of connections that he or she has found in the work, and look for fragments in the work that may set up other feeling expectations relating to the detail in question (BC 89). Blocks in expectations occur when the artist has done something that is unexpected. It may be that the viewer does not know enough about the potential of the materials to appreciate the methods an artist has used to integrate dramatic or symbolic values with plastic values, resulting in only a partial satisfaction for the viewer. Such blocks in perceptions are experienced as frustrated integrations (BC 93). The spectator’s inability to find aesthetic satisfaction is felt as a negative aesthetic value. The viewer’s experience of the work may be one of ugliness, but if the lack of cohesion in the work is the result of the viewer’s weakness, the work itself is not necessarily ugly (BC 93).

If the search for connections results in the integration of the problematic detail with the other parts of the work, then the initial understanding is revised to incorporate the new knowledge (WH 293, 298, 305). It is the responsibility of the viewer to seek out the inherent connections within a structure and to consult with other viewers or critics as necessary to discover how others have resolved contradictory feelings within a work, and whether the understanding of others can
further his or her own deeper connection with it (BC 89-90).

In order to find the maximum satisfaction and integration embodied in the materials of a work, a critic (or by extension, a viewer) must understand the potential of the materials (BC 82). Inadequacies in the knowledge of a critic may result in dissatisfaction, revealing weakness in the critic, as opposed to weakness of the work under consideration.

Weakness in the work itself is seen as a lack of integration and the result of an unsuccessful attempt to bring the elements of a work together on the part of the artist.

If the artist has not himself succeeded in fully integrating his aesthetic materials and communicating their interrelations through a physical work of art, then the aesthetic work itself is lacking in beauty. The work itself falls short of the total integration of which its materials were capable....

(BC 94)

If the lack of integration is due to an artist's level of skill, the implication is that another, more skilled artist may have been able to use the materials to produce a more coherent work (BC 83).

If, however, an artist deliberately includes disintegrative material in a work of art, the work may achieve the state of invincible ugliness (BC 94). In this case, the artist has used the materials to generate an expectation of imaginative
integration for the viewer, but deliberately chosen to deny its fulfilment in order to achieve an alternative end such as propaganda, fame, or money (BC 94). Such practice lacks artistic integrity and reflects not only on the weakness of the art, but also on the weakness of the artist.

**Summary of Organicism**

The organicist seeks an integration of feelings, of 'the ways in which sensation, images, thoughts, and emotions seek to come together of their own accord about a perceptive center such as a physical work of art' (BC 95).

Fragments of experience form connections which imply more coherent wholes. Conflicting fragments or gaps in understanding can be resolved at higher levels of integration. As all experience coheres, the organic structure approaches the Absolute: it approaches the ultimate coherent whole. As coherence and integration increase, elements within it become more determinate and more inclusive. Aesthetic value is accorded proportionally to the degree of integration achieved.

The viewer shares with the critic an obligation to search out the organic structure of a work of art, following the process of the artist, noting points at which frustrations, conflicting expectations, or gaps of experience occur, and enjoying the subsequent integration of isolated fragments into the larger whole.

Negative aesthetic values or ugliness are experienced as blocks in the
process of perceiving the organic structure of a work, and may be due to a weakness in the viewer, the artist or the work. Invincible ugliness ensues when an artist deliberately misleads the viewer for some ulterior motive.

Comment on Organicism

In a practical sense, there is no end to the organicist perspective. It implies that if only one knows enough, or has made enough connections of experience, then all will become clear. For the viewer of art, this can be an unsatisfying situation. On one hand, it implies that the Truth is attainable; on the other, it implies that a phenomenal amount of integration will be necessary in order to achieve it. The treatment of the unaesthetic in organicism, or that which fails to achieve a satisfying degree of coherence, also seems to leave a viewer few options for innocently disliking a work.

While in some aspects of contemporary culture organicism is visibly popular (for example in ecology and systems philosophy), the lack of individual privilege in organicism is directly opposed to the individual and immediate gratification many viewers are seeking when viewing art of any kind, as is evident in the Rothko controversy.
Animism

The basic (or immature) root metaphor of animism is humankind (WH 120), which in its more mature form can be identified in the concept of 'spirit' (WH 121). At its simplest, the animist endows non-human forms with human or animal characteristics (personification). As the theory becomes more sophisticated, the concept of spirit is extended to embrace systems of controlling deities and hierarchical structures within the spirit world, with spirits able to transcend the forms they inhabit and exist beyond the life of an organism they inhabit or control in some future state (WH 121-122).

In the animistic world, the work of art is valued for the power of the spirit embodied in the work. The greater the power of the spirit, the greater the authority (and therefore the Truth) of the statement made through the work of art, and consequently the greater the value of the work of art (WH 122-123). The nature of the aesthetic experience is the receiving of the 'voice' of the spirit through the work as an embodiment or representation of spirit (WH 123).

The rôle of the critic is not to critique, but to function more as a voicepiece for a higher authority: the critic would assume the rôle of the 'authoritative representative of a spirit' (WH 123), much like a shaman or a priest. The critic gains authority by voicing the word of a great spirit.

The problem for the animist is how to choose between one interpretation
and the next:

What is thunder? It is the angry voice of the great spirit. It is the stamping of the hoofs of the steeds of a great spirit. It is a great spirit clanging his arms. It is the roar of the lightning bolts hurled by a great spirit. It may even be a spirit itself roaring in pursuit of some other spirit to devour.

(WH 122)

With truth determined by the authority of the controlling spirit, and with potentially more than one spirit competing for the star position, explanations and interpretations of events generate indeterminacy and the inadequacy of imprecision (WH 122). Given the limitations of cognitive grounds for refining accuracy or distinguishing degrees of truth or certainty, authority is certain and indubitable or not authoritative at all and merely superseded by a greater and infallible authority:

Animism is the natural metaphysical support of authoritarianism, which inevitably culminates in the dogma of infallible authority.

(WH 123)

Summary of Animism

The essential metaphor of animism is spirit. The animist seeks out spirit, perceives value in the power of spirit and bases truth in the authority of spirit. Objects are valued in as much as they are endowed with spirit.
The 'critic' assumes the rôle of the representative of a spirit, or a number of spirits, in the manner of a shaman or priest.

Power of authority determines truth.

Comment on Animism

Animism presents the educator with similar problems to mysticism: the infallible authority of animism denies negotiation and criticized cognitive evidence demanded by Pepper's principle of 'cognitive adequacy'.

Pepper comments that children are natural animists (WH 120), and that both 'primitive' and 'civilized' (his terms) adults are naturally attracted to animism because it portrays the world and its workings made after a human image (WH 120).

Cultures that produce or designate animistic objects sometimes see these objects as having aesthetic significance, but the primary import of any representative of spirit in whatever form rests with the power of spirit itself, and without the animism of spirit, any object may have little or no value in itself.

The Western eye tends to look at objects with an aesthetic agenda, whether or not those objects were originally intended as aesthetic objects. This is problematic, as it not only generates a false reading of an animistic object, but also raises issues of respect for the culture that generated it.

Pepper's rejection of animism and mysticism for their lack of cognitive
adequacy is consistent with difficulties a Western frame of thinking has in comprehending such radically different epistemologies. Art educators must be cognizant of and sensitive to the issues of dealing with objects from a variety of cultures (see Dawtrey et al. 1996).

**Mysticism**

Pepper defines the root metaphor of mysticism as the emotion of love:

>This hypothesis states that this emotion [love] is the substance of the universe, and that so far as we differentiate things, these are generated from this substance and are ultimately nothing but this substance. (WH 133)

The mystical experience is characterized by four essential qualities. It is **supremely cognitive and revelatory**: a mystical experience gives knowledge or 'knowing', but the knowledge is mystical and may be thought of as 'supra' cognitive. The experience is **immediate and uninterpreted**: it is direct and, although an experience of sense, is not mediated by the imagination or the senses. It is **certain and indubitable**: the intensity of the mystical experience imbues it with cognitive certainty. The experience is **emotionally ecstatic**: mystical revelation is intensely emotionally charged with love (WH 128-129).

The emotional intensity of mystic experience is organized around three reductive principles: **intensity**, **fusion** (or **unity**), and **inclusiveness** (WH 133).
The stronger the emotional intensity, the greater the unity of things and the more material included in the emotional experience, the greater the reality of the experience. These principles define the action of emotion in events and are reductive in the sense that they imply a potential apical experience (WH 133, 134) where

the most intense, completely fused, beatific, loving feeling in the whole wide world would be an intuitive experience of the whole of reality itself, and would be Truth itself.

(WH 134)

Increasing intensity of emotional experience results in increasing certainty and indubitability in the truth of the experience:

'Facts' are false, and unreal, and apparent in proportion as they fall away from this apical experience. So pain, misery, sorrow, sadness are unreal, as opposed to beatific quality; pleasures, comforts, sensuous delights are false from lack of intensity; intellect, logic, science, analysis, definition, discrimination, differentiation are falsifying as opposed to fusion; selfishness, lust, hate, war are unreal as opposed to comprehension.

(WH 134)

While on one hand the intensity of the mystic experience seeks to embrace all things in an intense comprehension of All Things in an apprehension of certain Truth, on the other, any 'fact' that fails to be included in an experience is
dismissed as 'unreal' and discounted without value (WH 127). The scope of the cognitive certainty of the mystic experience is thus not limited to a mere certainty of the emotional experience itself as true fact, but declares the truth of the claim revealed by the experience (WH 129, 130, 134). Whatever the experience reveals is The Truth, and anything that falls outside the revelation is deemed 'completely or partly false, apparent and unreal' (WH 130).

The rôle of the individual in a mystic experience is as a vessel for the experience. The mystic him- or herself makes no individual cognitive claim, nor is any claim made on behalf of any other authority: rather, the mystic 'simply reports the claim which the experience itself reveals' (WH 130).

Pepper defines three types of mystic: **unmetaphysical, unsystematic metaphysical, and systematic metaphysical.** The unmetaphysical mystic is a hypothetical possibility only: in reality, the mystical world view is inevitably linked to notions of the nature of reality. The unmetaphysical mystic might enjoy a mystical experience 'and make no claims for it beyond having enjoyed it' (WH 129). Pepper gives the examples of 'being absorbed in a sunset, thrilled with a piece of music, or in love with a girl' (WH 129) and conjectures that the levels of these types of experiences would be mild forms of mystical experience, theoretically capable of being enjoyed as pleasant experiences for what they were, and as cognitive evidence for nothing 'beyond the intensity and sincerity of the emotion' (WH 130).
However, the mystic does make a claim of value in the experience, and the greater the intensity, fusion and inclusiveness of the emotion, the stronger the claim. Pepper argues that unmetaphysical mystics would reject any implication that they might ‘come to their senses’, as their feelings have afforded them the Only Truth, which simply discounts alternatives as unreal or untrue (WH 130). In practice, therefore, the unmetaphysical mystic is an untenable position which slips towards mechanistic pleasure and hedonism in the absence of a cognitive claim.

The unsystematic metaphysical mystic does extend his or her revelatory experience to make a claim of truth:

He is convinced of the supreme truth of his revelation. He takes his stand on the indubitable certainty of the experience and pays no particular cognitive attention to the other ‘facts’ of the world.

(WH 130-131)

Pepper posits several possible modes of existence for the unsystematic metaphysical mystic - those of the hermit, the reformer or the author, each of whom is totally absorbed in the truth of his or her revelation to the oblivion of all else, and either chooses to withdraw from the ‘unreality’ of the rest of the world, or participates in it only to declare the Supreme Truth to others (WH 130).

The systematic metaphysical mystic differs from the unsystematic
metaphysical mystic in the sense that the systematic mystic, while continuing to believe in the absolute truth of the mystical experience, attempts to understand the relationship between indubitable mystical facts and the ordinary 'facts' of the world (WH 131). This reflection serves the purpose 'of showing common men how they may proceed from common "facts" to the truth' (WH 131). The systematic metaphysical mystic might fill the rôle of critic within this hypothesis.

Summary of Mysticism

The essential metaphor of mysticism is love. The mystic searches for love, peace and unity, perceives value in the intensity of the emotional experience of love and bases truth in the degree of intensity of the emotional experience.

The mystical aesthetic is based on the intensity, fusion and inclusiveness of the emotional mystical experience, and the individual defines the quality of that experience in terms of its revelatory, uninterpreted, certain and beatific power.

The rôle of a critic is limited by the intense individuality and unmediated nature of the mystical experience. Unlike contextualism, where the viewer's experience is tied to the moment and contextual variants, mysticism cares only for the intensity of the experience for the individual. A critic might adopt one of three stances: to report his or her own mystical revelation (WH 130); to take on the rôle of a reformer or soothsayer and try to lead others towards a revelatory experience (WH 131); or to try to understand the links between revelatory experience and
everyday facts with a view to illuminating a procedural path to the Truth (WH 131).

Comment on Mysticism

The mystical art viewer is searching for an intense, 'wow' experience (McDermott-Lewis 1990). The problem with this hypothesis is that either the viewer gets the experience, or does not. It is in the nature of mysticism that the experience cannot be negotiated: if the art encountered does not engender a mystical experience, a work is simply discounted as false, unreal and without value. This is clearly a problem in an educational context: mysticism is supported by the dogma of certainty, which leaves the educator with little space to manoeuvre. (I will discuss the problems this presents further in Chapter 4.) However, Pepper's definition of the basic categories of both animism and mysticism may help contribute to an understanding of the fundamental differences in their frameworks, and in an educational context, understanding the basis for claims in mysticism and animism is essential in acknowledging different ways of knowing.

Summary

In this chapter I have re-presented six world hypotheses based on the work of Stephen Pepper (1942, 1945) in the context of viewing a work of art. I have
extended the theory of World Hypotheses by articulating the implications of the world hypotheses as they relate to viewing art. I have generated a set of criteria with which viewer expectations and experience can be reviewed in each world view, and in order to facilitate comparison of the definitions of the different hypotheses, I have summarized their characteristics and present them in the following set of tables.

In constructing the tables, it was clear that I should cover the essential categories and features of each of the hypotheses. However, in the context of this thesis, I also wanted to present the material so as to indicate specifically how each hypothesis worked in the context of viewing art. I devised the categories for the tables by thinking about what would be the most useful way to organize the material for someone wanting to know what any individual hypothesis would mean in the context of looking at art. I concluded that the five categories chosen enabled me to organize the elements of each hypothesis around the viewer in a viewing experience. The categories are: viewer expectation for the image; nature of the aesthetic experience; criteria of value for aesthetic judgement; nature of truth; and rôle of the critic. The category ‘nature of truth’ identifies the grounds of judgement in any one hypothesis. The term ‘critic’ in the category ‘rôle of the critic’ includes educators and educational tools such as written texts or multimedia resources.

In the next chapter I will go on to show how the frameworks developed in
this chapter can be used to increase our understanding of how various sets of epistemological assumptions are played out in viewer responses to a work of art.
**ART IN MECHANISM**

**essential metaphor: the machine**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Viewer expectation for the image</th>
<th>• there are no expectations for the form of the image per se, but rather that the experience of the object will engender a feeling of immediate pleasure in the viewer, born of 'swift, sensuous discriminations' (BC 43)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Nature of the aesthetic experience | • individual pleasure realized in the encounter with the object/image  
• pleasures of: the senses; association (words, colours, symbols); design (principles of contrast, graduation, theme-and-variation); pattern (satisfaction in the comprehension of pattern; attention and organization of elements); recognition or the fulfilment of type (concept including technical mastery) (BC 115-120) |
| Criteria of value for aesthetic judgement | • the greater the intensity, duration and number of pleasures/pleasurable feelings, the greater the aesthetic value of the object  
• judgement is individually determined on the basis of how much pleasure is perceived to have been experienced  
• individual judgements are variable according to the state of the viewer when viewing  
• sophisticated mechanism allows for 'acquired' pleasure  
• the greater a viewer's discriminatory powers, the greater the possible immediate pleasure |
| Nature of truth | • empirical fact of feeling supported by the articulation of that feeling or by report of external observation. Feeling as empirical fact.  
• causal-adjustment concept of truth: truth is characterized as the adjustment of functioning in response to stimuli |
| Rôle of the critic | • to increase the amount of sensuous pleasure viewers can derive from an aesthetic encounter by articulating what there is to enjoy and thereby help viewers to refine their own discriminatory powers  
• a critic may criticize negatively in order to warn the public or help the artist |

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## ART IN FORMISM

**essential metaphor: similarity**

| Viewer expectation for the image | • that the image will accord with a genre or form of composition  
• that aspects of the image are familiar or similar in appearance to known experience  
• that the object is representative of normal or normalizing forms  
• that the object will exemplify the skills of the crafts-person in working with the intrinsic properties of the materials to optimize their potential in the fabrication of the object |
| --- | --- |
| Nature of the aesthetic experience | • sense of satisfaction in the 'normal' person in the norm, normal and normative  
• possible catharsis experienced as a process of active normalization through the recognition of conflicts or problems in art leading to a re-balancing of the individual  
• sense of the universal |
| Criteria of value for aesthetic judgement | • degree to which the art work exemplifies an ideal form or norm (a universal norm)  
• degree to which the art work realizes the implicit norms of the materials and how they are used to realize the ideal form of the object  
• degree to which the art work exemplifies some aspect of its age (BC 106)  
• evidence of adjustment - survival  
• degree to which form and function are fused in an object as explicit norms of external form  
• the affective ability of the object to normalize the viewer  
• extent to which perceptions satisfy norms of perception (BC 107) |
| Nature of truth | • the correspondence of two or more elements |
| Rôle of the critic | • to examine 'the effectiveness and worth' of an object in 'establishing emotional balance and in attaining for the individual the satisfactions of normality' (BC 112) |

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ART IN CONTEXTUALISM

essential metaphor: the present situation in its context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Viewer expectation for the image</th>
<th>• that it will effect vivid, intense and deep experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature of the aesthetic experience</td>
<td>• voluntary, vivid realization of the quality of a situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria of value for aesthetic judgement</td>
<td>• 'the more vivid the experience and the more extensive and rich its quality, the greater its aesthetic value' (BC 57)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Nature of truth | • qualitative corroboration of aesthetic immediacies
• truth operational in the context of successful human activity: events have references which lead to satisfactions in other events |
| Rôle of the critic | • to increase the vividness of quality in an aesthetic experience
• to counter the effects of habit, convention and tradition; practical activity in achieving goals, and analysis
• to show the relation of the work to its social context
• to analyze the structure of the work in order to exhibit its details and fund a full realization of a work of art as a cumulative series of intermittent perceptions |

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| **Viewer expectation for the image** | • no expectation for any specific kind of subject matter, but rather for pleasures with coherent connections to their origins |
| **Nature of the aesthetic experience** | • 'to enter into the feeling tensions of the materials...to work these up to an organic structure for the satisfaction of all elements in a total mutual fulfilment [sic]' (BC 88) • imaginative satisfaction derived from the dynamic integration of elements within a work of art combining to form an organic whole |
| **Criteria of value for aesthetic judgement** | • value is accorded proportionally to the degree of integration attained (BC 74) and the amount of material integrated (BC 79) |
| **Nature of truth** | • fragments and their nexus are consistent and not contradictory and verify judgements based on observations • the internal coherence of the whole, formal consistency and positive relationships between the constituent parts induce more determinate, inclusive and accurate predictions |
| **Role of the critic** | • to follow the process of the artist in following the qualitative demands of the materials, knowing their potentialities and fulfilments, and apprehending the unity of the whole |

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**ART IN ANIMISM**

esential metaphor: spirit, being

| Viewer expectation for the image                                      | • that the image is the embodiment of, or vehicle for the powers of spirit  
|                                                                     | • the image will personify humankind in the universe, or in a more mature form, the  
|                                                                     | personification of spirit in the universe  
| Nature of the aesthetic experience                                    | • receiving of 'the voice' of the spirit through the work of art  
| Criteria of value for aesthetic judgement                            | • the greater the power of the spirit embodied in the work, the greater the value  
| Nature of truth                                                      | • truth is proportional to the greatness of the authority of the statement of spirit made  
|                                                                     | through the work of art  
| Rôle of the critic                                                   | • to function as a voicepiece, or representative, for a higher authority, gaining greatest  
|                                                                     | authority him or herself by voicing the word of the greatest spirit  

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## ART IN MYSTICISM

**essential metaphor: love**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Viewer expectation for the image</th>
<th>• that the substance of the image will be the emotion of love</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Nature of the aesthetic experience | • the experience will be supremely cognitive (mystical beyond the cognition of knowledge) and revelatory  
                                     • the experience of the image will be an immediate experience, unmediated by the senses or imagination  
                                     • the experience will be certain, indubitable and emotionally ecstatic (BC 128-129) |
| Criteria of value for aesthetic judgement | • judgement is individually determined on the basis of how the emotion of love is experienced through the mystical art encounter  
                                             • the greater the intensity, fusion and inclusiveness of the emotion, the greater the object's aesthetic worth |
| Nature of truth | • an intense comprehension of All Things in an apprehension of certain Truth  
                 • the greater the intensity, fusion and inclusiveness of the emotional experience, the greater the truth revealed |
| Role of the critic | • to understand the links between revelatory experience and everyday facts with a view to illuminating a procedural path to Truth (WH 131) |

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FRAMING THE FRAME:
DIFFERING APPRECIATIONS

In the previous chapter I redefined the criteria of six different world views based on Stephen Pepper's theory of world hypotheses as they particularly relate to visual art. I summarized their characteristics in a set of tables for ease of comparison. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how the six frameworks generate particular sets of responses through the analysis of a painting: Francis Bacon's *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Innocent X* (Plate 10), painted in 1953. I view this painting through the eyes of each framework, as it were, in order to demonstrate how the different epistemological orientations embodied in each world view are played out in the viewing of a work of art. In so doing, I will illustrate how the differing world hypotheses influence the values and preconceptions viewers bring to a viewing experience and affect their subsequent evaluations of a work of art.

In demonstrating how the six frameworks generate different views of a work of art, I focused on each world view in turn and thought about what would be important to me if I were viewing Bacon's painting from within each of the world views. I then wrote an analysis from the perspective of each world view. In
editing the writing, I used the categories I developed to organize the tables to check that I had also covered the important elements of a viewing experience from a viewer's perspective.

The choice of the Bacon painting was carefully considered (although I could have used any work as the subject of the analysis), so it is appropriate that in the context of a thesis I should outline the process by which I came to select it.

When I began to think about Pepper's world views and how they would work in the context of viewing art, I considered analyzing different types of works (representational/non-representational) and works from different periods of art history. In considering various options, I realized that a photo-realistic work, or a work of complete abstraction, played to the extremes of the representation-abstraction continuum. I could have analyzed a work of both representation and abstraction, but while experimenting with the writing found this generated a tedious amount of repetition both in method and in content.

I came across Francis Bacon's *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* as I was looking through an art book. Prior to working on world hypotheses I had not formally studied Bacon's work, which I thought would be advantageous in the sense of not carrying as much intellectual baggage into my analysis as might have been the case otherwise. I had certainly seen examples of a range of his work over the years and felt them to be unpleasant and distressing, and while Bacon is acknowledged as one of the great British painters, I have
actually disliked his work. As I began to explore the idea of using Bacon’s work as the subject of my analysis, I focused on the so-called ‘Screaming Popes’ and began to think about how I felt about these paintings. I quickly concentrated my attention on Bacon’s *Study after Velázquez’s Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (Plate 10), for no better reason than I could access adequate reproductions of this particular work.

Bacon’s *Study after Velázquez’s Portrait of Pope Innocent X* lies in a middle ground between representation and abstraction: on one hand he has clearly painted a figure and the work is based on the composition of a portrait; on the other, the painting so toys with the idea of figurative representation in the looseness of the painting, the excoriated composition and the distortion of the features that I have dubbed the style of the work ‘para-representational’ to indicate its move away from representation, but shortfall from abstraction.

My decision to choose Bacon’s work centred on the issue of representation or non-representation rests with novice preoccupation with representation and identifiable subject matter, as evidenced in the Denver Report (McDermott-Lewis 1990, see Chapter 2) and the published objections to the National Gallery of Canada’s acquisition of Mark Rothko’s *No. 16* (see Chapter 1). One of the crucial elements for a novice in looking at a work of art is that it ‘looks like something’. Bacon’s *Study after Velázquez’s Portrait of Pope Innocent X* is an interesting challenge: it does and does not satisfy the criteria for representation and
abstraction. In its ambiguity, this Bacon painting provides a rich subject for examining the analytical potential of my framework.

Given that the starting point for this study was the controversy that followed the National Gallery of Canada’s purchase of Rothko’s \textit{No.16}, it may seem surprising that the focus of the analysis is not Rothko’s \textit{No.16} itself. While the Rothko purchase was the trigger for this study, this is not a study \textit{about} the Rothko painting per se, but one that uses the Rothko controversy structurally as a framing device and as a means of focusing the issues surrounding looking at abstract art. My task in this chapter is to demonstrate an application of the theory and I decided that that task could be most interestingly and effectively accomplished by pursuing an analysis of Bacon’s \textit{Study after Velázquez’s Portrait of Pope Innocent X}. I will return to Rothko’s work in the final chapter with comments illuminated by the framework and subsequent analyses developed in this study.

I begin exploring the differing appreciations in this chapter with brief catalogue information relating to Bacon’s \textit{Study after Velázquez’s Portrait of Innocent X}. 
The Painting

Bacon's Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Innocent X (Plate 10) is painted in oil on canvas and was completed in 1953. It is a large work, measuring 153cm x 118cm and is part of the Des Moines Art Center collection in Iowa. It is important when looking at the comparatively small reproduction to try to recreate something of the impact of the actual image size and to imagine it hung on a wall; this is not a work that one can walk by casually and ignore, it is a large work of an almost life-size screaming figure, boldly highlighted and coloured. It is worth spending a few moments trying to fix the dimensions of the work in the mind, as this will bear on various aspects of the work that will be discussed.

Formist Analysis

The essential metaphor in formism is similarity. Aesthetic value within this hypothesis is determined by the degree to which a work of art represents an ideal form or norm; realizes the implicit norms of materials and how they are used to realize the ideal form of the object; exemplifies some aspect of its age; conforms with a genre or style; fuses form and function to realize norms of external form, and has the ability to normalize the viewer and satisfy norms of perception (BC 105-107). In short, the formistic aesthetic embraces norms of form, materials and culture in the object, and norms of perception and the experience of normalization in the viewer.
Plate 11: VELÁZQUEZ, Pope Innocent X, 1650.
Oil on canvas, 139.7 x 115cm.
Galleria Doria Pamphili, Rome.
Plate 12: TITIAN, Portrait of Charles V seated, 1548.
Oil on canvas, 203.5 x 122cm. Alte Pinakothek, Munich.
Panel, 5 x 2.4m. S. Zaccaria, Venice.
Oil on wood, 108 x 80.7cm. National Gallery, London.
Francis Bacon’s painting is, as named, a study based on a portrait of Pope Innocent X by Velázquez painted in 1650 (Plate 11). In terms of formistic criteria and conformity with a genre or style, the composition of Bacon’s Study is clearly based directly on the original Velázquez in the disposition of the body of the sitter. Velázquez’s composition is itself firmly rooted in a tradition of portraiture as a whole, evidenced in portraits of kings and nobles (Plate 12), religious worthies (Plates 13, 14 and 15) and popes in particular (Plate 16). The compositional ‘form’ in these works is embedded in the presentation of the sitter, and in his Study Bacon has followed the form very closely in compositional and structural terms: the figure sits in a chair (which may or may not indicate a seat of power such as a throne), on a raised dais, displaying some of the ‘trappings’ of grandeur and status. The attributes incorporated into works of this kind vary; Velázquez in his portrait included the papal throne, sumptuous robes, the papal ring and a state paper, but Bacon decided to include only the throne and robes. Similar attributes could be traced in the examples of portraiture illustrated in Plates 11-16 in the context of establishing the power and public image of the sitter in a work.

However, if Bacon may be seen to have adhered to the genre of portraiture and papal portraits in structural or compositional terms, he seems to have

1 Velázquez, *Pope Innocent X*, oil on canvas, 139.7 x 115cm, 1650, Galleria Doria Pamphili, Rome.
contravened it deliberately in psychological and emotional terms. Velázquez (Plate 11) conveys the confidence of infallibility, underscored in the authority of the sitter’s pose, power of his form and studied nonchalance of gesture. Velázquez’s portrait goes beyond a mere representation of office to suggest aspects of the personality behind the authority, but the suggestion is one of unity or consistency in the psychological profile of the sitter and the office that he holds.

The expression or emotional content of Bacon’s work is then at odds with the genre from which it derives its subject matter. In formistic terms there are two important points to consider in this regard: Velázquez painted his portrait to commission and with set parameters, while Bacon worked under no such restrictions; Velázquez was painting a portrait in which an evidence of likeness was expected, while Bacon was not concerned with the notion of ‘likeness’ (and often called works in this series ‘heads’ rather than ‘portraits’). Bacon’s Study is not itself part of the same tradition from which it takes its inspiration. Bacon’s studies are paintings about Velázquez’s image (combined with other sources); Bacon is looking at Velázquez’s image and responds in counterpoint with the ‘antithesis of the public state portrait,’ giving us instead what Davies describes as ‘the old man screaming in privacy at the moment when his public image collapsed’ (Davies 1978, 100).

Bacon’s Study after Velázquez’s Portrait of Pope Innocent X is then problematic formistically because although he is not exactly part of the portrait or
Plate 17: MUNCH, Lithograph of The Cry, published 1895.
Plate 18: EISENSTEIN, Still from *The Battleship Potemkin*, 1925.
Plate 19:  HUNTER, Second Photograph, shows clippings and photographs found in Bacon's studio, photographed in the summer of 1950. The pair of photographs in the top left corner show Himmler (far left) and Goebels (adjacent right).
papal traditions, he follows them so closely in his way that the variations or
departures from the genres stand out sharply.

Although the scream as an emotional and psychological state is
unprecedented in papal portraiture, it has visual antecedents that can be traced in
painting (Munch’s *The Cry*, Plate 17), in film (Still of the nurse in Eisenstein’s
film *Battleship Potemkin*, Plate 18) and journalistic photography (see photographs
found in Bacon’s studio, Plate 19). The forms Bacon ascribes to in his depiction
of a scream are those of pain and propaganda. Bacon juxtaposes these forms; he
could be said to be juxtaposing two forms: one of genre (painted portraiture) and
one of expression (screaming as presented in various media). He is peculiarly true
to and consistent in both forms, which he lays down together rather than conflates
into some new form, and because each is the antithesis of the other, it creates an
acute tension in the resulting work. The shock is caused not so much by the fact
that Bacon has done something completely different, but more by his adherence
to the essentials of the forms he *has* used in his work.

A formist in Pepper’s framework would also be concerned with the extent
to which a work typifies its age. In using forms derived from contemporary
journalistic photography, Bacon has to some extent integrated the overtly
contemporary and typical into his *Study*. However, after the Second World War
much of the work of other artists reflected a sense of relief and optimism (eg. the
art of Sutherland). Bacon’s work was considered unusual in its bleakness of
vision, although it was consistent with the concurrent post-war problems of decimation and loss (Davies 1978).

In terms of personality and the expression of individual norms, this painting is not a statement about the ideal of a happy and healthy individual, but it could be considered a reflection of a basic instinct in a ‘normal’ person, or a common aspect of human experience. In terms of the essence of a norm, a cry or scream is perhaps a universal norm of human pain. Notions of universals are problematic, but a scream may be deemed universal in the sense of it being an involuntary action. This scream is not cathartic; it does not have the release of catharsis. This is the claustrophobic, stifled and perpetual scream of a figure trapped in extremis. However, in the extremity of its expression, in establishing an abnormal state of pain and suffering, it may reinforce the sense of normality in the onlooker and so in formist terms have a normalizing function for the viewer.

Formism offers two very different insights into Bacon’s painting. On one hand, the work is disturbing because it not only breaks the forms of compositional and psychological stability, but also those of beauty as a proportionate manifestation or exemplification of a norm. On the other hand, the work walks a tightrope between the normal/norm and the abnormal. The knife-edge that the work teeters on gives it a great deal of power. As a personal aside, I believe that it is because Bacon’s Study after Velázquez’s Portrait of Innocent X is so challenging from a formist viewpoint, that he has produced an extremely
Mechanist Analysis

The essential metaphor of the mechanistic hypothesis is the machine, and in the context of aesthetics, the mechanism at work is viewer response to the stimulus of a work of art. The aesthetic experience in mechanism is rooted in immediate and intrinsic pleasures.

For the mechanist, on first glance Bacon's *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* offers little by way of possible sensuous delight: the elements of colour, form, line, tone and texture combine in a powerful expression not of pleasure but of pain. The painting challenges the immediate pleasure of recognition as a portrait. Even though the image has a strong sensory dimension, is compelling in the strength of the design, extremes of contrast, resonance through theme and variation, and technique, it is nonetheless elusive and unsatisfying.

Although the notion of aesthetics in mechanism is rooted in immediate and intrinsic pleasure, the nature of mechanism (the consideration of essentially discrete parts, even though these may to some degree be combined to form a more complex part) allows for the judgement of fragments. When I first began to analyze the various technical aspects of this work I could enjoy limited discrete pleasures. However, all the feelings I have for aspects of this work are double-edged. I find it extremely difficult to separate the integration of form and
compositional structure (which I believe successful and 'pleasing') from the rôle they play in the painting as a whole: they contribute to the intensity of feeling in the painting, focusing and concentrating the horror and the pain. Likewise with the depth of the painting: space is powerfully defined, but it is a disturbing space, confined and confining, also almost in limbo and unstable, with the 'floor' lines dropping off to an abyss on the left.

The brushwork employed accentuates the uncertainty and the ephemerality it creates, but is at once belied by the permanency of the pigment on the canvas. The strokes are loose, the colour is dragged over the background, and the action bold: these effects cannot be achieved without confidence. The technique itself is partly responsible for the wavering quality of the image: in parts the paint is very thin and the canvas is visible, which gives the image a peculiar transparency. Colour is balanced and unified, as is the organisation of light within the work. Once again, however satisfying the use of light in the work, for example, it cannot be divorced from its effect: it serves to highlight the figure with the intensity of an interrogation light and is at once as harsh, revealing and unwelcome.

I have previously discussed some of the aspects of unity and contrast as they relate to this work in terms of colour, traditions, geometry in the case of compositional unity, and illumination: the familiar and the unfamiliar. As regards unity as an aspect of comprehensibility, being able to identify the separate parts does not necessarily help to go beyond those parts to be able to put them together.
Comprehension in any unified sense requires a synthesis beyond part-naming deconstruction. As Mark Tanser said, 'A painting is like a vehicle: you can sit in the driveway and take it apart, or you can get in it and go somewhere' (source unknown).

Ironically, for a painting that one would suppose would have some figurative auditory component to it, this painting is ominously silent. The scream in this painting has a very different quality to the cry of Munch's painting (Plate 17), where although the scream cannot be heard literally, it can be 'seen' in the movement of line and the intensity of colour in the work; Munch's cry distorts the picture space it occupies.

Bacon's screaming figure is different: in spite of the gaping mouth, the scream is restrained, stifled and contained, locked into the composition. The image in Bacon's picture is not firm enough for the scream to have any substance: it is the depiction of an inner scream and certainly one that renders no pleasure.

Dealing with tactile qualities of a work such as this in search of sensory pleasures is especially problematic with such a small reproduction (Plate 10). The tactile qualities of this image lie in the physical qualities of the paint (impasto, brushwork), but also in the play between the idea of solidity and reality and the wavering uncertainty of a nightmare or hallucination; something that is a thin image on one level, and yet has qualities associated with the physicality of canvas on another. Again, the successful ambiguity achieved in relation to tactile qualities
in this case serves ultimately to heighten the tension and anxiety produced by the work, and however successful the technical handling of the medium, its success is inextricably linked to the subject and the effect of the work as a whole.

The ‘swift, sensuous discriminations’ (BC 43) that might be derived from an image are hard come by in this work. The mechanist judges the value of the work according to the intensity, duration and number of pleasurable feelings he or she derives from the painting, with the result that the mechanist might reject this work for its ultimate lack of pleasures.

**Contextualist Analysis**

The aesthetic experience in contextualism lies in the voluntary, vivid intuition of the quality of a situation (BC 56): the more vivid, intense, extensive and rich the quality of the aesthetic experience, the greater its aesthetic value (BC 57). Richness of experience derives from many strands of tradition fused into something new; these affect the future and have their roots in the past.

If I look at Bacon’s *Study after Velázquez’s Portrait of Pope Innocent X* from a contextualist stance, I am almost bowled over by the intensity and vividness of the image. The potency of the image is not, surprisingly, generated by the ‘noise’ of the scream that is really ‘trapped’ within the painting, but rather from a powerful surge of perceived fear, pain and helplessness. The projection of the energy within the work is heightened by vivid qualities in the design and execution
of the painting: the strong composition with the figure ‘locked’ into the chair - like an electric chair - and held in place, not only by the luminosity of the golden yellow frame of the chair and confining foreground bars, but also by the dark vertical streaks of paint that seem to hang in front of and even penetrate the figure itself, while the strongly contrasting white of the figure’s long robe almost slips out from underneath the rigid format of the upper part of the painting and immediately creates a tension in the stability of the composition. In addition to the tonal and complementary colouristic contrasts in the painting, there are also great contrasts of technique: strong, boldly applied colour contrasts with paint that has been scraped back to the canvas, dragged, thinly applied and spattered. There is also a physical contrast in the work as an object between its near life-size dimensions and material presence and the ephemerality of the image, which does not even cover the canvas in places.

For all the vividness realized through identifiable, tangible contrasts in the image, perhaps the most powerful is the psychological vividness of the painting: there is no ambiguity here; we get an all out, no holds barred expression of terror.

With regard to contextualism (and later organicism) the aspects of horror (as intensity of emotion) and ugliness (as a quality of the whole picture as an ‘event’ in Pepper’s terms) present potential problems for both the viewer and the frameworks.

Bacon said that his pictures did not ‘mean’ anything; that they were ‘just an
attempt to make a certain type of feeling visual...painting is the pattern of one’s own nervous system being projected onto canvas’ (Davies 1978, 77-78). Bacon was himself surprised by the general uniformity of reactions to his work as focusing on a feeling of horror and said,

In fact, I wanted to paint the scream more than the horror. And I think if I had really thought about what causes somebody to scream - the horror that produces a scream - it would have made the screams that I tried to paint more successful. In fact, they were too abstract....

(Bacon 1963, quoted in Berger 1972)

One of Bacon’s mentors (Roy de Maistre) said at one point that

In one’s life one ought to be gentle and forebearing [sic], but in one’s art one should conduct oneself quite differently. It’s often necessary for instance, to give the spectator an ugly left uppercut.

(Davies 1978, 18)

Bacon had not seen the original painting of Pope Innocent X by Velázquez prior to or during the years he spent working on the pope series (he painted twenty-five popes in all), and one of the reasons he gave for this evasion was that he was embarrassed at what he had done ‘to’ the work.

Far from being ‘too abstract’, it would seen that one of the problems with this work is that it is rather too vivid: the scream is very much part of the horror
and a successful (if reactions are to be valued) ‘attempt to make a certain type of feeling visual’ (Davies 1978, 77-78). Within the contextualist framework, the question becomes, how vivid is too vivid? The contextualist values vividness and intensity of experience, but how does the contextualist deal with intensity of unpleasant experience or experience of the ugly? When does the ugly become ‘insuperable’ and can the contextualist framework offer insight into this work if the horror of the image proves overwhelming?

To begin to come to some understanding of these questions, it is helpful to go back to Pepper’s idea of contextual ‘voluntary [my italics] vivid intuitions of quality’ (Pepper 1945, 56). When rôle-playing a contextualist in his exploration of a sonnet by Hopkins in Basis of Criticism in the Arts (Pepper 1945), Pepper judges that in spite of some of the gory and unpleasant images in the poem, the poem succeeds:

The poem is one of exceptional beauty. It is a condensed vivid perception, with a rich highly fused quality of great depth.

(BC 131)

The contextualist position can tolerate some pain or ugliness because beauty within this framework is not based on an aesthetic of sensuous pleasure alone, but of intensity. This is not to say that it can tolerate repulsiveness - Pepper talks of the need for ‘psychical distance’ using the example of a storm (BC 66-67).
Contextualism can accommodate awesome or horrific beauty if the negative aspect of an experience serves to pique the overall enjoyment of an experience and it ultimately becomes a positive quality. In art, an example of this would be Bernini’s *Ecstasy of St. Theresa*¹ in which the saint, pierced repeatedly with an arrow by an angel, experiences pain accompanied with such ecstatic spiritual pleasure that she wished it no end. When pain dominates an experience in whatever form that pain takes, the intensity of the experience can no longer ‘be dwelt upon’ (BC 132) but prompts action that closes down the experience: in the example of the storm, it may result in running for cover.

There is also a certain degree of pain in the nature of human form as Bacon paints it. Bacon did not paint naturally deformed subjects, he deformed and mutilated forms as he painted them. He preferred to paint from photographs than paint with a sitter because he found the presence of a sitter inhibiting:

   ...because if I like them, I don’t want to practise before them the injury that I do to them in my work. I would rather practise the injury in private by which I think I can record the fact of them more clearly.

   (Sylvester 1975, 41)

Bacon thought of himself as a ‘pulverizer’, and that by distorting something

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beyond its appearance he could 'bring it back to a recording of the appearance' (Sylvester 1975, 40).

Foils to Bacon's work are Velázquez’s portraits of the court dwarves: the subjects themselves are naturally deformed but they are painted with such sensitivity and lack of sentimentality that they are 'pleasurable' and are certainly vivid perceptions with the essential depth that 'can be dwelt on' (Pepper 1945, 132).

Without succeeding to combine the 'funded experiences of many preceding perceptions' (BC 71), the ability of the viewer to come to a full realization of the work will be compromised, no matter how vivid, rich, or extensive the quality of the experience of looking. In order to achieve an adequate judgement of a work of art, the issue for me looking through a contextualist lens is not one of recognizing the vividness of Bacon's *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X*, or having a viewing experience that is extensive in its context, but rather of this difficulty of dwelling on the image. In this framework, I am still coming to understand.

**Organicist Analysis**

The essential metaphor of organicism is integration. Aesthetic experience constitutes satisfaction derived from the dynamic integration of elements within a work of art, combining to form an organic whole. Value is accorded to a work
of art according to the degree of integration achieved and the amount of material integrated.

To look at Bacon's *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* from an organicist point of view, means to look at what has been integrated in the painting and how successfully. To begin with, there are physical elements of size, dimension, medium, support. There are also elements relating to the methodology of the painting: the colours used, the brushstrokes, the order of painting. There are issues of iconography. These are all elements that can be identified from the surface of the work. But then there are the unseen aspects of the work - the resonances that the painting embodies or implies: the meanings, symbols, images and emotions that ripple beneath the sensory surface of the work. It is through the unseen as much as the seen that we view a work of art, and we must go beyond the superficial in order to clarify the nature of the evidence before us and the strength of our judgement in the organicist world view.

Looking first at the visible: the most basic aspect of dimension is a significant element in beginning to judge levels of integration in this work. The painting measures 153 x 118cm, which means the seated figure is almost life-size: an illusion enhanced when the painting is hung on a wall in front of a viewer. It would be hard to recreate the presence of this work on a smaller scale: part of its power is its looming dimension.

The use of space within the painting emphasizes the feeling that in some
sense the painting comes out to meet the gaze of the viewer: the bright prominence of the cage-like construction around the figure seems to throw the foreground of the picture forward further than the perspective of the picture really permits, creating a tension not only in the pictorial space of the picture, but also in the spatial relationship between the picture and the viewer. The seemingly receding, ghostly and masked qualities of the upper part of the figure and chairback are waveringly insubstantial set against the brazen brushstrokes of the white under robe of the papal garments and the firm delineation of the foreground bars. The wide variations in the quality of paint and coverage on the surface of the canvas also contribute to the technical and compositional tensions within the work.

It might be thought that the inherent tensions in the technical and formal aspects of this painting might lead to a sense of disintegration and fragmentation in the work as art and imply inadequacy on the part of the artist in integrating the elements of the work and the materials (see BC 94 and my section on organicism in Chapter 3). However, within the organicist view, seeming fragments or disintegrative tendencies can be integrated and resolved at higher levels. Whatever problems there may be with individual formal aspects of this work, there remains a strong internal organic coherence when the technical and plastic aspects of the work are integrated with the dramatic, symbolic and psychological values of the work. Integration in organicism hinges on organized and coherent feeling where the nature of feeling experienced in response to a work of art is bound to the
qualities of the object (BC 78). In an integrated work ‘the materials...are highly controlled in their interrelations, so that there is a constant test of relevancy within the work itself’ (BC 86). This internal control and ‘highly integrated embodiments of feeling’ (BC 87) give the organicist a belief in the objectivity of a work of art (BC 87).

From a personal standpoint, I believe it is exactly the precise complementing of tensions within this work that combine to produce its power as an image. Far from Bacon not having control over his materials, I think he deliberately chose to use his artistry to enhance the power of the work as a whole, and that the very ambiguities visible in the treatment of space, form and paint only serve to complement and intensify the interpretive tensions that focus around the permanency of the Church and the promise of everlasting life and hope versus the mortality of its apostles, and the torment of this papal figure in particular.²

However, there are still two potential problems with this work within organicism: horror (as intensity of emotion) and ugliness (as a quality of the whole picture as an ‘event’ in Pepper’s terms).

I have discussed the horror often perceived within the painting and the horror of encountering this painting as a perceptual experience. The issue is that

² Of course, the interpretive possibilities extend well beyond these literal polarities of the image, but it is not my intention here to produce an exhaustive analysis of this work within each frame, but rather to demonstrate the application of the theory sufficiently for the process to be apparent.
if the organicist seeks out pleasures of satisfaction derived from the coherence of connections in an experience, what does the organicist do with aesthetic experience annexed to ugliness or the unpleasant, and what insights can organicism offer as a modus operandi with relation to an appreciation of Bacon’s Study after Velázquez’s Portrait of Pope Innocent X?

Organicism accounts for ugly or unpleasant experiences in one of four ways:

1. That by definition, if objects are not integrations of feeling, they fall outside the field of aesthetics altogether and are consequently of no concern.

2. The problem lies with the spectator; the object is not ugly at all, the spectator has just failed to integrate it. (Pepper talks of ‘blocks’ in the process of integration.)

3. The artist has tried to affect a particular response through the work (e.g., propaganda in literature). This is interesting in light of the fact that Bacon said he wanted to depict the scream more than the horror, although this is what is commonly perceived.

4. There may be a problem with the work itself: it may lack intrinsic integration and be ‘invincibly ugly’ (BC 94).

(BC 92-94)

Pepper explores the idea of invincible ugliness and intrinsic disintegration
in relation to a Hopkins poem\(^3\) in *Basis of Criticism in the Arts* (BC 127ff). There are some potentially illuminating parallels to be drawn between the Hopkins’ poem and the Bacon *Study after Velázquez’s Portrait of Pope Innocent X*. Pepper argues that the very subject of the Hopkins sonnet (insomnia) is disintegrative, and that it is the poem of ‘disintegrated personality,’ in which ‘whatever peace is hoped for is by denial and insulation from the world’ (BC 135).

Similarly in the Bacon painting, there is no hope of divine integration, nor of any existential happiness for the individual. The Bacon painting is an experience of isolation in a vacuum and Pepper’s comments pertaining to the Hopkins’ poem could be applied equally well to the Bacon *Study*:

> The experience of a soul that fears it is deserted in the context of the great Christian tradition of Church and God and heaven and hell and the place of man in the world, and the depth of that fear is as great as the extent of the tradition it exemplifies.

(BC 132)

This is the intrinsic weakness of the subject: there is *no* hope of resolution through relations of facts, only ‘despair, self-conflict and confusion’ (BC 136). Pepper claims that the only thing that saves the Hopkins poem within an organicist

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framework is that the subject is 'true of a certain state of disintegrative being' (BC
136). In this light an organicist could treat the poem as a fragment, relate it to personal and human experience as a whole and thereby integrate it in relation to other facts.

Another possible accounting for aesthetic disintegration might lie within an intrinsic lack (or flaw) in the personality of the artist. Bacon would not deny the autobiographical nature of his work. Could the work be judged as an expression of personality? Bacon's personality did have a destructive and violently disintegrative side to it, and in this sense his work, including the screaming popes, could be seen as integrated expressions of a disintegrated character. In relation to Hopkins, Pepper states that 'this [disintegrated character] comes out not only in the subject but in the development of the details where there is much vivid insight and much skillful organisation but broken into again and again by exaggeration, deficiency, and open conflict among the demands of the aesthetic materials' (BC 137). Bacon himself talked about overworking canvases frequently or overworking his materials (see Sylvester 1975 and Davies 1978).

In addition to the potential weaknesses of the work itself and the artist, it may be that in viewing the painting any problems that arise may be attributable to weakness in the viewer: the painting itself is a highly integrated work, but the viewer experiences some block in the process of integration (e.g., a lack of understanding of the artist's materials, methods or intent). There are clearly some
potential problems with the notion of organistic integration in relation to the Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X; there is rich material which is highly integrated in some senses, but there are arguably fundamental disintegrative tendencies in the subject matter and its realization, which might inhibit an appreciation of the integration of the work.

It would be possible at this point to indulge in an exhaustive art historical and biographical account of the painting and its painter to try to establish wide-ranging integration in the work for the purposes of a full organistic appreciation of Bacon’s Study after Velázquez’s Portrait of Pope Innocent X. However, my intention here has been to demonstrate the progress of an organistic analysis, rather than produce an exhaustive organistic critique of Bacon’s work (a thesis in its own right). For the purposes of this thesis, having demonstrated the application of organicism and indicated its scope, I will suspend my organistic analysis at this point.

Animist and Mystic Analyses

Animism and mysticism present particular problems for this thesis in the context of a demonstrative analysis. In animism, the essential metaphor is spirit and the aesthetic experience is defined as receiving the voice of the spirit through the work of art. In mysticism, the essential metaphor is love and the aesthetic experience is defined as supremely cognitive (by which Pepper means ‘supra’-
cognitive, beyond cognition), unmediated, indubitable and ecstatic. Both positions are dogmatic and indubitable: there is no cognitive means of challenging a judgement in either world view. If the animist says he or she is receiving spirit through a work, the claim cannot be countered, and likewise with the mystic - who is to deny that another is suffused with a mystical experience if that is their claim? One experience is as real as any other: they are rooted in uncriticized belief. This is why these positions are so difficult to work with and is also why I have chosen not to analyze Bacon’s *Study after Velázquez’s Portrait of Pope Innocent X* using animism or mysticism. Although an understanding of World Hypotheses can facilitate an awareness of the values of these two epistemological orientations, interpretations in these two views are uncontestable. This is why Pepper regarded them as cognitively inadequate and did not include them in the set of world hypotheses he regarded as cognitively adequate (namely mechanism, formism, contextualism and organicism).

I have included animism and mysticism in the previous chapter that defines the elements of the various world views as it is important that they be represented and that the categories of the belief systems be understood, but I also want them to be represented in this chapter, because in the context of experiencing art, it is exactly a mystical experience that some viewers anticipate and feel is particularly thwarted when viewing abstract art. There are also cultural variations on how images are regarded, and although this study is framed in a tradition of Western
culture and experience, it is important to note that there are other traditions which would be much closer to animism and mysticism than they would other frames of thought.

**Summary**

In this chapter I have used the framework I developed in the previous chapter based on Pepper's theory of World Hypotheses as an analytical tool to define and articulate a series of responses from four of the six identified world views: mechanism, formism, contextualism and organismic, and explained the difficulties of responding in the context of animism and mysticism.

In the process of this inquiry, I identified the expectations of each world view and examined how these expectations might be met in relation to viewing Francis Bacon's *Study after Velázquez’s Portrait of Pope Innocent X*. The analysis also identified where potential problems in viewing might occur.

Through the analysis and the experience of 'viewing' Bacon's painting through each outlook on the world, I personally came to a richer and clearer appreciation of a wider range of aspects of the work than I had had prior to undertaking this research and experienced directly as a learner the educational potential of applying world hypotheses in looking at art. This study is not an attempt to unlock or identify the meaning of Bacon’s *Study after Velázquez’s Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (although in the course of the process of exploration
it is evident that I do begin to build meanings), and I do not feel I have reached any kind of definitive conclusion and have not striven for closure. My thoughts represent only some of the many potential variations of meaning and emphases arising from a viewing of the work. In my consideration of Francis Bacon’s *Study after Velázquez’s Portrait of Pope Innocent X*, I have reached the understanding that although I do not ‘like’ the painting or find it pleasurable, I believe it to have great depth and power, and acknowledge it as a great work of art.
GROWING INTO KNOWLEDGE:
CONNECTING UNDERSTANDINGS

This thesis began with the presentation of an issue in art: public rejection of abstract art evident in the controversies following gallery acquisitions. In Chapter 1, I laid out the issues visible in the controversy that followed the National Gallery of Canada's announcement of its acquisition of Mark Rothko's abstract work, *No.16* (Plate 1). In presenting the plethora of opinions voiced in the course of the controversy, I argued that the objections revealed a fairly narrow range of underlying assumptions. Furthermore, I proposed that increasing the understanding both of the problems viewers have with abstract art and also of the nature of controversies such as that surrounding the Rothko purchase required insight into the fundamental beliefs and world views of viewers that underlie their thinking and opinions. Such insight, I argued, would not only help to clarify the nature of the problems involved, but would also help to indicate a way forward for education professionals and the public. Finally, I suggested that Stephen Pepper's theory of world hypotheses in which he outlined the structure of a set of world views and their basic categories would provide a useful framework with which to pursue the inquiry.
In Chapter 2, I argued that while research in education and galleries recognised the issue of pluralism in both viewers/learners and the objects being viewed, addressing multiple dimensions of experience tended to be dealt with on an ad hoc, needs basis, rather than from within a coherent, systematic philosophical framework. I proposed that a systematic, pluralistic framework such as that originally developed by Stephen Pepper afforded a metaperspective on the multiplicity of demands and expectations evident in the Rothko controversy.

In Chapter 3, I explained Pepper’s theory of world hypotheses and extended the theory by articulating its implications for visual art. I then presented a set of tables summarizing the frameworks developed to facilitate easy comparison between the different world views.

In Chapter 4, in order to demonstrate both the use and implication of the theory of world hypotheses for viewing art, I applied the framework I developed in Chapter 3 by analyzing Francis Bacon’s *Study after Velázquez’s Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (Plate 10) through each of the world views in turn to illustrate how each world view generated different value judgements based on the expectations of each value system.

In this chapter I will return to the touchstone for this study - the acquisition of Mark Rothko’s *No. 16* (1957) by the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa - to connect the understandings gained through the process of this inquiry. In returning to the inspiration for this study, I will reflect on how an appreciation of world
hypotheses informs understanding of the controversy. I will talk about world hypotheses themselves, and discuss their limitations and other theoretical considerations, and I will examine what learning with world hypotheses might mean. I will also indicate possible directions for future research in each section.

Rothko Revisited

Having systematically proceeded through different viewings of Francis Bacon’s *Study after Velázquez’s Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (Plate 10) from the perspectives of different world views, and having developed an understanding of how world views bear certain assumptions and expectations which in turn generate certain responses, it is easier to see the patterns of expectation and response in relation to Rothko’s *No. 16*.

For all those who thought the Rothko did not *look like* a work of art, it is probably true that from a rigid and naive formist perspective, it never would. Not only does it not represent a visible subject matter, it even fails to present any distinctive geometry. Whereas some abstract art demonstrates some tangible use of shape or geometry, the Rothko firmly resists the nominal identification of any clearly defined forms in the frayed boundaries between one colour field and another. By contrast, in the Op Art of Victor Vasarely (1969, Plate 20) shape is precisely defined for the purposes of creating an optical illusion. Even in a work like Frank Stella’s *Lac Laronge III* (1969, Plate 21) where shapes are not being
used for the purposes of visual illusion, there are still identifiable shapes with possible associations that a concerned viewer could latch onto.

The Rothko painting is not illusory in any sense and plays no visual games with the viewer, as for example the Vasarély does is in a very obvious way, or more subtly, as Barnett Newman does with his sculpture, *Here II*, of 1965 (Plate 22). The Vasarély painting (Plate 20) creates the illusion of a three dimensional shape on the two dimensional surface of the canvas. The illusion of the Barnett Newman sculpture is more difficult to experience and I will take a moment to explain how this particular work *functions* as an illusion, because it will illustrate just how different illusion can be in a work of art. If, as a viewer, you look intently at the dark shadow at the base of this sculpture for a couple of minutes, and then raise your gaze to the upper portion of the sculpture, there appears to be a bright line of light crossing the three uprights, which lasts for several seconds. This visual trick trips the viewer into completing the piece, and then opens up symbolic possibilities of meaning I find intriguing. Personally, I love this effect. I particularly like the ephemerality of the connection between what is tangibly here and now, and what is, but is also not an illusion. Barnett Newman provides the pieces, but only the viewer in the act of looking can create the illusion. Rothko is not playing any such visual games in *No. 16*, but whether you care about that or not as a viewer, will once again depend on your prior expectations and assumptions and the type of experience that will be valued.
Another problem identified by viewers is an apparent lack of meaning in the Rothko No. 16. The Vasarély (Plate 20) may not mean anything, but from the standpoint of basic mechanism, for example, it is an optical trick - there is a mechanism at work can be fairly easily identified. What is the mechanistic pleasure of the Rothko? For the naive formist, Rothko's painting might present a challenge in its lack of clear form, while from a mature formist perspective, the painting conforms to a recognisable style or genre of painting, is typical of its age and may in fact be seen to be normative in the meditative and spiritual release some viewers find in Rothko's work and so could be accommodated on those grounds. A sophisticated mechanist might understand the mechanism of the Rothko as a meditative tool.

On the issue of the skill of the artist and technique: these may be important to any viewer; are more likely to be important to a mechanist or formist; and may have less importance for a contextualist, organicist, animist or mystic. The Rothko (Plate 1) resists any hard lines, precise forms, or even compositional decisiveness. As I have already mentioned, the edges of the colour fields are frayed, the perceptible 'shapes' of rectangles are slightly distorted (this is probably dissatisfying to the viewer who wants their shapes well defined), and looking at the edges of the cream colour fields it is possible to see where Rothko changed his mind about where the 'edges' should be drawn.

The technical and compositional aspects of the Rothko are probably well
illustrated by comparison with a work such as Mondrian’s *Broadway Boogie Woogie* of 1942-3 (Plate 23). For all the nebular qualities of the Rothko, the Mondrian is a meticulously organized, meticulously constructed work which also lends the viewer some associative dimension in the given title - another aspect of denial in Rothko’s work. Although there are demonstrative examples of technical knowledge in the Rothko (knowledge such as how to construct and support a large canvas and dealing with the application of paint over a large area), for someone who is looking for ‘knowledge’ based in a high degree of detail from either a mechanistic or formistic perspective, the Rothko might be perceived as having missed the mark.

It is clear from the objections raised in the context of the Rothko controversy that the notions of skill, technique and composition are closely related to the dollar value viewers ascribe to a work. While the framework will not address the problem of whether a government should pay one or three million for any specific work to hang in a public gallery, it will help to identify the grounds upon which such judgements are made. Whatever the price tag, the economic philosophy behind it will reflect a particular world view.

Whether the concern is the monetary aspect of the Rothko painting, its worthiness of the appellation ‘art’, its lack of visible subject-matter, its affective power, technical merit or any of the other issues that have been brought into focus, the importance given to any individual aspect of the work will be determined by
the criteria of value operating in the value system being applied.

I want to emphasize that *any* work of art can be viewed from *any* world hypothesis. Some works may be more accessible through some frameworks than others, particularly if they are a strong expression of the artist’s world view. However, noting the problems of applying a naive formist perspective rooted in representation to the Rothko painting is not to imply that the painting ‘is’ therefore either mechanistic, contextualistic, organistic, animistic or mystic. It is not that works of art are intrinsically mechanist, formist and so on, but rather that viewers favour particular world views. When focusing on initial viewer responses, it is the frame the viewer brings to a painting that is his or her starting block for the viewing experience, in the sense of being either a beginning or an obstacle.

Having some knowledge of the values embedded in the world views examined in this thesis begins to place a frame of reference around so many seemingly different orientations and expectations, and looking at the art I have brought forward in this Chapter highlights how applicable and useful the concept of world view can be, not only in looking at art, but also in looking at who we are when we look at art.
Considerations for World Hypotheses

I do not want to present Pepper’s world hypotheses and the aesthetic orientations I have extrapolated from them as fool-proof and immutable truths. World views are useful devices that I have demonstrated can further our understanding of ourselves and our attitudes to art.

The world views presented here are formulated within a Western frame of thinking. I find this useful having been schooled within a Western tradition myself and looking at art produced from the same tradition. I have not pursued a detailed exploration of animism and mysticism as epistemologies as defined by Pepper in this thesis because of the problems they pose in the context of the subject of this particular inquiry (see Chapters 3 and 4). The principal difficulties of these two hypotheses is that the experience of either world view is incontestable and non-negotiable: if someone claims to have an animistic or mystical experience, there is no means of countering or questioning that claim. In the context of the Rothko controversy, when one viewer claimed to be ‘overwhelmed by the unnameable spirituality’ of No. 16 (Jonathan Bordo, Toronto Star, 23 July 93, A23), that was his indisputable experience. Nevertheless, I believe it is extremely important to include animism and mysticism in this study on two counts: first, because some people do experience art in these frameworks (for example, some viewers in the Rothko controversy talked about wanting or having mystical (i.e. emotionally ecstatic) experiences in relation to No. 16); and second, because in an educational
context of trying to understand the experience of others it is necessary to have an understanding of all the world hypotheses, not a select few that are perceived to be more valuable for preferred reasons. Animism and mysticism are clearly very important hypotheses for understanding certain areas of experience and offer important insights within the pluralistic framework of world views.

An inquiry that examined the scope and precision of animism and mysticism as world hypotheses in relation to non-Western thinking and non-Western art would be a logical extension of the work of this study and present an opportunity for further study. However, while acknowledging the Western genesis of the theory of world hypotheses and recognizing all the cultural and ethical issues surrounding the origins, meanings and significance of images generated by non-Western cultures, world views as I have delineated them in this study will provide a framework for understanding different ways in which Western epistemologies are likely to be applied (however erroneously) to objects made in non-Western contexts. Jacqueline Chanda, in talking about alternative concepts and terminologies for teaching African art, identifies the belief system of traditional African peoples as animistic in the sense of ‘a belief that all natural phenomena have a life force independent of their physical being’ (Chanda 1992, 57). The structure and categories of Pepper’s animistic theory seem to be compatible with features of animistic cultures described by Chanda. There is a sense in which it is inevitable that any art, artefact or object will be approached in the first instance
through conceptual frames with which we are already familiar. The great opportunity that a grasp of world views affords us is the chance to apprehend different values, supported within a coherent theoretical framework.

Such apprehension is no mean feat and should not be viewed glibly. I am not suggesting that we can ‘try out modes of thought like modes of fashion, and see which ones fit’ (Garver 1990). Garver argues that there are two possible responses to plurality that must be rejected:

The first is the idea that since there are various possible ways of thinking, all these are possible for me. That reading of pluralism leads to seeing plural systems as options....The other understanding...thinks that these forms are fixed, by history, nature or the unconscious. This is the old conception of history as its own force, whether of progress or cycles, which makes the past unavailable to us.

(Garver 1990, 396-397)

An understanding of world views does not mean we can skip from one to another and become completely ‘other minded’. It affords us a vantage point, from which we can try to see as far as possible. In viewing the territory, we can begin to discern not just the outlying regions, but also our own position in relation

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1 Historically this has resulted in the flagrant de-contextualization of objects. (See Tallack 1996 for an interesting discussion of the de-contextualization and attempted re-contextualization of aboriginal art.)

to other features.

There is one other aspect of world hypotheses that should be raised as a potential limitation of the framework, and that is the inextricable tie between that which is deemed part of the field of aesthetics and the experience of pleasure. Although the theories differ in the degree to which they will tolerate levels of intrinsic pain, the aesthetic experience in any of the world hypotheses by Pepper's definitions is ultimately one of pleasure. I have followed this (traditional) thinking, acknowledging that what falls within the field of aesthetics is that which engenders feelings of pleasure or pain, but broadly accepting that aesthetic experience is one of pleasure. The theories deal with the unpleasant or the ugly in different ways and I have discussed their individual stances in Chapters 3 and 4. While it is not the case that the theories cannot deal with the unpleasant or the ugly (as it is in the nature of a world hypothesis to be able to account for all experience), these experiences are effectively pushed beyond the extent of aesthetic experience and considered otherwise.

**Learning with World Hypotheses**

Although the purpose of this thesis is not to generate curriculum per se, there are pedagogical implications for the use of an understanding of world views.

In the informal educational setting of the gallery or museum I see a potential use for systematic pluralism and world views to identify the likely strengths and
pitfalls of various exhibits in terms of likely responses of viewers. World hypotheses could help curators and educators to accommodate the values of different world views, either by pre-empting or addressing problems that arise in viewer reactions, or by formulating strategies to extend and challenge viewer thinking. An understanding of world views could be used to structure exhibits, write labels and catalogues and inform the content and delivery of guided tours.

In examining world views from a systematic, coherent philosophical perspective it becomes clear that it is not possible to be all things to all people all at once: some of the parameters operating are mutually incompatible. However, it would be interesting further research, for example, to look at what effect underpinning the Art Gallery of Ontario’s ‘Ask Me’ program with the systematic theoretical foundation of world views would have, not only on the reception of the program in the galleries, but also on the training and orientation of the gallery guides.

In the formal educational setting of the school, I would not go so far as to suggest that systematic pluralism and the particular expression of it explored in this thesis should be taught in the classroom as a theoretical construct and then used by students. If the concept of systematic pluralism is to be useful to the educator, then it should be as part of his or her professional knowledge. Just as a teacher doesn’t teach the student about developmental learning stages but uses

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3 See J. Quina and L. Alessio (1982) for an example of this strategy.
the concept to plan for instruction at an appropriate level, so too would be the practical application of systematic pluralism in a learning situation. Furthermore, developmental stages must be considered in any learning experience, and to try to explain systematic pluralism to learners who do not have the developmental ability to understand it would be futile and confusing. Pluralism is not so much a subject to be taught in the school classroom, but rather a process to be practised with caution.

Levels of learner developmental stages must clearly be factored into any learning situation. Pepper himself points out that children (by which he means young children) are natural animists (WH 120). Young children will see things pretty much as they want to see them; it is the adult who develops the ability to work with more abstract concepts, understand bias and see that there may be other ways of viewing the world. Further study could be undertaken to investigate the effectiveness of using the concepts of world hypotheses with learners of different ages, abilities and developmental levels in both the informal setting of the museum and the formal setting of the school.

With regard to art education, it might be the case that responses to a work of art are coming from one or other of the world views defined in this thesis. With an understanding of the basic categories of the different views, an educator not only has a grasp on what is valued by a viewer, but also has an understanding of different value systems. Using this knowledge, an educator can strive to deepen
the experience within an operating world view and can construct questions to include reflection on different notions of value. In the example of the Rothko controversy, the most obvious starting point in the face of so much rejection, is why is it that some people *might* value this work? If as a viewer I am looking for a particular type of experience from viewing this painting and am not getting it, then what different types of experiences do other viewers want that are being fulfilled? In what ways is it or is it not satisfying as a work of art? Where does its quality lie? How does it fit into the grand scheme of art? Do these understandings mean anything to me?

The object of including world views as part of a repertoire of pedagogical tools is not to generate a method of looking so that everyone will love art and everything about it. I want people to be able to look at art, think about it, love it, hate it, accept it, reject it, argue about it, and most importantly to have the choice to respond in different ways. One of the difficulties in working with responses to art as an educator is how to give choice without unwittingly making a choice (for example, by favouring certain artists or genres). It seems to me that a pluralistic framework as explored in this study is not a confining device in an educational context. It has the potential to stimulate the thinking of both the educator and the viewer and expand the available frames of reference, but in such a way as to allow the viewer to come to his or her own conclusions. Even within the same framework, insights and understanding will not be precisely the same.
The theory also allows that in practice, people are often inconsistent in the ways in which they view the world, so that while in one area of experience an individual might employ a largely mechanistic outlook, in another, he or she may be far more formistically oriented. It is this flexibility that liberates world views as conceptual structures.

Systematic pluralism appears to offer a possible means of extending our comprehension of some of the most challenging areas of experience: understanding the values of ourselves and others.
REFERENCE LIST


