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GOLDMAN'S PLURALISTIC APPROACH TO AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE AND PIET MONDRIAN'S INTUITIVE NEO-PLASTIC ART

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Abstract

The objective of this article is to demonstrate the credibility of the pluralistic approach to aesthetic experience, mainly focused on Goldman's recent argument, in the case of Neo-Plastic paintings which is chosen as the most mature paradigm of pure abstract art created based on the premises of formalism. This article tries to clarify whether the spectator should realize the aesthetic value of pure abstract art based on a formalistic standpoint (as it has been commonly used), or a pluralistic mode: interactive and simultaneous involvement of all mental faculties namely perception, imagination, emotion, and cognition. To achieve the goals of this article, Mondrian's writings will be examined in light of two different viewpoints: formalists' intuitive

approach and Goldman's pluralistic approach. At the end of this article, it becomes evident that although Mondrian, in several instances in his writings emphasizes the role of intuition in the creation and aesthetic perception of spiritual content (universal beauty as truth) of his Neo-Plastic art, his approach to aesthetic experience, similar to the recent argument of Goldman, is pluralistic; meaning that for appreciation of the aesthetic value of Neo-Plastic paintings all mental faculties, except imagination, are correlatively involved.

Keywords

Aesthetic experience, Aesthetic value, Disinterested contemplation, Formalism, Piet Mondrian.

1. Introduction

Aesthetic experience, commonly called aesthetic appreciation, has been one of the pivotal and controversial topics amongst aestheticians and art critics in the past decades. As such, it is not surprising that there are still several debates about the nature of aesthetic experience in contemporary aesthetics. (Carroll, 2012, p. 165). Since the 18th century, philosophers from different traditions like English empiricism, positivism, German classical philosophy, Italian neo-idealism, pragmatism, existentialism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics, have been all concerned with the aesthetic experience as a crucial topic. (Bertinetto, 2015, p. 7)

Amongst different accounts of aesthetic experience, the majority of contemporary aestheticians take a pejorative position to the disinterested and intuitive nature of aesthetic experience, mainly propounded by formalists like Clive Bell and Roger Fry at the beginning of the 20th century. In this regard, scholars, especially Alan H. Goldman, consider a pluralistic approach to aesthetic experience. The proponents of such a new thesis purport that the true aesthetic value of works of art can only be realized when spectators interactively and simultaneously use all their mental capacities: cognition, emotion, imagination, and perception. Such thesis is in opposition to the singular approach of formalists to aesthetic experience who assert that the aesthetic value of artworks is primarily perceived through a disinterested and intuitive mode of attention (seeing the art object as an end in itself).

It is evident that previous objections of scholars to the intuitionist nature of formalists to aesthetic experience, and the disinterested way of attending to works of art, resulted in the proposal of a pluralistic theory on aesthetic experience. Yet it is unclear which one of these two theses is more plausible for appreciation of Modern artworks; particularly abstract and pure

abstract paintings like in the case of Mondrian's Neo-Plastic paintings. As such, spectators are still more inclined to adopt a formalist approach to the perception of pure abstract paintings – primarily in reference to the thesis of formalists like Bell and Fry who purport that following Kant and Schopenhauer, aesthetic perception is primarily intuitive and is fulfilled through disinterested contemplation. In this regard, Schopenhauer highly stresses the significant role of intuitive perception, as reasoning is essential in science, and the aesthetic experience of an artifact. In his view, intuitive perception, and not reason, is indispensable in aesthetic experience. (Wicks, 2020, p. 57).

It is noteworthy that the domination of the formalist approach to aesthetic experience is most conspicuous in the appreciation of aesthetic value of pure abstract paintings of artists like Piet Mondrian whose Neo-Plastic compositions are devoid of any representational or expressive content. On this subject, Mondrian and many of his counterpart painters, influenced by metaphysical and esoteric doctrines like Theosophy, claim that they created their works only through their intuition and in a state of ecstasy. Nevertheless, very little has been said about Mondrian's attitude to aesthetic experience and the way spectators should perceive his pure abstract art which is formed based upon ideas of formalists (particularly De Stijl artists) as well as spiritualist and philosophical tenets of Theosophists, Hegel, and Plato. As such, these questions need to be addressed: What is Piet Mondrian's attitude on the nature of aesthetic experience? Is that similar to the premises of extreme formalists, intuitive, disinterested, and contemplative?; or does it corresponds to the recent thesis of Goldman? Hence, the objective of this article is to investigate the expediency of a pluralistic approach to aesthetic experience (with emphasis on Goldman's thesis), in the case of Mondrian's theory of Neo-Plastic art which is chosen as the most enriched paradigm of the intuitionist theory of formalism.

2. Formalist's Approach to Aesthetic Experience

Formalists, mainly Clive Bell and Roger Fry, assert that spectators should be primarily concerned with perceptible form. They maintain, following Kant and Schopenhauer, that aesthetic attention is disinterested (entirely apart from personal desires and needs), and a work of art should be contemplated for its own sake (non-instrumentality of art object). Formalists hold that the aesthetic value of artworks, what Bell coined as *significant form*, is perceived through a disinterested mode and the aesthetic value of an artifact is realized as an end in itself. (Crowther,

1993, p. 31). In Bell's view, aesthetic experience is a particular kind of emotional state of mind, called *aesthetic emotion*, aroused by significant form. He defines significant form as "lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms" (Bell, 1914, p. 8) and he asserts that the spectator at the first glance is impacted by the formal qualities of artwork before even he recognizes objects or ideas represented or expressed in a work of art. As such, Bell advocates the element of shock in aesthetic experience and holds that a pure aesthetic experience happens in a passive mood, when the spectator is disinterested in the artwork. (Elliott, 1965, p. 117)

One of the main tenets of formalism is that aesthetic experience does not need the involvement of the cognitive faculties of mind: no knowledge, idea, or meaning is acquired by intellect and experience. As Berleant argues, aesthetic experience has a non-cognitivist essence in the sense that cognition always comes after intuition in aesthetic experience. In his view, a pure aesthetic experience is intuitive and direct, whereas a cognitive experience of art, using rational faculties of mind, is mediated. (Berleant, 2000, p. 106). Indeed, formalists mainly focus on the sensory aspect of aesthetic experience. Their view is analogous to Lichtenstein who advocates this thesis that a sensory property of an artwork (like its color) can be beautiful for it stimulates the spectator's emotional faculties. (Lichtenstein, 2019, p. 3).

For formalists, *significant form* as the aesthetic value of artworks can be realized through disinterested contemplation and intuitive faculties (sensual perception) of the mind. As such, Formalists' account of aesthetic experience, as Noel Carroll expounds, can be categorized as an affect-oriented approach to aesthetic experience. Within such a viewpoint, aesthetic experience is defined in terms of an experiential qualia (pleasure, enjoyment, disinterested pleasure, or contemplation). (Carroll, 2002, p. 146). Formalist's intuitionist standpoint on aesthetic experience can be considered as sentimentalist aesthetics and it is in line with the argument of Jesse Prinz who purports that it is a "discrete feeling of wonder that makes an experience aesthetic." (Larsen and Sackris, 2020, p. 116).

Another feature of formalists' account of aesthetic experience is that spectators should not ponder any kind of instrumentality for art object. Bell, following Kant, purports that art objects should be perceived as an end in themselves. In this regard, Fry defines art as something which is not used or valued for any purpose or necessity in actual life but as something which is an end in itself that can only be experienced in what he called *imaginative life*. In his view, imaginative life

is freed from any responsive action, moral responsibility, or ethical conduct. (Fry, 1920, p. 14). Indeed, formalists like Bell and Fry emphasize perceptual aspects of aesthetic experience and envisage no role for the personal emotion, intellect, and imagination (cognitive faculties) of spectators. Bell holds that when we look at an object as an end in itself, we get aware of the universal quality of that object which he equates with *ultimate reality*. As such, the significance of an object as an end in itself is indeed the significance of pure or ultimate reality. (Bell, 1914, p. 54).

Overall, it is clear that for formalists aesthetic experience, or in Bell's terminology *aesthetic emotion*, is primarily an intuitive perception of universal reality (as Schopenhauer construes it as Platonic Idea or knowledge of the world) which is a state of disinterested contemplation and ecstasy apart from actual life. As such in a formalist approach to aesthetic experience, particularly in Bell's theory, feelings and intuitive perception come before cognition, and thus for Bell art is "the subject of direct emotional experience." (Bywater, 1975, p. 36). For formalists, the aesthetic value of works of art is experienced through intuitive faculties of mind and in the moment of ecstasy. However, as we will see, many commentators, like Sparshott, reject this thesis that something is art if it provokes the spectator's emotions and makes a sense of pleasure. A work of art is something, as Kant proclaimed, that "aesthetic judgements or the aesthetic attitude were especially appropriate." (Sparshott, 2019, pp. 111-2; 264)

2.1. Mondrian's Formalist Standpoint on Aesthetic Experience

Overall, one finds two opposing viewpoints in Mondrian's writings about aesthetic experience. In some instances, he stresses, similar to formalists like Bell, that spectators should only contemplate works of art to perceive the true content of his Neo-Plastic art. Whereas, in a few cases he also emphasizes the interactive and correlative involvement of different faculties of mind like intuition, intellect, universal emotion, feelings, and spirit in aesthetic experience which distances him from formalists and brings him closer to ideas of contemporary aestheticians like Goldman. In this section, Mondrian's formalistic approach to aesthetic experience will be discussed.

Mondrian holds that intuition is the main vehicle for attaining an objective vision which is indispensable for the appreciation of pure beauty as universal truth. In his view, intuition, and not rationality, is essential for transcending the subjective vision to objective vision. (Chandler,

1972, p. 16). For Mondrian, like Bell, intuition, an objective vision, is a direct way of realization of the universal beauty as truth, what Bell called *ultimate reality*.

Mondrian in a few instances points to the key role of intuition in the discernment of the spiritual content of his Neo-Plastic paintings: pure beauty as truth. In his Neo-Plastic paintings (see figure 1) Mondrian portrays and expresses the primordial laws of the universe (a universal manifestation of immutable laws of the universe: equilibrium and unity) through the purest formal elements of painting that are depicted as dual oppositions on canvas: horizontal line versus vertical line, primary colors (red, blue, and yellow) versus noncolors (white, gray, and black), and so on. Mondrian holds that the universal unity and harmony (pure beauty as truth) can be attained through mutual interaction of all dual oppositions which results in the neutralization of the duality of elements.

Mondrian, in his essay *Dialogue on the New Plastic* he holds that the true content of art can only be realized through contemplation and intuition of spectator: "the content of the New Plastic can be seen only in the work itself. Only through intuitive feeling, through long contemplation and comparison, can one come to complete appreciation of the new." (Mondrian, 1919, p. 78). Similarly, in his 1924 essay *Down with Traditional Harmony!* he proclaims: "The new art, and through it the future, can be seen and understood exclusively through pure and intuitive contemplation that is free of the limitations of time and space." (Mondrian, 1924, p. 191). As it is evident, in both statements, Mondrian, similar to formalists, firstly argues that aesthetic value of art, what Bell called 'significant form', resides in the art object itself (formal qualities of artwork), and secondly the true content of art can only be perceived through using an intuitive and disinterested mode of aesthetic attention. That is to say, Mondrian, here is a formalist in the sense he merely envisages a unilateral attitude (intuitive attention to art object) to aesthetic experience.

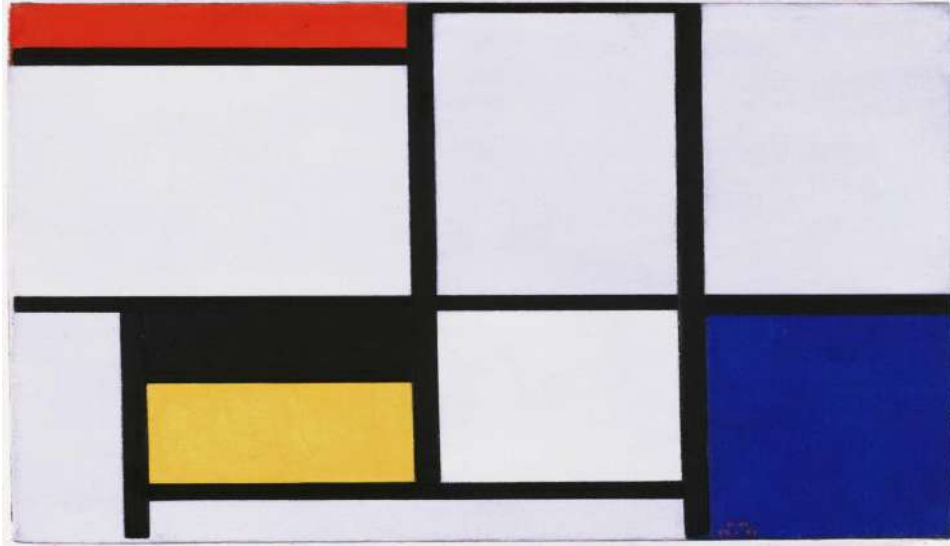


Figure 1: Piet Mondrian. (ca. 1921 / repainted 1925). *Composition with Red, Black, Yellow, Blue, and Gray*. 49.2 x 49.2 cm. The Phillips Collection, Washington D. C. Retrieved from (Source: <https://www.phillipscollection.org/collection/composition-no-iii>)

Mondrian in his writings also alludes to the Schopenhauerian notion of *disinterested contemplation* which is central to the formalist's approach to aesthetic experience. He, similar to Bell, asserts that art is free and disinterested (Mondrian, 1923, p. 176). He also maintains that spectators in the moment of contemplation, what Bell characterizes as moving from 'a world of man's activity' to 'a world of aesthetic exaltation' (Bell, 1914, p. 25), are emancipated from their individual concerns and desires of daily life. In this regard, Mondrian in his 1919-20 essay *Natural Reality and Abstract Reality* holds: "But in the moment of aesthetic contemplation the individual as individual falls away. The universal now comes to the fore; the essence of painting has actually always been to make it plastically perceptible through color and line." (Mondrian, 1919-20, p. 90). As such, it is deduced that Mondrian, like Bell and Fry, holds that the true aesthetic value of art cannot be perceived in actual life and it can be realized in an imaginative life which is freed from moral responsibility, and responsive action, or ethical conduct.

It is essential to know that Mondrian borrowed the conception 'disinterested contemplation', a term Bell and other formalists also used, from Schopenhauer. In fact, Schopenhauer's disinterested contemplation for Mondrian, like in the case of Bell, is a particular state of mind, a state of exaltation, that is required for the realization of universal beauty as truth in art. (Cheetham, 1991, pp. 60-1). As such, Mondrian holds that only in a state of disinterested contemplation spectators can discern the universal content of art which is beyond the particular

form and outward appearance of objects in nature, what he also called *morphoplastic*. In fact, intuition, or a disinterested contemplation, for Mondrian is an objective or aesthetic vision, which is essential to transcend all particularities of subjective vision, needed to appreciate the beauty as truth in pure forms and in their formal relations. Mondrian reveals the Schopenhauerian nature of his intuitive approach to aesthetic experience in this way:

This contemplation, this plastic vision, is most important. The more consciously we are able to see the immutable, the universal, the more we see the insignificance of the mutable, the individual, the petty human in us and around us. [...] Through all vision as disinterested contemplation (as Schopenhauer calls it), man transcends his naturalness. (Mondrian, 1919-20, p. 89)

Up to this point, it is evident that Mondrian's thesis on aesthetic experience is analogous to the ideas of formalists like Bell and Fry who are mainly defendants of a singular approach to aesthetic attention; seeing art object as an end in itself concerning its formal qualities (formal properties of art) through a Schopenhauerian disinterested mode of attention. At this point, it is inferred that Mondrian's intuitive approach is mainly an *aesthetic attitude* rather than to be an aesthetic experience. Such a formalist standpoint only authenticates Mondrian's impacts from the premises of formalism which have been dominant in his time. Mondrian in his writings reveals his true approach to aesthetic experience, and as it will be elucidated, his viewpoint is more inclined to the pluralistic approach of contemporary aestheticians like Goldman than formalists.

3. Shortcomings of Formalist Approach to Aesthetic Experience

Although formalists, particularly Bell and Fry, hold that the aesthetic value of works of art should be perceived through disinterested contemplation, the majority of scholars show a pejorative attitude toward such a thesis. For example, Paul Crowther strictly refutes such claim of formalists that a work of art is a unity of formal qualities that by disinterested contemplation leads to aesthetic experience. In his view, varieties of formalism consider the notion of 'disinterestedness' as a psychological term that is apart from attitude taken up by the beholder. (Crowther, 1993, p. 7). Recently Goldman also objected to Bell's idea that aesthetic experience is based on disinterested contemplation. In his view, valuing something as an end in itself is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for aesthetic experience. (Goldman, 2020, p. 581).

Overall, it is argued that objections of scholars to the disinterested and contemplative nature of aesthetic experience lead to the proposal of a surrogate thesis which is substantiated by the proponent of contextualism in art. According to Eldridge, art theories, especially formalism, consider art as 'an idle plaything of empty pleasure' and they paid little attention to art's cognitive, spiritual, political, and historical contexts or significance. (Eldridge, 2003, p. 67). In this regard, scholars like Carroll and Shusterman reject this viewpoint that pleasure is an essential condition or characteristic of aesthetic experience. For example, Shusterman holds that not only other values, other than pleasure, can be involved in aesthetic experience, but also an aesthetic experience can be valuable in absence of the beholder's pleasure. (Shusterman, 2006, p. 218). In fact, such opposition to non-cognitivist standpoint to aesthetic experience roots in works of philosophers, primarily Wittgenstein, who were proponents of analytical aesthetics. (Cascales, 2019, p. 66)

Hence, the majority of contemporary aestheticians are skeptical of the decontextualized approach to art, primarily epitomized in Bell and Fry's formalism, which merely attends to formal qualities of artworks disinterestedly without considering its historical, social, political, and cultural contexts (mainly its nonaesthetic and nonformal properties). David Fenner who is the proponent of contextualism in art holds that the value of works of art increases when they are considered and evaluated within their context, or when certain contextual factors are taken into account. (Fenner, 2008, p. xiii). He claims that even when the beholder focuses on the object and its formal qualities, a contextual approach works better. (Fenner, 2008, p. xvi). As such contemporary aestheticians namely Eldridge, Crowther, and Goldman propound a new thesis that aesthetic experience calls for interactive and correlative engagement of all mental faculties of the spectator to fully appreciate artworks within their historical, social, political, cultural, and moral contexts.

4. Goldman's Pluralistic Approach to Aesthetic Experience

In fact, the objections to the formalistic attitude to aesthetic experience have been developed and enriched in the works of earlier philosophers and aestheticians like John Dewey, George Dickie, Marshall Cohen, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jerrold Levinson, Paul Crowther, and Richard Eldridge. For instance, Monroe C. Beardsley, following Kant, asserts that spectators cannot make a full experience of a work of art only by attending to its formal elements and their

formal arrangements (what is internal to the object itself). Instead, when a spectator attends to a work of art, his mental faculties are engaged both in form and the meaning (content) that those forms give us. (Beardsley, 1969, p. 5). Similarly, John Dewey maintains that aesthetic experience has a holistic character: "Perception that occurs for its own sake is a full realization of all the elements of our psychological being" (as cited in Goldman, 2018, p. 10). In fact, Dewey stresses the inseparable relation between cognition and other mental faculties like emotion and perception in aesthetic experience (Goldman, 2013, p. 328), and that aesthetic experience is neither emotional nor cognitive, but the "one in which both aspects become fused." (Sparshott, 2019, p. 399).

Moving to Goldman's thesis, he refutes the idea that aesthetic experience involves disinterested contemplation. This is because one cannot be disinterested while he is having an aesthetic experience. (Goldman, 2020, p. 581). To understand Goldman's main thesis on aesthetic experience, one first needs to discern his definition of two kinds of aesthetic experiences: objective and subjective. He defends the subjective account against the objective account, and he delineates both accounts in narrower and broader varieties. The narrowest version of the objective account of the aesthetic experience is when we attend to the formal and structural properties of works of art (similar to formalists). And less narrow versions include the expressive and other aesthetic properties like when one is frightened or delighted in respect to works of art. However, Goldman asserts that such an objective account (either narrow or broad version) is not sufficient for aesthetic experience. (Goldman, 2020, p. 581). As such, he advocates the broad subjective account of aesthetic experience that is derived from John Dewey and Monroe Beardsley's arguments. Based on these two accounts, Goldman explicates aesthetic experience as a kind that "involves the active and simultaneous engagement of all our mental faculties: perception, imagination, emotion, and cognition." (Goldman, 2020, p. 582). Therefore, Goldman propounds his main thesis in this way: "I have argued that aesthetic experience involves the inseparable, mutually reinforcing, simultaneous operation of the mental faculties, including cognition, and that this is indeed the mark of aesthetic experience that distinguishes it from other kinds." (Goldman, 2020, p. 585).

4.1. Mondrian's Pluralistic Approach to Aesthetic Experience

As it was discussed, for Mondrian disinterested contemplation (objective vision) which is fundamental for the perception of the aesthetic value of art, is only possible when the spectator

abolishes his subjective vision: individual feeling, emotion, intellect, ego, and so on. (Mondrian, 1917, p. 71). In his view, aesthetic experience entails having an objective vision. Yet, unlike his emphasis that he primarily created his Neo-Plastic paintings by use of his intuition and not any kind of rational methods and mathematical calculations, he considers an important role for cognitive faculties of the mind in aesthetic experience, especially intellect and emotion. As he elucidates, the components of objective vision are a universal state of emotion and universal (or heightened) intellect – a universal consciousness - that is in balance and unity. Indeed, for Mondrian, the amalgamation of universal emotion and intellect in unity is what he called *pure intuition* which is essential not only for art creation but also for the perception of the art object. In his 1927 essay *Jazz and Neo-Plastic*, he points to these two faculties of the mind (emotion and cognition) that are both involved in unity in the aesthetic experience of art.

Complete knowledge of form can be gained through purely objective vision, that is, vision unmixed with subjective feeling. Thus the new culture, whose mentality holds deepened emotion in equivalent relationship with consciousness (or intellect), can discern form, deepen form, abolish form. (Mondrian, 1927, p. 219)

As such, Mondrian, similar to Goldman, never denies the role of intellect (intelligence) and cognitive faculties in aesthetic experience. In his vision, both intuitive and cognitive faculties are unitedly and equally involved in aesthetic experience: “The fine content of the culture of art is to have realized in the work the complete union of intuition and intellect.” (Mondrian, 1931, p. 250). Furthermore, in his 1920 essay *Neo-Plasticism: The General Principle of Plastic Equivalence* he maintains that one cannot experience a work of art, or what Mondrian following Bell called *aesthetic emotion*, without exploiting his intellect. It should be noted that by intellect, Mondrian means a universal or heightened intellect that is different from individual intellect or what he called 'inferior intellect.' (Mondrian, 1924, p. 191). He holds that the spectator of new art, Neo-Plastic painting, should use his universal feeling and intellect in unity when he experiences a work of art.

But if our consciousness attributes to words a content, a meaning, this can reach us only through our intellect. If modern man experiences aesthetic emotion, how can we disregard intelligence? The new man combines feeling and intellect in unity. When he thinks, he feels; when he feels, he thinks. Both are in him, despite him, automatically alive. (Mondrian, 1920, p. 142)

In fact, Mondrian holds that for having a complete aesthetic experience of his new art and perceiving the pure forms, colors, and lines as an end in themselves (what Bell also stressed following Kant), spectators need to be equipped with objective vision. He further defines such objective vision as 'conscious vision': a conscious way of looking at art objects which entails for engagement of cognitive, emotive, and perceptual faculties of the mind. (Mondrian, 1917, p. 63). As such, for Mondrian objective vision by no means is merely intuitive and disinterested. Instead, he maintains that the spectator is fully conscious throughout an aesthetic experience and he actively uses all of his intuitive, cognitive and affective faculties.

Similarly, Goldman maintains that even when we attend to the formal qualities and properties of works of art, we should inevitably use all of our mental capacities and faculties. In his view, to perceive the aesthetic properties of a work of art we should discern its different aspects like knowledge of the genre, medium, style, and history. (Goldman, 2020, p. 584). According to Goldman aesthetic form, what Bell coined as *significant form*, should fully engage and stimulate the spectator's mental faculties. Moreover, such experience should satisfy these faculties by providing them with the structures they seek. (Goldman, 2018, p. 90). As such, he holds that even those who advocate the narrower view of aesthetic experience (mainly a formalist standpoint) should not repudiate the role of other mental faculties, particularly cognition, in aesthetic experience.

Overall, it is inferred that Mondrian, similar to Goldman, considers a total and interactive engagement of different faculties of the mind (especially intuition, emotion and feelings, and intellect) in aesthetic experience. As Mondrian expounds, the spectator perceives a work of art through feeling, and then what is perceived becomes clear through intellect, and it is deepened by reason and is recognized by spirit. (Mondrian, 1917, p. 59). It is noteworthy that, as Kant defines, spirit or *Geist* is "the animating principle in the mind" that quickens the soul. Spirit for Kant, and for Mondrian, is the essential factor for the true operation of the cognitive faculty of mind which is indeed a playful and interactive relation between understanding and imagination. (Grabes, 2008, p. 152). Therefore, like in the case of Goldman, for Mondrian aesthetic experience needs the interactive and active participation of various faculties of mind like perception, cognition, and emotion. And this authenticates Goldman's argument that no feature or value of an artwork (representation, expression, formal structure, etc.) can be considered as the aesthetic value of a given work of art. Instead, one should perceive these values in relation to

other values of artwork and this requires the simultaneous and interactive engagement of all faculties of the mind. (Goldman, 2018, p. 8).

Similar to Mondrian's idea that each faculty of mind have a distinctive and collective role in the enrichment of an aesthetic experience, Goldman holds that each mental faculty interactively helps the other to fully appreciate and experience the aesthetic value of a work of art. In this regard, he holds that perception of formal and sensuous qualities is informed by cognition and is further enlarged by imagination. And finally, such an experience evokes deep emotions and emotional responses in spectators. (Goldman, 2020, p. 583).

Nevertheless, it should be noted that, out of four mental faculties mentioned by Goldman, Mondrian consider no role for the imagination in aesthetic experience. In fact, he shows a skeptical attitude to the spectator's imagination, or what he considered 'fantastic feelings' (Reynolds, 1995, p. 160). He asserts that imagination is an obstacle to the perception of the true content of art, what he construed as universal beauty as truth. (Mondrian, 1941, p. 341). For Mondrian, imagination is associated with the subjective feelings of spectators which is a hindrance to the realization of universal beauty and real truth in art. He purports that perception of such spiritual and true content of art can only be fulfilled in the moment of contemplation and that only in such a particular state of ecstasy, do spectators 'cease to fantasize,' or stop using their imagination. (Mondrian, 1919-20, p. 95).

At this point, it is obvious that, unlike the common argument that Mondrian's approach to art is intuitive and that he creates his Neo-Plastic paintings through his pure intuition, his approach to aesthetic experience by no means is merely intuitive and unilateral. Instead, he, similar to what Goldman holds, considers a pluralistic approach to aesthetic experience. However, his approach slightly differs from that of Goldman, for he excludes imagination in aesthetic experience. The below flowchart (figure 2) outlines Mondrian's pluralistic approach to aesthetic experience and its analogy to Goldman's thesis.

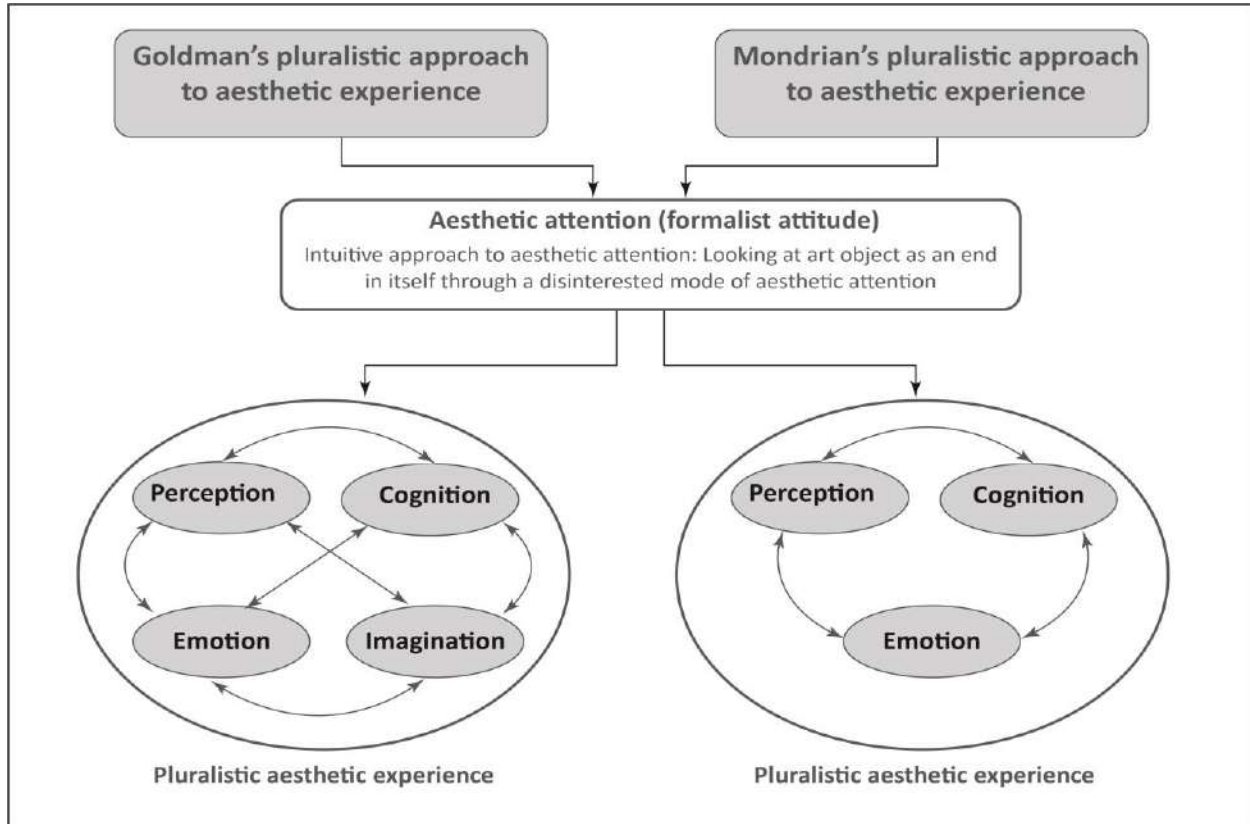


Figure 2: Analogies between Goldman's pluralistic approach to aesthetic experience and Mondrian (Source: Self Compiled)

5. Conclusion

After scrutinizing Mondrian's writings, it is inferred that unlike the common arguments of scholars on the intuitive nature of his vision to the creation of his art, his approach to aesthetic experience is not merely intuitive. Instead, he, like Goldman, envisages a pluralistic standpoint on aesthetic experience. For Mondrian, aesthetic experience involves the active and full engagement of emotion, perception, and cognition. Nevertheless, it is concluded that, unlike Goldman, Mondrian considers no role for imagination, or what he called 'fantastic feelings,' in aesthetic experience. Overall, it is contended that Mondrian's vision toward aesthetic experience, as a painter who was heavily influenced by the main tenets of Bell's formalism, is more inclined to the pluralistic approach of Goldman rather than to that of formalists. Such a conclusion authenticates Goldman's argument that even when spectators look at art object from a formalistic standpoint (looking at form and formal qualities as an end in itself) they realize the true aesthetic value of a work of art by using a simultaneous and full engagement of all mental faculties namely perception, cognition, emotion, and imagination.

The findings of this article can be expanded in this way that no matter how one looks at an art object (whether through a formalist attitude or not), and no matter which kind of aesthetic properties (formal, expressive, representational, and so on) one attends, aesthetic experience is always pluralistic in essence. The tenability of the pluralistic approach to aesthetic experience in the case of pure abstract painting which is a paradigm of artworks created based upon the doctrine of formalism further validates arguments of moderate formalists and neo-formalists like Nick Zangwill and Noel Carroll, as well as anti-formalists namely Arthur Danto and Kendall Walton, whom all objected extreme formalism of Bell and Fry which considers no aesthetic value for nonformal qualities and properties of works of art. Furthermore, endorsement of the thesis of contextualists like David Fenner who purport that the true aesthetic value of works of art resides in both aesthetic and nonaesthetic properties necessitates a pluralistic approach to aesthetic experience to fully and holistically realize the aesthetic value of a work of art within its historical, social, cultural, and moral contexts.

Ultimately, the analogies between Mondrian's approach to aesthetic experience and Goldman's pluralistic standpoint also raise this hypothesis that Mondrian should have been influenced, directly or not, by the ideas of pioneers and initiators of such pluralistic approach to aesthetic experience: namely John Dewey. Furthermore, the possibility of such a pluralistic approach to aesthetic experience can be examined in the case of other Modern pure abstract painters like Theo van Doesburg, Bart van der Leek, and Kazimir Malevich, whose works have been primarily perceived by spectators through a formalist standpoint.

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