**Chapter 3**

**Orthodoxy and Classical Assumptions in Art and Science**

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**Introduction**

In her classic, Beast and Man, Mary Midgley (1978: 103)) exhorts that ‘the purpose of all *explanation* (italics in-text)must be, ultimately, to illuminate the chaotic world with which we are actually surrounded. That is what we have to explain.’ The chaotic character of things, and its consequences for explanation of those things, is a recurring motif of Midgley’s work. Midgley specifically critiques the present-day quasi-religious status of science.[[1]](#endnote-1) This status is elaborated soon. The said present-day prestige of science does not mean that everyone who practices or affirms science extends such prestige to it. Nor does Midgley’s critique mean that she is anti-science. Nor is it so. Indeed, she (2004: 6) observes at one juncture the ‘magnificent’ work of science, counselling only against the conceit of ‘omnicompetence’.

Neither Midgley nor any informed commentator is unaware that it is hazardous to talk in brushstroke fashion of science or a scientific method, ontology or epistemology. Alan Chalmers (1982: 166) suggests that the title of his book, *What is this Thing Called Science?* is ‘misleading and presumptuous’, since it presumes a category, ‘science’, which areas of knowledge such as physics, history, biology and sociology either fall into or don’t. And Chalmers laudably admits to having no idea how to defend such a presumption. However, the failure of a knowledge area, university discipline or set of methods to cut a tidy allotment on the intellectual land is neither uncommon nor disturbing. Philosophy itself, for instance, shows diversity of perspective with respect to its objectives, scope and methods.[[2]](#endnote-2) Different conceptions of art, with consequences for what falls into the category, have been articulated. There are, as is well known, very different conceptions of feminism and dispute about who or what has a legitimate claim to be considered feminist. Ditto (perhaps to a lesser extent) Marxism; Molnar and Kelly (2013: 83) advise, in fact, that there is ‘*no one Marx*’ (italics in-text), and invoke sociological pioneer Mills’ counsel that one must earn one’s own ‘perception’ of Marx. Different moral philosophers have different ideas about the domain of the moral.[[3]](#endnote-3) The notion of a religion similarly fails to ‘cut nature at the joints’; is there a criterion that allows us to decide whether something is a religion? And finally, the concept of education has, similarly, a certain, possibly inherent contestability.[[4]](#endnote-4) All the same, we manage to speak meaningfully and largely successfully by using the concepts of feminism, Marxism, art, morality, religion, education and science. They (sometimes loosely) map out territory, without which they would do no work and therefore evaporate. They do not need to be travelogues. Chalmers’ preceding conclusion has not, after all, prevented a substantive and seminal book on the philosophy of ‘this thing called science’. Only in comparatively rare circumstances do boundaries need to be considered or cultural meanings interrogated.[[5]](#endnote-5)

**Scientism**

The preceding, quasi-religious status of science is one such cultural meaning, which Midgley and others want to rein in. Midgley (1978: 86) is correct that ‘when we use the word *scientific* (italics in-text) as an important compliment, we mean “what increases our understanding of the world”’. The operative conception of science, however, is narrower, since it sets strict conditions on what *most authentically* increases our understanding of the world. In a forceful paragraph, Nagel (1986: 9) disapprovingly calls this outlook ‘scientism’, which, he elaborates, ‘puts one type of human understanding in charge of the universe and what can be said about it, and which ‘at its most myopic … assumes that everything there is must be understandable by the employment of scientific theories like those we have developed to date – physics and evolutionary biology are the current paradigms.’ (Again, it is possible to practice or affirm science without embracing scientism.) Scientism is perhaps most conspicuous in approaches to the mind, and more broadly, people. In his pointedly titled *The Rediscovery of the Mind*, Searle (1992: 10-12) articulates the interconnected presuppositions at issue. They include:

* Where the scientific study of the mind is concerned, consciousness and its special features are of minor importance
* Science is objective in the sense that it seeks conclusions that are independent of personal points of view, and in the sense that it concerns a reality that is objective
* Science is objective because reality is objective
* The best method in the study of mind is to adopt the objective or third-person viewpoint
* Intelligent *behaviour* and *causal relations* to intelligent behaviour are the essence of the mental (italics mine)
* The only things that exist are ultimately physical, *as the physical is traditionally conceived* (italics in-text)

Hence theories of the mind such as Materialism, Behaviourism and Functionalism, and approaches to the study of people such as that of sociobiologist Edward Wilson (1975). The latter is devoted to quantitative methods and the explanatory primacy of gene and DNA reproduction, and therefore forgetful of the individual and her messy but ineradicable and causally efficacious psychology. In response to Wilson, Midgley (1978:101) demurs that, ‘*We need a psychology for individuals, not for genes*’ (italics in-text). Midgley also exposes the fatal flaw in the behaviourist ambition of describing and conceptualising behaviour independently of experiencing agents, i.e. descriptions of human behaviour are typically inscribed with reference to conscious agents. In raising my arm (not Midgley’s example), I might be voting for the motion, I might be acknowledging a friend, I might be apologising, I might be trying to attract the attention of the Chair, etc. The physical movement of my arm might be identical in each case, and therefore fail to betray which (if any) of the preceding actions I am carrying out. A description of my behaviour as (say) voting for the motion imports the perspectival baggage of a social practice and a perspectival conscious agent who *understands* the practice and *wishes* to *express* his voting *preference*. And conscious states such as wishing and preferring are perhaps best understood by reference to what it is like to be in them. Nagel (1986: 4) speaks persuasively in saying that ‘not all reality is better understood the more objectively it is viewed. Appearance and perspective are essential parts of what there is, and in some respects they are best understood from a less detached standpoint.’

**Concept-Dependence**

It would certainly be *prima facie* surprising if, for starters, the four disciplines cited by Chalmers (physics, history, biology and sociology) were *all* ultimately physical in any substantive sense, were apt for identical investigative approaches and yielded equivalent forms of knowledge. History and sociology involve the investigation of social and cultural phenomena. Physics and biology do not. Expanding the sets, history and sociology are in this respect like economics, English literature, the French language, linguistics and human geography. Physics and biology are in this respect like biomechanics, physiology, anatomy, astronomy and physical geography. One important difference is that the former set investigates objects that depend upon their concepts, while the latter does not.[[6]](#endnote-6) If we did not have the concept of money, for instance, then money would not exist and there would not be the discipline we know as economics. There would not be English literature without concepts such as writing, story, poem and Englishness. There would not be slaves and the slave trade, studied in history, without the concept of a slave. Nor would there be the wars studied in history without the concept of a war. There would not be the cities and towns studied in human geography without the concepts of a city and a town. Sociologists and historians can investigate aspects of marriage, something which, again, could not exist without its concept. Conversely, the existences of, for instance, earthquakes, gravity, photosynthesis, the sun, the moon, stars, maximal oxygen uptake and respiration do not depend upon their concepts. If all creatures capable of possessing the latter concepts were wiped out, the instantiations of the concepts would continue, albeit there would be no one left to talk about them and the concepts would disappear, at least until creatures capable of conceptualising their objects reappeared. Similarly, the instantiations existed before their concepts. The things themselves pre-date and could outlive their concepts. It is possibly fair to call that a classical assumption of the physical sciences. If all creatures capable of the concept of money were wiped out, on the other hand, then money would cease to exist. Similarly, money did not exist prior to its concept. Money is an example of something that could not pre-date or outlive its concept. There might be uncertain cases (e.g. falling in love and other precise emotions?), but that does not disqualify the distinction any more than a penumbral phase disqualifies the distinction between day and night.[[7]](#endnote-7)

**Contested Concepts and Natural Kinds**

The preceding radical dependence upon or independence of the human is implicated in important differences between disciplines. For instance, the sociologist who wants to investigate relationships between social class and voting preferences must first specify how the social class of the sample population is to be conceived. Does she use, for instance, the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification system? Or is social class to be defined by other factors, e.g. home ownership or cultural dispositions? The question betrays that social class, like money, depends upon its concept. It betrays too that social class is, like the concepts of, say, aggression[[8]](#endnote-8) and violence, inherently contestable, i.e. there is no universally accepted definition, dictated by how we find things to be ‘out there’ in nature.[[9]](#endnote-9) This provides a sharp contrast with standard objects within the physical sciences, which some philosophers have called ‘natural kinds’, i.e. types that occur in nature independently of any human decisions, such as water, gold and the elements of the Periodic Table.[[10]](#endnote-10) Humans can conceptualise and discover the real nature (e.g. water=H2O) and properties (e.g. water boils at 100 degrees centigrade) of natural kinds, but these real natures and properties exist independently of any human decisions or perspectives. Discovery of such real natures and properties result from a detachment from our personal, social and cultural perspectives and preferences, yielding truths unconfined by the same, e.g. ‘water=H2O’ is true for all times and places. Similarly, the appearance, taste and feel of water, for instance, are contingent markers by which we pick it out and investigate it for its real nature.

**Lawlike Regularities and the Anomalism of the Social Sciences**

The preceding distinctions are continuous with other differences between the physical sciences and (say) social sciences such as sociology, history and psychology. The physical sciences tend to seek and expect to find (putatively) lawlike regularities, i.e. an event of type A is always followed by an event of type B. This is arguably another ‘classical assumption’, part of the orthodoxy of the physical sciences. If McFee (2010: 65) is right, the lawlike character of ‘scientific law’ involves contrivance, because there is no finite totality of conditions that will guarantee true statements that an event of type A is always followed by an event of type B. The physical sciences make these statements true by *ceteris paribus* clauses intended to set aside all those ‘other things’ which could interfere with A’s causing of B. But this ambition requires that we can in principle identify all those other things.[[11]](#endnote-11) Whatever, there is no such assumption of lawlike regularities (contrived or otherwise) in disciplines such as sociology, history and psychology. Donald Davidson (1980) articulated the principle of the Anomalism of the Mental, i.e. there are no laws on the basis of which mental events (such as the wishing and preferring above) can be predicted or explained. This principle has obvious consequences for explanation in psychology, and is mirrored in sociology and history. That does not entail the absence of explanation in disciplines such as those. Nor does it entail the absence of patterned explanation (or, indeed, the absence of patterned facts and data). Sociological theories such as Functionalism, Marxism and Feminism, for instance, offer patterned explanations of facts and data (e.g. the data of Sport England’s Active People Survey). The anomalism of the social sciences amounts only to the absence of predictive and explanatory laws equivalent to those of the physical sciences. This is viably a classical assumption of the social sciences. And it entails inauthenticity of the social sciences’ subject-matter or knowledge only if there is an a priori or merely compelling reason that explanation is finally nomological, i.e. scaffolded by laws such as are found in the physical sciences. If, again, the only things that exist are ultimately physical, as Searle (above) characterises a contemporary popular ontology, then this condition on explanation might be tempting. But there is, again, scarce reason to embrace the ontology and similarly scarce reason to affirm a globally nomological explanatory model.

Further reflections of McFee (2010) reinforce the disanalogy between physical science and the social sciences. The former is defined by community acceptance of a paradigm. This involves theoretical principles (e.g. Newton’s principle of Universal Gravitation) and disciplinary principles (e.g. that all physiological functions are to be explained in chemical terms). However, as Kuhn argues, there can be no ‘normal’ phase in social science, since there are never theoretical principles accepted by all. There are, instead, competing ‘ways of seeing’ the social world, with divergence over fundamentals endemic. (Therefore, the use – widespread - in social science of the term ‘paradigm’ is inappropriate.) This is illustrated through the above theories of Functionalism, Marxism and Feminism, to which Interactionism, Figurational Theory and Postmodernism could be added. Moreover, research into the social world often involves a heightened perspective-dependence. Both researcher and participant are agents with concerns, reasons and interests. The researcher view is regularly incomplete, therefore the researcher cannot take his perspective as the only viable one. This incompleteness is not a methodological flaw; it is not bias, since bias is remediable. We cannot complete the picture by adding other perspectives, since there is no reason to think the perspectives mutually consistent, or again, that there *is* a finite totality of perspectives. Again, a participatory research style is often appropriate in social science, with controlled experiment and hypothesis testing especially inappropriate. These features reinforce the unavailability in the social sciences of the preceding *ceteris paribus* device: whilst physical science can pretend to be able to identify all those ‘other things’ to be set aside as equal, social science cannot perform this pretence. This, again, is continuous with the fact that social theories such as the preceding quite radically underdetermine outcomes. For instance, Functionalism, Marxism, Interactionism and Feminism might all offer robust and useful explanation of the affinity of working-class males with football. A psychological theory such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour might do likewise. But these theories do not, even when taken together, allow us to read off an interest in football from someone’s status as a working-class male. Theories in the social sciences, again, leave a wiggle room not mirrored by equivalents in the physical sciences.

**Positivism and Constructionism**

The immediately preceding does not entail that relatively simple data collection, for instance, is never possible and appropriate in the social sciences. Such a conclusion would be absurd and at odds with copious practice. When Sport England, again, seek to establish, say, the proportion of English women aged 18-24 who have played football at least once a week in the last year, it seems that at least two Positivist assumptions, paraphrased here by Silverman (2006: 122), are robustly applicable, viz.

1. The aim of social science is to discover unknown but actual facts or essentials.
2. Reality is ‘out there’. Thus, it is a matter of finding the most effective and unbiased methods that, as precisely and objectively as possible, could bring out the information about this reality.

The only stumbling block in this case seems the contextually trifling one of who counts as female. (The Active People Survey entails participant self-identification as male or female, a usually innocuous but perhaps occasionally freighted procedure.)[[12]](#endnote-12) There is, for sure, no need to interrogate the commerce between investigator and investigated. There are, however, other research contexts, particularly those involving the preceding ‘participatory’ research style, where the researcher has a reflexive and dynamic relationship with the researched, where standardization of participant and method is (at best) less secure, and where the Positivist framework is therefore inapplicable. Hence one alternative, Constructionism, which centralises the ‘focused interaction’ (Denzin 1970: 133) of the research interview as social encounter, and asserts that participants *create* meaning in interviews that are a part of the world and not merely a commentary on it. Kitzinger (2004: 128) seems to take this to an unsettling extreme in his counsel that ‘what women say should not be taken as evidence of their experience, but only as a form of talk – a “discourse”, “account” or “repertoire” – which represents a culturally available way of packaging experience.’[[13]](#endnote-13) This would seem to deny interview data the capacity to say anything about any reality other than the interview, therefore defeating its apparent purpose. Constructionists Holstein and Gubrium (1997: 121-22) have replied that we can and should be attentive to both what is said by the participant and how it is delivered in the interview context. For instance, a nursing home resident may offer thoughts and feelings on the quality of care, but also ‘continuously monitor who they are in relation to the person questioning them’ (‘speaking as a woman …’). Recalling Midgley’s imperative at the outset, questions of theoretical framework and method are questions of how best to illuminate our chaotic world, and Holstein and Gubrium’s example might illustrate how such illumination sometimes entails attention to both the formal results of investigation and the processes of introspection and self-presentation of the investigated, as well as the methods and self-presentations of the investigator.[[14]](#endnote-14) Here, again, the perspectives of investigator and investigated are elements of the research process not to be airbrushed in pursuit of the ‘pure’ results of the enquiry.

**Science and Art**

Despite our chaotic world, of which there is some recognition hitherto, it is not uncommon to hear physical science (‘science’ for now), which seeks to explain much of that world, esteemed as ‘an art’. The remainder of this essay will discuss this notion, uncovering in the process another and perhaps surprising ‘classical assumption’ of the former.

Art, again, is highly heterogeneous, arguably increasingly and unpredictably so in the current era of multiple media. By the early twentieth century, there was sufficient scepticism about an artistic essence for Duchamp to submit his porcelain urinal, titled ‘Fountain’, to a sculpture competition. The spirit of iconoclasm was philosophically consummated in Dickie’s (1974) Institutional Theory of Art, which asserts that a work of art is an artefact upon which some person or persons has conferred the status of candidate for appreciation. The merits and demerits of this theory will not be discussed here.[[15]](#endnote-15) Ditto the Mimesis and Expression theories of art. Instead, a classical aesthetics, most familiar from art and underlying the claim of equivalence between science and art, will be outlined. The truth in the latter claim is then unpacked. Finally, some significant differences between science and art are proposed.

The said classical aesthetics is defined by the concepts of symmetry, simplicity, order, coherence, unity, elegance and harmony. Beauty might be cautiously added. Beauty incites caution, because of controversy about its status. Mothersill (1984: 11), for instance, thinks it a ‘peculiarly basic’ concept like truth and knowledge. Sontag (1966: 31), on the other hand, considers it ‘an essentially vacant concept’. Edgar (2013: 103) suggests that it is a ‘hangover of eighteenth-century aesthetics and art criticism’, and that it is only when beauty cashes out as more substantive concepts, such as ‘graceful’, ‘delicate’, ‘dainty’, ‘handsome’, ‘comely’, ‘elegant’, ‘balanced’, ‘warm’ or ‘passionate’ that we get grounds for evaluating judgements of beauty. There is no need to adjudicate here on whether beauty is basic, vacant or parasitic upon concepts such as those listed by Edgar or, indeed, the ‘classical’ set at the beginning of this paragraph.[[16]](#endnote-16)

Engler (1990) provides an admirable overview of the normative role assumed in science by the preceding classical aesthetics. He first notes Bertrand Russell’s observation that modern science has returned to Pythagoreanism, i.e. ‘the assumption that the natural world has certain formal and aesthetic features, and that natural processes therefore possess harmonies, symmetries and simplicities’. This assumption has a very strong claim to be a ‘classical assumption’ of modern science, in turn problematising any notion of the modern scientist as a pristine empiricist, i.e. someone who investigates nature without any presuppositions. Engler (1990: 24-25) subsequently notes modern science’s Pythagorean affinity with mathematics,[[17]](#endnote-17) which some, such as mathematician and philosopher Poincare and aesthetician Osborne, consider a site of harmony, elegance and beauty.[[18]](#endnote-18) Engler (1990: 29-31) goes on to adumbrate the local significance in science of the seven defining concepts of classical aesthetics. None is particularly easy to define (nor is beauty),[[19]](#endnote-19) but that, again, need not prove obstructive. Symmetry plays a vital role in physics, especially modern physics in the shape of general relativity and quantum mechanics (and see Endnote 18). Grounded on symmetries, Engler notes, are the structure of the Periodic Table, the antiparticles, and quantum numbers which specify the building blocks of the atoms. And symmetry contributes ‘greatly’, Engler observes, to the second concept: simplicity. The normativity of simplicity in science seems a local expression of the philosophical principle of Occam’s Razor (after William of Ockham): among competing hypotheses, the one with the fewest assumptions should be selected. An undeniably key procedural attraction is that the fewer the assumptions, the easier is a hypothesis to test. At the same time, simplicity brings its aesthetic satisfactions. Complexity courts ugliness. Hence another attraction of the foregoing *ceteris paribus* clauses, out of reach of the social sciences, which sponsor ‘lawlike’ regularities and therefore nourish a pleasing belief in nature’s simplicity.[[20]](#endnote-20) Engler considers order, coherence and unity together, since the first two can be considered as leading to the third. As Engler (1990: 30) puts it, ‘The meaning of order in science follows from the *assumption* that the natural world contains regularities and structures, and it is the task of science to find them’ (emphasis mine). And the laws thus discovered should form a coherent system. Modern physics’ effort at a scheme of ‘grand unified theories’ (GUT) is luminous illustration of the principle of unity. Elegance, Engler reminds us, is an aesthetic concept that has the meaning, ‘chosen skilfully or carefully’. We expect the mathematical relations and proofs of science to reach their conclusions in particularly satisfactory ways. Engler suggests that harmony, again, has such appeal for scientists because of its affinity with art. This is, again, continuous with the connection of harmony to numbers, Pythagoras having first shown how musical harmonies are related to the lengths of the strings required to sound them. Pythagoras’ discovery spawns more general relations between harmony and numbers, e.g. architectonic harmony, arithmetical harmony and geometric harmony. ‘Wherever,’ Engler (1990: 31) concludes, ‘there are relations between like parts, which are more or less pleasing, it is possible to talk of harmonies.’

The preceding sketch intimates how science, with its article of faith that nature will unmask itself as aesthetically pleasing, has a profound affinity with a conception of art inscribed with the preceding classical aesthetics. (Whether, again, beauty is considered an eighth property, perhaps emergent from the foregoing seven or some combination, doesn’t particularly matter.) At the same time, there are significant differences between art and science. For all the above, aesthetic appeal is not the aim of science. No amount of aesthetic charm is sufficient for the acceptance of a scientific theory, which should be accepted only on grounds of accuracy, scope, consistency and predictive power. The aim of science is the true description of nature. Conversely, the relationship between art and truth is at best ambiguous. Indeed, there are some art forms, e.g. music, abstract painting, architecture and dance, for which talk of truth (or falsity) seems misplaced. This figures among the considerations that motivate Cordner (1988: 36-39) to say that the deepest value of art lies not in its ability to comment on life-situations, but to manifest, enact or realise life-values in a self-enclosed domain. For instance, a face is painted so as to realise a certain kind of life in the face, such as (Cordner’s example) the delicacy, sensitivity and weakness realised in Van Dyck’s portrait of Charles I. And even when an artwork does identifiably comment on life-situations, construct an argument or assert a putative truth, that is not the source of the deepest meaning the work has for us. Cordner cites (among others) the case of Milton’s Paradise Lost, echoing earlier words of Sontag (1961:22): ‘The satisfactions of Paradise Lost for us do not lie in its views on God and man, but in the superior kinds of energy, vitality expressiveness which are incarnated in the poem.’ This energy, vitality and expressiveness is, naturally, undetachable from the poem’s instantiation of the preceding qualities of symmetry, unity, etc.[[21]](#endnote-21)

Again, while art can, like science, have effects (of even a disruptive kind)[[22]](#endnote-22) beyond its own world, that is not essential to art. For instance, one might be persuaded to become a Christian on the grounds (or partly so) of reading or viewing some Christian art, but such an ambition on the part of the artist would not be an artistic objective. An artist aiming at such results might be as well knocking on doors, distributing leaflets and preaching in the City Centre on Saturday mornings. And if she were to find any of these approaches more effective, then it would be rational to abandon the artistic work in favour of the more effective conversion technique.

**Conclusion**

Fidelity to the messy character of reality requires a pluralistic ontology, methodology and epistemology. Though magnificent, physical science is not omnicompetent. The social sciences are similarly indispensable, and different in key respects from their physical counterparts. These differences include the absence of lawlike regularities (anomalism), subject matter that depends upon its concept, the need of operational or constructed definitions, the significance of perspective, and a regularly dynamic relationship between investigator and investigated. Art, also indispensable, is something else again.

There are, however, profound affinities between physical science and a classical aesthetics most familiar from art, in the role played by the concepts of symmetry, simplicity, order, coherence, unity, elegance and harmony, the cachet of which reflects the legacy of Pythagoreanism.

At the same time, there are robust differences between physical science and art. Physical science aims to truly describe nature. Some forms of art do not admit talk of truth. And even when an artwork is apt for considerations of truth (‘truth apt’), the claims embodied in it are, even if true or believed to be true, not the source of the deepest meaning the work has for us. Despite the preceding affinities, science is science and art is art. As Butler (1726: Preface 39) said, ‘Everything is what it is, and not another thing.’

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1. See, in particular, Midgley (1992). Some of this essay was written during the 2017 United Kingdom General Election campaign, liable to expose one to nervous media disclaimers of ‘non-scientific’ opinion polls. What constitutes a scientific opinion poll is not clear, and no effort at clarification is ever made. Nor is there effort to make clear why a ‘scientific’ poll, with its unspecified protocol, is more reliable than a ‘non-scientific’ counterpart. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Nagel (1986: 9) in fact comments that ‘philosophy seems regularly to generate announcements that what past philosophers were trying to do was impossible or nonsensical’. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. For compelling discussion, see Flanagan (1991). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. For excellent treatment, see Carr (2003). [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. The case described in Endnote 1 might be an example. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. The distinction between concept-dependent objects and phenomena and concept-independent objects and phenomena is made by Dennett (1991: 24). Most of the illustrations offered here are not his. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. What counts as concept possession is an intriguing question that needn’t be addressed here. For interesting discussion, see Bermudez (2003) [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. The respective definitions of aggression offered by Shields and Bredemeier (1996: 15) and Parry (1998: 207) illustrates the concept’s contestability. For the former, aggression is the initiation of an attack with the intent to injure. For the latter, aggression involves force, is vigorous, is offensive (as opposed to defensive) and is proactive (e.g. striking first). [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. The concept of class might therefore be a ‘floating signifier’ (Levi-Strauss 1987: 63-64). [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. See Kripke (1980). [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. McFee’s point echoes Anscombe (1971). [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. For reflection on the socially constructed element of sex, see Prokhovnik (1999: 103-137), and Karkazis et al. (2012: 6) [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Denial of a discourse-independent reality which discourse is supposed to be about is a stock motif of Postmodernism. For penetrating critique, see Skillen (1985). [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Political opinion polls might, again (see Endnote 1), provide simple illustration. Reporting one’s voting intention is a mode of self-presentation, courting the possibility that one’s actual intention conflicts with how one wishes to present one’s self. Hence the British notion of ‘shy Tories’. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. For excellent discussion, see Mothersill (1984: 33-73). [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Modernist art, in its hospitality to the desacralizing exposure of artist materials and struggle, roundly rejects the entire prospectus. Sontag (1966: 8) goes so far as to say that the characteristic aim of modern art is to be *unacceptable* to its audience. (emphasis in-text) [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Engler (1990: 28) observes that general relativity and quantum mechanics were built on ‘speculative leaps of mathematical imagination’. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. In ‘The Prelude’, Wordsworth (1926: 676-677) relates his erstwhile intoxication with ‘geometric science’ and the relation it bears to ‘Nature’s laws’. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. For compelling treatment, see Mothersill (1984). [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. We similarly wish our own lives to have a comparatively simple, pleasing narrative structure. In self-narration, we therefore select, omit, simplify and sanitise. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. A purely aesthetic response to an artwork might, however, be chimerical. Sontag (1961: 23) suggests that ‘we never have a purely aesthetic response to works of art – neither to a novel, with its depicting of human beings choosing and acting, nor … to a painting by Jackson Pollock or a Greek vase.’ [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. For compelling discussion of the ambiguous commerce of art and the aesthetic with ideology, politics and morality, see Eagleton (1990). [↑](#endnote-ref-22)