Methodological Considerations.
From Singular Descriptions to General Explanations

Answers to the questions of how and why the subject experiences the aesthetic are traditionally found in a more theoretical realm. Since this book searches for an empirical reply, methodological concerns in such an unusual inquiry need explication. This will take place both through general methodological discussions as well as through a delineation of the methods of the empirical study that follows.

General Concerns in Regard to Method

Internalism versus Externalism
The debate about externalism versus internalism is to a large extent outdated. It was an issue frequently discussed in relation to the history of science in regard to different conceptualizations of the development of science (Køppe 2004), and whether one adheres to internal principles within the paradigm or whether it is specific political and ideological structures which are the driving forces of development. The internalism vs. externalism debate, however, can expose differences between approaches using the first-person vs. third-person perspective, and the reason why this issue is taken up again here is because this book, at first glance, might appear to be supporting strong internalism (or solely the first-person perspective), with its focus on singular descriptions of aesthetic experience and not the social, or more political, dimensions of art experiences. When looking more thoroughly, however, this is not the case. As seen in relation to subjectivity, the individual partially constitutes the social and vice versa; they are dimensions which mutually inform and shape one another without being conflated into one. This book focuses on the individual meeting with art (which is also social and thus not strongly internalistic), yet this does not mean that more externalistic approaches have nothing to add. No single approach is sufficient in itself and never, in principle, tells the whole story. That being said, the phenomenological critiques of the sciences reveal that externalistic approaches
need to take the more internalistic perspective seriously. There are many externalistic or third-person approaches such as neuroaesthetics, which prematurely ignore the internalistic. Their results therefore risk becoming meaningless in relation to such experientially complex situations as aesthetic experiences.

In keeping with Køppe (2004), this book can be seen as espousing “moderate internalism,” here meaning that the first-person perspective is ontological. The “infrastructure” (Althusser, 1971) is also an intra-structure. It is primarily ego-logical and not economical, yet acknowledges the fact that such analysis reveals only part of the phenomenon because, as Merleau-Ponty (1945a) elegantly argues: “every cultural phenomenon has, among other, economic significance, and history by its nature never transcends, any more than it is reducible to, economics” (p.200).

If one takes the phenomenological insights seriously, truth takes place in a subject-object relation. If the object reveals truth, it cannot but have an effect on the subject. Depending on how one views causation, the phenomenon’s effect is either internal or external, but a consequence nonetheless. The autonomy of art is not complete in the phenomenological world.

The Interview
The interview is introduced in the beginning of the 1900’s as an integral part of qualitative research, as sociology and anthropology are becoming established branches in the university setting. Over half a century later, the qualitative interview becomes an independent research method, described in seminal guide books on how to conduct interview research, such as James Spradley’s (1979) The Ethnographic Interview and Steinar Kvale (1996) InterViews. Kvale shows how the interview has derived its theoretical basis from various different traditions, mainly postmodern construction, hermeneutic interpretation, phenomenological description and “dialectics” (with focus on internal contradictions); the qualitative interview arises from a mixture of traditions which do not provide a unified theoretical basis without tension (see Helles and Køppe (2003) for a further discussion). The interview method which Kvale advocates lacks internal consistency, and is instead given as a pragmatic tool for qualitative research which extracts the useful parts from these traditions, focusing on practical instructions and advice. Such interview methods have a relatively long tradition within the American version of phenomenological psychology which was practiced at Duquesne University (the Journal of Phenomenological Psychology begins publishing from there in 1970), as being the most common way of gathering empirical material. Kvale’s interview techniques become descriptions