



BBB-Body Brain Beauty

Beauty as evolutionary emergent
property: neurophenomenological
hypothesis

Ugo Morelli

www.ugomorelli.eu - ugo.morelli.unibg.it

biogem : Master subtitle style
La bellezza

5 settembre
2015

biogem



Beauty experience in art

- ♦ "In order to create a work of art it takes an artist, an object, the work, the audience. Absolutely: if there is no public there is no artist. ”
- ♦ [Henry Matisse: *The lost interview with Pierre Courthion*, Skira, Milan 2015], Skira, Milan 2015]



Question

- ◆ At the basis of this hypothesis on the origin, nature and expressions of beauty, there is the orientation that the issues are not two: on the one hand the material and the body and the other the mind, the spirit and its manifestations, but one: over the two cultures, the beauty is, therefore, seen as a manifestation emerging from the evolution of a species, homo sapiens, that at some point in its evolution, has become symbolic species, expresses a provision, under certain conditions , to hear extensively others and the world, amplifying its presence by assigning specific meanings that stand out from the background. The manifestation of the emerging beauty is proposed, therefore, as a distinctive species-specific of homo sapiens.



Toward a natural perspective of beauty

- ❖ Beyond the empire of the vision;
- ❖ Beyond anthropocentrism and the presumption of being above the parties, while we are part of the whole [evolutionary perspective]
- ❖ as well as the specter of reductionism that appears whenever we are in the same sentence the word: "science", "art" and beauty



Kind of neurophysiological in beauty

- ◆ There is something tangible to the neurophysiological basis of aesthetic experience we call beauty



Basic emotion and beauty

- ◆ Basic Emotions: pre-intentional and pre-voluntary: **A. Damasio** (brainstem), **V. Gallese** (the emotion is in the narrative, it is a word), **J. Panksepp** (seven basic emotional areas)



From we-go to ego

- ◆ Empathy
- ◆ Embodied simulation
- ◆ Intentional attunement
 - ◆ Shared manifold

*[The possible roots of beauty over the
Kantian association: "beautiful" and "good"]*



Beyond cosmetics and canon

- ❖ Discontinuity and breaking of the domains of meaning



BBB-Body Brain Beauty

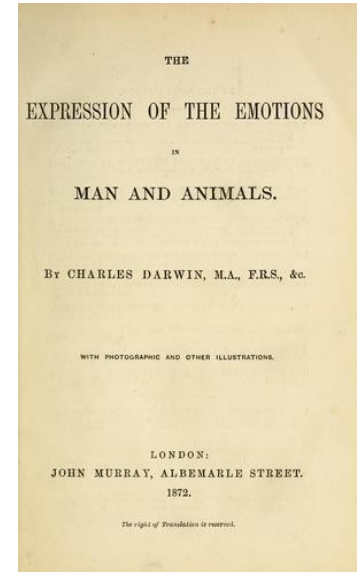
- ◆ Embodiment of mind and intersubjectivity in aesthetic and beauty experience
- ◆ H. Wölff in, "if we were purely optical entities, aesthetic judgment of the physical world there would be foreclosed"
[Prolegomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur, 1898]



A Natural Approach to Beauty

In search of the
evolutionary bases
of beauty:

Body protagonist of our faculty to appreciate
the aesthetic characteristics of the world: art,
landscapes, music, theater, dance, film,
people.....





Beauty: a Hypothesis

- ◆ Beauty emerges from a particular embodied resonance [**embodied simulation**] in relation to others and the world, able to extend and expand the model of neurophenomenological self
- ◆ **Extended tension**: in the observer's brain activates the simulation of bodily gesture that has made the signs, creating an aesthetic experience



Beauty and terror

- ◆ Beauty is tangent to terror
- ◆ The same neurophysiological processes support both beauty and terror
- ◆ Basic emotions find a direct way, without the mediation of reason, when it comes to aesthetic experience



Paradigmatic evolution in cognitive science and neuroscience

- ◆ In order to give voice to the paradigm shift taking place in the mind sciences and in the humanities about the relationship between body and cognition, between nature and culture [Giorgio Prodi: we are naturalcultural animals]
- ◆ object: the naturalization of aesthetic experience using the investigation of cognitive science and neuroscience



Signs of the Origins

- ◆ **Blomboos**

C. S. Henshilwood, F. D'Errico, I. Watts, *Egraved ochres from the Middle Stone Age levels at Blombos Cave, South Africa*, Journal of Human Evolution 57, 2009; 27-47

- ◆ **The Origins of Modern Human Behavior**



oward the Symbolic Competence

Looking for the evolutionary antecedents
in higher order primates



Recognition and reflection

Chang, L., Fang, Q., Zhang, S., Poo, M., - m & Gong N.,
Monkeys seem to recognize their reflections,
Current Biology, 1, 2015



Shared manifold and aesthetic experience

- ✦ Cultural context
- ✦ Shared manifold and intersubjectivity
- ✦ Embodied simulation
- ✦ Affordance
- ✦ Intentional attunement

Aesthetic experience as social experience and beauty

- ◆ Science
- ◆ Art
- ◆ Sacred
- ◆ Politics
- ◆ Love
- ◆ Game/Play/War
- ◆ Comic





Homo hipoteticus

- ◆ Homo hipoteticus: intuition and the formulation of hypotheses as creative act linked to beauty: dial and redial so at least in part original the available repertoires



Body and action in the aesthetic experience. A neurophenomenological perspective

- ♦ The aesthetic experience as a social experience: so emerges an aesthetic experience, you need at least five factors related into a situated contingency :
- ♦ i) a creator; ii) a creation; iii) an observer; iv) a listener who narrate what has been observed; v) a narration



Extension of human possibilities

- ◆ The beauty extends, enhances and emancipates the ability to feel the world and others:
- ◆ Livability
- ◆ Cultural coexistence



Changing one's mind and epistemophilic anxiety

- ◆ Beauty is not only aesthetic and contemplative, but, through neuroplasticity, may extend and enhance human possibilities in relationships and feeling of the world and others



**Almost in agreement
with Dostojevskij**

- ✦ "Maybe does not the beauty will
save the world but it certainly
helps us to understand it"

[U. Eco]



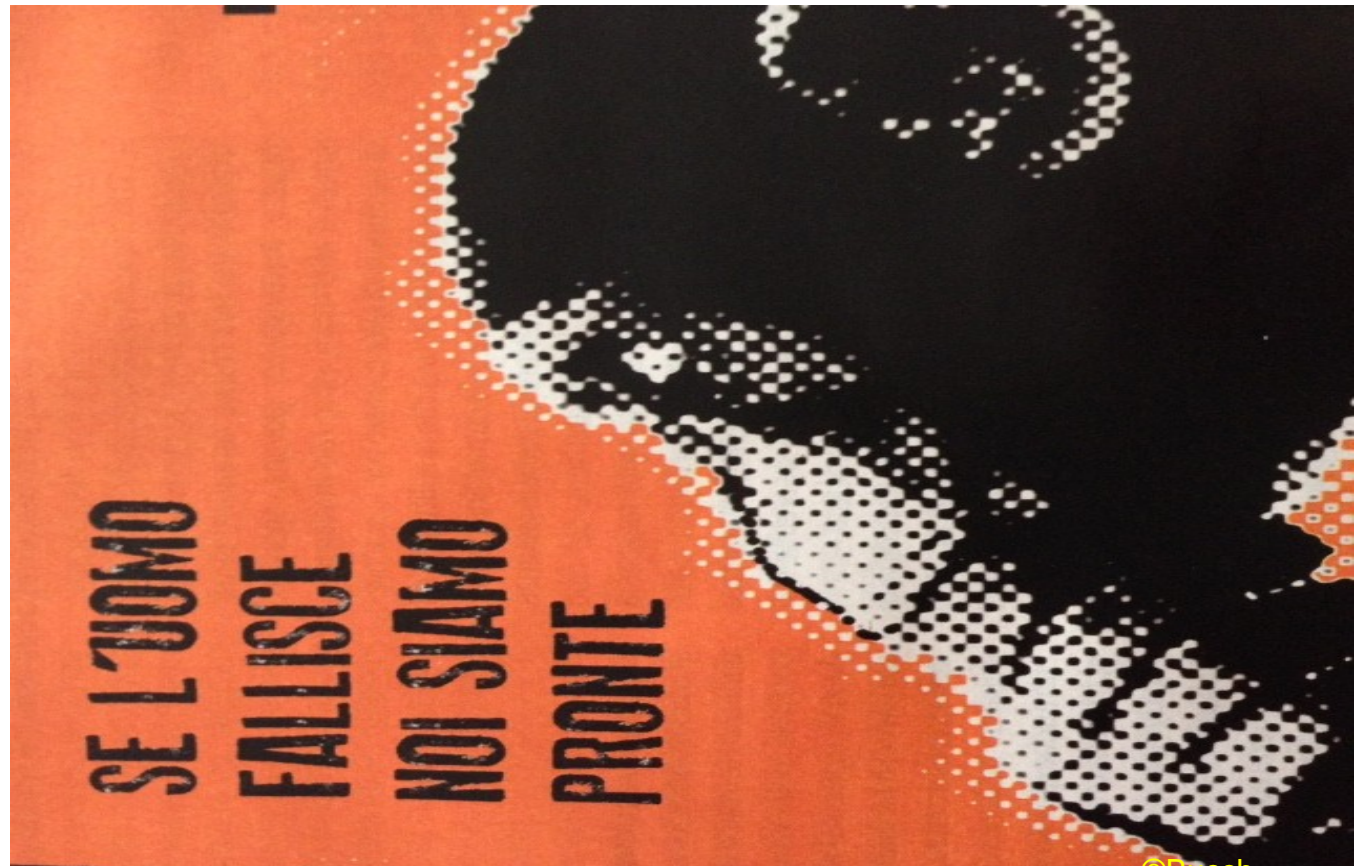
References

- ♦ Darwin Ch., 2012, *L' espressione delle emozioni nell'uomo e negli animali*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino
- ♦
- ♦ Eco U., *Combinatoria della creatività*, Conferenza tenuta a Firenze per la Nobel Foundation il 15 Settembre 2004
- ♦
- ♦ Gallagher S., *Aesthetics and kinaesthetics*, in Krois J., Bredekamp H., ed., *Sehen und Handeln*, Berlin
- ♦
- ♦ Gallese V., *Bodily Framing*, in C. Jones, R. Uchill, D. Mather, eds., *Experience: Culture, Cognition and the Common Sense*, Boston, MA, MIT Press, in press.
- ♦
- ♦ Gould, S. J. and Lewontin, R. C., *The Spandrels of San marco and the Panglossian Paradigm: a Critique of the Adaptionist Programme*, *PROCEEDINGS OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF LONDON, SERIES B*, VOL. 205, NO. 1161 (1979), PP. 581-598.
- ♦
- ♦ M. D. Kirchhoff and D. D. Hutto, *Never Mind the Gap: Neurophenomenology, Radical Enactivism and the Hard Problem of Consciousness*
- ♦
- ♦ Morelli U., *Mente e bellezza. Arte, creatività e innovazione*, Umberto Allemandi & C, Torino 2010
- ♦
- ♦ S. Varga and S. Gallagher, *Critical social philosophy, Honneth and the role of primary intersubjectivity*
- ♦ *European Journal of Social Theory* 2012 15.
- ♦
- ♦ Wojciehowski H., Gallese V., *Take Us Feel: Toward an Embodied Narratology*, *California Italian Studies*, 2 (1).

5 settembre
2015

biogem

We can use our symbolic expertise to recognize the beauty of the world and of others, and to be a part of it appropriately?



©Bucchi

5 settembre
2015

biogem