PART II:

INTRINSIC FUNCTIONING OF THE

PERFORMING ARTS
5. Autonomy, Processes of De-autonomization and Functioning of Art in Urban Society

As discussed in the Introduction, the tradition which holds that the value of art in society is solely aesthetic is a strong one in Western philosophy and arts practices. Thus it is no surprise that the notion of art’s autonomy strongly reverberates in the policy documents, specifically those of the national government. The notion refers to the freedom of artists to create an artwork in any way they wish. Artists are free to choose the medium, style and subject matter of a work of art. This can be considered as a first level of autonomy. A second level is the notion of the freedom of the artwork. The autonomous position holds that artworks should function as artworks and not for other ends. This implies that the audience should regard the work as such and follow its aesthetic (perceptually perceivable) properties. In reality, however, artworks are used for other goals. One can visit the arts as a diversion, as an opportunity to meet other people, or one can earn money as a result of artistic activity. A third level is the autonomy of art fields or artworlds, i.e., the institutional relationships between arts producers, distributors and consumers in society. All three levels are relevant for developing methods to evaluate arts policies.

In the policy documents, the freedom of artists to produce whichever works they see fit is uncontested. It is considered a prerequisite for the arts to function in society (see e.g. Pantser of Ruggegraat, 1995, p. 5, and Meer dan de Som, 2003, p. 1). Therefore this level of autonomy is not problematic for the present research. The level of the autonomy of the artwork will be dealt with in Chapter 6 on the specific nature aesthetic experience, for this level of autonomy clearly refers to the experiences artworks (can) generate. For the present moment, the third level of autonomy is the most important: the autonomy of the artworld, specifically concerning the subsidized arts (see Investeren in Cultuur, 1992, pp. 37-8, and Cultuur als Confrontatie, 2000, p. 7). A purely autonomous artworld seems to limit art’s functioning in society, for it can be considered as only serving aesthetic needs and the needs of the agents in the artworld. This notion sits ill with the description of intrinsic and extrinsic functions in the policy documents, as they assume some functioning outside the artworld for spectators and for society at large.

In this chapter, the autonomy of artworlds is discussed on the basis of two traditions in the philosophy of art, the institutional and functional approach. Both approaches will be introduced in section 5.1. On the basis of this discussion of autonomy (in sections 5.2. and
5.3.), attention will be devoted to two issues which are prominent in the policy documents: cultural diversity and artistic quality (sections 5.4 and 5.5).

5.1. Artworks and their Functioning in Society: Institutional and Functional Paradigms

Davies discerns two approaches to the question of the definition of art, a functional and a procedural approach (see Davies, 1991, 2001 and 2006). In the functional approach ‘an artwork performs a function or functions (...) distinctive to art’. In the procedural approach ‘an artwork necessarily is created in accordance with certain rules and procedures’ (Davies, 1991, p. 1). These approaches seem complementary at first glance. One can imagine that artworks are artworks because they perform certain functions and, at the same time, are created in accordance with certain rules. However, Davies argues that these approaches are not complementary in the case of art because the procedures under which art is created are not in concordance with the function of art in society (ibid.). This suggests that what is called ‘art’ in society does not necessarily function as such. In 1991 Davies writes:

Probably most people look to a definition of art in the hope of finding an account of the value and importance of art. The interest and worth of the philosophy of art lies in its facilitating just such an account. (Davies, 1991, p. 46)

However, he later concedes that the defining essence of a concept will not always reveal why and how it is important to us (Davies, 2001, p. 169). This is especially true for the procedural definitions, but that does not make such definitions erroneous. Davies even prefers such definitions because he believes that much modern art is made and regarded by the public in such a manner that it seems to defy art’s functioning altogether (Davies, 1991, pp. 38, 41). Only procedural definitions can account for cases such as Duchamp’s Fountain. His argument seems to be that artists may disagree – certainly over time – on the functions that art performs in society, and comment by means of their work on the functioning of art in society itself (see Davies, 2001, p. 172). Such artists need a procedural approach to art for their products to be recognized as art at all. However, the opposite also can hold true. Artists can criticize and challenge the conventions which govern the procedures for conferring the status of art to objects, as Duchamp in fact did when submitting a urinal for an art exhibition. If one regards the challenge to artistic traditions, practices and conventions to be one of the functions of art, there is no need to conclude that functional definitions and procedural definitions cannot be combined. However, in his introduction to the philosophy of art published in 2006, Davies still opposes functional and institutional definitions of art. He concludes that

1 In this and the following chapter, the words ‘artwork’ and ‘work of art’ are mostly used in the common language meaning of the term. These terms do not indicate that the work indeed functions artistically in society, i.e., that it provides certain functions that can be called ‘artistic’ (see sections 5.3 and 6.2).
2 He now calls the functional approach ‘aesthetic functionalism’ (Davies, 2006, p. 36). As in 1991 and 2001, he also discerns intentional definitions (referring to the artist’s intention that a work be perceived or should function as art) and historical definitions (relating a work to prior artworks by means of a coherent narrative, which is the narrative approach supported by Carroll (1999) or the historic development of conventions under which artworks are being created and appreciated).
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There is no clear winner here. Among the advocates of definitions, there is perhaps a growing consensus in favour of hybrid formulations. Functional accounts might be needed to accommodate the earliest artworks and the introduction of novel art forms. And it may be necessary to invoke institutions and historical traditions to explain how items qualify as art when they are intended to be non-aesthetic or anti-aesthetic. This much is clear: if it is accepted that small-scale non-Western cultures possess art and their own artworlds, and that art can often be intended more for ritual use, educative enlightenment, and entertainment than for contemplation for its own sake alone, a rich account of art’s functions will be needed, along with acknowledgement of art’s institutional variety, if an adequate definition is to be found (Davies, 2006, p. 43).

The opposition between both approaches (or paradigms) in Davies’s work stems from the fact that he tries to find a definition of art which stipulates sufficient and necessary conditions to be able to denote a certain object as a work of art. He presents the paradigms with the work of Dickie (procedural paradigm) and Beardsley (functional paradigm). Dickie and Beardsley, however, never thought of their approaches as opposing but simply as being about something different: Dickie’s as an inquiry into the organization of artistic production, Beardsley’s as an inquiry into art’s functions (see Van Maanen, 2009, p. 18). Davies himself concedes that a strict definition is not necessary for research into the value of art (Davies, 2006, p. 46). The question as to what art actually is thus shifts to what art actually does and consequently is (Van Maanen, 1998, p. 28). To discuss autonomy, however, the opposition between the institutional and functional paradigm will be maintained, as both shed light on different aspects. Because Davies opposes both approaches most sharply in his 1991 book, this will be the basis for the following discussion.

5.1.1. The Procedural Approach: Institutional Theory

Davies presents the institutional theory of Dickie as the most fully articulated account of the procedural approach, although he deviates from Dickie’s theory at several points and gives his own, more sophisticated account of the theory. According to institutional theories:

something is a work of art as a result of its being dubbed, baptized, or honoured as a work of art by someone who is authorized thereby to make it an artwork by her position within the institution of the Artworld. (...) The theory entails that things are artworks by virtue of their being placed within the appropriate institutional context, whereas normally we would think that it is because they are art that it is appropriate so to place them. (Davies, 1991, p. 78)

It follows that any institutional theory should describe the structures and roles of the artworld in order to properly examine artworks and their position in society. The authority for ‘dubbing’ something as art is dependent on the role one has in the artworld. A role should be regarded as a context for the act of ‘dubbing’, in the same way as a banker can declare someone free of a debt and a baker cannot (ibid., p. 79).

The notion of Artworld was presented by Danto in 1964. His idea was that artworks are surrounded by ‘an atmosphere of theory’ which the eye cannot descry. To recognize and understand a work of art as such one must be able to locate it within a historical and social context. That context, or atmosphere, is generated by the changing practices and conventions of art, the heritage of works, the intentions of artists, the writings of critics, and so forth. Taken together, these constitute the Artworld. (Davies, 1991, p. 81)

However, these approaches can be subsumed in both the functional and institutional paradigm (see Davies, 1991, Chapters 7 and 8; 2001, pp. 175-6, and 2006, pp. 39-41).
Thus institutional theory focuses on the conventions and practices of the artworld, as well as the historical tradition in which these conventions and practices stand. It is assumed that the conferral of art status upon an object takes the previous art history into account. Danto did not see the artworld as being ‘structured to a degree that might make it to be viewed plausibly as an informal institution’ (Davies, 1991, p. 81). In this respect Dickie and Davies differ from Danto, although Danto’s shift from the artistically relevant properties of artworks to the social context without which they could not take on and present such properties sets the scene for the institutional theory (Davies, 1991, p. 81).

In Davies’ view, Dickie’s institutional theory is not entirely convincing as Dickie ‘discusses the conferral of art status as if it were a kind of action, like shaving, rather than the exercise of authority vested in socially defined roles’ (Davies, 1991, p. 84). Davies points to the limits of the roles that people can have in an informally structured artworld. For instance, amateur artists have a far more limited role within the professional part of the artworld, while Dickie seems to contend that amateurs can be candidates to bestow art status just as authoritatively as professional artists (Davies, 1991, p. 86; see also under (1), (4) and (6) below). Davies argues that the account by Dickie can be modified sufficiently as to present a coherent institutional theory of the artworld which has several features:

1. The artworld is an informal institution structured by various roles – artist, impresario, public, performer, curator, critic, amateur, and so on – which are occupied by agents and by the relationships among these roles and some formally structured elements – theatres, art galleries, ministries of the arts, and so forth.

2. An artist acquires the authority to confer art status through his or her participation in the activities of the artworld. The act of conferral of art status is not an act of representation in the sense that a member of parliament represents the sovereignty of his or her constituents. It is merely the exercise of a role of which it has become legitimate that the artist play it.

3. The conventions by which art status is conferred and the possible membership of the roles in which there is authority to confer art status are not fixed; they change over time.

4. In some parts of the artworld (e.g. amateur arts) the conventions allow almost everyone to occupy the role of artist whereas, in other parts, only a limited number of people are authorized to occupy this position.

According to Davies this is due to the fact that ‘Danto always has been interested in the fact that artworks refer to other artworks and the practices of art creation, and in the way this reference generates a history of art such that works that could not have been created as art in the past become creatable as the art of the present slips into the past’ (Davies, 1991, p. 81). Here Danto offers a first glimpse of the history of modern art as becoming more and more self-referential and thus developing an autonomous sphere from an institutional point of view.

Davies notes that Danto has always opposed the institutional theory of Dickie. However, Davies is of the opinion that Danto’s argument is not successful in undermining the institutional theory. For the present research, this discussion can be left aside (see Davies, 1991, p. 82).

Amateurs probably stay away from the professional part of the artworld because their activities are grounded in different goals than the bestowal of art status.
(5) It is the affording of the authority that counts, not the artistic skills, although one might be allocated the authority of the role of the artist by displaying sufficient skill.

(6) Not everyone who confers art status is an artist in the sense of a creator of a work. A gallery owner who presents chimpanzee drawings or random computer drawings as art is an artist (has the authority to confer the status of art). This logically leads to the conclusion that some works of art, such as chimpanzee drawings or random computer graphics, are presented in an artworld to the art public, but there is no responsibility for them in the sense of an artist-creator (Davies, 1991, pp. 87-9).

It is especially the last element of institutional theory that clashes with common sense. In this respect Davies’ argument seems feeble. First, the chosen examples of chimpanzee’s drawings and random computer graphics are weak. It is questionable whether or not such works have indeed been granted the status of artworks within the artworld in the long run. Therefore the authority of the gallery owner seems contested, at best. Second, institutional theories seem to have little regard for the act of creation. Though institutionalists will be ready to agree that Duchamp’s ready-made Fountain is a work of art, because it has been accepted as such by the artworld, they do not seem to fully grasp what the moment of artistic creation was. It seems that the creation took place at the moment Duchamp regarded the urinal as an aesthetic object (and a work of art at that) while institutional theorists will regard the moment the object is placed in the gallery as the act of creation. This argument will be elaborated in section 5.2.3, where critique on the institutional theory will be discussed in more detail.

Davies himself also identifies a few problems with institutional theories. The major problem is that institutionalists have to provide proof that the artworld is institutionalized sufficiently ‘to generate a structure of roles and authorities that could explain how the status of art is conferred’ (Davies, 1991, p. 172; see also 2006, p. 39). Furthermore the artworld should be distinctive enough from other social practices in order to be able to account for the difference between art and other cultural practices (Davies, 1991, p. 173). Institutional theory also has difficulty in accounting for early artworks (because the artworld of antiquity, for instance, still had to be institutionalized), and for isolated artists or artists working outside the artworld, such as embroiderers (Davies, 1991, p. 173). For the present research, these are not fundamental problems. However, a fourth issue that Davies identifies is certainly problematic:

The institutional (...) (theory) make(s) art relative to an artworld, an organized practice that has established a tradition. But if there is the possibility that there are artworlds other than the Western one, and nothing in (institutional theory) has demonstrated otherwise, these theories are incomplete, because they do not explain what makes an artworld an art world (Davies, 2006, p. 41, italics QLvdH).

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6 See Boorsma, 1998, p. 88. She argues that the essence of this work is not the urinal itself. The point is that the urinal is used to evoke a deeper message with regard to the status of art. In other words, Duchamp was able to confer art status on the urinal because by putting it in an artworld setting he was able to let this ready-made object perform an artistic function, namely questioning the erstwhile conventions of the artworld.
This implies that artworlds can only be understood when their historic development is taken into account. Furthermore it implies that, although institutional theories point to the limits of art’s functioning in society – which is extremely relevant for the present research –, these theories can only be generated on the basis of a notion of art as art in society, thus implying that there is a specific form of art’s functioning in society. The functional approach is more suited to examine this aspect.

5.1.2. The Functional Approach

Davies introduces the functional approach with the theories of Beardsley by referring to his 1958 book entitled *Aesthetics, Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*. Here Beardsley hesitates to provide a definition of an artwork. In the postscript to the second edition, published in 1981, he discusses some criticism of the first edition, amongst which the omission of such a definition was the most notable feature.

> My present inclination is to give an answer to the question ‘What is art?’ where this is understood to ask what distinguishes artworks from other things. My answer (...) is that an artwork is an arrangement of conditions intended to be capable of affording an experience with marked aesthetic character – that is, an object (...) in the fashioning of which the intention to enable it to satisfy the aesthetic interest played a significant causal part. (Beardsley, 1981 [1958], p. xix)

For Beardsley notes ‘the aesthetic value of anything is its capacity to impart – through the cognition of it – a marked aesthetic character to the experience’ (Beardsley, 1981 [1958], p. lix). The object does not need to succeed in imparting this aesthetic value to be classified as an artwork. When it is created with the intention to do so, this suffices to call it art. It is important to note that the aesthetic value can only be obtained through cognition of the object, which implies that a specific type of attention to the work is needed. Beardsley looks at aesthetic value as a value in its own right and thus hints at the autonomy of art (see section 5.3). Carroll offers a very similar definition of art in his chapter on aesthetic experience (see Carrol, 1999, p. 162). He points to the intention of the artist to afford an aesthetic experience as important to be able to discern art from natural objects, though he adds that this may not be the primary intention or the only intention of an artist in creating a work. In 2006 Davies expanded the functional definition of art by writing that the work should be intended to be contemplated for its own sake. Furthermore, the work can afford an aesthetic experience of significant magnitude based upon the work’s aesthetic features and that the viewer should adopt an appropriate frame of mind (see Davies, 2006, p. 36). The additions allow for the concept of quality (an aesthetic experience of a certain magnitude, although Davies does not indicate whether or not he has a certain threshold value in mind) and for an investigation into the nature of the appropriate attitude of the spectator (see Chapter 6).

Evidently these definitions are circular. Basically they hold that a work of art is a work of art when it is created with the intention to afford an experience which has (an) aesthetic

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7 Thus Beardsley avoids making the ‘definition’ of art and aesthetic value relative to the observer and his or her abilities to appreciate a work. Aesthetic value for Beardsley remains a potentiality of the artwork.
value(s). To avoid circularity, one should give an account of the values that can be attached to this experience without appealing to the notion of artwork. Beardsley lists five features of an aesthetic experience:

(a) it is directed towards an object;
(b) what comes has the air of being freely chosen;
(c) the object is emotionally distanced;
(d) there is active discovery of connections, etc.;
(e) there is a sense of integration between oneself as a person and the object of interest (Beardsley, 1979, cited in Davies, 1991, p. 53; see also Beardsley, 1981 [1958], p. lvi).

The first condition is necessary, the others are not. Any combination of (a) and any of the other features suffices to classify an experience as an aesthetic experience. As will be shown later, (c) and (e) relate this account of aesthetic experience to Kantian aesthetics (see section 5.3.1). It may be questioned whether or not this list suffices to describe aesthetic experiences which is the topic of Chapter 6 of this book. The value that can be attached to aesthetic experience derives from its giving rise to valuable effects (Davies, 1991, p. 54). Beardsley derived seven effects of art on consumers from the work of Shelley, Richards and Dewey (Beardsley, 1981 [1958], pp. 574-6):

(a) relieving tension and quieting disturbing impulses;
(b) resolving lesser conflicts within the self and helping to create an integration, or harmony;
(c) refining perception and discrimination;
(d) developing the imagination and along with it the ability to put oneself in the place of others;
(e) serving as an aid to mental health, but more as a preventive measure than as a cure;
(f) fostering mutual sympathy and understanding;
(g) offering an ideal for human life.

From his phrasing it may be concluded that Beardsley does not argue that this is a complete list. It is easy to see the links between this list of valuable effects and the functions which have been mentioned in the policy documents (Chapters 2 and 3). So, for the present research, the fact that the definition offered by Beardsley seems circular and the circularity can only be absolved by an – admittedly – incomplete list of valuable effects is not a problem. It is precisely such a list of functions that is the object of the present research.

The functional approach is not without problems. For instance there are ‘hard cases’ of artworks which a functional definition can not effectively account for, such as conceptual art. Beardsley’s insistence on the aesthetically relevant properties of a work of art bars such works as Duchamp’s *Fountain* and minimal music from the realm of art (Davies, 1991, p. 56) as well as all other artworks that lack or reject aesthetic properties that can be perceived.

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8 By referring to ‘object’ it might seem that the theories discussed here apply to the visual arts. However, a performance can also be considered as an object as well, and the theories apply to all forms of artworks.

sensuously (Davies, 2006, p. 37). However, if one assumes a calmer stance towards the properties of a work, a functional paradigm should be able to account for these cases. This means that the fact that the object affords experiences which are of aesthetic nature and value, and the fact that the object has been created with the intention to afford such experiences, constitute the most important traits of a functional paradigm. This leads to the problem of who is doing the intending. It seems obvious that the artist-creator of a work is a candidate. The artist can have two types of intentions. First, that his or her work be perceived as an artwork and he or she thus presents it in a setting that induces such a regard, in a museum, art gallery, theatre of concert hall, for example. Second, with the work, he or she can have an intention to express certain views or a belief. A third intention can be the case of the gallery owner presenting ordinary objects in order for them to be regarded as artworks, such as chimpanzee drawings. In the performing arts, this scenario occurs when old texts or musical scores which have never been regarded as artworks, nor were intended to function as such by their author, are presented as art, or more importantly, when certain works are excluded from the stage because there is no expectation that they will function artistically. A fourth intention is more important, namely the intention of the work itself. This intention is embedded in the formal arrangement of the work and presents itself as a necessary way of interpretation. It need not be the same thing as the artist-creator’s intention with the work. Bourdieu argues that the objective meaning of a work of art (indeed of any cultural object) depends on the sign systems current in the culture in which the work stands, and may have nothing to do with the author’s intention. It is the codes within the culture that ultimately determine a work’s meaning (Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 216). Shusterman points to the fact that in perceiving a work one tries to make sense of it rather than to describe ‘an objectified meaning already carefully buried in the text by it’s author’ (Shusterman, 1992, p. 92), inferring that there may be a difference between the two. With Bourdieu he seems to agree that the meaning depends on the culture within which the work stands, but he rather means the culture in which it is interpreted and not the culture from which the work originates. Thus he allows for the meaning of a work to be flexible and change over time (ibid., p. 100). When taking into account these differences in intentions that may be at stake in the

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10 For instance, the negation of aesthetic properties itself can only be perceived sensuously.

11 In his postscript to the second edition Beardsley himself writes that his ‘definition’ does not imply that the intended aesthetic values indeed are realised, nor that other objects which are not artworks (e.g. natural and technological objects) can not also afford experience with marked aesthetic character (Beardsley, 1981 [1958], p. xix).

12 Here an obvious connection between the institutional and functional paradigms becomes apparent. This has been fully elaborated by Bourdieu (see section 5.2.1) who argues that the proper way to regard artworks is institutionalized in the historical development of artworlds.

13 According to Shusterman there can also be something such as the intention of the audience. He describes popular misreadings of works (Shusterman, 2000, p. 51). This occurs when certain groups within mass audiences attach their own meaning to a work which in fact can be contrary to the ‘original’ meaning, such as Marxist fan’s of Dallas and gay fans of Dynasty. This implies that the audience is actually more creative in interpreting the work than the creators, and regard the work with a specific interest. It appears that such instances depend on the dissemination of an artwork through reproducible media in order to reach a large enough audience of a specific nature. This is rarely the case in the performing arts with its much smaller audiences.
production and presentation of art, the functional paradigm is suitable to study art’s functioning in society.

Davies indicates a few more problems with functional theories. First, a functionalist may argue that many works which are created and presented as artworks are not really art because they do not afford the appropriate experience (Davies, 1991, p. 51, and 2006, p. 37). From a policy point of view, this need not be a problem. One can surmise that many works that are presented as art (within an artworld setting) indeed are not art, they simply fall short of the expectation of them functioning properly as art. However, this can only be established after the creation of the work and its reception by an audience. Therefore the subsidies can be viewed strictly as not enabling the production of art but enabling the production of objects that have the ability to afford aesthetic experiences with artistic nature, although they may not do so. This is exactly why measurement criteria of the effects of art policy that only include numbers of performances and attendance at these performances are crude instruments for measuring the effects of policy. Because it is Davies’s goal to provide a definition of art, he upholds a very strict view of functionalism which is not ready to allow a work to be called ‘art’ if it does not function as such, and which does not allow for bad art. However, in his later writings, he seems to have adopted a more easy-going stance in allowing for bad art or damaged art. However, he still holds that functional theories do not fully account for such cases (Davies, 2006, p. 37). Second, in Davies’ view, it is difficult to find a single function that is potentially served by all artworks. One can question whether this is necessary. As Beardsley pointed out, a work needs not perform all possible artistic functions for it to be considered art. For the purpose of introducing a thorough definition of art, such as is Davies’s aim, this entails offering a complete and exhaustive list of artistic functions. For the purpose of the present research this is less crucial. The list should be based upon the functions which have been mentioned in policy documents, because those functions should be considered in policy evaluation. Artistic functions that have not been mentioned in the policy documents apparently are not a goal of the policy and need not be evaluated. Third, Davies writes: ‘Functionalism does not readily encompass works that are plainly expected to perform social, ritual or didactic functions, as against aesthetic ones, as is so for much non-Western and popular art.’ (Davies, 2001, p. 172. see also 2006, p. 42) For the present research this poses a major problem. On the one hand, this relates to the issue of applying Western conceptions of (the functions of) art to non-Western art forms, which will be discussed in section 5.4. On the other hand, this implies that a strict use of the functional paradigm excludes societal functioning from artistic functioning. It is one of the aims of the

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14 His argument is unconvincing because he claims that there is a residue of artworks which were created just as the author intended and who meet a willing audience who experience it in the proper manner, but still there is no aesthetic functioning. The works are simply not interesting aesthetically or do not provide a function which can be considered as art-defining (Davies, 2006, p. 38). However, there is no reason to suppose that a functionalist will refer to such works as ‘art’. By a functionalist account they are not. Davies’s main difficulty with functional theories seems to be that he does not want to allow that works are presented within the artworld which turn out not to be ‘art’ after all.
present research to investigate the relationship between intrinsic (or artistic) functioning and extrinsic (or societal) functioning. A strict functional approach that only includes aesthetic functioning seems to imply that such a relationship does not exist.

Based upon the functional approach it is possible to reassess the definitions given in the first chapter. ‘Functioning’ can now be described as the occurrence of valuable effects from the aesthetic experience. It should be noted that this new definition adds a step to the process of functioning: an aesthetic experience gives rise to valuable effects, or values, for the spectator. Such a value can subsequently be instrumental to some further goal, or function, for either the individual spectator or society. Once such functions are linked to the artistic nature of the experience, the values and the resulting functions can be regarded as artistic. It seems logical to regard them as intrinsic. At first glance, the valuable effects mentioned by Beardsley all seem to correspond with what have been classified as intrinsic functions in Part I, except for serving as an aid to mental health (e) which is not mentioned in the policy documents at all. Functions (a) through (d) can be considered as values for the individual spectator and (e), (f), and (g) as functions for the individual spectator or for society. Some of the values are instrumental to some of the functions, such as relieving tension and quieting disturbing impulses for instance, and may be considered conducive to mental health.

Functional theories use the word ‘aesthetic’ when they speak of the aesthetic character (or nature) of the experience. It is not clear whether ‘aesthetic’ and ‘artistic nature’ can be considered to be the same thing. This problem will be dealt with in Chapter 6. It is obvious that the classification used until now in the present research should be refined in order to differentiate between the values, functions and their mutual connections. There appear to be three different layers:

- The values of aesthetic experience for the person seeking such an experience.
- The functions that these values can give rise to for a person.
- The functions that these values can give rise to in society.

In Chapter 6, this refinement of terminology is based upon a thorough description of the aesthetic experience. The issue of art’s autonomy now will be discussed using both the institutional and functional paradigms (sections 5.2 and 5.3).

5.2. Autonomy and Processes of De-autonomization in the Institutional Paradigm

5.2.1. Bourdieu’s Field Theory

Bourdieu is one of the most influential theorists on cultural policy from the previous century. He developed what has been called ‘field theory’ in recognition of the fact that both the analysis of works of art as objects in themselves and of the social circumstances under which art objects are created do not paint the whole picture. In his view, works should be studied on at least three levels: (1) the work itself and the relation of the work to other works,

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15 One can interpret offering an ideal for human life (g) as a form of formulating critique on society, which has been mentioned in the policy documents.
including the strategies and trajectories of the makers of the work, (2) the artworld (Bourdieu uses the term ‘field’), and (3) the broader surroundings of the artworld (especially the power relations). As Johnson writes in an introduction to a collection of some of Bourdieu’s essays, this amounts to ‘radical contextualisation, (…) the full explanation of artistic works (…) is to be found in the history and structure of the field itself, with its multiple components, and in the relationship between that field and the field of power’ (Johnson, 1993, p. 9). According to Bourdieu, the meaning of a work or genre changes with changes in the structure of the field (Bourdieu, 1993a, pp. 30-1). Historians of art need to reconstruct the social history of art, which means reconstructing the space of possible position-takings. However, these were self-evident facts of the situations in which works of art were created, and thus they may remain unrecorded in contemporary accounts, chronicles or memoirs. This is a major problem for the analysis of art (ibid., p. 35).

Bourdieu is fundamentally institutional in his analysis and, at the same time, pays due attention to the historical development of the belief that something is or can be art. Art theory therefore should not be limited to either an internal analysis of the work or an analysis of the social circumstances in which its creator created it, but also of the social circumstances which designate that the work be regarded as a work of art (including the opinions of those who think the work in question should not be regarded as a work of art). In Bourdieu’s view ‘disinterestedness’ or the pure gaze (which will be discussed below in the section on functionalism) also is a product of social circumstances ‘linked to the institution of the work of art as an object of contemplation’ (ibid., p. 36). In short, not only the work but also how it should be properly regarded as a work of art is a result of historical cultural development. The meaning of a work of art can never be fully researched without being aware of this.

Given that works of art exist as symbolic objects only if they are known and recognised, that is, socially instituted as works of art and received by spectators capable of knowing and recognising them as such, the sociology of art and literature has to take as its object not only the material production but also the symbolic production of the work, i.e., the production of the value of the work, or which amounts to the same thing, of belief in the value of the work. (Bourdieu, 1993a, p. 37)

This means not only researching the work and its direct producers but also the contribution of the critics, publishers, educators, etc., ‘the whole set of agents whose combined efforts produce consumers capable of knowing the work of art as such, in particular teachers (but also families, etc.)’ (Bourdieu, 1993a, p. 37). This implies that the influence of government agencies and advisory boards is an important aspect of the functioning of the artworld. For Bourdieu the concept of art for art’s sake is a historical fabrication of the Western artworld (Bourdieu, 1993c, p. 256; see below). In this regard his field theory is not purely institutional but allows for functional tendencies. Specifically he accounts for the dominant views on the function of art in society, which can make up the doxa that hold the field together. However, field theory focuses on the power struggles between dominant and subordinate fractions and does not study the differences of opinion between such fractions on what proper art is and should do. For the present research it is important to note that Bourdieu points to the fact
that the views on the (‘proper’) functioning of art are in fact culturally ‘indoctrinated’ in audiences (and policy makers alike) as well as the views on the conditions under which these functions can be realized. Furthermore, his field theory leaves open the possibility that works may be produced that have the capacity to perform these functions, but they are not recognized as such as a result of the current power relations within (and around) the field. In Bourdieu’s own words:

(…) it is a question of understanding works of art as manifestations of the field as a whole, in which all the powers of the field and all the determinisms inherent in its structure and functioning are concentrated. (Bourdieu, 1993a, p. 37)

The advent of new works or genres changes the meaning of existing works or types of works. For example, dominant works and genres are pushed into the position of classical works (Bourdieu, 1993a, p. 32). This is difficult for the field of the performing arts because these works only exist for the duration of their performance. Every performance (even of a classical play or symphony) is a contemporary work of art where the artists have chosen to perform this particular piece at this moment in time, with this specific interpretation or mode of execution. However, some works (dramatic texts, scores and their interpretations) become conventions which can be considered as ‘outmoded’ or ‘classical’ by performers, critics and audiences, whereas they had previously held a dominant position in the field. It can be assumed that different views on the (desirable) effects of the works are conducive to these power struggles between the types of works in the field. Thus it seems useful to understand the field theory as a methodology for social scientists to analyse an art object and the position it occupies in a field and why it takes up such a position, which also applies to the field of theatre.

For the present research the external influences on the field are of specific interest.

The field, as a field of possible forces, presents itself to each agent as a space of possibles [i.e., of possible positions, QLvdH] which is defined in the relationship between the structure of average chances of access to the different positions (…) and the dispositions of each agent, the subjective basis of the perception and appreciation of the objective chances. In other words, the objective probabilities (of economic or symbolic profit, for example) inscribed in the field at a given moment only become operative and active through ‘vocations’, ‘aspirations’ and ‘expectations’; i.e., so far as they are perceived and appreciated through the schemes of perception and appreciation which constitute a habitus. (Bourdieu, 1993a, p. 64)

The actions of actors or agents in the field may be explained by their inherent dispositions (habitus), which are achieved through education but also through earlier participation in the field, and their perception of the possibilities in the field to gain economic or symbolic profit. These possibilities are dependent on the state of the struggle for economic and symbolic power in the field. The autonomy of a field can be defined as the degree to which the specific capital at stake in the field is divided among the agents according to the laws of the field itself. In the field of cultural production, artistic prestige is the capital which is at stake. The degree of autonomy is reflected in the degree of specific consecration or artistic prestige.
independent of other forces, i.e., ‘the extent to which [the field] manages to impose its own
norms and sanctions on the whole set of producers’ (Bourdieu, 1993a, p. 40). These other
forces result from the fields within which the field of cultural production is contained: the
field of power (which abides by economic laws) and the field of class relations (which is
characterized by struggles between dominant and subordinate classes). In a perfectly
autonomous field of cultural production, the inherent struggles in the field are dominated by
artistic criteria alone. Bourdieu refers to this as the sub-field of restricted production where
the only audience aimed at is the audience which consists of other producers (ibid., p. 39).

Analysis of art should include the struggles between the more autonomous and more
heteronomous agents in the field. Blindly following the definition of art which seems
dominant in the field disregards the fact that this type of definition is only applied as a
weapon in the struggle, mostly by agents in the sub-field of restricted production.

The evolution of different fields of cultural production often is accompanied by the fact that
art becomes increasingly self-referential. Bourdieu speaks of a ‘reflective and critical return
of the producers upon their own production’ (Bourdieu, 1993c, p. 264). From the perspective
of the already consecrated artists, this is a profitable strategy (in the sense of gaining
symbolic profit) for they have arrived in a position to impose their own style (over subject
matter) as the thing that matters in determining the artistic value of works (ibid., p. 265). On
the consumer side, this leads to a necessity to be able to classify works of art correctly within
cumulative art history, in order to determine their artistic value. This reduces art reception to
a classification in the history of forms, and foregoes the sociological reasons why these
different forms came into being and attained value (ibid., p. 266).

In other words, this limits
the functioning of art in society, namely, to those who are able to classify artworks properly.

One last important aspect of the field theory is the question as to how different positions in
the field become apparent. Because the consecration is done by (already consecrated) artists

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16 Note that in Bourdieu’s work the term ‘field of cultural production’ refers to the field of art
specifically but on many occasions is used in a broader sense, also encompassing science and
journalism for instance. The present discussion refers to the artworld specifically.

17 Bourdieu gives the example of Symbolist poets who apparently only wrote for the benefit of their
peer poets. In the actual field of restricted production, other agents, such as members of advisory
boards, critics and theatre programmers, can function as the targeted audiences of connoisseurs. It is
easy to imagine that the more diverse the ‘in-crowd’ for whom the production is made, the greater the
chance that economic and class-related forces are at play in the field.

18 This hints at a conclusion which will be defended in the section on the functional paradigm that
aesthetic experiences which are artistic in nature can occur outside the consecrated artworld, but they
will not be recognized as such. None the less, the field theory points to a difficulty for the present
research based upon an analysis of the functions found in the policy documents. As stated above,
these documents have not been formulated independently of the views of agents in the field of
cultural production itself. However, the inclusion of extrinsic functions in the policy documents
indicates that there is not a simple connection between the artworld and the formulation of policy
documents, in Bourdieu’s terms: they are influenced by heteronomous forces and not just the result of
the definition of art put forward by a single faction in the field.

19 This may very well be what Davies means when he writes that the procedures under which art is
created part company from the point of having art (Davies, 1991, p. 1).
and people in a position to do so within the field, artists’ forewords to the work of others and other reviews constitute relevant study material for a social scientist of art. Manifestos in which ‘new’ artists define their position relative to already consecrated artists or art movements, and the reaction of older artists to such manifestos, are also relevant in the analysis of the state of the field. Moreover, ‘the various positions in the field of cultural production can be (…) easily characterized in terms of the audience which corresponds to them. (This) results from the homologies between the positions occupied in the space of production, with the correlative position-takings, and positions in the space of consumption; that is (…) in the field of power (…) or in the field of class relations’ (Bourdieu, 1993a, p. 45).

This may seem a very analytic approach to art, leaving out the idea of the pleasure and the emotions artistic or aesthetic encounters may give rise to. In his preface to The Rules of Art, Bourdieu devotes more attention to the functional side of the analysis. In his view

The love of art (…) feels founded in its object. It is in order to convince oneself of being right in (or having reasons for) loving that such love so often has recourse to commentary, to that sort of apologetic discourse that the believer addresses to himself or herself and which, as well as its minimal effect of redoubling his or her belief, may also awaken and summon others to that belief. This is why scientific analysis, when it is able to uncover what makes the work of art necessary (…) also furnishes artistic experience, and the pleasure which accompanies it, with its best justification. (Bourdieu, 1996, p. xix)

In other words, research of the specific artistic nature of the experience is needed to legitimize it as such. This clearly is a functional tendency in Bourdieu’s theory, although he is critical of the traditional view on the function of art in modern Western societies. The specific economy of the field of cultural production is based on a belief in what constitutes a work of art and what its aesthetic and social value may be (Johnson, 1993, p. 9). But that is what it is, a belief, which is historically and socially constructed by all the agents in the field, consumers and producers alike.

Bourdieu is anxious to renounce the idea of pure interest in pure form. He aims to analyse the specific interests which operate in the field, and regards such things as ‘pure interest’ and ‘pure form’ as mystifications of the capital that is truly at stake in the field (Bourdieu, 1996, p. xx). This means that the idea of what constitutes a work of art changes over time and from artworld to artworld, and thus Bourdieu is critical of analytical philosophers who try to search for an ahistoric essence of art.

What is forgotten (…) is the fact that although appearing to be a gift of nature, the eye of the twentieth-century art lover is a product of history. (…) the pure gaze, capable of apprehending the work of art as it demands to be apprehended (i.e., in itself and for itself, as form and not as function), is inseparable from the appearance of producers of art motivated by a pure artistic intention, which is itself inseparable from the emergence of an autonomous artistic field capable of formulating and imposing its own ends against external demands. (Bourdieu, 1993c, p. 256)

In short, fields enforce their own specific way of contemplating or valuing their products. Therefore Bourdieu also developed a sociological theory of art’s reception, which will be discussed in the section on functional theories.
5.2.2. Autonomization of the Dutch Artworld

In 1990 Oosterbaan Martinius published a study on how the Dutch national government has dealt with problems of legitimizing the art policy and the allocation of subsidies. The tension between the autonomization of art (which leads to the legitimisation and allocation problems) on the one hand, and the pressure for objectification and accountability of the art policy, on the other, is central to his analysis (Oosterbaan Martinius, 1990, p. 12). His thesis states that the demand for objectification and accountability in art policy leads to bigger problems than those found in other policy areas (ibid., p. 202). The present research has been prompted by the same concerns. Oosterbaan Martinius’s work relies extensively on Bourdieu’s field theory. His study can be regarded as an application of field theory to Dutch art practice and, although it does not directly apply to the policy era that has been studied in the present research and although his study focuses on the visual arts, it remains of interest here.

Oosterbaan Martinius defines the autonomization of art as ‘the long-term process in which art became increasingly “free”. That gave art a turbulent character, especially in the twentieth century, but also simultaneously led to the loss of the bond with large parts of the general public’ (ibid., p. 18). In referring to the freedom of the arts, he means that church, state and wealthy contributors no longer define the subject and design of artworks (ibid., p. 18). The arts have become a medium for self-expression of the artists. Autonomization is an aspect of the professionalization of artists as a choice of occupation. This process had already started in the eighteenth century, but led to great turbulence in the twentieth century, specifically with the ever-changing styles and art movements. The autonomization of art relates to the decline of the influence of (royal and papal) courts in Europe and the

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20 Oosterbaan Martinius refers to the art historian Gombrich (1982) who pinpoints the start of this development in 1789 with the French Revolution. Carroll refers to the advent of Romanticism in Western European culture as a ‘seismic shift’ from artists aiming to represent the objective features of the world towards exploring their own subjective experiences. He dates the development back to the same year with the publication of the Lyrical Ballads by Wordsworth who, in his Introduction, wrote that poetry ‘is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings’ (Carrol, 1999, p. 59). Luhmann dates the development even earlier. He observes that ‘We are not missing the mark if we assume that in earlier societies the objects we retrospectively perceive as art and store in museums were produced as supports for other functional circles, rather than in view of a special function of art. (…) In retrospect, we describe the intricate, specifically artistic form combinations of such works as incidental, as ornamental. In any event, the link between functional specification and the differentiation of functional systems constitutes a socio-historical nexus, which long remained protected by familiar contexts. Not until artistic possibilities of this sort reached a high degree of evidence and independence did the specific function of art take hold as an attractor for creating forms that now followed their own dynamic and began to react to their own realization. This apparently happened for the first time in ancient Greece and then again during a period that deserves to be called the “Renaissance”.’ (Luhmann, 2000, p. 140) This means that objects are not valued on the basis of their user value but rather for their aesthetic appeal; in other words, art becomes autonomous. ‘Once art becomes autonomous, the emphasis shifts from hetero-reference to self reference (…). That [art] draws on (…) overall greater degrees of freedom corresponds to the conditions of modernity and signals that a society differentiated along functional lines must do without authority and representation.’ (Luhmann, 2000, p. 149) Note that Luhmann does not imply that this is the same as self-isolation, and he thus explicitly leaves leeway for art’s functioning in society.
advent of the power of the citizenry. The courts were no longer able to dictate certain styles. This leads to what Oosterbaan Martinius calls ‘taste-uncertainty’ (smaakonzekerheid) and a subsequent need for specialists to determine taste (ibid., p. 22). Artists are faced with the obligation to be original, and personal development becomes an assignment for artists. This leads to ever-changing styles and the co-existence of different art movements, specifically in the twentieth century (ibid., p. 20). Although one could argue about whether personal style and originality had perhaps also been relevant to artists working for royal or papal courts, the argument that the artists developed from a position as mere craftsmen (however much revered in their own time in some cases) to a specific profession which distinguishes itself from traditional artistry and the vernacular is compelling. Blokland describes the same development when he writes that cultural policies

an assortment of complex, innovative cultural expressions is stimulated and produced, an assortment that increasingly demands prior knowledge in order to understand it and appreciate it. Partly due to this, the gap between the interested fans on the one hand, and the artist and initiated on the other, has thus become greater. This, in turn, has led to it becoming increasingly difficult to penetrate a certain artworld. The assortment thus precludes large-scale participation. This process probably explains the previously observed elite-forming within public that attends theatre and (subsidized) art manifestations. (Blokland, 1995, p. 350).

The autonomization is related to the creation of specific buildings for art.

The autonomization of art has led to separate areas being allocated to artworks, in buildings especially assigned for that purpose. (...) It is the provisional finishing point of a process in which art has received an increasing number of social functions. (Oosterbaan Martinius, 1990, p. 23)

Here, the fact that Oosterbaan Martinius limits his description to the visual arts inhibits the possibilities to generalize his findings to all art forms. In the visual arts, the tendency to create art which is only suited for presentation in a museum (instead of being bought by private individuals who wish to hang a painting in their living room) is important. However, the performing arts are by their very nature a public art form to be experienced in public buildings (or open air) instead of in private use. A history of public buildings and erecting concert halls and theatres may be less of an expression of the autonomy of art than art museums are. Nevertheless, Oosterbaan Martinius does have a point. Museums, theatre venues and concert halls can have a ‘temple-like’ quality which, on the one hand, leads to a certain attitude in experiencing the art created in it, and, on the other, selects a certain kind of audience. For instance, plays in schools or music in cafés and restaurants tend to attract a far more mixed audience than formal city theatres and concert halls.

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21 It is precisely this creation of a ‘compartmental conception of fine art (which) remits (the aesthetic) to a separate realm – the museum, theatre and concert-hall’ (Shusterman, 2001, p. 100; see also 2000, p. 6) which Shusterman criticizes as robbing art of its functions in society. See section 5.2.3.

22 Nevertheless, one should realize that some museums, especially in a social-democratic or communist tradition, have been erected by members of the privileged class with the aim of stimulating or preserving art’s functioning in society. They wished private art collections to have a more public function.

23 It is illustrating to look at the history of reception conventions in classical music. Smithuijsen (2001) describes the history of reception conventions in the Dutch concert halls where originally the audience
Oosterbaan Martinius stresses that while government policy aims at toning down the effects of autonomization, in doing so it inadvertently strengthens it (ibid., p. 18) by making use of taste specialists in the allocation of subsidies. The fact that the advisory boards which decide over allocation of subsidies consist of members of the artistic profession themselves can be viewed as the final piece of the autonomization process. However, Oosterbaan Martinius demonstrates that the influence of the artists themselves in the Raad voor de Kunst declined considerably between 1947 and 1987 in favour of managers and art theorists (see ibid., pp. 126-7). Oosterbaan Martinius considers this an example of the ‘incomplete professionalization’ of artists in the Netherlands (ibid. pp. 129-30). However, if one includes these managers (who have undoubtedly been recruited from the boards of art institutions or are former public officials or politicians responsible for art policy) and art theorists in one’s conception of the artworld – because these managers and theorists can be considered as frequent users of art – the argument of the autonomization of art still holds. None the less, the professionalization of artists seems faulted when compared to the legal and medical professions for instance. Oosterbaan Martinius therefore admits that the artists themselves seem to have limited influence in advisory boards on artistic quality, whereas membership of these boards seems to be the most important instrument in securing the field’s autonomy. Even though the Dutch national advisory committees which decide on actual subsidy allocation do predominantly consist of artists and critics, these committees are not able to prevent ‘self-taught’ artists from entering the field of cultural production, a situation which was seated at tables and food and drink were served during concerts, a situation which allowed social contact between the audience members. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the seating plans changed in order to enforce concentrated attention to the music. Likewise, many city theatres were built in such a way that the audience was able to see each other just as easily as the performers on stage. Sometimes lodges had curtains which could be closed during the performance by the audience members in order to conduct other business. In more recent theatres, the seating plans are such that every audience member has the best possible view of the stage.

24 He claims that there is also a public demand for ever changing styles in art which can explain the style diversity (Oosterbaan Martinius, 1990, p. 20). However, his claim is insufficiently supported on the basis of Grampp’s notion of the declining marginal benefits of consumption of more of the same product. It can not be expected that two artworks – however much realized in the same style or tradition – are exactly the same. Other authors stress that there are parts of the public that favour experiment and surprise (see e.g. Van Kerkhoven, 2005, p. 109). But it is questionable whether or not the demand from these small portions of the audience can account for the style diversity. The internal drive of artists, which is accelerated by the judgements of peers in advisory boards, is a far more likely explanation.

25 The Raad voor de Kunst (Council for the Arts) was the advisory body for the national art policy from 1947 until 1996 when the Raad voor de Kunst was replaced by the Raad voor Cultuur (Council for Culture) which advises on the full range of cultural policy (and not the art policy exclusively). The reorganization of the Council was prompted by the conviction that the primacy of politics had been neglected. ‘Advisors should have taken more into account the primacy of politics, and were no longer expected to take the lead in policy development’ (Pots, 2006, p. 331). One of the most prominent changes was that council members are no longer appointed independently (i.e., by the Council itself). They now are recruited by a departmental committee presided over by the director of the Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau (Social and Cultural Planning Agency, an independent organization which supports social, welfare, education and cultural policy by doing research).
has been successfully prevented in other professions due to legal protection of the profession.26

A last remark should be made about Oosterbaan Martinius’s research. He draws a distinction between ethical and aesthetic norms which govern the art policy. He claims that the aesthetic norms have become increasingly important in art policy, whereas religious and moral values, and more recently, in the 1970s, what he calls ‘social’ norms once dominated (*ibid.*, pp. 105-6). In doing so, he concurs with the short history of the national cultural policy presented in Chapter 2. Since the 1980s, the art policy has been governed solely by aesthetic norms:

Art policy has been geared towards the quality of art. The art itself has become the focus of the policy and not the societal effects of the arts (Oosterbaan Martinius, 1990, p. 203, italics QLvdH).

In other words, though the professionalization of Dutch artists seems faulted as compared to other professions, they have none the less been successful in securing the place of art for art’s sake in Dutch cultural policy. However, the inclusion of many policy goals which lie outside the artworld demonstrate that the autonomy is far from complete.

An important issue for the present research concerns whether or not the account of Dutch cultural policy, as rendered by Oosterbaan Martinius, is still valid. On the one hand, this seems to be the case because the major policy instruments and the distribution of responsibilities between the most important actors in cultural policy – public administration, private persons and professionals – have not changed fundamentally. Even more so, with the adoption of the *Wet op het Specifiek Cultuurbeleid* (Act Governing Specific Cultural Policy) in 1993 the existing distribution of responsibilities has been legally affirmed (Pots, 2006, p. 324). On the other hand, Pots concludes that, in the last decade of the 20th century, the legitimization of cultural policy has shifted towards education, the development of a sense of community in a multi-cultural society and cultural diversity, which have become prominent since 1990 (*ibid.*, p. 417).27 These are goals that Oosterbaan Martinius would consider as ethical rather than aesthetic. Thus it seems that the Dutch cultural field has since been de-autonomized rather than that autonomy has been strengthened.

### 5.2.3. Critique of the Institutional Paradigm

The central thesis of institutional theories is that what art is cannot be ‘discovered’ on the basis of some particular features of artworks. Artefacts come into being through the actions of people, and they attain the status of ‘artwork’. This means that not every object is likely to

26 Note that the current Kernraad (central council) consists of scientists, programmers and former politicians but not art producers themselves, although artists are still present in the subcommittees that decide on individual grant applications. These subcommittees function independently of the Kernraad.

27 These last two legitimizations seem to differ in the sense that developing a sense of community prompts an aesthetic exploration of the common aspects of different ethnic heritages, whereas cultural diversity prompts a concern for the representation of specific ethnic and youth groups in cultural practices.
become an artwork. It also implies that art history is constantly being reinterpreted. The attainment of art status is dependent on the specific art tradition in which the artist operates. The institutional paradigm depends on an artworld in which agents are able to endorse ‘their’ preferred objects and ways of contemplating them as art. It is questionable whether or not this is still the case in contemporary Western artworlds. Various authors have recently questioned some of the consequences of field theory.

Consecration of new art forms
The position of the traditional, ‘higher’ art forms has been challenged by art forms that were formerly regarded as illegitimate. Pop music is perhaps the best example. This discipline has been professionalized through the establishment of a national institution (the Dutch Pop Music Foundation) which awards an annual prize (Grote Prijs van Nederland). This foundation has received structural national funding since 1987 and started up a policy of sustaining local pop-music venues. The further professionalization of pop music proceeded with the advent of courses in pop music at the official conservatories of music in the Netherlands (a national Rock Academy was established in Tilburg in 1999, followed by an academy for pop and pop culture in Leeuwarden in 2003). In the curricula for cultural education at primary and secondary education and in the media, the attention given to pop music has also more than doubled. A similar process can be recognized in the development of crime novels (Janssen, 2005, pp. 6-8). Though this last genre has not secured subsidies, the legitimacy of the subsidized ‘high’ culture has eroded because the diversification of genres has diminished the consensus on ‘the nature and quality of cultural expressions’ (Janssen, 2005, p. 8). Janssen thus confirms the mechanisms that Bourdieu describes in the professionalization process that contributes to developing autonomous fields. Wilterdink, in a reaction to Janssen’s work, observes that, within the new genres, such as pop music, differences between more complex and simpler forms arise which coincide with specific audiences. The more highly educated public favours complex forms and they are the ones who argue for the recognition of the genres as official art genres (Wilterdink, 2005). Rather then refuting field theory, it seems that these examples show that the same mechanisms for the professionalization of hitherto ‘non-classical’ genres is now occurring, creating their own fields with their own mechanisms for distinguishing between good and better art.28 The point is that when multiple fields arise, the legitimacy of the claim to being the ‘right’ field producing the most valuable artworks is weakened considerably.

The classification of various publics for different art forms
One important indicator for the presence of an autonomous field is the division of the general public for specific art forms. In contemporary marketing literature, the impossibility to classify various publics along sociologically relevant categories has been argued, and the cultural omnivores – consumers who freely alternate between different ‘scenes’ and who build a lifestyle out of elements of both high and low culture – seem omnipresent

28 With the development of popular music, it even seems to be the case that popular acclaim is part of the consecration mechanism, as can be witnessed in the success of TV shows such as Idols.
(Twaalfhoven, 2005). However, it turns out that differences between cultural consumers along the lines of education still exist. Cultural competence is still an important explanatory factor for differences between audiences of different genres (Janssen, 2005, p. 9 and Wilterdink, 2005, cited above). The cultural omnivores are mostly people with higher education who visit ‘popular’ and ‘high’ culture alike. However, specifically the younger generations seem to be less likely to participate in the traditional art forms. The growth in welfare with its subsequent rise in expenditure on leisure activities is conducive to the development of the diversification of cultural production and consumption.

Both points indicate that one should adopt a more sophisticated view of the institutional theories rather than dividing the artworld into high art, usually with state funding, and low culture. Even though new art forms have claimed ‘higher’ status and the classification of cultural consumers is much vaguer than it used to be, these developments do not discredit the validity of Bourdieu’s field theory. It seems that through support from highly educated and (thus) economically powerful consumers, new art forms gain recognition and are able to professionalize. However, the new methods of dissemination generated by IT have enabled greater flux on the side of both the producers and the consumers than Bourdieu’s field theory takes into account. Especially the education system, although still related to the social stratification, has become more open to underprivileged groups (Janssen, 2005, p. 15), and therefore has lost its power to affirm patterns of cultural consumption as ‘appropriate’ (see section 5.3.2). Furthermore, as Shusterman argues, conspicuous consumption nowadays seems to be present in the domain of popular culture more than in the high arts. Ever-changing styles and trends keep mass consumers in a frenzy that leads them to buy more in order to keep up with fashion. Taste specialists are also needed here (Shusterman, 1992, p. 146).

**Why art status is conferred**

Regardless of the particular mechanisms that one discerns for the bestowal of art status, and regardless of the degree of openness one might think the artworld shows toward new genres and their public, institutional theory remains open to a crucial criticism. It may be true that certain persons or agents come to be in a position to bestow the status of art upon certain works and withhold this status from others. However, this does not answer the question as to the validity of the premises upon which these persons or agents base their decisions when bestowing this status. It may be true that they base these decisions upon their expectation that these works will have a certain function for their audience, or for specific audiences. Likewise, the tradition of evaluations of artworks in the past may also have been based upon this supposed functioning of the works for their public or publics. Van der Tas argues that, in Dutch cultural sociology, the assumption has been too easily made that people align their aesthetic judgements to ‘taste specialists’, and thus the complexity of the process of art’s creation and reception is underrated. Institutional theory crudely divides the various publics on the basis of the alleged correspondence between social and economic position and cultural preferences, disregarding differences within these various publics and the values
they attach to cultural consumption (Van der Tas, 1993, p. 422). Shusterman also voices such critique. Even with the addition of a historical analysis to the institutional theory, he observes that institutional theory:

... cannot adequately explain the ends for which art practices and institutions were developed, what human goods they are meant to serve, and why non-Western, non-modern cultures also pursue what seems to be artistic practices. (Shusterman, 2000, p. 6)

Shusterman suggests taking these ‘human goods’ as the starting point of analysis. He suggests that apart from the modernistic temples of culture, the mass media, popular culture and body art and live art are increasingly areas for alternative aesthetic experiences. They are characterized by ‘a deep recognition of the value and pleasure of aesthetic experience, our need for beauty and intensified feeling, and the integration of such enriching experience into our everyday living’ (Shusterman, 2000, p. 7). It follows from his argument that the level of autonomization of art depends on the exclusiveness of the public for art one has in mind when evaluating, and that the functional paradigm is more suitable than the institutional one for a thorough consideration of the value of aesthetic experience.

### 5.2.4. The Value of the Institutional Paradigm for the Present Research

The above strongly suggests that the mechanisms that support the development of autonomous fields in the Dutch artworld have weakened. The democratization of education has allowed greater social mobility. Revolutions in (information) technology have allowed more rapid development of new aesthetic genres and more democratic media for dissemination. Combined with growing welfare, this has cultivated mass audiences with economic power which has led to a diversification of aesthetic genres and tastes. As a result, the claim to being the right type of art and reception circumstances has been considerably weakened. Multiple semi-autonomous fields of cultural production have developed and subsidized art production in the Netherlands has now incorporated many new genres such as pop music. The ‘field of the subsidized arts’ only provides a relative degree of autonomy as well, most notably because of the inclusion of non-aesthetic goals in Dutch cultural policy and a decline of the position of aesthetic professionals in advisory boards.

However, the fact remains that specifically the subsidized arts reach only a restricted proportion of the population, namely, those that have developed a *habitus* to experience art because they are acquainted with the artistic codes and ‘proper’ reception practices. Repeated empirical research has shown that public demand for Dutch subsidized performing arts is limited. It is estimated that 14% of the population visits professional theatre (drama). Only 2% are frequent visitors, paying four visits per year or more (Van

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29 Van der Tas thus argues for research into the values people attach to cultural participation. However, his findings confirm in part the field theory inasmuch as people seem to agree on the values which *should* be attached to cultural consumption regardless of their socio-economic background. This suggests that privileged classes have been able to endorse their values of cultural consumption as the proper values.
den Broek et al., 2009, p. 39). Van Maanen estimates that only four per cent of the Dutch population visits the subsidized theatre (Van Maanen, 2008b, p. 132). Visits to ballet and modern dance are made by 5% of the population and 1% is frequent visitor. Classical music and opera are visited by 14%, with 3% as frequent visitors. The total reach of the performing arts has risen from 48% of the population in 1995 to 53% in 2007. The rise is caused by the growing popularity of cabaret and pop music concerts (Van den Broek et al., 2009, p. 40). For the research aiming at the development of an evaluation instrument for cultural policy, this has two consequences. On the one hand, the aesthetic values and functions realized for these restricted audiences are key in developing an evaluation instrument. On the other hand, the question arises as to the value of experience for those who do not attend. This can either be through dissemination of the values from the attendees to non-attendees, by audience members who share their experiences with others for instance, or through effects on collective level, such as city image.

5.3. Autonomy and Processes of De-autonomization in the Functional Paradigm

5.3.1. Kantian Aesthetics

The idea of aesthetics working as a distinct type of functioning is founded upon the philosophy of Kant. He distinguishes between ‘agreeable art’ which is aimed merely at enjoyment and momentary entertainment, and beautiful art (Kant, 2000 [1790], p. 184).

Beautiful art (…) is a kind of representation that is purposive in itself and, though without an end, nevertheless promotes the cultivation of the mental powers for sociable communication. The universal communicability of a pleasure already includes in its concept that this must not be a pleasure of enjoyment, from mere sensation, but one of reflection; and thus aesthetic art, as beautiful art, is one that has the reflecting power of judgement and not mere sensation as its standard. (Kant, 2000 [1790], p. 185)

In other words, art represents a separate sphere in society based upon how it works: through the sensation or the perception of an object, a subject will increase his or her power of judgement. Although beautiful art (or rather art or the aesthetic) should be regarded disinterestedly, it is not without purpose as it is an exercise in the faculties of judgement. Aesthetic experience has a reflective quality as one becomes aware of a self-related experience within the perception, which is not the case for agreeable art (or other mental activities such as education and science). Such an outcome of experience only is possible when adopting an accurate attitude towards the object. Kant refers to this attitude as ‘disinterested’, referring to a pure gaze without the desire to own the object or to use it for a purpose other than contemplation.

30 Note that Kant’s opposition of agreeable art and beautiful or aesthetic art can be regarded as a precursor to the difference between comfortable and challenging aesthetic experiences that was (re)introduced into the Dutch cultural policy debate by Van Stokkom (1995), see section 6.1.2.

31 It should be noted that Kant’s disinterestedness does not preclude societal functioning of art. It merely stresses that the object should be regarded without ulterior motive (and even this assumption will be complemented in the next chapter). However, Kant still holds that in the end art – when it is contemplated disinterestedly – does communicate wisdom on ethical matters, i.e., it does have a purpose. Belfiore and Bennett demonstrate how a misreading of this particular point in the 18th
If the question is whether or not something is beautiful, one does not want to know whether
there is anything that is or that could be at stake, for us or for someone else, in the existence of
the thing, but rather how we judge it in mere contemplation (intuition or reflection). (Kant,
2000 [1790], p. 90)

Art now can be conceived as a separate sphere in society as the judgement of taste can be
distinguished from cognition (Kant, 2000 [1790], p. 89). In Art and Social Theory, Harrington
(2004) complements Kant’s philosophy with Hegel’s, arguing that, in the philosophy of art,
the aesthetic experience came to be valued in itself, a value which is separate from moral
issues and practical value (Kant) and religion and philosophy (Hegel). ‘In the nineteenth
century, ideas of the autonomy of art judgements soon became linked to the idea of the
autonomy of art itself. Art was seen as resting on a self-evident value of its own’
(Harrington, 2004, p. 14). As a consequence, artistic production is seen as distinct from
craftsmanship, industrial production, materialism and science. Harrington stresses that the
thesis of aesthetic autonomy is a normative thesis:

Works of art can be, and ought to be, valued ‘for their own sake’, rather than for the sake of some
ulterior interest or purpose, such as for entertainment or for a moral or political purpose or
instruction and exhortation. (Harrington, 2004, p. 83, italics QLvdH)

Aesthetic judgements are formed from the ‘free play’ of the faculty of intellect with the
faculty of perception. ‘Kant argues that aesthetic judgements neither communicate any
information about the physical properties or causes of their object, nor express any
judgement about the moral worth or practical utility of their object. They express the
pleasure of the spectator on apprehending the object’ (Harrington, 2004, p. 85). An important
consequence of Kantian aesthetics is the fact that the question ‘what is art?’ cannot be
answered on the basis of certain characteristics of the work of art, but rather by the type of
attention that is paid to it and from the values the experience generates for the subject.
Aesthetic judgements are typically laid down in the form of a challenge to others. Beauty is
not a property of the objects itself, there is no objective concept of beauty. What can be
beautiful in one painting (a certain colour blue) can be extremely ugly in another. However,

Kant insists that the fact that there cannot be universally valid aesthetic concepts or principles
does not mean there cannot be universally valid aesthetic judgements. Kant argues that
aesthetic judgements not only involve an avowal by persons that they like the object in question
(…). They also involve a commitment from these persons towards showing how the object
could, and should, be an object of pleasure for everyone. Aesthetic judgements involve pointing
to particular features in the object and showing, through critical communication, how these
particular features contribute to the total aesthetic merit of the object’ (Harrington, 2004, p. 86).

For Kant it was possible to agree on an aesthetic experience, indeed he presupposes a
universal capacity for common feeling which he calls the ‘sensus communis’ of human beings.
Based upon this sensus communis, Kant argues that, through the proper use of intellectual
capacities, humans will arrive at the same aesthetic judgements although they cannot agree

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century led to the autonomist tradition in Western thinking on the relationship between the arts and
society. The proponents of the autonomous tradition hold that Kant argued in favour of a total
separation between art and morale, thus precluding any other than aesthetic consequences for art (see
Belfiore and Bennett, 2008, p. 181). This presents a fundamental weakness to the autonomous
tradition.
on taste. For the present discussion on autonomy, it is important to note that his claim for
universality in aesthetic judgement may overstate two facts: (1) the willingness of spectators
to reflect on their own perception of something beautiful, and (2) the possibility to arrive
indeed at the same judgements. None the less, the notion of an intelligent debate on aesthetic
judgement based upon distinguishing pleasing elements in the object of contemplation is of
value.

Harrington observes that ‘Kant was concerned more than anything else with the logical
structure of judgements about art and beauty, not with empirical historical circumstances
under which objects of art and beauty come to be valued by society’ (Harrington, 2004,
p. 88). Harrington thus concedes that Kant’s account of aesthetic judgement does not paint
the whole picture. He opposes the normative thesis of aesthetic autonomy to the empirical
sociological research of, most notably, Bourdieu. Harrington admits that factors such as the
socio-economic background of spectators and their education influence patterns of
consumption of cultural products, and that generally the cultural practices of the more
privileged classes have been considered to be of greater value than those of other classes.32
However, this does not undermine the validity of Kantian aesthetics. The democratic sense
may demand that cultural practices by different social strata should be valued equally.
Moreover, a parity of value should be acknowledged between different groups of cultural
products, e.g., between theatre-going and film. It cannot be argued that the one is more
valuable than the other. But this does not ‘entail that equality of value should be recognized
in individual objects of cultural consumption’ (ibid., p. 108).

There are two sides to the study of value in sociology of the arts. There is the side of empirical
social facts about differences of habitus in respect of categories of cultural production and
consumption, and there is the side of the normative aesthetic validity of individual objects of
culture. (Harrington, 2004, p. 109)

In other words, even though differences in consumption habits of different groups in society
are omnipresent, this still means that:

1. individual cultural objects can be expected to function in an autonomous way (in the
terms of the present research: intrinsically), and that, in comparison, cultural objects
within a certain class (such as sentimental film comedy or post-9/11 literature) can be
thought of as functioning better others (i.e., having more artistic quality);

2. individual works of art can be contemplated in different ways by different people
(disinterestedly, with cultural disposition, or an otherwise functional disposition) and
thus generate different aesthetic and/or artistic values for different people, while the
one may not be more important than the other;

32 However, Harrington’s rendition of Bourdieu’s theory seems incorrect. For instance, he regards the
consumption patterns of individuals as their *habitus*. But the habitus is a person’s set of dispositions
which can be an explanatory factor for their consumption pattern. At this point it suffices to say that
Bourdieu recognizes Kantian disinterestedness in what he calls ‘aesthetic disposition’, which is
something only culturally educated people are able to do. It follows that people who lack aesthetic
disposition might have other functional dispositions which lead them to contemplate artworks
differently and which can generate other than aesthetic values for them.
3. It can be assumed that artistic functioning is present for different groups within their own consumption habits, even though not all of the consumption practices may receive public support in the form of subsidies (for either production or consumption of the objects in question) and will be recognized as artistic.\textsuperscript{33}

For the present research it is important to identify how the artistic functioning for one social group (the attendees at performing arts) has relevance for other social groups (the non-attendees). This question refers to how individual aesthetic experiences can become collective experiences (from cell C to cell E in Table 4.6), and to how intrinsic functioning influences extrinsic functioning (from cell C to D and F).

\subsection*{5.3.2. Bourdieu’s Theory of Distinction}

Bourdieu sees art perception as involving a conscious or unconscious operation of deciphering the work of art because the work can be considered to be made out of cultural codes (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 2, and 1993b, p. 215).\textsuperscript{34} In order to be able to comprehend a work, the beholder needs to command a certain \textit{artistic competence} which matches the codes used in the work.

A work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded. The conscious or unconscious implementations of explicit or implicit schemes of perception and appreciation which constitutes pictorial or musical culture is the hidden condition for recognizing the styles characteristic of a period, a school or an author, and, more generally, for the familiarity with the internal logic of works that aesthetic enjoyment presupposes. (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 2)

Artistic competence is thus a condition for the reception of art (see also Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 216). Experiencing and understanding a work of art are two different things. Experience is possible without comprehension, or without full comprehension. However, it is logical to suppose that the experience of a work one can decipher is different from the experience of a work that one cannot (see point 2 in the last section). Bourdieu argues that a person who is not acquainted with the codes of a work will stop short at the sensible properties of a work or at the emotional resonance aroused by these properties. However, he or she will not experience the meaning of what is signified in the work (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 2). This means that a person must learn the appropriate disposition to adequately experience art. Such a disposition is socially installed in the audience members.\textsuperscript{35}

The goal of the deciphering operation is to identify the objective meaning of the work, which is not the same as the artist’s intention with the work. ‘The work of art considered as a

\textsuperscript{33} This has already been encountered in Chapter 2 where it was concluded that cultural objects can function differently for different social groups.

\textsuperscript{34} Bourdieu’s idea of cultural codes to be deciphered is quite like the idea of languages of art as suggested by Goodman (1976).

\textsuperscript{35} Bourdieu distinguishes between right and wrong reception, though not overtly. His argument is that experience of cultural objects without knowledge of the sign systems used (whether they are artistic or not) is not adequate. Recognizing the signs in a work for what they are meant to represent (\textit{aisthesis}) can lead to enjoyment whereas the scholarly savouring of a work can lead to \textit{delight}, to an experience that has more value. He even goes so far to denote this as the \textit{adequate} experience of a work of art (Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 220).
symbolic good (and not as an economic asset, which it may also be) only exists as such for a person who has the means to appropriate it, or in other words, to decipher it’ (Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 220). In deciphering a work, an audience member needs to use two types of codes. First, the codes from everyday life to be able to appreciate what the work represents. For example, the arrangement of the leaves on trees and clouds in the sky can lead to the conclusion that a storm is being depicted. But for aesthetic appraisal attention should be turned to the manner in which the representation is done, to the style of the work. ‘The perception of the work of art in a truly aesthetic manner, (...) consists of (...) noting its distinctive stylistic features by relating it to the ensemble of works forming the class to which it belongs, and of these works only’ (ibid., p. 222) and thus applying the right code to decipher the work’s meaning. The degree of artistic competence of an audience member depends on the subtlety of the classification system used by that audience member, and not every audience member has command over a sophisticated classification system. Bourdieu points to the fact that these systems are social codes and that every society writes its own classification system of art at any point in time, thus the history of the conditions under which art is produced should be matched by a history of how artworks ought to be contemplated. The artistic competence of audience members depends on their own trajectory and on the codes present in his or her society. It is a social code which must be mastered (ibid., p. 225). This learning usually occurs unconsciously and through prolonged contact or appreciation of works of art (of specific classes). This is why members of the privileged classes usually regard aesthetic experience – particularly when artistic in nature – as something ‘natural’, specifically in relation to works in scholarly traditions, and they thus attribute magical powers to the works of art. They are not aware of the social and cultural conditions underlying aesthetic experience (ibid., p. 234). If one is aware of this, the social use of art becomes apparent: culture’s primary ideological function is class co-optation (ibid., p. 235) and thus his theory is called ‘distinction theory’.  

Bourdieu’s distinction theory has become influential in cultural policy (Van Stokkom, 1995). For instance De Swaan (1985) argues that cultural policy, although proclaiming a democratic notion of spreading the benefits of cultural participation, actually makes use of a mystification which has become possible through the use of style and the subsequent taste specialists for judging artistic quality, and thus aims at defending art from mass tastes. It is questionable whether or not this is a viable reading of Bourdieu’s theory. It is true that

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36 Maas (1990) here discerns two types of codes, the code of everyday life (representation) and a symbolic code through which a person may find it normal that a witch flies through the air on a broomstick (see Maas, 1990, p. 43). However, both are used to discern what is being represented and not the style in which the representing is done.

37 Bourdieu adds that the education system – notwithstanding its emancipatory claims – is in fact the major builder of class structures.

38 It is remarkable that De Swaan’s essay ends with a thorough defence of the value of aesthetic experience, though he is critical of the functioning of the Dutch artworld in defending aesthetic ideals against affect and necessity; obviously he still thinks this is the right way to experience art, as Bourdieu also seems to be doing. On the other hand, De Swaan defends the value of the ‘popular culture’, just as Shusterman does (2001).
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Distinction theory stipulates that the disposition to adequately experience works of art is not distributed evenly in society but is the domain of the privileged classes. However, this does not mean that class distinction is a motivation for consumers in attending performances, as theorist like De Swaan (1985), Knulst (1989) and Ganzeboom (1989) seem to suggest. Bourdieu argues that distinction, which becomes apparent in sociologically homogenous audiences, is a consequence of ‘the specific logic of the economy of cultural goods’ (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 1), rather than its cause.

5.3.3. Critique of the Functional Paradigm

The foregoing discussion has mentioned several points of critique on the functional paradigm. A functional approach does not seem to be particularly successful in defining art, for it holds a circular line of reasoning: something is art when it is capable of affording aesthetic (or artistic) experiences. Such experiences have (artistic) value for the subject and these values can lead to intrinsic functioning. This kind of definition requires a list of values (and subsequent functions) that can be attached to the experience. A strict use of a functional paradigm (i.e., the autonomous tradition which misinterpreted Kant) even excludes any effect from artistic events outside this separate sphere. Shusterman (2000 and 2001) criticizes such strict functionalism. He discerns two main criticisms on the conception that art should function autonomously:

1. Aesthetic experience cannot be conceived as an unchanging concept narrowly identified with fine art’s purely autonomous reception. For not only is such reception impoverished, but aesthetic experience extends beyond fine art (to nature, for example). Moreover, aesthetic experience is conditioned by changes in the non-artistic world that affect not just the field of art but our very capacities for experience in general.

2. Aesthetic experience requires more than mere phenomenological immediacy to achieve its full meaning (…) immediate reactions are often poor and mistaken, so interpretation is generally needed to enhance the experience. (Shusterman, 2000, p. 20)

The second point is telling. It refers to what Bourdieu has called the operation of ‘deciphering’. Shusterman concurs that the experience can be enhanced through interpretation and subsequent understanding of a work. Bourdieu argues that understanding affords more pleasure (‘delight’ as opposed to ‘enjoyment’). But then if one assumes that interpretation is necessary to develop the ‘true’ meaning of an aesthetic experience, this presupposes that the subject has an interest in the work (or rather in the experience the work affords to him or her). For without such an interest, no search for interpretation will be undertaken either in one’s own mind or through discourse with others, written texts, commentaries, or reviews. However, the interest could lie in the felt immediacy of an aesthetic experience, but it cannot be the case that the aesthetic experience is purely
‘disinterested’. Shusterman thus argues against Beardsley’s third feature of an aesthetic experience (presented in section 5.1.2), that the object is emotionally distanced.\(^{39}\)

Carroll also is critical of the ‘disinterestedness’. He observes that disinterestedness and engagement do not seem to go together. In genres such as feminist literature or anti-racist films one does strive for a specific interest in the sense of a moral response (Carroll, 1999, p. 177-8). Thus formulating critique on society through art would be impossible if disinterestedness is upheld as a prerequisite for art. Likewise Harrington discerns that socialist art, feminist art and art for ethnic minorities presuppose a moral interest in the experience (Harrington, 2004, chapter 2). Nevertheless, a property of engaged works is that a moral stance is reached through the formal arrangement of the elements in the work and, in order to arrive at the intended moral stance, the viewer has to open up for the formal arrangement in the work to let it ‘do its job’. Thus, even in works of art with an overtly moral purpose, a certain kind of surrender to the work’s structure is necessary, yet the gaze must still be disinterested in some way. Carroll introduces the term ‘sympathy towards the work’. Zeglin Brand takes critique on ‘disinterestedness’ a step further: she claims that it does not exist. One can only strive to regard a work as disinterestedly as possible because one can not become a ‘pure, unflawed mirror’ (Zeglin Brand, 1998, p. 167). She voices a feminist critique that the disinterested attention to artworks is in fact a white, middle-class, male conception of art and that disinterested attention is not possible because people are either male or female and thus will always approach a work with a specifically male or female interest.\(^{40}\) In contrast to feminist critique, though, she argues that in order to fully appreciate a work one should alternate between interested and disinterested (or at least as much as possible) attention to the work. Both Carroll’s and Zeglin Brand’s arguments will be taken up in Chapter 6.

Shusterman insists on aesthetic experience (i.e., the function of artworks) as the starting point for aesthetic theory, a position he derives from Dewey (see Shusterman, 2001). Dewey’s approach departs from the recognition that art and beauty are basic vital functions in human life. Art indeed serves a purpose, it has a function. In Shusterman’s (and Dewey’s) opinion,

\(^{39}\)To complete the criticism of Beardsley’s features of aesthetic experience, the discussion of Bourdieu’s distinction theory above has indicated that the second point, the experience has the air of being freely chosen, in other words, it feels ‘natural’, only feels so because the disinterested contemplation is socially indoctrinated in culturally competent classes and thus feels as natural. Bourdieu’s and Shusterman’s accounts concur with Beardsley’s features, that the experience is directed towards an object and that there is active discovery of connections (which is the deciphering operation). Shusterman concurs with the fifth feature that there is a sense of integration between oneself and the object. This means that one feels attached to a work (or style), it can even become part of one’s lifestyle, and consequently one does take an interest in it.

\(^{40}\)The traditional feminist stance also implies that females are indoctrinated to adopt the male stance in which women are depicted as objects of desire and possession. Thus feminist critique follows Bourdieu in the sense that the appropriate way to contemplate art is to remain indoctrinated. Zeglin Brand argues that this is a specific feminist lens for viewing political artworks. She thinks that the richness of artworks can only be appreciated by adding such lenses rather than subtracting the ‘male’ lenses as feminist critique tends to do (see Zeglin Brand, 1998, p. 167).
this function is more than just aesthetic. Thus they stand in sharp contrast to the ‘extreme emphasis on disinterestedness’ which in Shusterman’s opinion analytic aesthetics – functionalists and institutionalists alike – ‘inherited from Kant’ (Shusterman, 2001, p. 98). ‘Disinterestedness in analytical philosophy is necessary to place art apart from and above instrumental value and natural satisfactions. But in doing so, the bodily factors and desires involved in the aesthetic are ignored’ (ibid., pp. 98-9) and art’s historico-political and socio-economic determinants and instrumental power as well (ibid., p. 99). Shusterman introduces two levels of ends for the arts:

For anything to have human value it must in some way serve the needs, and enhance the life and development, of the human organism in coping with its environing world (...) art’s special function and value lies not in any specialized, particular end but in satisfying the live creature in a more global way, by serving a variety of ends, and most importantly by enhancing our immediate experience, which invigorates and vitalizes us, thus aiding our achievement of whatever further ends we pursue. (...) works of high art are (...) not merely a special function-class of instruments for generating aesthetic experience (as they essentially are for Beardsley) (...); they modify and enhance perception and communication; they energize and inspire because aesthetic experience is always spilling over and getting integrated into our other activities, enhancing and deepening them. (Shusterman, 2001, p. 99)

Disregarding the blurring of terminology (function, value, ends) in this quote, Shusterman seems to undermine effectively the idea of the aimlessness of art. The aim, though, seems to be at a different level than the primary ‘urges’ that lead people to the consumption of artistic events, which, according to this line of reasoning, can be for realizing specific ends (such as socializing, meeting other people or friends, affirming one’s social status or merely diversion) but a aesthetic experience which is artistic in nature transcends such primary goals. As a consequence of placing the aesthetic experience, rather than the artwork, at the centre of attention, this conception of art leads to the inevitable conclusion that aesthetic experience can occur outside what is normally considered to be the artworld (Shusterman, 2001, p. 100). ‘The compartmentalization and spiritualization of art as an elevated separate realm set upon a remote pedestal’ (ibid., p. 101; see also 2000, p. 34) have impoverished the aesthetic quality of our lives. However, it is of great importance for contemporary society

... as we move from a more unified experiential culture to an increasingly modular, informational one. This results in art that highlights fragmentation and complexities of

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41 Shusterman here does not seem to recognize that a large number of the goals mentioned by Beardsley already have this type of ‘transcendental’ character. In his 2000 publication, however, he praises Beardsley’s approach as being the most true to Dewey. Therefore one can argue that Shusterman’s (and Dewey’s) pragmatic aesthetics is an elaboration of the functional paradigm.

42 It seems that the policy instruments of subsidizing production and reception facilities aid this compartmentalization of art. However, the issue concerning the instruments for arts and/or cultural policy lies beyond the scope of this research. Research should be performed on whether demand-oriented policy instruments can be more effective in terms of sustaining art’s functioning in society. For the present research, none the less, it is important to define the ‘playing field’ of the government in the cultural policy more precisely. It seems that when an aesthetic experience with artistic nature can be present everywhere, it can also be present in non-subsidized cultural practices. Limited government interference in the cultural sector can then only be legitimized by either sustenance of the more artistically challenging (and economically less profitable or unprofitable) productions, or by intervention due to market failures in realizing either intrinsic or extrinsic functions at the collective level.
information flow that are often too helter-skelter to provide the coherence needed for traditional aesthetic experience’s pleasurable sense of focused, funded affect.\(^{43}\) There is a growing concern (…) that we are being so thoroughly reshaped by our informational technology that our experiential, affective capacities are wearing thin. (Shusterman, 2000, p. 33)

Though he does not acknowledge art’s autonomy, Shusterman does find that art has a specific function to perform in contemporary society. This is a function, however, which is also being performed outside the traditional artworld in mass culture and body and lifestyle art. Van Stokkom argues that the subsidized artworld is not the only place where artistic renewal takes shape. Within popular culture, much artistic renewal is occurring which is also of great value to people (Van Stokkom, 1995, pp. 330-1).\(^{44}\)

Janssen also argues that the strict division of tastes for ‘high art’ and ‘popular art forms’ is no longer valid. Specifically the younger generations, also including highly educated youngsters, stay away from traditional art forms and orient themselves towards ‘popular culture’. And even more so: indulging in ‘popular’ culture nowadays does not result in loss of status as it did in the fifties.\(^{45}\) Janssen discerns three factors that undermine the strict divisions in the general public that Bourdieu predicts. First, there is a trend in the cultural industry itself which has lost state support due to neo-liberal politics. A greater dependence on ticket sales has prompted cultural institutions to market their products more as ‘commodities’, thus making them more like regular products (Gray’s ‘commodification thesis’). Second, the education system in the Netherlands has changed in such a way that high education is far less a privilege of certain classes nowadays. ‘The dwindling interest for traditional art forms and the re-evaluation of popular forms of culture can in part be considered as cultural side-effects of social mobility’ (Janssen, 2005, pp. 15-16). Though it has been thought that social climbers will distance themselves from the art forms of the class from which they originate, it actually seems that social climbers have taken these forms with them to the higher circles. Third, the processes of democratization and emancipation in Western societies have led to a different attitude towards authority. People are far more likely to consider themselves as equals to those from privileged groups. Thus the possibilities to distinguish oneself through conspicuous cultural consumption have

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\(^{43}\) This refers to post-modern aesthetic theory. Harrington argues that though the autonomy of artistic fields may seem compromised (he speaks of ‘relative autonomy’) it still is possible to conduct arguments about the value of art (Harrington, 2004, p. 197). See also van Stokkom’s criticism on diverse experience, section 6.1.2. Van Maanen (2008a) also points out that one should speak of relative autonomy.

\(^{44}\) Popular culture is here defined as aesthetic activities that occur without subsidies, usually in venues which are not considered as part of the ‘field of restricted production’ and in mass media such as television, radio and internet. A strict definition is difficult, however, because some forms of popular culture have been able to secure public funding, mostly through funding of the venues for jazz and pop music.

\(^{45}\) Harrington confirms that empirical research in the United States has yielded more intricate patterns of consumption than Bourdieu might have predicted. He observes that Bourdieu’s theory cannot be generalized outside of the French society of the seventies in which he conducted his research on distinction (Harrington, 2004, pp. 98-100). Janssen refers to some of the same American sources in her claims.
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diminished.\textsuperscript{46} In a reaction to Janssen’s work, Van Maanen adds that it may be true that differences in taste seem to have lapsed with the advent of cultural omnivores, but this does not mean that people attribute the same value to attending a performance by a subsidized company and watching a sentimental movie on television. He argues in favour of replacing the adjectives ‘high’ and ‘low’ with ‘challenging’ and ‘common’ (Van Maanen, 2005a, p. 59). This argument will be taken up in the following chapter.

Although Bourdieu’s field theory may still be a valid way to describe artworlds, it seems that the thesis of social distinction as a result of cultural consumption has suffered considerably in validity.\textsuperscript{47} However, these research findings do not discredit the distinction theory entirely. It still seems to be the case that cultural dispositions are not distributed evenly in society. Moreover, the ‘cross-over’ of tastes between different groups (cultural omnivores) does not mean that people with differing social backgrounds seek the same gratification in consumption of the same cultural products. For the present research, the key issues remain whether or not experiences in which codes can be easily deciphered are artistic, and the value of the experiential component versus the cognition component of the aesthetic experience. These issues will be taken up in Chapter 6.

5.3.4. The Value of the Functional Paradigm for the Present Research

Kantian aesthetics, which has been hugely influential in Western society, stipulates that art is a way to communicate knowledge about society, but in a specific way. Art should therefore be experienced ‘for its own sake’, thus yielding specific aesthetic benefits. This is usually referred to as ‘disinterested attention’ to works of art. It is precisely these aesthetic benefits that are the focus of the present research. Therefore, these benefits and the way in which they are generated through aesthetic experiences will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

Contemplating art for its own sake involves deciphering the codes in which the work has been executed. Knowledge of the codes (and a tendency to favour attention to artistic languages) is therefore regarded as a prerequisite for aesthetic experience. Such knowledge is not distributed evenly in society, and the tendency to focus on the aesthetic qualities of a work as the proper way to experience it is a matter of social indoctrination. Thus the Kantian notion of disinterested attention to a work of art is a major building block for the institutional paradigm. Furthermore, the functional paradigm leads to the inevitable conclusion that aesthetic values will also be realized outside of official art circuits, in popular culture for example. In studying the realization of aesthetic values in society for the purpose of evaluating cultural policy, this fact should be borne in mind.

\textsuperscript{46} Wilterdink and Schnabel (2005) both suggest that status considerations are still important nowadays but these may not always come to the fore in cultural consumption. Instead, the entire lifestyle of people is used as a distinguishing feature.

\textsuperscript{47} Though one could hypothesize that for less egalitarian cultures than the Dutch, such as the French, German and British cultures, distinction still plays a more significant role. Although the processes of emancipation and individualization also have taken place within these cultures, their education systems might be geared more to handing down traditional cultural values.
5.4. Cultural Diversity

Chapter 4 concluded that cultural diversity became a major concern in Dutch cultural policy at around the turn of the century. This is not such a new phenomenon as one might conclude from the discussion of the policy documents from 1992 to 2005. Oosterbaan Martinius studied cultural policy up to 1990 and also found concern about the exclusiveness of art and art criticism. In his view, this amounts to nothing more than a ‘ritualistic doubt’ (Oosterbaan Martinius, 1990, p. 144) of the cultural policy which is expressed by groups who benefit most from the cultural policy. Their expressed concern that others do not benefit is false, in Oosterbaan Martinius’ view, and only adds to the legitimacy of the cultural policy itself (ibid, p. 144-145). This may seem a plausible explanation for the advent of cultural diversity as a policy aim in around 2000 as well. However, the question can be raised as to whether it is the only explanation. Oosterbaan Martinius himself offers another explanation, which is equally cynical. He suggests that the well-informed elite understands perfectly that art policy will not survive in the long run without broader public support for the arts, and therefore their expressed concern for a broader cultural policy only is meant to secure long-term support for subsidizing the arts and thus their own elitists tastes (ibid., p. 144). Blokland is of the same opinion. In his view, politicians who argue for a broad span of cultural amenities do not genuinely mean it in real life (Blokland, 1995, pp. 347-8, note 31). But one can also be less cynical and suggest that cultural diversity is a sincere concern, for the fact that the personal benefits that can be gained from participating in aesthetic activities should not be limited to small audiences. In other words: the experience of culture and art is of value and therefore should be accessible to large groups in society.\footnote{This implies that the functions themselves should be researched and not be foregone, as Oosterbaan Martinius and many institutional theorists do.}

In the case of ethnic minorities, a functional approach to cultural diversity is not without difficulty. From a functional point of view, one can conclude that the concern that some groups – in this case ethnic minorities – do not benefit from the functions of culture and art in society may constitute a motivation for policies aimed at cultural diversity. This presupposes that one finds the same functions in art or cultural forms specifically developed for ethnic minorities, or that members of ethnic minorities who are recruited for regular aesthetic activities by means of specific marketing approaches will experience the same functions while participating as ‘white’ audience members do. In other words, members of ethnic minorities ‘search’ for the same values in cultural and art participation as ‘white’ audience members do. This may be true for white youngsters who want to further the acceptance of ‘their own’ cultural and artistic forms. However, it is questionable for members of ethnic minorities who have their roots in non-Western cultures. The functioning of art and culture as a separate sphere in society – its autonomy – is a typically modern and Western conception. One can assume that, for people who come from non-Western cultures, aesthetic

\footnote{Which is exactly why Blokland, for instance, defends cultural education as a means to spread the ability to experience culture and art (see Blokland, 1995, pp. 365-7).}
experience is much more linked to other areas of social activity, such as religion, weddings
and funeral rites, and that they will therefore experience other functions than those
identified in the policy documents. There are indications that this assumption is not without
merit. In a research on the aesthetic activities of ethnic minorities in the city of Groningen,
executed in 1996, it was found that, when asked which activities they participated in, some of
the participants mentioned religious ceremonies (among which were voodoo and winti-
worship, a traditional religion from Surinam), marriages and traditional crafts; activities that
are far less autonomous in nature than the western concept of art. However, the research
indicates that the Western definition of aesthetic activities was already recognized by ethnic
minorities (Van den Hoogen and Van den Berg, 1997, p. 395). Note that research in
Rotterdam showed that the most important reason for the non-participation of ethnic
minorities is their economic situation and lower education levels (Rotterdam, 1999, p. 8). This
suggests that ethnic minorities – once they have acquired sufficient income and education
levels – will participate, but still this does not offer an explanation for their motives. They
might be searching for different values. This means that the findings of this research cannot
be used to measure entirely the effects of cultural diversity policies. The research is restricted
to those situations where aesthetic activities take place in specific venues – as is the case with
most subsidized art forms, even those that do attract ethnic audiences such as reggae
concerts. However, the composition of audiences for cultural institutions in terms of ethnic
diversity can be used as a measurement point for the evaluation of cultural policy.

5.5. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Functioning and Artistic Quality

Based upon the preceding discussion artistic quality can be defined in three ways:

1. Artistic quality can be regarded as the degree to which artworks manage to realize
their artistic values. Therefore, the question as to how these artistic values (and their
subsequent functions) are realized should be answered based upon a description of
the specific artistic nature of aesthetic experience. From a functional paradigm, this is
obviously the best way to ascertain artistic quality. Defined as such, artistic quality
correlates directly with intrinsic functioning of performing art in society. However, it
is not clear whether or not artistic quality, defined in this way, correlates directly with
extrinsic functioning.

2. Artistic quality can be judged in terms of the representation in the artwork of the
subject matter about which it is communicating. It can be expected that works which
communicate profound messages will be experienced as having a higher quality than
works that communicate worn-out phrases.

3. Based upon the institutional paradigm, artistic quality can be defined as how the
code or artistic language is employed in works of art. This refers to two aspects of
quality: to craftsmanship in the execution (command of techniques) and to
development of the code itself, the way in which the code employed relates to
existing works. Experiment thus becomes an important aspect of the judgement of
artistic quality.
All three ways should be regarded as relative criteria, which means that the quality of works can vary with the intended (or actually realized) audience of artworks. This is most obvious for the last two definitions of quality. To a great extent artistic competence influences the quality one will perceive in a work. The same holds for the subject matter of a work; its relevance can vary for specific audience members. The functional definition of quality (the first above) is also dependent on the other two, and therefore functional quality can also vary from audience member to audience member.

The interesting question now is whether or not advisory boards deciding over the allocation of subsidies in the Dutch art field do so in a way that limits the functioning of art in society. In a strictly Bourdieusian artworld, the advisory boards are composed of taste specialists who look for artistic craftsmanship, originality, and so on. In the terms of this research, it can be expected that the advisory boards will therefore focus on the style of works and the development of style within the artistic discipline. Their measurement instruments are geared only towards the functions mentioned in cell ‘A’ of Table 4.6: the intrinsic functions for the artists. The assumption made here is that when the artistic quality is high, the art in question will also function better in society; i.e., it will realize its artistic values. From the perspective taken here, this is a highly debatable assumption. However, it should be noted that advisory boards nowadays also include other criteria, such as marketing criteria, in their evaluations of artistic quality. Research should be carried out to clarify the role advisory boards play in policy evaluation (see Chapter 11).

5.6. Summary: Autonomy in Relation to Functioning in Society

A first conclusion to be drawn from the preceding discussion regards the question as to whether or not the functioning of the performing arts in society is conceivable under the condition of the autonomy of art. The answer to this question should be positive. The relative autonomy of art (Van Maanen, 2008a) seems to limit artistic functioning, yet simultaneously it is precisely the autonomy of art (or artists) that makes the functioning of art possible. The autonomy of the arts is closely related to the specific artistic functions because autonomy as a concept arises from the recognition that there are specific artistic functions which are different from moral, political, religious and scientific considerations. Autonomy thus is necessary for art to be able to function artistically. This means that artists are free from political or ethical pressures in their choice of subject matter and of style. The critical functions of art are threatened without such autonomy, especially in contemporary society in which the media steer conceptions through images. Art’s autonomy is necessary in order not to succumb to the ideology of that media society (Kuypers, 2005). This is consistent with the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic functions which has been adopted in the present research. The assumption of ‘disinterested’ contemplation of works of art is at the basis of art’s autonomy. However, this assumption can be criticized, for it can be assumed that spectators do need to take an interest in the work, in order for it to be able to be of any value at all and thus function in society. The specific artistic nature of the aesthetic experience is at
the basis of the functioning of the (performing) arts. This specific nature of the aesthetic experience will therefore be discussed in the next chapter.

From a political point of view, it is important to note the limits of the functioning of the arts in society. The fact that subsidised art consumption in Western societies is limited to elite audiences may severely limit the functioning of subsidized art in society. The relatively small public attendance at the subsidized arts can be explained on the basis of the style uncertainty that is a result of the uneven distribution of cultural competence and the development of various co-existent styles in the arts. Power relations within the artworld also have a defining character in that they limit the power to consecrate. This can lead to the omission of the cultural products of certain groups in society from official art institutions, such as the products from underprivileged or less well-educated people, women, ethnic minorities and youngsters. These groups do not seem to be able to consecrate their cultural forms of expression in the established art institutions. Although this research does not question the policy instruments employed in cultural policy, one certainly could do so from an institutional point of view. For instance, one can devise measures to include members of ‘excluded groups’ in advisory boards, but one can also think of more demand-oriented forms of subsidy. From a more functional approach, one might add that the importance of aesthetic experience lies in the functions it performs for the spectators. Such ‘benefits’ should be evenly distributed in democratic societies. However, this presupposes that the benefits of aesthetic experience for excluded groups can be expressed in the functions found in the policy documents as well. For the working class, this certainly seems to be the case, as well as for white females and youngsters. However, because of the fact that the functioning of the performing arts is related to the autonomy of the arts, this assumption cannot be made so easily for members of ethnic minorities, because the autonomy of the arts is a specific Western phenomenon.

Recent theorists have pointed to the fact that artistic pleasure can also be expected to occur in ‘popular’ culture. Within both the institutional and functional paradigm, it cannot be logically argued that this will not be the case. Likewise, the functional paradigm points to the fact that some of the artworks which are produced within the institutionalized artworld do not in fact function as such; they fall short of the expectation that they can function artistically. On the other hand, specific niches have developed within popular culture, leading to the conclusion that appreciation of stylistic features occurs just as well within popular culture.

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49 Here, a problem of translation arises between English and Dutch. In Dutch there is a distinction between ‘esthetische ervaring’ (aesthetic experience) and ‘artistieke ervaring’ or ‘kunstzinnige ervaring’ (artistic experience). In English and American literature, aesthetic experience can denote both artistic and non-artistic experiences but also is used to mark the specific artistic nature of experiences. A definition of both terms will be given in Chapter 6 of this book.
Artistic quality can be defined in several ways. For the present research, artistic quality refers to the extent to which art objects fulfil their artistic functions. This is a more all-encompassing definition than defining quality on the basis of how works are executed and the experimental nature of the artistic languages employed, or on the profoundness of the subject matter of works. However, it is questionable whether advisory boards on artistic quality, who advise on the appropriation of subsidies, use a definition of quality that refers to the functioning in society, or whether they limit their judgements to the employment of artistic languages and content. The membership of advisory boards has not surprisingly been identified as an important way to secure the autonomy of the (subsidized) artworld. The contribution advisory boards can make to the functioning of art in society is therefore an important issue in this research.

50 The inclusion of women in this list does not imply that they are a specific social group which is underprivileged. However, a case can certainly be made for the under-representation of women in official art circles.