

Aesthetic Alternative: Hip Hop as Living Art

Shannon McCabe

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ABSTRACT

Aesthetic Alternative: Hip-Hop as Living Art

by

Shannon McCabe

With over thirty-five years in the making, hip-hop has grown and developed into a global phenomenon. Despite its global expansion from the Bronx, New York, in the 1970s, the hip-hop arts confront criticism, both aesthetically and culturally. Repeatedly criticized as an art that glorifies misogyny, pimping, prostitution, objectification of women, crime, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination, scholars denounce the hip-hop arts as ignorant, offensive garbage, devoid of any aesthetics and culture. However, this is a limited, one-sided view of the hip-hop arts and culture. From local urban streets to global metropolitan stages, the hip-hop arts and culture continue to evolve many artistic and cultural traditions from across the globe, which are in opposition with the image of commercial, media-driven hip-hop. Through its commercial, media-driven image, which rap music represents, hip-hop identifies with that which is unaesthetic and not cultural. The dissertation argues that the hip-hop arts, especially hip-hop theatre, return to an aesthetic sensibility. Additionally, the hip-hop arts return to a somatic and sustainable sensibility to combat conditions of crisis in culture. Beginning in aesthetic philosophy, and moving forward with aesthetic spirituality and psychology, and cultural studies and criticism, the study applies a hermeneutic and creative/artistic method. In the theoretical component, the study describes several bodies of literature: (1) aesthetics, (2) cultural studies, and (3) criticism. The amplification of the hip-hop arts

perspective in these bodies: aesthetics, cultural studies, and criticism, identifies the hip-hop arts as a platform for change. In amplifying the hip-hop perspective, the hip-hop arts maintain an artistic function and a cultural function grounded in the etymology of hip-hop: movement in the know, in the now. Movement in the know, in the now serves as a vital function for artistic and cultural expression. The theoretical component concludes that tending to hip-hop may serve the future as an alternative perspective across the globe. The study closes with a production component that calls for hip-hop literature as an alternative mode of criticism that imagines an aesthetic culture and cosmos.

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The style used throughout this dissertation is in accordance with the *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing* (3rd Edition, 2008), and *Pacifica Graduate Institutes' Dissertation Handbook* (2010-2011).

Chapter 1 Can Ya' Feel It?

Life poses an artistic project in calling for creative self expression and aesthetic self-fashioning—the desire to make ourselves into something fulfilling, interesting, attractive, admirable, yet somehow true to what we are. The selves we both inherit and create are not merely embodied but also inescapably cultural.

— Richard Shusterman, *Performing Live*

Aesthetic Alternative takes a fresh look at our most critical concerns of today—the body (sustainability), performance (sociocultural justice), and the art of living (spiritual fulfillment)—and explores and exposes what connects them. Posed is the argument that an aesthetic experience offers an alternative way of understanding these critical concerns. Presented in the dissertation is a line of reasoning that suggests there is evidence of the potential to move towards an age of interconnected action, becoming, and being. More specifically, offered here is insight into the artistic, creative, and imaginal possibility of a global world and humanity through the hip-hop arts. Although the hip-hop arts originated in New York during the 1970s, they are now a polycultural global phenomenon that brings together people from cultures and communities that typically do not mix. Not only do cultures and communities come together, distinct genres of art form coherent artistic narratives. On the stage with the hip-hop arts, this aesthetic alternative finds expression as cultural criticism and as living art.

This study researches the relationship between aesthetic philosophies, the hip-hop arts, and cultural studies criticism. Within the dissertation, the research addresses the following questions:

1. In what ways are aesthetics found on and off stage in contemporary culture?
In addition, what spiritual, psychological, and somatic impact do aesthetics have on individuals and culture?;
2. How do the hip-hop arts embody and reflect an aesthetic way of life?
3. How does an understanding of the hip-hop arts' relationship to aesthetics inform contemporary culture, cultural studies, and criticism?

The inspiration for the examining the hip-hop arts comes from the aesthetic and from the philosophical ideas of G. W. F. Hegel. In his *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, he states that art-scholarship must have knowledge of art from ancient and modern times and reflect a multitude of ideas. In relation to culture, Hegel writes of art:

every work belongs to its age, to its nation and to its environment, and depends upon particular historical ideas and aims. For this reason art-scholarship further requires a vast wealth of historical information of a special kind, seeing that the individualized nature of the work of art is related to individual detail and demands special matter to aid in its comprehension and elucidation. (31)

The conditions of modernity and postmodernity have had a great impact on culture and art. The result is an often perplexed, anti-expression sensibility; the world, or at least much of it, appears to have misplaced its aesthetic sensibility, its soul, and its sense of the divine. Let us add some color to the world.

The hip-hop arts powerfully bring together people of different cultural backgrounds. The b-boys/girls from Brooklyn are on Broadway. Season ticket holders from the suburbs sit side by side with city folk. Hip-hop also stages an authentic expression of the arts, and a real commitment to education, social action, and spirituality in its particular community and beyond. A feminine principle steals the stage rather than a booty-shake. Marc Bamuthi Joseph, creator of *Word Becomes Flesh* and *Scourge*, says

that hip-hop theatre is a mythic, folkloric medium appreciated by people all over the globe that is deep-rooted in the idea of movement, expression, and change. In “From Dope Spot to Broadway: A Roundtable on Hip-Hop Theatre, Dance and Performance,” in an interview with Jeff Chang, Joseph says, hip-hop is “edutainment” (81). Although the hip-hop arts use the five basic elements of hip-hop: dance (breaking, b-boying/b-girling, popping, locking), music (deejaying, beatboxing), poetics (emceeing, rapping), visual arts (graffiti) and philosophy (overstanding, knowledge), the hip-hop arts are constantly evolving, being re-imagined, and redefined to reflect today’s world. The hip-hop arts are committed to the body and performance and to beauty and intensified feeling, but they also share a relationship with modern technology. In this way, the constant evolution of the hip-hop arts is a platform for an aesthetic alternative because of its improvisation and pragmatism.

The hip-hop arts’ aims are quite different from the corporate media-driven agenda of commercial rap (e.g. Lil Wayne or 50 Cent). The media-driven agenda presents hip-hop artists to the mainstream audience as misogynist gangsters who are culturally insensitive. This presentation marginalizes grassroots or conscious hip-hop artists involved in the performing arts. In contrast to the commercial image of rap, hip-hop artists stage an image of contemporary dance cultures, artful lifestyles, idioms of posture, movement, and speech, and modes of fashion, grooming, and behavior rooted in ritual and tradition. What is important to understand is that the hip-hop arts have roots in African diaspora. According to Manning Marable in *Globalization and Survival in the Black Diaspora: The New Urban Challenge*, “Our ideas about the black diaspora are rapidly changing through the process of globalization and urbanization” (back cover).

Diaspora is now a global phenomenon about retaining tradition and reforming identity in a multicultural world.

Humanity is moving toward a more global culture. Technology has enabled the World Wide Web to create an Internet of people. Therefore, modes of expression and consciousness that understand an Internet global world are important, too. In “Toward a Hip-Hop Aesthetic,” Danny Hoch (artistic director of the New York City Hip Hop Theatre Festival) states, “Good hip-hop art is highly articulate, coded, transcendent, revolutionary, communicative, empowering” (349). Growing out of a movement from the city streets toward a global stage, hip-hop theatre has cultural relevance and celebrates aesthetic values. Hoch confirms, “hip-hop’s aesthetics lie foremost in the social context from which it sprung” (355). The hip-hop arts change communication and expression by collaging, sampling, dislocating, and reconfiguring; to keep up with the hip-hop arts movement, consciousness and criticism must change.

In spite of hip-hop’s reconfiguring, much of the world is not feeling “the love” or an aesthetic alternative. Scientific experts, respected thinkers, activists, and even artists suggest that there is now evidence that catastrophe clouds (or makes ugly) our contemporary world. The ugliness is more than merely *An Inconvenient Truth* (a documentary film about global crisis). The impact of our progress—the industrial system, science and technology, and overpopulation—seems to be distressing the art of living (sustainability). Apocalyptic and escapist visions unfortunately dominate aesthetics. With managed news, a corporate media-driven celebrity culture, and other weapons of mass numbness and destruction—nanotechnology, Bluetooth, and MobileMe with iEverything—it is as if people are not living art.

James Hillman in *City and Soul* states, “Sitting there, booted up, right hand on the mouse, in control of this treasury of opportunity, what is the cost, what is the loss—since for every gain something is always lost? . . . To answer our question: the cost of the electronic miracles may well be more ugliness” (201-202), and the cost of electronic miracles may well be the body. With technological advancement, the practice of somaesthetics may well be necessary to improve the art of living.

In *Philosophies of Art and Beauty*, Hugh Bredin and Liberato Santoro-Brienza construct a different, more aesthetic collage of human culture. Bredin and Santoro-Brienza state, “Despite the cultural conditions that shape our outlook at the present time, despite the current restrictive paradigms of human beauty . . . our instinctive pleasure and wonder at the human body has not entirely vanished. It emerges, for instance . . . at the sheer existence and presence of living human bodies (143). With an aesthetic rather than anesthetic (used to connote an automaton world as opposed to an imaginative, sensate world) reprise, Bredin and Santoro-Brienza return to their earlier theme (the beauty of bodies) as theatre promoters. They write, “Stage bodies do not, of course, assume statuesque poses in front of us. They move about, make gestures, adopt a variety of facial expressions; and, above all, they speak” (143).

But what are bodies fluent in? What are bodies trying to articulate about an aesthetic alternative? Calling on a creative mythologist for a clue, Joseph Campbell—albeit posthumously—ascribes to the body, the alternative, and the hip-hop arts movement “the essential aesthetic factor. . . . [He states,] the aesthetic experience transcends ethics and didactics” (Campbell and Moyers 277).

Institutions worldwide—political, commercial, academic, or otherwise institution-like—give an anaesthetic impression. With such numbing and sedation, the crisis conditions of culture remain unchanged moral reason and teaching that tends to dogmatism rather than lived aesthetic experience. The culprit is not necessarily industry, science and technology, the corporate media, big business, or any of the shortsighted human interests that lead humanity to *The 11th Hour* (a documentary film about global crisis, but also refers to the last moment when change is possible). The culprit and its cause is an outmoded worldview. The outmoded worldview is a prison complex that mistakes distinctions for dichotomies: science/art, technology/craft, reason/imagination, et cetera. It is a way of seeing the world in which ugliness and tragedy only appear alterable by reason, science, or technology rather than all three in chorus with the body, imagination, and creativity.

In *City and Soul*, Hillman has a hip way to look at the modern experience that moves beyond moral teachings. He suggests that the tragedy of today's culture is actually a conduit for aesthetics. He states, "the path to the apprehension of beauty seems to go by way of ugliness. . . . It costs ugliness to awaken our contemporary anesthetized consciousness" (203). From this perspective, the outmoded worldview is not a path to imprisonment, but a path to the liberation of sensation. The alternative is not a prison, but a prism complex that sees the world as a spectrum of many compatible, mixed, and multihued things similar to an artist's viewpoint.

Friedrich Nietzsche, an author on tragedy and morals, has an equally hip way of seeing the world. Nietzsche tries to look at crisis conditions of culture in the perspective of an artist. This does not mean he is for art and against industry, science, and

technology, big business, or shortsighted human interests. Instead, his perspective advocates for a mode of consciousness and being that has a relationship with “the culprit” and its cause. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche envisions this mode of consciousness and being as “an ‘artistic Socrates’—a philosopher with an intellectual conscience and with a feeling for art . . . [furthermore,] a ‘Socrates who makes music’—a philosopher who is also an artist” (Kaufmann, “Translator’s Introduction” 13). According to Walter Kaufmann, who decodes Nietzsche, this meant philosophy (or rather philology, which is the study and analysis of ancient texts and narratives as an approach to culture) that “sings and sizzles” (*The Gay Science* 13).

The goal of the dissertation, then, is not merely to explore and expose the hip-hop arts for aesthetic value. In *Performing Live*, Richard Shusterman states, “There is also an alternative tradition in aesthetics that affirms a greater unity of art and of life, of making and doing” (202). The goal is to grapple and come to grips with the very assumptions that underlie the way people see the world and our place in it, and with what aesthetic alternative and action—both individual and collective—might perhaps move people beyond moral principles and pedagogy through to living art.

This study follows a three-part structure that resembles the structure of a play from antiquity. The three-parts are:

1. The prologue explores the historical and mythological background of aesthetics, the hip-hop arts, and culture, and introduces readers to the story line and action of the dissertation. The prologue assembles as Chapter 1, which encompasses the Introduction, Review of the Literature, and the Organization of the Study.

2. The episodes, which act as the plot of the dissertation, comprise Chapters 2 through 6. Each episode or chapter reflects on the themes from the Review of the Literature. The following themes apply to the hip-hop arts: aesthetic philosophy, spiritual and psychological aesthetics, aesthetic legitimacy, physique, archetype and mythology of the hip-hop arts, conditions of crisis in culture, and an alternative mode of criticism.
3. The exodus, which acts as the production component of the dissertation, is a postscript to the episodes entitled *The B Side: On a Whim and a Prayer*. *The B Side* combines a symphony of lyrical and literary voices concerned with the arts and humanities. These diverse voices experience conflict and crisis, and imagine an aesthetic culture and cosmos.

Review of the Literature

Aesthetic philosophy. An approach to aesthetics founded in philosophy begins with Plato and Aristotle. Plato is the founder of philosophical aesthetics. The focus of his philosophies of art, imitative art, and beauty centers on the establishment of an ideal culture and the ideal individual. Aristotle challenges the philosophies of Plato. Both philosophers argue the origins of aesthetics, aesthetic sources, and meaning. Plato and Aristotle disagree in many areas of aesthetics. While the focus of Plato reflects on ideals, the focal point of Aristotle centers on imitative art and tragic drama. Plato believes imitative art and tragic drama deceive and misinform audiences; on the contrary, Aristotle answers that imitative art and drama guide audiences to gain knowledge. Contemporary philosophers Hugh Bredin, Liberato Santoro-Brienza, John Dewey, James Hillman, and Richard Shusterman demonstrate the living presence of aesthetics within

the individual and culture today. These contemporary thinkers recognize the importance of personified aesthetics—art and beauty that come to life in-body, which means aesthetic philosophy and practice has a much neglected somatic function.

The Socratic Dialogues by Plato trace the origins of aesthetics and aesthetic philosophy in the review of literature. Aristotle also enters the discussion in direct opposition to the dialogues; however, also as a complementary commentator to the Socratic Dialogues by Plato. In combination, the three (Socrates is a persona in the Socratic Dialogues. His persona is as Plato and Aristotle—a philosopher.) create an originary, systemic reflection of aesthetic philosophy and the arts. Whereas the Socratic Dialogues by Plato work the arts as inspired in *Ion*, Aristotle works the arts as crafted and performed in his *Poetics*. For Plato, the origin of art is the divine. For Aristotle, the origin of art is human imagination and skill. In Plato's *Symposium*, from which Plato speaks from his own aesthetic understanding rather than Socrates's understanding, Diotima in dialogue with Socrates dwells on the divine nature of beauty; on the contrary, Aristotle in his *Poetics* organizes beauty in relationship to human creation, perception, and sense.

In *Ion*, the conversation between Socrates and Ion, who is a rhapsodist (a singer with a staff and a performing philosopher), the conversation between Socrates and Ion clearly argues that the source of aesthetics (a particular idea of what is artistic or beautiful) is inspiration. Regardless of the point of view, whether from an artist, a performer or a spectator, the particular idea of what is artistic or beautiful reveals itself through the divine. Socrates maintains that aesthetics does not originate from *art*, which he defines as skill nor does it develop from the temporality of the *senses*, which he defines as the mind. Instead, aesthetics originates from the insight of the gods or Muses.

Socrates states, “making is not by art . . . but is by lot divine—therefore each is able to do well only that to which the Muse has impelled him” (Plato, *Collected Dialogues* 220.534c). Socrates suggests the possibility of a divine wisdom that presides over the different creative arts, which also suggests a spiritual meaning for aesthetics.

Although Socrates focuses on the poet and the rhapsodist, he maintains that the deeper meaning for aesthetics is not limited to the poets and rhapsodists. For Socrates, the artist, performer, and spectator connect in a single aesthetic image: three iron rings that unite by a magnetic force (the gods or Muses) in an interlinked chain. The rhapsodist is the middle link and the artist and spectator are the outer links (Plato, *Collected Dialogues* 221.536). Essential to Socrates’s aesthetics is his explanation not just of the rhapsodists’ performance as the intermediary connection and of the rhapsodists’ ability to comment about or reinterpret the poetry that they perform. Ion states, “good poets convey to us these utterances of the gods”; and rhapsodists, Socrates states, “are interpreters of interpreters” (221.535). Despite the differentiation between each of Socrates’s iron rings, the artist, performer/interpreter, and spectator are counterpart mediums for the divine. Each medium makes comparable aesthetic contributions.

In direct opposition to Socrates in *Ion*, Aristotle argues that aesthetics originates from human nature, which makes use of the mind and skill. At its core, aesthetics is conceptual and intellectual rather than inspired by the gods or Muses. Aristotle believes aesthetics is an imaginative use of concepts. In *Aristotle’s Poetics*, he states that the basic principle of aesthetics is “imitation. Epic poetry and Tragedy, also Comedy, the Dithyramb, and most of the music performed on the flute and the lyre are all, in a collective sense, Imitations” (45.1447a). But what does Aristotle mean by “imitations?”

According to Aristotle, imitation does not mean the replication or falsification of nature, but means the reenactment of human perception.

For example, the arts of the flutist and citharist employ only rhythm and melody, as do other arts of similar effect such as that of the panpipes, and rhythm alone without melody is the medium of the dance—dancers simply by means of a rhythmical pattern of movement succeed in imitating men’s characters, emotions, and actions. (Aristotle 45.1447a)

Regardless of the media, object, or mode of presentation, Aristotle argues the capabilities of the human imagination, skill, and action drive the creative arts. In Aristotle’s thoughts, as compared to Plato’s, there is a rejection of the gods and Muses as the source of the creative arts. Instead, for Aristotle, the source of the creative arts is human intelligence.

Although Aristotle thinks the source of creativity is human intelligence, the movement (the imitation of characters, emotions, and actions) that accompanies creative intelligence has a deeper meaning for Aristotle. The deeper meaning, even in the suffering, pity, and fear of tragedy, is catharsis: a release of intense emotions resulting in the understanding of beauty. “In catharsis Aristotle may have had in mind something like mystical . . . [and] the ritual and religious origins . . .” of the arts (34). With the release of emotions, a sincere experience of understanding pleasure and beauty ensues.

Plato and Aristotle share similar differences when discussing beauty. While Plato points upward to the realm of the divine and eternal, Aristotle positions himself in the human realm. In *Symposium*, Plato’s idea of beauty points to its divine, eternal nature, its formlessness and the human’s lack of ability to fully understand it. Diotima, in dialogue with Socrates states, “the very soul of beauty . . . is an everlasting loveliness which neither comes nor goes, which neither flowers nor fades, for such beauty is the same on every hand. . . . It is neither words, nor knowledge, nor a something that exists in

something else” (*Collected Dialogues* 562.210.d-211.b). For Plato, the attributes of beauty are incomprehensible to human creation. Its traits cannot change by human perception. Beauty is divine creation; it manifests in a spiritual realm that is also timeless and perpetual.

According to Aristotle, beauty is impossible if it is beyond human understanding, perception, and senses. For Aristotle, beauty is reliant on human participation and organization. He also believed beauty requires human perception for it to exist. Aristotle stated, “In order to be beautiful, a living creature or anything else made up of parts not only must have its parts organized but must also have just the size that properly belongs to it. Beauty depends on size and order . . . easily taken in by the eye . . . [and] easily held in the memory” (52.1451-53.1451). Although beauty depends on arrangement, which makes its objective, it is also dependent on the human experience to exist, which makes beauty, simultaneously, subjective. Aristotle places the creation and existence of beauty in human participation and perception.

In understanding aesthetics, which is an individual idea of what is artistic or beautiful, Plato and Aristotle differ. In summary, Plato points to an aesthetic that creates man and nature by virtue of what is divine. Aristotle situates himself with an aesthetic that humans create through skill and participation. Although Plato and Aristotle differ in thought, the philosophers also complement each other. Plato and Aristotle complement one another in the expression of meaning. Plato understands art and beauty as a medium for the divine to express itself for human recognition; Aristotle appreciates art and beauty as a cathartic human experience similar to mythic, ritualistic, and emotive expressions.

In *Philosophies of Art and Beauty*, contemporary philosophers Hugh Bredin and Liberato Santoro-Brienza state that aesthetic thought “started with Plato and Aristotle, and it is they who laid the foundations of this branch of philosophy, and who still shape and influence aesthetics as we have it today” (4). Following the foundations framed by Plato and Aristotle, Bredin and Santoro-Brienza map out the course of aesthetics from the Greeks to the postmodern philosophers.

Relating to the abovementioned ideas of Aristotle, the authors argue that aesthetics and the arts unite in the realm of human experience. Their discussion is anthropological rather than philosophical as it “refers to everything in human culture that possesses or produces aesthetic properties” (Bredin and Santoro-Brienza 13). An anthropological study of aesthetics is particularly compelling in the dramatic arts. Shared by all of the dramatic arts is the use of the human body. The authors state, “artistic uses of the body seem to proliferate as societies grow larger and more complex” (138). Bredin and Santoro-Brienza argue that the dramatic arts, in particular the theatre arts (stage drama), are the most comprehensive of all art forms. The theatre arts employ a range of artistic skills from all of the arts and also include the human body. The authors state that the theatre arts, “even more than the literary arts, are vehicles for the exhibiting of universal truths about the human condition, and their value can be judged by the significance and universality of the truths that they embody” (161). Their contemporary discussion of anthropological aesthetics syncretizes the classic discussion of aesthetics founded by Plato and Aristotle. Plato and Aristotle differ in the source of aesthetics, but unite in the bringing forth of the dramatic arts as an expression of aesthetics, spiritual, human or otherwise.

John Dewey, American pragmatist, complements the thought of Bredin and Santoro-Brienza. In *Art as Experience*, Dewey states, “Since art is the most universal form of language, since it is constituted . . . by the qualities of the public world, it is the most universal and freest form of communication” (282). Although Dewey places more significance on biological, pragmatic aesthetics (living art) rather than anthropological (cultural art) aesthetics, he, too, takes a compelling position with the dramatic arts.

Dewey relates the dramatic arts to life experience. He states, “In art as experience, actuality and possibility or ideality, the new and the old, objective material and personal response, the individual and the universal, surface and depth, sense and meaning, are integrated in an experience in which they are all transfigured” (309). Dewey believes, then, that human experience, fantastic, ordinary, crude or otherwise authentic shares a more valuable relationship with aesthetic experience than an object set apart or removed from living experience. In this way, aesthetics distances itself from conceptual discourse. As an alternative, it shares proximity with pragmatic, useful action. Although Dewey does not apply art as experience specifically to the hip-hop arts, the hip-hop arts utilize art as experience in that the arts are reflective of real life experience.

James Hillman accompanies Dewey with a comparable feeling for aesthetics. In *City and Soul*, Hillman states that culture must free aesthetics from perfection, objectification and seclusion. He states, “we must free our notion of beauty from Apollonian ideals” (166). For Hillman, this does not mean to delete high art from critical discourse and artistic action. It means to include popular art (culture, media, and technology) in the analysis and creative undertakings. He states:

Beauty could find definition in many other styles: office buildings, and office furniture, traffic highways and gasoline stations, neon signs and TV

advertisements could also be imagined as places where beauty might “naturally” appear.

The casual graffiti on buildings and subways, the strange disharmonies and words of pop music, the clever consumerist advertising, the sarcastic and aggressive disillusion of the avant-garde, are each ways of tempting aesthetics away from the eternal perfection and purified ideals of the Apollonian mode. (166)

Hillman, similar to Dewey, suggests that popular art or art in the world has aesthetic value, too. Notwithstanding its seeming faults, subjectivity and easy accessibility, popular art leads aesthetics to the vitality and beauty in everyday life. According to Hillman, “the world is primarily and always an aesthetic phenomenon with which our animal senses and innate reactions are attuned” (206). In other words, our understanding of the world is an artistic experience.

Richard Shusterman, professor of philosophy from Temple University, contributes to the thought of living art in *Performing Live: Aesthetic Alternatives for the Ends of Art*. Where Hillman argues that culture/criticism must free aesthetics from Apollonian ideals, Shusterman argues that culture/criticism must free aesthetics from modernist ideals. Modernist ideals aim at rationality and socio-technological progress. Although modernist ideals oppose tradition, modernist art forms typically belong to high culture and abandon the body. The freeing of aesthetics from these ideals requires an understanding of popular art and postmodern characteristics. According to Shusterman, “These characteristics include recycling appropriation rather than unique originaive creation, an eclectic mixing of styles . . . an enthusiastic embracing of new technology and mass culture, and an emphasis on the localized and temporal rather than the putatively universal and eternal” (61). From this viewpoint, popular art forms are fresh and hip varieties of interdisciplinary creative work (e.g. the hip-hop arts). In this way,

Shusterman argues for the hip-hop aesthetic. He states, “In contrast to an aesthetic of devotional worship of a fixed untouchable work, hip hop offers the pleasures of deconstructive art—the thrilling beauty of dismembering (and rapping over) old works to create new ones, dismantling the prepackaged and wearily familiar into something stimulatingly different” (64). At this threshold, the aesthetic value of popular art/culture coexists with high art/culture.

In addition to legitimizing the aesthetic value of popular art, Shusterman argues, similar to Bredin and Santoro-Brienza, that the body is a vital dimension to aesthetics. *Somaesthetics*, which Shusterman coins, relates to the body as a place of aesthetic perception, action, and appreciation. While Plato and Aristotle point to aesthetics of a divine dimension or a human mind, Shusterman argues that focus on the abstract or intellectual aesthetic tends to obscure or marginalize the body. He believes the body and mind are mutually dependent, and therefore, interrelate with the cultural and spiritual dimensions of human life.

Although the body-mind relationship is an individual practice and understanding, culture, too, informs the body-mind experience. In “Thinking Through the Body, Educating for the Humanities,” from *Embodying Pragmatism: Richard Shusterman’s Philosophy and Literary Theory*, Shusterman states:

For culture gives us the languages, values, social institutions, and artistic media through which we think and act and also express ourselves aesthetically, just as it gives us the forms of diet, exercise, and somatic styling that shape not only our bodily appearance and behavior but also the ways we experience our body: whether as a holy vessel or a burden of sinful flesh, a pampered personal possession for private pleasure or a vehicle of labor to serve the social good. Conversely, culture—including its institutions and humanistic achievements—cannot thrive or even survive without the animating power of embodied thought and action. (3)

Shusterman's thoughts about somaesthetics situate the body-mind experience of the individual in direct correlation with culture. Whether as a professional performing artist or an everyday amateur, his treatment of the mind-body experience brings embodied thought and action to aesthetics. This seems essential for an aesthetic alternative.

The above body of discourse briefly illustrates the philosophical approach to aesthetics—its origin of sources and meaning, and its living presence within the individual and culture today. As the next section moves to the topic of aesthetic spirituality and aesthetic psychology, art and aesthetics impact on internal workings of spirit and soul receive emphasis. The section makes correlations between art and aesthetics in relationship with spirit and soul. The focus is on a discussion of how aesthetic sensibilities influence spirituality and psychology.

Aesthetic spirituality and psychology. An aesthetic spirituality and psychology come to life in the critical discourse from Joseph Campbell, James Hillman, and Richard Tarnas. In *The Flight of the Wild Gander*, *The Power of Myth*, and *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*, Joseph Campbell asserts that the aesthetic life is a spiritual adventure. In *City and Soul* and *The Thought of the Heart and The Soul of the World*, James Hillman insists that modern psychology has lost its sense of aesthetic appreciation. He believes beauty is a multidimensional, sensate experience that occurs in the world. Through the development of aesthetic awareness, Hillman also establishes an aesthetic relationship with psychology (between the individual soul and the world soul). In *Cosmos and Psyche: Intimations of a New World View*, Richard Tarnas establishes a relationship between the universe and individuals, the world soul and individual soul, and archetypes and aesthetics. This relationship reveals the major archetypal complexes that inform both