

Foreword

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Since their foundation as autonomous disciplines in the late eighteenth century, Aesthetics and Biology have shared a common ground of interests and questions, as it is pointed out, for instance, by Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Judgment* (1790), where the German philosopher writes – to cite but one example – that “das Schöne führt directe ein Gefühl der Beförderung des Lebens bei sich”, the experience of the *beautiful* implies a promotion of the feeling of *life* (§23).

In continuity with this tradition of intersection between the question of beauty and the question of life, between Aesthetics and Biology, *Evolutionary Aesthetics* emerges today as a young and lively field of studies whose main aim is to rethink the traditional questions of philosophical Aesthetics (such as the origin of art, the genesis of the human aesthetic attitude, the role of culture in determining the experience of beauty etc.) in the light of biological theories, in particular in the light of Darwin's evolutionary theory by means of natural selection (Darwin 1859).

Seminario Permanente di Estetica at the University of Firenze (SPES) has developed in the course of the last four-five years an increasing interest for the relationship between evolution and aesthetics. Last year, in March 2012, the research group, headed by Fabrizio Desideri, organized an interdisciplinary seminar (which was held on 16 March 2012 at the Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione of the University of Firenze), entitled «Estetica ed evoluzionismo: i presupposti». The aim of the seminar was to introduce Evolutionary Aesthetics into the Italian philosophical debate, focusing on the requirement for a rigorously interdisciplinary approach. Thanks to the contributions of geneticists, zoologists, paleoanthropologists, historians of science, experts in prehistoric art and philosophers, the seminar drew a first “map”, provisional but nevertheless accurate, of the different competences and expertise involved in the program of research of Evolutionary Aesthetics. The essays by Mauro Mandrioli, geneticist, Giorgio

Manzi, paleoanthropologist, Alessandro Minelli, zoologist, and Fabio Martini, archeologist, collected in the first section of this issue of “Aisthesis”, all stem from talks originally delivered at the fore-mentioned seminar.

While main aim of this first section is to provide the essential requirements for a fruitful dialogue between Aesthetics and Evolutionary theory, the ensuing two sections (“perspectives” and “issues”) deal with the variety of theoretical perspectives and lines of interpretation that currently animate the scenario of Evolutionary Aesthetics. Contributions collected in this issue of “Aisthesis” cover almost entirely the lively, multifaceted spectrum of the discipline: 1) the high-debated question of the adaptive value of aesthetic sense, artistic practices and art fruition (Stephen Davies, Zach Norwood, Joseph Carroll); 2) the evolutionary explanation of human sexual preferences and production of artifacts (Hannes Rusch & Eckart Voland); 3) the possibility for a Darwinian non-reductionist definition of art as a culturally differentiated behavior (Kathryn Coe; Nancy E. Aiken; Roberta Dreon); 4) a comparative analysis of aesthetic experience from a cognitive viewpoint (Gianluca Consoli) and from a morphological one (Salvatore Tedesco); 5) the influence of Darwinian perspective beyond the English boundaries, with particular reference to the Italian scientific community in the Nineteenth century (Elena Canadelli) and to the tradition of *Gestaltpsychologie* (Michele Gardini); 6) a naturalistic approach to aesthetic experience and medial experience (Antonino Pennisi & Francesco Parisi).