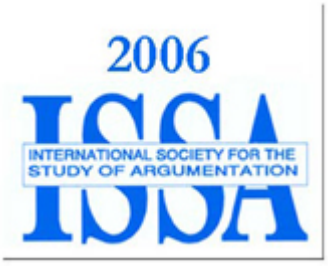
ISSA Proceedings 2006 – Aesthetic Reason: Expanding The Role Of Argumentation & Deliberation Within Aesthetic Theory



As many of its commemorative predecessors, Reflecting Absence, the winning design in the World Trade Center (WTC) site memorial competition, has rarely, if ever, enjoyed the full support of its major stakeholders. Over the past two years, Michael Arad's original austere and contemplative design has been slowly modified – making aesthetic concessions for a myriad of reasons ranging from finances and security to morality and respect for the dead. For many, Reflecting Absence's aesthetic strength and affect has often been the last concern in this battle over the memory of September 11th. However, this endless barrage of artistic compromises prompted by good intentions warrants investigation. As noted memorial scholar and design competition juror James Young warns: "The memorial at ground zero is not a zero-sum project in which one interested party gets its way. It is, rather, an accretion of personal and civic memorial needs, a place for memory, mourning and the history of that horrible day" (Young and Van Valkenburgh, 2006).

The intensely personal loss felt by so many on that tragic day is profound, making it simple to understand the emotional needs this memorial must fulfill. As a native New Yorker, who was working in Manhattan on 9/11, I can attest to the personal needs the memorial needs to fill. This can and should become a place of mourning. But identifying the civic needs this memorial will attempt to satisfy becomes more difficult to explicate. How does an aesthetic representation of the mortal loss incurred on September 11th fulfill a civic need? Memorials are more then simply rhetorical texts; they create spaces of aesthetic experience which visitors subject themselves to. Together, memorials and the aesthetic experience they inspire present individuals with an embodied argument on civic duty that contends both what to think but more importantly, how to think about September 11th. Just like any other argument, these aesthetic memorial arguments should be assessed with regard to the reasonableness of their claims.

To do so, the recent changes to the design of Reflecting Absence will be problematized utilizing Alan Singer's theory of aesthetic reason. Underlying Singer's theory is the assumption that aesthetic experiences are not solely affective. Rather the importance of the cognitive effect the aesthetic elicits needs to be reestablished. Neither the cognitive nor the affective are privileged during the aesthetic experience; instead they ground each other within an intersubjective reasoning process. With regard to public memorial artworks, aesthetically reasonable memorials will prompt visitors to engage in this process via a reflexive turn educed by the aesthetic experience of these memory spaces. A constitutive process by nature, experiencing aesthetically reasonable public memorials can, ideally, enhance visitors' deliberative skills and character. Thus, the purpose of this process is the cultivation of a deliberative ethos in democratic citizens. To further explicate this, I will first discuss my theoretical framework consisting of a discussion of aesthetic reason, its ties to the deliberative ethos and the normative standards for analyzing aesthetically reasonable memorials. Then I will examine the recent changes to Reflecting Absence. Finally, I will analyze the new design changes to assess the impact they may have on the aesthetic reasonableness of this proposed memorial.

1. *Aesthetic Reason*

Aesthetic reason is an attempt to rethink the power of the aesthetic without privileging transcendent sensuous immediacy over cognitive reason. Singer (2003) asserts that the cognitive efficacy of the aesthetic is bound to individual agency as it culminates in the act of rational choice making, i.e., one's ability to utilize the knowledge of the particular to inform her/his acts of judgment. When we reason aesthetically, the imagination is enlivened which "extends thought, [and] stretches the mind" (Diffey, 1986, p. 11). The foundation for a cognitive theory of the aesthetic can be traced to, Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten who established the field of aesthetics as a philosophical discipline that "concentrated on the perception of the human senses" in all of its particularity (Weissberg, 2001, p. 15). Aesthetics as the study of sensate perception focused on the determinate nature of how we "know" things through our senses. This is best understood when a distinction is made between art and aesthetic experience.

Although works of art can typically prompt an aesthetic experience within viewers, this type of *experience* is not limited to the artistic realm. An artwork is a rhetorical text that presents the possibility of an aesthetic experience; however it is the experience that defines an object as art, not the other way around. As

Mitias (1986) explains, “Art is, and should be, defined not on the basis of how an art work ‘ordinarily’ merely, or naively appears to the senses but on the basis of what it does to the imagination. This is based on the fundamental assumption that the *artistic* about art, or what makes an object art, is not a finished product or aspect but a spiritual content which acquires its structure and meaning in the process of aesthetic perception” (p. 52). Aesthetic experience, etymologically speaking “breathing in” our surroundings, is prompted by our *attention* to the sensuous particulars of that which we encounter (Maclagan, 2001, p. 10). This emphasis on the truly unique combination of sensuous perceptions allows individuals to experience the world anew. When special attention is paid to our sensuous perceptions we are not (re)presenting that which we encounter, rather we must work to *make sense* of the new information we have taken in.

Artworks, therefore, become contexts for contemplating what rational choices individuals should make about the sensate information they gather when encountering it. This places the aesthetic within the realm of action informed by cognitive interests. The choices made will be a product of the reciprocal (re)cognition of our intersubjective sensate experience in concert with our existing bodies of knowledge. Ultimately these choices inform the judgments we make regarding the feelings induced by our sensate experiences. Judgments about the aesthetic are, therefore, not based on universal norms but rather take the particulars of each situation into consideration before a decision is made.
Singer (2003) asserts that art which is tragic by nature possess the aesthetic qualities necessary to engage us in the act of aesthetic reason. Tragic drama as articulated in ancient Greece, “occurs coincidentally when the Greek law itself lacks a consensus about the proper conduct of individual agency” (Singer, 2003, p. 178-9). In these types of tragic situations, there are no guiding rules or laws for behavior since this situation has yet to be encountered. Thus, tragedy creates a space that is defined by its relation to the unknown. “In this view the aesthetic crux of the tragic protagonist is precisely his or her mandatory deliberation about what is the most relevant context of knowledge in which to act” (Singer, p. 180). The tragic protagonist, therefore, must become skilled in adaptation, learning and deliberation in order to survive.

In ancient Greece it was believed tragic drama aided in the citizen’s development by honing one’s deliberative abilities. These tragic dramas beckoned their audiences to assess unknown situations via a process of reciprocal (re)cognition

that aids in the development of the same skills as the protagonist. Audience members were invited to engage in aesthetic reason to not only recognize the tragic situation but also their place in relation to this tragedy. Aesthetic reason, therefore, thrives in the space of the unknown to help provide a means of reacting to the singularity of a tragedy and making choices in response to its unique context. Arendt describes this as "the problem of the new" in her critique of Kant's theory of determinate judgment. "The problem of the new is a political question about how we, members of democratic communities, can affirm human freedom as a political reality in a world of objects and events whose causes and effects we can neither control nor predict with certainty" (Zerilli, 2005, p. 162).

According to Zerilli (2005), Arendt's assertion that political judgment is more comparable to Kant's aesthetic rather than determinate judgment is based on her belief that the affirmation of human freedom, not calculative thinking, is the basis of political action. Arendt explains that the freedom of the imagination, as the basis of aesthetic judgment, incites dynamic, opposed to routine, action. "Imagination, when it is considered in its freedom…is not bound to the law of causality, but is productive and spontaneous, not merely reproductive of what is already known, but generative of new forms and figures" (Zerilli, 2005, p.163). It is our imaginative capacity of reason that enables us to account for the modern condition of plurality. For Arendt, our imagination allows us to base our decisions on what will count as part of our shared world through a process of aesthetic judgment. Politics, from an aesthetic perspective, deals with the opening up of the world not the reconceptualization of it via our pre-understanding (Zerilli, 2005, p. 168).

The aesthetic (re)presentation of tragedy is the catalyst of the imagination which restores personal choice rather than the simple application of laws or universalized norms. One chooses what actions to take in the face of tragedy without complete knowledge or information because of the uniqueness of the situation. As Zerilli (2005) explains, "The creative discovery of relationships among appearances that have no logical connection, it is an exercise of radical imagination" (p. 173). Sole reliance on cognitive reason will not enable our imagination because without sufficient knowledge, reasons cannot be deemed valid and thus cannot be action upon. However, "Spectators do not produce judgments that ought then serve as *principles* for action or for other judgments; they create the *space* in which the objects of political judgment, the actors and actions themselves, can appear, and thus alter our sense of what belongs in the common world" (Zerilli, 2005, p. 179). The aesthetic focus on sensate information

gathered at that moment will provide the intersubjective knowledge needed to make a decision about the limits of our political community. “To judge objects and events in their freedom expands our sense of community, not because it tells us what is morally or politically justified and thus what we should do, but because it expands our sense of what is real or communicable” (Zerilli, 2005, p. 178). When we aesthetically reason, our imagination is expanded, to use Kant’s term, in a ‘free play’ of ideas that enlarge our mentality.

However not all tragic artwork is aesthetically reasonable; some is overshadowed by mythic tragic fate. In mythic tragic fate, catharsis is overemphasized as “the premier aesthetic effect and even purpose of tragedy” (Singer, 2003, p. 223). Cleansing oneself of the tragic experience does not necessarily prompt, and oftentimes counters, intersubjective reasoning about the tragedy. Thus, feeling and thought become two mutually exclusive categories that function individually and even contradictory. Intense melancholy induced by mythic tragedy does not have the capacity to enliven the imagination through thought which is “crucial for breaking the boundaries of identity-based experience: taking account of plurality and affirming freedom” (Zerilli, 2005, p. 174). In contrast, choice which can lead to character development is the effect and purpose of a cognitive aesthetic of tragedy. It is the combination of both thought and feeling in moments of unknown territory that enable choice thus becoming a moment of action. Choice, which informs our judgments of the aesthetic, is then not an either/or designation, but rather a moment of intrapersonal and collective deliberation that can be transformative. Ultimately, the intersubjective sensate knowledge we acquire through aesthetic reason can aid this transformation and also assist in the development of our deliberative ethos.

In this way, aesthetic reason is similar to Arendt’s concept of representative thinking. According to Zerilli (2005), representative thinking “involves coming to ‘see the same world from one another’s standpoint, to see the same in very different and frequently opposing aspects.’ At stake is the difference between understanding another *person* and understanding the *world*, the world not as an object we cognize but ‘the space in which things become public’” (Arendt quoted in Zerilli, p. 176-7). During the transformative process of aesthetic reason, we learn that the key to good choice making is the ability to assess the issue from a multitude of perspectives and analogous situations that contextual the situation within our public rather than solely private life.

When public memorials have a similar tragic nature to ancient Greek dramas, it has the same effect. These artworks "requires a 'public scene' in which 'moral agents are at once actors and spectators, and in which the ways actors act informs the way they see things and the way they see things regulates the way they act'" (Wiggins quoted in Singer, p. 197). Public memorials present just such a public stage at which visitors become both actors and spectators of tragedy. Tragic memorials trigger the internal deliberations of aesthetic reason, which is the precursor to judgments about the aesthetic and the space where visitor may form shared reasoning premises regarding the commemorative subject. These shared premises are the hallmark of public reasoning processes; typically signally the beginning of deliberation. When a memorial is crafted in a way to provoke contemplation, as opposed to sublime shock and awe, it functions tragically since it presents us with a problematic situation but does not offer any answers.

The genre of memorials Blair and Michel (1999) outline are best understood as tragic since they invoke critical reflection and "invite us to *confront* our own values… [and] *engage* us by asking us to think" (p. 37). When encountering this type of memorial, individuals go beyond identity politics and the discourse of knowledge that constrain it, to engage in aesthetic reason which allows them to recognize the particularities of the situation and their unique relation to it in order to make a choice about what this memorial means. This is possible because the process is based in the assumption that intersubjective plurality is a necessary condition for arriving at reasonable decisions. Thus, "the aesthetic is now profitably seen as instantiating a public space where an agent's maximizing of consideration – based, not on a presumptive rational practicality, but on the reciprocity of actor and spectator – are put in the service of an ideal of practical deliberation" (Singer, 2003, p. 197-8). Thus, as a public scene, tragic memorials do not presuppose a visitor deliberative skills or character but rather aids in their development.

2. *The Deliberative Ethos*

The public spaces created by tragic memorials that provoke aesthetic reason and culminates in an act of rational choice-making become the training ground of a deliberative ethos. "This disposition," according to Singer (2003), "privileges the widest repertoire of adaptations to any circumstance of human inquiry. There is an implicit understanding here that the ideal practical deliberator brings to bear on any situation the greatest number of pertinent concerns and understandings commensurate with the context of deliberation" (p. 197). Furthermore, frequent

engagement in aesthetic reason helps cultivate our deliberative ethos and abilities which is due, in part, to the act of rational choice-making which is "a constitutive aspect of aesthetic knowledge" and judgment (Singer, 2003, p. 219). However, it is important to note, neither Singer nor I are claiming aesthetic reason will necessarily improve one's deliberative ethos or skills. Rather, aesthetic reason is but one part of the development process which functions constitutively. Hicks and Langsdorf (1999) take a similar position when they explain "the very experience of participating in critical discussion produces individuals with more critical-rational and democratic dispositions; individuals who are more tolerant, better able to examine their preferences, more willing to take the claims of others seriously, and more prepared to submit their judgments to the test of critical scrutiny" (p.150). In other words, the process and practices individuals engage in help constitute individuals that are better skilled at that form of communication; i.e. deliberation produces agents who deliberate (Hicks and Langsdorf, 1999). If memorials provoke contemplation and critical thinking, they will produce agents who reason aesthetically rather than simply appreciate commemorations' artistic quality or agree with their rhetorical symbolism.

3. *The Aesthetically Reasonable Memorial*

The normative standards for the rational choices made when one is engaged in aesthetic reason are based on an ideal 'sense' of community that is not universal but rather a deeply contextualized vision of an ideal community. "The imperative for self-justification," as Singer (2003) notes, "implicates the subject in the interests of a communitarian identity" (p. 226). The choices made, therefore, would aid in the creation of this ideal community in relation to the subject the memorial (re)presents. An aesthetically reasonable memorial would equip its visitors with the skills needed to deal with the "sociopolitical pressures that human subjects contend with in the prospect of sharing a common world" (Singer, 2003, p. 238). In other words, the designation of an aesthetically reasonable memorial identifies artworks that not only spark a sense of mental play within individuals but also "fit[s] more exemplarily with our shared sense of who we could be at our best" (Ferrara, 2004, p. 593). Therefore, aesthetic exemplarity is the normative standard of aesthetic judgment when determining whether or not a memorial is aesthetically reasonable. Aesthetic exemplarity of public memorials is based on three standards: the ability to create a transformative aesthetic experience, the ability to aid in development of visitors' deliberative ethos, and the presentation of subject matter from a communitarian ideal.

Essentially, when a memorial is aesthetically reasonable it will be judged as an aesthetic exemplar if it not only aids in the transformation of its visitor and assists in the development of their deliberative ethos, but also signifies an ideal vision of the society people hope to achieve. Therefore, the aesthetically reasonable memorial will be tragic and engage visitors in a continual sense of mental play that is intersubjectively based on the public significance of the tragedy rather than simply one's private remembrance and feelings. This mental play would culminate in the visitor's embodiment of the memorial space and the act of rational choice-making. In this sense, 'embodiment' is a moment at which both past and future are realized in the present creating a temporal unity that promotes self-realization and transformation. However, the designation of being aesthetically reasonable is not totalizing, rather it is best understood along a continuum of reasonableness, provoking contemplation on some issues but limiting or disregarding others. In other words, even though a memorial is aesthetically reasonable it can still exclude others by constraining the deliberation process via its rhetorical symbolism. We can only deliberate about what we recognize as the issue put forth by the memorial. However, aesthetically reasonable memorials will tend to be non-allegorical making visitors work to understand their meaning. Yet, simply having these characteristics does not categorically determine the aesthetic reasonableness of a memorial. Analyzing the aesthetic reasonableness of a memorial can help determine whether or not a memorial should provoke aesthetic reason and to what extent it is limited. Ultimately, an aesthetically reasonable memorial will be an aesthetic exemplar if it invites visitors to critically analyze the memorial subject from an intersubjective perspective that promotes rational choices based on the creation of an ideal community.

4. *Design of Reflecting Absence*

The design for "Reflecting Absence" is in the midst of its fourth revision. The original concept, created by Michael Arad, was considered too stark and solemn. The focus was solely on loss whereas it also needed to symbolize hope. Arad enlisted the help of Peter Walker, a landscape architect, to help sculpt the stark exterior of the plaza and a third architect, Max Bond, was brought in to investigate design advancements to ensure the most "poetic and precise" memorial would be created. To understand the design changes which were proposed on June 20, 2006, I will explicate the differences between the third and fourth revisions.

The third design consisted of three levels: the Memorial Plaza, Memorial Hall and the Bedrock Level. The Memorial Plaza would be on street level and consist of hundreds of oak trees that would canopy over its visitors creating “an unexpected forest in the city” (*Reflecting Absence,* n.d.). As the first and last aspect of the memorial visitors would experience, originally the exterior needed to be both welcoming and soothing. Two enormous voids in the exact dimensions of the twin towers would be at the forest’s center. Waterfalls would line the interior of each void and their cascading water would drop nearly thirty feet collecting in two reflecting pools below. Long ramps directly on the plaza would lead down into the second level, Memorial Hall, where visitors would access eight viewing galleries to the pools through the veil of water flowing from the aforementioned falls. Surrounding the reflecting pools, low parapets would indiscernibly listed the deceases’ names however, “the police officers, firefighters, and other rescue workers [would] be designated with individual shields” with their organization’s insignia on it (Collins & Dunlap, 2004). The final, Bedrock Level would travel down to base of the original World Trade Center towers’ foundation; a 70-foot section of exposed slurry wall. The slurry wall would be the centerpiece of the 9/11 memorial museum also housed on this level. The museum would be “A vast below-grade museum telling the stories of September 11, 2001, and February 26,1993,… contain[ing] information about the lives of those lost, and convey[ing] the events of the day and the breathtaking worldwide outpouring of support in the rescue and recovery” (Sciame, 2006). Additionally, a family room, contemplation area, and space for the medical examiner would be on this level. The family room would be specifically created to give the victims’ families a place to collectively share their memories of their lost loved ones. This room would include a window to the final resting place of the unidentified victims’ remains. Adjacent to the family room would be a public contemplation room, which would have had at its center a symbolic vessel to represent a mausoleum for visitors to express their condolences.

Although there was general acceptance of this design from the public, there were three main catalysts for the proposed revisions. First, the building costs which were originally estimated at $493 million had risen to almost $1 billion dollars making Reflecting Absence too expensive to build. Second, there were numerous security concerns regarding the safety of an underground memorial especially at such a tempting location for terrorist attacks. Lastly, the Put It Above Ground campaign which was launched by a group of 9/11 families’ believed having an *underground* memorial was a dishonor to their loved ones. Supporters of this

campaign felt placing the names below ground signified shame in our loss and felt the deceased deserved a more hopeful and heroic memorial. This group "had collected more than 14,000 signatures in favor of getting 'the names raised to the light of day'" (Dunlap, 2006c). In response to these conditions and concerns, both Governor Pataki and Mayor Bloomberg placed a $500 million dollar cap on memorial costs and hired Frank J. Sciame, a construction executive, to revise the memorial plans to remain within budget while retaining its original vision.

Although the fourth design revisions preserves many of the hallmarks of the third design it also includes several important changes. Most importantly, the galleries containing the low parapets with the victims' names will now be above ground lining the waterfalls. Making the parapets directly accessible from the street, Sciame explains that, "As visitors read the names, they can look out over the waterfalls and view the reflecting pools and the voids that are the empty footprints of the Twin Towers" (Sciame, 2006). Although Memorial Hall would still be below ground, six of the eight original waterfall viewing galleries would be closed leaving only two interior vistas of the falls and reflecting pools. The plaza entry ramps will be removed and a consolidated entrance to Memorial Hall and the Bedrock Level will only be accessible from the Visitor Education and Orientation Center. "Rather than journeying down a long ramp into underground galleries to contemplate the inscribed names, then coming back up to enter a separate museum, a visitor would walk around the plaza before entering an orientation center leading to a smaller museum, most of it near bedrock" (Dunlap, 2006b). Also, the family and contemplation rooms will be merged into one space for family members and visitors alike to view the unidentified remains. For brevity, this paper will only analyze one of these design changes: the relocation of the victims' names above ground.

5. *Analysis*

The first step in assessing the extent Reflecting Absence, as currently proposed, is aesthetically reasonable is establishing its tragic nature. Can Reflecting Absence incite the imagination in a free mental play that encourages transformation, hones one's deliberative ethos and promotes an inclusive communitarian ideal?

The most contested change to the memorial design plans has been the migration of the names above ground. Although this change was requested by a large faction of the 9/11 families, many feel this detracts from the aesthetic power and affect of the memorial. Arad, the original memorial designer, felt these were 'painful cuts' to the overall effect of Reflecting Absence; but why? By moving the

names of the deceased above ground what is lost? Simply put, silence and the journey. The original design had consciously attempted to mimic the cycle of life, death and rebirth. There was meaning in the journey of entering into a forest in the midst of the concrete laden streets of Manhattan, descending down into a quiet, stark space apart from the chaotic, cluttered city, to finally re-emerge into the commotion of life. The structure of this aesthetic journey of the memorial bears a striking resemblance to Plato's cave allegory. First, there is a turning away from what we know as well as what imprisons us; the hurriedness of life in New York City. Then there is the turning towards the unknown by facing the tragic text of the memorial. Lastly, there is the turning back to the plaza, to the hurried life, ideally with a new understanding of the community we are a part of. This three part journey contains the possibility for aesthetic reason by simply creating a space that fosters reflection. The aesthetic experience of the third memorial design consists of both the memorial's symbolism and the sensate embodied action of extricating oneself from the hurriedness of everyday life to a space of solace and contemplation where the only things presented to you are: the names of the deceased, the unidentified remains, the waterfalls, reflecting pools, artifacts from September 11th and your fellow visitors. As Monica Iken, "a memorial foundation board member, … founder of September's Mission," and 9/11 widow explained, by moving the names above ground, "you will lose the experience of what the memorial is … There is a meaning behind the descent … You become immersed in that space and you enter a place of peacefulness, reverence, reflection and honor. And you become part of that experience. And you forget about everything outside" (Dunlap, 2006a). In the midst of the largest city in the US, the third design was specifically created to shut out the sights and sounds of the city and replace it with a sober space and reverberations of rushing waterfalls as a means to induce reflexivity.

By moving the names above ground we no longer take this journey into silence and contemplation, however, this does not necessarily mean the memorial is aesthetically unreasonable. First we must imagine the experience in all its potential. We walk in the Memorial Plaza through a sea of oak trees that create a canopy overhead. There are competing sounds – the buzz of the city, consisting of car horns, loud talking, and ever present construction in concert with the rush of running water from the immense waterfalls filling the voids. We come upon these running voids and look down at the parapets with the names of the deceased – the enormity of this loss is upon us. Yet what is the context of this loss? By placing the names within the "life" of the city without creating a silence from this clutter we

recognize the inevitability of death. Yet, this inevitability does not stem from the natural cycle of life and death. Rather this death is illogical and massively imposing itself upon the living. As proposed, this memorial presents us with a mythic tragic fate that will most likely provoke contemplative melancholy via awe at the physical size of the loss. In the densely populated area of New York City, two voids – each sprawling over an acre of empty land – creates a sense of infinite loss. Nothing will ever be able to fix this. Nothing will ever be able to fill this space again. There is no return to everyday life since there is no space separate from it to make sense of the loss from September 11th.

The intense melancholy of this symbolic message can not enliven the imagination to examine the loss from an intersubjective perspective that promotes transformation. Simply symbolic memorials tend to provoke "contemplative melancholy (a de facto inhibitor of deliberative mind) [as] its object … The resulting melancholy evokes, on the part of the reader, a deep affective ambivalence" (Singer, 2003, p. 228). Thus, as newly proposed, Reflecting Absence may be emotionally overwhelming to the point that that visitors can think of nothing more than what a tragic fate this was. There is the production of an emotion but no self-transformation or development of a deliberative ethos since we do not have to work for the meaning of this memorial. Catharsis is solely an individual affective reaction rather than an intersubjective cognitive action. We may cry to "let it all out"; overcome with sympathy for the victims and the families they left behind. However, this fourth design is allegorical; we do not need to make sense of the memorial since the size of the voids is representative of the size of the America's loss. A deep sense of remorse over such an illogical and immense loss becomes the main effect of the memorial aesthetic experience.

Granted the rhetorical symbolism of the memorial design, regardless of the proposed revisions, is highly US centric. In the third design it is the experiential journey that is allegorical, (re)producing the cycle of life, not its symbolic message. Although the third design offered an experience that was also allegorical; recreating the cycle of life, the tragedy of September 11th becomes something we will change and grow from during the rebirth stage when we return above ground. Ideally, this transformation would have been triggered by the intersubjective process of aesthetic reasoning visitors experience during the memorial journey. By viewing and embodying tragedy as something that is infinitely human, something all people experience, September 11th becomes an event that links us to all cultures. Throughout the world, all cultures have

experienced some type of tragic loss they have had to rise up from. Admittedly, this is not be the most ideal or inclusive perspective of society, however, it is, at least, more intersubjective than the narrow notion of community promoted by the fourth design. In the fourth design, 9/11 is not a journey one goes through, overcomes and changes from but rather something that infinitely scars the US. In other words, we are not offered a means to consider this loss from a perspective other than the 'victimized American'.

The fourth design solidifies the hermeneutical framework of the memorial in the notion that Americans are hapless and innocent in the global community; America simply wishes to help spread freedom and democracy throughout the world and in return Arab terrorists target us as the enemy. There is no space for deliberation regarding what may have lead to the unfortunate loss on September 11th or critical reflection on the common ground that exists between the US and other cultures. Tragedies, such as 9/11, do not become an inevitably part of human life people go through and are eventually reborn. Rather this tragedy is something specifically done to the US, giving Americans cause to perpetuate a cycle of aggression against the perpetrators. Therefore, the vision of community promoted by the fourth design is not only US centric; it can also create a sense of entitlement. We are allowed to wage war with whoever may pose a terror threat because of the illogical loss we've incurred. Yet what of the loss we've inflicted on others? This new design also enables us to remain blind to the role we've played in September 11th since this tragedy is a terrifying anomaly in life done to us *simply because of who we are*, *not what we've done*. Furthermore, signifying 9/11 as a complete anomaly of life which American were innocent victims of creates a sense of fear that another attack can happen at any moment, especially when we least expect it.

The controversy surrounding the security risks of this memorial emphasize the fear that continues to haunt this site. According to the New York Times, "A recently disclosed memo from James K. Kallstrom, Governor Pataki's senior adviser for counterterrorism, called on the architects to 'significantly reduce the opportunity for a satchel charge explosive or airborne contaminant dissemination device to be cast, or a suicide attempt to be made into the void.' It stands to reason that if visitors were not standing around the bottom of the voids because there were no galleries to stand in, their attractiveness as targets would diminish" (Dunlap, 2006a). As evident from this quote, aesthetic reason is no longer the main concern when building this memorial. First, we need to make sure this type of tragedy will not happen again so visitors should not 'stand around' being

contemplative or they may become another American victim. By creating a 9/11 memorial that limits aesthetic reason more that it promotes it, we Americans concede to their need for security and comfort over the possibilities of transformation, honing our deliberative skills and creating a more ideal community. Rather than affirming our freedom through the act of aesthetically reasoning in crucial spaces of public memory, the new changes to Reflecting Absence creates an aesthetic experience that will perpetuate a cycle of victimization, ethnocentrism, and entitlement.

6. *Conclusion*

This paper offers aesthetic reason as a new theoretical means to assess the aesthetic arguments presented by public memorials. This theory, originally conceptualized by Singer (2003) has been modified here to explicate the unique transformative possibilities inherent within the aesthetic experience prompted by tragic memorials and their capability to develop the deliberative ethos of the memorials' visitors. Aesthetic exemplarity was offered as the normative standard for assessing the arguments embedded in aesthetic experience of memorials to determine the extent to which these commemorations of aesthetically reasonable. The most recent changes to Reflecting Absence, the proposed memorial to September 11th at the WTC site was then problematized using this revised version of Singer's theory. This analysis concludes that the new modifications to Reflecting Absence will provide a less aesthetically reasonable experience for its visitors. The changes made present a more symbolically allegorical memorial that does not make visitors work for its meaning and perpetuates a narrow, ethnocentric vision of an ideal community. By changing the aesthetic experience of the memorial, we lose the chance at transforming our understanding of 9/11 through aesthetic reason and honing our deliberative ethos. Furthermore, as America has troops deployed in both Iraqi and Afghanistan in its war on terror which was the US's direct response to September 11th, what we truly lose is our ability to respond to tragedy with something other than violence.

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