

# Aesthetics

Stephen Wright  
stephen.wright@jesus.ox.ac.uk  
Office: XVI.3, Jesus College

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## 1 Overview

Week	Topic
1	Plato on Poetry
2	Defining Art
3	Representation
4	Expression
5	Fictions
6	Forgeries
7	Kant on Aesthetic Judgement
8	Hume on the Standard of Taste

This is a course about philosophical aesthetics. We will be considering various different types of artwork, from poetry and painting through to literature. We'll think about what makes something a work of art, exactly what makes something artistically valuable and whether or not this kind of value might be extracted from a highly skilled forgery of (for example) an artistic painting. In addition, we'll consider the relationship between art and emotions. We will discuss the way in which art can elicit emotions, think about what it is for a work of art to express an emotion and consider whether or not the seemingly emotional responses that we take ourselves to feel in response to explicitly fictitious works of art should really be thought of as genuinely emotional responses at all. And if they are, how should we evaluate them for rationality? All of these questions will be discussed during the course. In the main, we'll be taking a thematic approach to the questions in philosophical aesthetics, but we'll also have tutorials on Plato's views on poetry, as they appear in the *Republic*, Kant's theory of aesthetics in the *Critique of Judgement* and also Hume's famous essay *Of the Standard of Taste*.

## 2 Course Website

I'll post the materials for these tutorials on my website as we go along. They can be downloaded at:

[www.stephenwrightphilosophy.com](http://www.stephenwrightphilosophy.com) on the right-hand side of the page under the 'Aesthetics' link.

## 3 A Note on the Reading List

For each class I've identified three types of reading. Readings marked as required are exactly that – they're readings you just have to do. Some of these are hard, though, so I've set out some introductory readings that you can consult. These introductory reasons are *not* to be used as a substitute for the required readings, though. They are there to give you a route to accessing the content of the required readings. Judicious use of the introductory readings will help you understand what's at stake in some of these debates. It won't, however, give

you the kind of understanding of the issues that you can get from the required readings.

† denotes required reading.

# denotes introductory reading.

\* denotes background reading.

Lastly, don't be shy about asking me if you find any of the readings hard to get hold of.

## 4 Study Questions

Along with the readings lists for each tutorial, there are sets of study questions associated with each tutorial. These questions have a dual role. From my perspective, they help me structure the tutorial and guide the discussion each week. From your perspective, they will help you check your understanding of the content and structure your revision, when the time comes. That said, you should absolutely *not* take these as any indication of what might be asked on the final examination. Some of the questions will be the kind of thing you can give essay-length answers to, others will be more short-answer questions.

## 5 Doing Philosophy

During your time doing philosophical work, you'll want to read things that aren't on the reading lists. And it's really important that what you read is good quality. It's very easy to waste a lot of time and energy in philosophy reading stuff that just isn't helpful. If you read stuff from poor sources, you're liable to wind up confused or misinformed. You want to be reading things that are written by people who have, at the very least, more philosophical experience than you. In the case of several sources, though, there's no filtering or checking to make sure that this is the case. Obviously, the reading lists provided by the faculty are a great place to look. But even they don't contain *everything*. With that in mind, here are some guidelines for you to get you started. As always, do get in touch and ask me if you find yourself in any doubt at all.

Some good places to start your reading are:

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy at <http://plato.stanford.edu> is an excellent resource. It gives you an overview of some of the topics that we'll be working on and also comes with a useful bibliography, all of which is of an appropriate quality for you to be using.

The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy at <http://www.iep.utm.edu/> is another excellent online philosophy encyclopedia. Like the Stanford Encyclopedia, its entries are reviewed before they are published and also have useful suggestions for further reading.

Philpapers at <http://www.philpapers.org> is an online collection of philosophy articles that can be searched by category. There are some excellent articles on here and the site is a useful way of finding things to read. This site requires

some caution, though. Unlike the above two, anyone can add their papers, regardless of whether or not they have actually been published in journals, or are ever going to be! As a rule of thumb, if you can't see publication details for a paper on this site, then proceed with caution. This notwithstanding, it is an excellent and important source.

Google Scholar at <http://scholar.google.co.uk/> is a relatively recent research tool and one that's extremely useful. The best thing that you can use Google Scholar for is finding papers that are relevant to what you've been reading. If you run a search for a paper that you've just read, Google Scholar will help throw up any papers that have cited the paper you searched for. This is extremely useful for helping you figure out where to go next. As with PhilPapers, however, there's no quality filter, so if you are in any doubt about what you've found (as with any of the above resources) feel free to ask me first. Lastly, note that this *is* an acceptable use of Google's resources, where searching for philosophers or themes and then reading what you find absolutely is *not*. Likewise, stay off looking for things on Wikipedia.

## 6 Preliminary Reading

Anything identified as "introductory" on the reading list (marked with a #) would be a good thing to look at before getting started on the course. For those wanting a particularly good introductory reading to the course as a whole, however, the following would be particularly suitable:

Sebastian Gardner (1998) 'Aesthetics' in A.C. Grayling (ed.), *Philosophy 1: A Guide Through the Subject* Oxford: Oxford University Press pp. 585-627.

If you would like to read this, but are unable to get hold of a copy of the book, then please email me for a PDF.

## 7 Week 1 – Plato on Poetry

We'll begin our investigation into philosophical aesthetics by looking at Plato's discussions of poetry and painting. As we will see, Plato takes a dim view of both poetry and painting. We'll be concentrating primarily on the arguments as they appear in Plato's famous work *The Republic*, but we'll also have a look briefly at the discussion in the *Ion* dialogue and think about how these compare. We'll think about exactly why Plato's discussion is so hostile to both poetry and painting and think about what might be said in its defence.

### 7.1 Readings

- † Plato. *The Republic* Books II, III and X.
- † Plato. 'Ion' in John M. Cooper (ed.), *Plato: Complete Works* (1997) Hackett: Indiana. 937-949.
- † J. Tate (1928). 'Imitation' in Plato's Republic' *Classical Quarterly* 22 (1):16-23.
- # The Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on *Plato on Poetry and Rhetoric* at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-rhetoric/>
- # Iris Murdoch (1977). *The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- \* Elizabeth Belfiore (2006). 'A Theory of Imitation in Plato's "Republic"' in Andrew Laird *Ancient Literary Criticism* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- \* James O. Urmson (1982). 'Plato and the Poets' in J.M.E. Moravcsik and Philip Temko (eds.), *Plato on Beauty, Wisdom, and the Arts* Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield, reprinted in Richard Kraut (ed.), (1997) *Plato's Republic: Critical Essays* Lanham MD: Rowman and Littlefield pp. 223-234.
- \* J. Tate (1932). Plato and 'Imitation' *Classical Quarterly* 26 (3-4):161-169.

*Question: Plato's criticisms of poetry divide into moral objections and epistemological objections. Critically evaluate the success of either the moral objections or the epistemological objections but not both.*

## 7.2 Study Questions

- (1) What does Plato have in mind in his discussion of “poetry”?
- (2) What do you think of Ion’s claim to be exclusively an expert on Homer’s poetry?
- (3) What do you make of Ion’s claim to being inspired by the divine?
- (4) How plausible is the idea that Ion comes to know things through Homer’s poetry?
- (5) “Taking Plato’s ideas about the impact of poetry on the young seriously would lead one to keep the young away from poetry, not banish the poets from the Republic.” Discuss.
- (6) Could censorship of poetry (or the arts generally) ever be legitimate?
- (7) How does the notion of “mimesis” differ between Books II and III on the one hand and Book X on the other of the *Republic*.
- (8) What do you think of the idea that everyone can be genuinely expert only in one area?
- (9) Is there any plausibility in the idea that the claim in (8) makes a case against poetry?
- (10) What is the difference between “simple” narration and “mimesis” in Book III?
- (11) Does it matter if poets don’t know what they write about?
- (12) Why does Plato think it problematic?
- (13) How does Plato characterise our response to tragedy?
- (14) Is our response to tragedy really as naïve as Plato suggests?
- (15) How *should* we respond to art in order to appreciate it properly?
- (16) How should we consider Plato’s objections to poetry in terms of content and style?
- (17) Critically assess Plato’s claim that the poets present things to their audiences as true.

## 8 Week 2 – Defining Art

The question of what is art and what isn't art is one of the core questions in philosophical aesthetics. In this tutorial, we'll think about some different characterisations of art and consider what there is to be said for and against them. We'll look at theories that define art in terms of the way people (would) respond to it and theories that classify art as a matter of something like a family resemblance. On a higher level than this, we'll think about how we would go about formulating a definition of art and what the usefulness or attraction of such a theory might be.

### 8.1 Readings

- † George Dickie (1969). 'Defining Art' *American Philosophical Quarterly* 6 (3):253-256.
- † Arthur Danto (1964). 'The Artworld' *Journal of Philosophy* 61 (19):571-584.
- † Richard Wollheim (1992). 'The Institutional Theory of Art' in Wollheim *Art and its Objects* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 157-166.
- # Richard Eldridge (2003). *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Art* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Chapters 1&7.
- # Robert Stecker (2010). *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: An Introduction* Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield Chapter 5.
- \* Paul Ziff (1953). 'The Task of Defining a Work of Art' *Philosophical Review* 62 (1):58-78.
- \* Maurice Mandelbaum (1965). 'Family Resemblances and Generalization Concerning the Arts' *American Philosophical Quarterly* 2 (3):219-228.
- \* T. J. Diffey (1979). 'On Defining Art; *British Journal of Aesthetics* 19 (1):15-23.

*Question: What is the institutional theory of art? Is it correct?*



## 8.2 Study Questions

- (1) What makes a theory of art an institutional theory?
- (2) What are the two versions of the institutional theory of art? How do they fill out the schema 'X is a work of art if and only if ...' ?
- (3) Should we worry about the circularity involved in the institutional theory of art?
- (4) Is it possible to give an account of anything that is ultimately non-circular? What does this show about the circularity in the institutional theory?
- (5) What is the significance of a work of art being *of a type* presented to an artworld public?
- (6) Are institutional theories correct to claim that the conditions of art are not to do with the perceptible qualities of the work?
- (7) Should a viable theory of art allow that works of art can be created by individuals situated outside the artworld?
- (8) What is Wollheim's dilemma for the institutional theory?
- (9) What is the difference between conferring status on a work as art and taking it to be art?
- (10) What are the "two powerful intuitions" that Wollheim identifies?
- (11) Should we regard Duchamp's fountain as a work of art?
- (12) Is there circularity contained within an account claiming that art is that which is *designed to satisfy the aesthetic interest*?
- (13) Might art be a "cluster concept?"
- (14) Is there a difference between something being a work of art and something being a *comment on art*?
- (15) "To say that something is a work of art, but it is bad *qua* work of art is to state an impossibility." Is this correct?

## 9 Week 3 – Representation

It's pretty clear that van Gogh's famous painting *Sunflowers* depicts. It's a picture that represents a vase of sunflowers. In some cases it's clear what the artwork represents. In others it's less clear. We'll have a think about what makes a painting (or some other work of art) a representation of something. An immediate suggestion is that van Gogh's painting represents some sunflowers because it resembles some sunflowers. But there are worries about this—other things more closely resemble sunflowers than van Gogh's painting. So what is representation? This is the question that we'll be concerned with, looking at a variety of approaches to this puzzle.

### 9.1 Readings

- † Nelson Goodman (1968). *Languages of Art* Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Chapter 1.
- † Richard Wollheim (1998). 'On Pictorial Representation' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56 (3):217-226.
- † Robert Hopkins (1995). 'Explaining Depiction' *Philosophical Review* 104 (3):425-455.
- # Noel Carroll (1999). *Philosophy of Art: A Contemporary Introduction* London: Routledge Chapter 1.
- # Richard Eldridge (2003). *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Art* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Chapter 3.
- \* Robert Hopkins (2009). *Picture, Image and Experience* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- \* R.G. Collingwood (1938). *The Principles of Art* Oxford: Oxford University Press Chapter 3.
- \* Richard Wollheim (1980). *Art and Its Objects* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- \* Dominic Lopes (1996). *Understanding Pictures* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

*Question: Goodman claims that denotation is at the core of representation. What does this mean and is it correct?*

## 9.2 Study Questions

- (1) What is the resemblance theory of representation Goodman discusses?
- (2) Could a painting resemble an object whilst looking *nothing* like it?
- (3) Could a painting look like an object whilst not representing it?
- (4) What does Goodman think makes for representation?
- (5) What does it mean to say that representation is like a sentence in a natural language?
- (6) What is Wollheim's account of pictorial representation?
- (7) What is involved in *seeing-in*?
- (8) What role does the imagination play in seeing-in?
- (9) What do the intentions of the artist have to do with representation, according to Wollheim's approach?
- (10) Should we think that representation is a matter of seeing-in?
- (11) How are we aware of *both* the marked canvas *and* the object it represents?
- (12) What are the six explananda that Hopkins identifies?
- (13) Might a picture represent an object in virtue of resembling it in certain ways?
- (14) Could something that was formed through natural processes depict in the same way that paintings do?
- (15) Why does Hopkins think that the gap between resemblance and depiction cannot be filled by the intentions of the artist alone?
- (16) What is the theory that Hopkins eventually offers?

## 10 Week 4 – Expression

A common thought is that art is involved in the expression of emotions. One approach to understanding what art is appeals to the idea of expressing an emotion. Nowadays we talk about the idea of art expressing an emotion a lot. But this immediately prompts the question of what it is to express an emotion. Unless we can say what it means for art to express an emotion, it's hard to see how we can make any sense of a notion of art in terms of expression can get off the ground. With that in mind, in this tutorial, we'll have a look at what it means for art to express an emotion.

### 10.1 Readings

- † Nelson Goodman (1968). *Languages of Art* Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Chapter 2.
- † R.G. Collingwood (1938). *The Principles of Art* Oxford: Oxford University Press Chapter 6.
- † Ismay Barwell (1986). 'How Does Art Express Emotion?' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 45 (2):175-181.
- # Malcolm Budd (1996). *Values of Art: Pictures, Poetry, and Music* London: Penguin Books Chapter 4.
- # Noel Carroll (1999). *Philosophy of Art: A Contemporary Introduction* London: Routledge Chapter 2.
- \* V. A. Howard (1971). 'On Musical Expression' *British Journal of Aesthetics* 11 (3):268-280.
- \* Guy Sircello (1972). *Mind and Art: An Essay on the Varieties of Expression* Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- \* Roger Scruton (1982). *Art and Imagination: A Study in Philosophy of Mind* London: Routledge.
- \* Alan Tormey (1971). *The Concept of Expression: A Study in Philosophical Psychology and Aesthetics* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

*Question: 'A work of art expresses sorrow only if it induces sorrow in its audience.' Is this correct? If so, why? If not, what's wrong with it?*

## 10.2 Study Questions

- (1) What does it mean to say that art expresses emotion?
- (2) Why is saying that music is a vehicle for expressing the emotions of the composer not an account of expression?
- (3) Why can the way that a work of art be sad (say) not be the same as the way a person is sad?
- (4) What is wrong with the view that art expresses the emotional state of the artist?
- (5) Is it correct (Goodman) to say that art is metaphorically sad, but not literally sad?
- (6) What does Goodman think that pictures do express?
- (7) Could a painting be sad even if nobody ever thinks that it is sad?
- (8) What does exemplification mean in Goodman's aesthetics?
- (9) What is the difference between *possessing* and *denoting* in Goodman's theory?
- (10) Should we be trying to analyse the concept of musical expression?
- (11) What, on Collingwood's view, does the expression of emotion require?
- (12) Are there worthwhile analogies between facial expression and musical expression?
- (13) 'Emotions have objects and involve thoughts and concepts, but music does not. So music cannot express emotions.' Discuss.
- (14) Could it one day come to pass that Handel's Messiah expresses no emotions?
- (15) Does expression provide a useful way of understanding the nature of art?
- (16) Can Hamlet's melancholy express Shakespeare's uncertainty?

## 11 Week 5 – Fiction

In this tutorial, we'll think about a particular paradox. Fictitious artworks, particularly (though not exclusively) films, can bring about what seem to be emotional responses. Thinking about Anna Karenina's sad story, it seems that the story might bring me to feel sad or pity for Anna. But at the same time, I know that the story is fictitious—there's *actually* nothing to be sad about. And that makes my feeling sad seem irrational. We'll think about whether or not I really *do* feel sad about Anna Karenina's story and whether or not this is as irrational as it might seem.

### 11.1 Readings

- † Colin Radford (1975). 'How Can We Be Moved by the Fate of Anna Karenina?' *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 49:67-80.
- † Kendall L. Walton (1978). 'Fearing Fictions' *Journal of Philosophy* 75 (1):5-27.
- † Eva Schaper (1978). Fiction and the Suspension of Disbelief. *British Journal of Aesthetics* 18 (1):31-44.
- # The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry at: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/fict-par/#H1>
- # Richard Eldridge (2003). *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Art* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Chapter 8.
- \* Tamar Szabó Gendler (2008). 'Alief and Belief' *Journal of Philosophy* 105 (10):634-663.
- \* Gregory Currie (1990). *The Nature of Fiction* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- \* Colin Radford (1977). 'Tears and Fiction' *Philosophy* 52 (200):208-213.

*Question: I know that Anna Karenina's story is fictional, but I seem to feel sad for her nonetheless. Is my response an emotional one? Is it a rational one?*

## 11.2 Study Questions

- (1) What do statements of fiction involve?
- (2) Is it a statement about the world?
- (3) Do we state anything at all?
- (4) What is the paradox of fiction?
- (5) Does emotion require belief?
- (6) Are our responses to fictions genuine emotions?
- (7) Are they, in any sense, rational?
- (8) What is involved in *make-believe*?
- (9) How does Walton's appeal to make-believe purport to solve the paradox?
- (10) What are the shortcomings of this approach?
- (11) Do fictional works express emotions?
- (12) Do we believe what fictional narrators say?
- (13) Might a merely possible situation move us in the way that fictions do?
- (14) Might an impossible situation move us in the same way?
- (15) What is it to properly engage with fictions?
- (16) How does proper engagement with fiction illustrate what is involved with proper engagement with art more generally?

## 12 Week 6 – Forgeries

Han van Meegeren sold around \$60 million of imitation Vermeers to various art collectors. Van Meegeren's work resembled Vermeer's, but it wasn't Vermeer's. Forgery represents an interesting philosophical puzzle. In what sense does this devalue van Meegeren's work? More generally, why are forgeries less valuable than original artworks? In this tutorial we'll think about what the differences between original works of art and forgeries are and consider what this shows us about the value of artwork.

### 12.1 Readings

- † Nelson Goodman (1968). *Languages of Art* Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Chapter 3.
- † Colin Radford (1978). 'Fakes' *Mind* 87 (345):66-76.
- † Mark Sagoff (1978). 'Historical Authenticity' *Erkenntnis* 12 (1):83-93.
- # Robert Stecker (2010). *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: An Introduction* Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield pp. 110-114.
- # Richard Eldridge (2003). *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Art* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Chapter 5.
- \* Nelson Goodman (1978). 'Reply to Sagoff' *Erkenntnis* 12 (1):166-168.
- \* Sherri Irvin (2007). 'Forgery and the Corruption of Aesthetic Understanding' *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 37 (2):283-304.
- \* Tomás Kulka (2005). 'Forgeries and Art Evaluation: An Argument for Dualism in Aesthetics' *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 39 (3):58-70.

*Question: Would an indistinguishable replica of a work of art have the same artistic value? If not, what devalues it?*



## 12.2 Study Questions

- (1) Why are forgeries philosophically puzzling?
- (2) Is there a difference between the aesthetic qualities of music played from an original score and from a reproduction?
- (3) What about music played using original instrument as opposed to contemporary instruments?
- (4) Why does Goodman think that there's a difference between a replica painting and music performed from a replica score?
- (5) Does our changing reaction to a forgery amount to a difference in the *aesthetic experience*?
- (6) What does this tell us about the nature of the aesthetic experience (think back to aesthetic and institutional definitions of art)?
- (7) Is our aesthetic experience different if we don't know that we're looking at a forgery?
- (8) How might our experience of something change when we discover that it's more valuable than we initially thought?
- (9) Does the significance of a forgery change if it isn't intended as a forgery?
- (10) 'Our shifting reactions to forgeries are unjustified since the artifact we are perceiving doesn't change in its properties.' Is this correct?
- (11) Might the fact that one is original and the other is not justify our differing attitudes?
- (12) Is there an important difference between an adult deliberately painting like a child and a child painting?
- (13) Could a distinction between *seeing* and *seeing that* help to explain the problem of forgeries?
- (14) Does a perfect forgery of a work of art have the same artistic value as the original?
- (15) Is it true that *an object can be known in as many ways as it can correctly be described*?

## 13 Week 7 – Hume on the Standard of Taste

In this tutorial, we David Hume’s famous essay *Of the Standard of Taste*. A lot of people think that disagreement about matters of taste somehow can’t be wrong. The idea is that I’m entitled to my judgement about a work of art and you’re entitled to yours and we can happily disagree without either of us being *wrong* in any real sense. According to Hume, this is mistaken. Only a false critic, Hume claims, would rank Ogilby above Milton in terms of poetry. There are thus objective standards according to which we can rank art. We will consider the kinds of things that might ground an objective judgement about a work of art.

### 13.1 Readings

- † David Hume (1965). *Of the Standard of Taste, and Other Essays* Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.
- † Noel Carroll (1984). ‘Hume’s Standard of Taste’ *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43 (2):181-194.
- † Jerrold Levinson (2002). ‘Hume’s Standard of Taste: The Real Problem’ *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 60 (3):227-238.
- # Peter Jones (1993). ‘Hume’s Literary and Aesthetic Theory’ in David Fate Norton (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hume* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- # Mike Martin’s podcast in the *Philosophy Bites* series at:  
<http://philosophybites.com/2013/08/michael-martin-on-hume-on-taste.html>
- \* Peter Kivy (1967). ‘Hume’s Standard of Taste: Breaking the Circle’ *British Journal of Aesthetics* 7 (1):57-66.
- \* F.N. Sibley (1968). ‘Objectivity and Aesthetics’ *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 42:31-54.
- \* Michael Tanner (1968). ‘Objectivity and Aesthetics’ *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 42:55-72.

*Question: What is a ‘standard of taste’ and is there such a thing?*

## 13.2 Study Questions

- (1) How does beauty relate to sentiments on Hume's view?
- (2) What does Hume think that beauty is the property of?
- (3) Does Hume's theory amount to the claim that *beauty is in the eye of the beholder*?
- (4) How does Hume's discussion of beauty relate to the discussion of primary and secondary qualities?
- (5) What reasons does Hume give for thinking that beauty is not a property of objects?
- (6) What is meant by a *Standard of Taste*?
- (7) What would we use such a standard for?
- (8) Hume doesn't explicitly offer a conception of what beauty is. Will his discussion of in the Standard of Taste do?
- (9) Why do things that have a capacity to please universally in fact fail to please universally?
- (10) How does the notion of obstruction in Hume's discussion interact with his observations about disagreement?
- (11) What sorts of things obstruct our judgements of the beautiful?
- (12) 'Appealing to aesthetic principles can rationally force aesthetic agreement.' Is this correct?
- (13) How does Hume seek to accommodate the idea that ideal critics will respond differently to different works of art?
- (14) What is the puzzle of imaginative resistance?
- (15) Does the immorality of a work of art diminish its beauty?
- (16) Is Hume's account of the Standard of Taste problematically circular?

## 14 Week 8 – Kant on Aesthetic Judgement

Our final tutorial will turn our approach to one of the great historical works of philosophical aesthetics. Specifically, we'll be looking at the theory of aesthetic judgement put forward by Immanuel Kant in the *Critique of Judgement*.<sup>1</sup> Kant distinguishes between the beautiful, the appeal of which is immediately apparent to an audience and the sublime, which is not. With this distinction made, Kant then goes on to categorise different aesthetic experiences. In this class, we will examine Kant's taxonomy of aesthetic experiences.

### 14.1 Readings

- † Immanuel Kant (1790). *Critique of Judgement* Oxford: Oxford University Press Introduction and Chapter 1.
- † Henry E. Allison (1997). 'Beauty and Duty in Kant's Critique of Judgement' *Kantian Review* 1:53-81.
- † K. Gorodeisky (2010). 'Kant's Aesthetic Theory: The Beautiful and Agreeable' *British Journal of Aesthetics* 50 (3):317-320.
- # Richard Eldridge (2003). *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Art* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Chapter 3.
- # The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry at: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/kantaest/>
- \* Malcolm Budd (1998). 'Delight in the Natural World: Kant on the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature. Part I: Natural Beauty' *British Journal of Aesthetics* 38 (1):1-18.
- \* Malcolm Budd (1998). 'Delight in the Natural World: Kant on the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature. Part II: Natural Beauty and Morality' *British Journal of Aesthetics* 38 (2):117-126.
- \* R. D. Miller (1970). *Schiller and the Ideal of Freedom: A Study of Schiller's Philosophical Works with Chapters on Kant*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

*Question: Kant claims that when you judge something to be beautiful, you are committed to the claim that everyone else ought to agree with you. Why does Kant think this and how plausible is it?*

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<sup>1</sup>The Critique of Judgement is divided into two parts. One dealing with aesthetics, the other dealing with the philosophy of science. We'll only be concentrating on the aesthetics part of the Critique.

## 14.2 Study Questions

- (1) How does Kant's claim about aesthetic agreement compare with Hume's?
- (2) Is Kant's account of the difference between the agreeable and the beautiful defensible?
- (3) What does it mean (and is it correct) to say that judgements of beauty do not involve representing something under a concept?
- (4) How might this connect to Goodman's claim about the problem of forgeries?
- (5) Why aren't beliefs about beauty based on reasoning not judgements of taste?
- (6) How do Kant and Hume differ on the possibility of acquiring knowledge of beauty by testimony?
- (7) Are judgements of beauty based on a *disinterested* pleasure?
- (8) Could a judgement that *all Picassos are beautiful* ever be a judgement of taste on Kant's terms?
- (9) Kant claims that expressing your disapproval of something is independent of judging it to be beautiful. Is this always true?
- (10) What is the central problem that Kant identifies concerning aesthetic judgements?
- (11) Do judgements of taste demand agreement like cognitive judgements?
- (12) Can we be sure that squareness looks the same to you as it does to me, but not redness?
- (13) Why does our belief that everyone can take pleasure in the object that pleases us need to be justified *a priori*?
- (14) How can we get such *a priori* justification?
- (15) Is Kant able to offer a proof of the match between the universal harmony of the cognitive faculties and the subjective experiences?
- (16) Where does this leave Kant's claims about the subjective character of colour judgements?

## 15 Revision Reading

Below is some reading designed to help ease you into your revision. It should start you off in the process of remembering what you've been thinking about during the course. It doesn't (usually) go into the kind of levels of detail that you'll want to go into in your essays, nor the kind of levels of detail that we've been thinking about things in during tutorials. But it's useful stuff to give you an overview and try to jog your memory a bit. There's one particular collection that I'd recommend to you for shaping your reading:

Jerrold Levinson (ed.), (2003). *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Levinson's collection has well-written chapters on most, if not all, of the topics that we've covered during the course. And they're ones that we haven't looked at. Two other useful collections generally are:

Matthew Kieran (ed.), (2006). *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Kieran's collection features discussions between two philosophers, each representing one side of a philosophical issue. I recommend more or less anything from there. Lastly, there's:

Peter Kivy (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Probably the least directly connected to what we've been looking at, but a very good collection that might help you extend your understanding beyond what we've been thinking about in tutorials and give you a better idea of how the various issues fit together.

### 15.1 Plato on Poetry

Nickolas Pappas (2013). *The Routledge Guidebook to Plato's Republic (3rd Edition)*. London: Routledge. Chapter 9.

### 15.2 Defining Art

George Dickie (2004). 'Defining Art: Intension and Extension' in Peter Kivy (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

### 15.3 Representation

Alan Goldman (2003). 'Representation in Art' in Jerrold Levinson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## 15.4 Expression

Derek Matravers (2007). 'Musical Expression' *Philosophy Compass* 2 (3):373-379.

## 15.5 Fiction

Tamar Szabó Gendler & Karson Kovakovich (2006). 'Genuine Rational Fictional Emotions' in Matthew Kieran (ed.), *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

## 15.6 Forgery

Gordon Graham (2006). 'Aesthetic Empiricism and the Challenge of Fakes and Ready-Mades' in Matthew Kieran (ed.), *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

## 15.7 Hume on the Standard of Taste

Christopher Williams (2007). 'Some Questions in Hume's Aesthetics' *Philosophy Compass* 2 (2):157-169.

## 15.8 Kant on Aesthetic Judgement

Robert Wicks (2007). *The Routledge Guidebook to Kant's Critique of Judgement*. London: Routledge. Chapter 1.