

Aesthetics

Stephen Wright

stephen.wright@jesus.ox.ac.uk

Office: XVI.3, Jesus College

Trinity 2015

Contents

1	Overview	3
2	Course Website	3
3	A Note on the Reading List	3
4	Study Questions	4
5	Doing Philosophy	4
6	Preliminary Reading	5
7	Tutorial 1 – Plato on Poetry	6
7.1	Readings	6
7.2	Study Questions	7
8	Tutorial 2 – Aristotle’s <i>Poetics</i>	8
8.1	Readings	8
8.2	Study Questions	9
9	Tutorial 3 – Defining Art	10
9.1	Readings	10
9.2	Study Questions	11
10	Tutorial 4 – Forgeries	12
10.1	Readings	12
10.2	Study Questions	13
11	Tutorial 5 – Hume’s <i>Of The Standard of Taste</i>	14
11.1	Readings	14
11.2	Study Questions	15

12	Tutorial 6 – Fiction	16
	12.1 Readings	16
	12.2 Study Questions	17
13	Tutorial 7 – Representation	18
	13.1 Readings	18
	13.2 Study Questions	19
14	Tutorial 8 – Expression	20
	14.1 Readings	20
	14.2 Study Questions	21
15	Tutorial 9 – Intention and Interpretation	22
	15.1 Readings	22
	15.2 Study Questions	23
16	Revision Reading	24
	16.1 Plato on Poetry	24
	16.2 Aristotle’s <i>Poetics</i>	24
	16.3 Defining Art	24
	16.4 Forgeries	25
	16.5 Hume’s <i>Of the Standard of Taste</i>	25
	16.6 Fiction	25
	16.7 Representation	25
	16.8 Expression	25

1 Overview

Week	Topic
1	Plato on Poetry
2	Aristotle's <i>Poetics</i>
3	Defining Art
4	Forgeries
5	Hume's <i>Of the Standard of Taste</i>
6	Fiction
7	Representation
8	Expression
9	Intention and Interpretation

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 on the right-hand side of the page under the 'Aesthetics' link. Please make sure you get the right link for 'Trinity 2015' though!

3 A Note on the Reading List

For each class I've identified two types of reading. Readings marked as required are exactly that – they're readings you just have to do. I've tried to keep the amount of required reading within manageable limits for the purposes of the tutorials. So I'll be expecting you to have a decent idea of what's going on in them. The others are background readings. These will help you think your way

through the issues in the required readings and give you a bit more context on them. If you want to work up any of these areas for the purposes of the exam, then you will definitely need the background readings. But aside from that, it's up to you to make judicious use of them.

† denotes required 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. The study questions are attached to the relevant tutorial reading lists.

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 Tutorial 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.
- * 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: Was Plato a philistine?

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 Tutorial 2 – Aristotle’s *Poetics*

In this tutorial, we will think about Aristotle’s discussion of poetry and tragedy in the *Poetics*. We’ll consider the notion of *katharsis* in Aristotle’s work and the role that it plays as well considering the palusibility of the notion. In thinking about Aristotle’s *Poetics*, we’ll think about the main aims of Aristotle’s project and how far Aristotle’s comments in the *Poetics* about poetry and imitation can be seen as a response to Plato’s comments, encountered in tutorial 1.

8.1 Readings

- † Aristotle *Poetics* (any edition).
- * Malcolm Budd (1996). *Values of Art: Pictures, Poetry, and Music* London: Penguin Books Chapter 3.
- * Stephen Halliwell (1995). ‘Introduction’ in Stephen Halliwell (ed.), *Aristotle’s Poetics* Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Question: What is Aristotle’s notion of ‘katharsis’ and what role does it play in his discussion of tragedy and poetry?

8.2 Study Questions

- (1) What are Aristotle's aims in the *Poetics*?
- (2) How does Aristotle claim that poetry comes about?
- (3) Why does Aristotle think that we can derive pleasure from things that would ordinarily cause us pain.
- (4) How does the notion of *mimesis* differ between Aristotle's *Poetics* and Plato's *Republic*?
- (5) How does Aristotle define tragedy?
- (6) What is the aim of poetry, on Aristotle's view?
- (7) What makes something a good poem for Aristotle?
- (8) When does Aristotle allow that it might be permissible to represent things as they are not, or represent immoral actions?
- (9) Does poetry represent universals or particulars?
- (10) How do we get from the idea that poetry represents the probable or the necessary sequence of events to the conclusion that it represents universals rather than particulars?
- (11) Is poetry more philosophical than historical?
- (12) How does Aristotle respond to Plato's epistemological objections to poetry?
- (13) How does Aristotle respond to Plato's moral objections to poetry?
- (14) In what way(s) can pleasure derive from emotions such as pity and fear?
- (15) How plausible is the idea that we take pleasure in pity and fear because we are pleased at manifesting our own compassion?
- (16) Is it better to think of the question as what reasons there might be to value tragedy overall?

9 Tutorial 3 – 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.

9.1 Readings

- † George Dickie (1969). 'Defining Art' *American Philosophical Quarterly* 6 (3):253-256.
- † Jerrold Levinson (1979). 'Defining Art Historically' *British Journal of Aesthetics* 19 (3):232-250.
- † Richard Wollheim (1992). 'The Institutional Theory of Art' in Wollheim *Art and its Objects* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 157-166.
- * 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.
- * Arthur Danto (1964). 'The Artworld' *Journal of Philosophy* 61 (19):571-584.

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

9.2 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) Is there circularity contained within an account claiming that art is that which is *designed to satisfy the aesthetic interest*?
- (10) Is Beardsley correct in claiming that there is an important distinction between objects that enter artistic practice in virtue of their aesthetic properties and objects that enter in other ways?
- (11) Could a piece of driftwood be a piece of art? If so, what does it have in common with other artworks that makes it a work of art?
- (12) Is there a difference between something being a work of art and something being a *comment on art*?
- (13) Might art be a "cluster concept?"
- (14) How does Levinson define art in historical terms?
- (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?

10 Tutorial 4 – 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.

10.1 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.
- * 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: Is it irrational to place a higher value on an authentic work of art than an indistinguishable replica?

10.2 Study Questions

- (1) Why are forgeries philosophically puzzling?
- (2) What is the difference between *formalism*, *reductionism* and *historicism*?
- (3) Why does Goodman spend so much time discussing what is meant by *merely by looking*?
- (4) '[T]he fact that I may later be able to make a perceptual distinction between the pictures that I cannot make now constitutes an aesthetic difference between them that is important to me now' [GOODMAN]. Discuss.
- (5) What is the significance of Goodman's distinction between *autographic* and *allographic* works?
- (6) Is Goodman correct in observing that our changing reaction to a forgery amounts to a difference in the *aesthetic* experience?
- (7) Does this shift in attitude stand in need of justification? If so, what might justify it? If not, why not?
- (8) Can we draw a distinction between the aesthetic and the art-historical that illustrates what the problem of forgeries is about?
- (9) How might a formalist seek to accommodate the intuition that there are important differences between an original and a forgery even if the two are subjectively indistinguishable?
- (10) Does the significance of a forgery change if it isn't intended as a forgery?
- (11) Is there an important difference between an adult deliberately painting like a child and a child painting?
- (12) What does Sagoff mean by the claim that predicates are only meaningful relative to a certain class of works?
- (13) Even if Sagoff is correct, is this failure to imitate a failure of the work of art?

11 Tutorial 5 – Hume’s *Of 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.

11.1 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 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?

11.2 Study Questions

- (1) How does beauty relate to sentiments on Hume's view?
- (2) What does Hume think that beauty is a 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 discussions of primary and secondary qualities?
- (5) What reasons does Hume give for thinking that beauty is not a property of objects?
- (6) 'But when critics come to particulars, this seeming uniformity vanishes.' What does Hume mean by this?
- (7) In what sense does Hume suggest that aesthetic judgements are analogous to moral judgements?
- (8) Assuming that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, what kind of standard might we use to rank the sentiments of different people?
- (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 judgement 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 difference between liking and assessing?
- (15) Even if Hume misses a distinction between liking and assessing, does this create a problem for Hume's account of the Standard of Taste?
- (16) Is Hume's account of the Standard of Taste problematically circular?

12 Tutorial 6 – 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.

12.1 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?

12.2 Study Questions

- (1) What is the paradox of fiction?
- (2) Is there a difference between our (apparently) emotional responses to fiction and history?
- (3) Is it in any sense mysterious how we might feel pity or sadness for the kind of suffering someone *might* experience?
- (4) Can we feel the same emotions at stories that we narrate?
- (5) Does the fact that our experience feels similar to an emotional experience mean that we can make sense of it only if we have the relevant belief?
- (6) Do cases like fearing death or willing a tennis ball over a net do anything for Radford's claim that our emotions are essentially incoherent?
- (7) What are the limitations on the idea that we simply suspend belief when we are dealing with fictions?
- (8) How does Kendall Walton propose to resolve the paradox of fiction?
- (9) What is the difference between make-believing and imagining?
- (10) Is Walton's focus on representational art forms problematic?
- (11) Is it plausible to say that Charles knows that he is make-believedly in some sort of danger?
- (12) What is the difference between make-believedly knowing that you are in danger and knowing that you are make-believedly in danger?
- (13) How does the experience of make-believe differ between audiences and actors?
- (14) In what sense is Walton's theory a *two worlds* theory?
- (15) How does the make-believe theory make sense of our tendency to talk without the operator 'in the fictional world...'?
- (16) Does Walton's provide a convincing account of someone who wants the heroine to die for artistic reasons but survive for aesthetic reasons?

13 Tutorial 7 – Representation

It's pretty clear what van Gogh's famous painting *Sunflowers* is a picture of. 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.

13.1 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.
- * 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: In what sense, if any, does resemblance make for representation.

13.2 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?

14 Tutorial 8 – 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.

14.1 Readings

- † Stephen Davies (2006). 'Artistic Expression and the Hard Case of Pure Music' in Matthew Kieran (ed.), *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics* Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
- † R.G. Collingwood (1938). *The Principles of Art* Oxford: Oxford University Press Chapter 6.
- † Derek Matravers (2003). 'The Experience of Emotion in Music' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 61 (4):353-363.
- * V. A. Howard (1971). 'On Musical Expression' *British Journal of Aesthetics* 11 (3):268-280.
- * Derek Matravers (2007). 'Musical Expression' *Philosophy Compass* 2 (3):373-379.
- * Ismay Barwell (1986). 'How Does Art Express Emotion?' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 45 (2):175-181.
- * Nelson Goodman (1968). *Languages of Art* Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Chapter 2.

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?

14.2 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?

15 Tutorial 9 – Intention and Interpretation

This tutorial involves considering the different ways of looking for meaning in a work of art. Sometimes it is not entirely clear what a sentence in a work of literature means. It might be ambiguous between different meanings. In this tutorial we will think about a methodology for interpreting such cases and in doing so we will focus particularly on what role the actual or hypothetical intentions of the artist should be thought to play in this project.

15.1 Readings

- † Jerrold Levinson (1992). ‘Intention and Interpretation: A Last Look’ in Gary Iseminger (ed.), *Intention and Interpretation*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. pp. 221-56.
- † Noël Carroll (1992). ‘Art, Intention, and Conversation’ in Gary Iseminger (ed.), *Intention and Interpretation*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 97-131.
- † Gary Iseminger (1996). Actual Intentionalism vs. Hypothetical Intentionalism. *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (4):319-326.
- * Gregory Currie (1993). ‘Interpretation and Objectivity’ *Mind* 102 (407):413-428.
- * Berys Gaut (1993). ‘Interpreting the Arts: The Patchwork Theory’ *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51 (4):597-609.
- * Anthony Savile (1996). ‘Instrumentalism and the Interpretation of Narrative’ *Mind* 105 (420):553-576.
- * Frank Cioffi (1963). ‘Intention and Interpretation in Criticism’ *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 64:85-106.
- * Henry David Aiken (1955). ‘The Aesthetic Relevance of Artists’ Intentions’ *Journal of Philosophy* 52 (24):742-753.

15.2 Study Questions

- (1) What is the point of interpreting art?
- (2) What is meant by *actual intentionalism*?
- (3) Does the recovery of an artist's intentions present a difficulty for actual intentionalism?
- (4) What is the difference between an artist's intentions with respect to her work and an artist's own interpretation of her work?
- (5) Is it a problem that an artist might attempt to express something through a work of art and fail to do so?
- (6) What should an actual intentionalist say about a situation where the artist is ambivalent between multiple incompatible meanings?
- (7) Might the meaning of a work be determined by conventions?
- (8) Which conventions should an account seek to take note of in determining the meaning of a work?
- (9) Might context and the intentions of artists show that conventionalism is false?
- (10) What is *hypothetical intentionalism*?
- (11) How should hypothetical intentionalism understand an appeal to the notion of 'an audience' for any particular work?
- (12) Are audiences limited in their interpretations to using evidence of an artist's intentions?
- (13) Can an account of interpretation accommodate both actual and hypothetical intentions?
- (14) Could a work of art have meaning that it is known the artist did not intend it to have?
- (15) What is it to successfully express an intention?
- (16) Might relativism about interpretation and work-meaning be true?
- (17) In what way(s) is interpretation of a work of art similar to interpreting a work of philosophy?

16 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.

16.1 Plato on Poetry

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

16.2 Aristotle's *Poetics*

The Internet Encyclopedia Entry on *Aristotle's Poetics* at <http://www.iep.utm.edu/aris-poe/>

16.3 Defining Art

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

16.4 Forgeries

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

16.5 Hume's *Of the Standard of Taste*

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

16.6 Fiction

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

16.7 Representation

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

16.8 Expression

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