

Aesthetic Experience

(Beardsley, 1982)

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To start with...

- **Aesthetics** has been defined as:
 - “the science of the beautiful” (Baumgarten, 1744)
 - “the philosophy of the beautiful”
 - “...an attempt to understand our experiences of and the concepts we use to talk about objects that we find perceptually interesting and attractive...”
 - “...the philosophy of art, being concerned primarily with the nature of the work of art as the product of artistic creative activity and as the focal point of aesthetic appreciation and art criticism”.
 - “...‘having to do with art’ rather than ‘pertaining to sensory contemplation and its object’ ...” (Crawford, 1987)

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- “Aesthetic” is an adjective, whose meaning has to do with beauty and the appreciation of beauty, and also similar to “artistic”

Aesthetic Experience

- For an experience to be called “aesthetic”, Beardsley (1982) mentioned three pre-requirements:
 - It has to be obtainable from artkind instances (works of art)
 - It will be strongly felt from a “considered to be” great work of art
 - It, to a certain extent, can be acquired from other (particularly natural) objects or situations often grouped or related to “artkind instances”

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- In the beginning, Beardsley (1982) closely linked aesthetic experiences with “**hedonic quality**”, having to do with pleasure, enjoyment, and satisfaction.
- However, he then formulated five criteria to indicate whether or not an experience has an aesthetic character.
- From these five criteria, he stated that to be **aesthetic** an experience must have the first feature and at least three of the others.

Criteria of the Aesthetic Character of Experience

1. Object directedness
2. Felt freedom
3. Detached affect
4. Active discovery
5. Wholeness

Object Directedness

- **Object** → the work of art (artkind instances)
- **Directedness:**
direct → directed → directedness
- **Object directedness** has to do with a situation when, as the “experiencer”, we are directed (or guided) to analytically think of, to pay close attention on, and to give an intense interest on a piece of artwork, being absorbed in it.

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- An aesthetic experience, seen from *object directedness*, can be both **on purpose** or **unintentional**
- Object directedness becomes a “compulsory” criterion of aesthetic character.

Felt Freedom

- **FF** is not a necessity.
- It is **linear**: some experiences may have it while some may not.
- **FF** can be defined as a feeling of relief or release, a situation where you feel like “flying”.
- It touches **your mind** and **your heart**.

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- It is one of the reasons why some people can become so feared of FF, regarding it to potentially lead to **“dangerous escapism”**, **drugs abuse** and **anti-social behavior**.

Detached Affect

- DA is intended to create **some degree of objectivity**, trying not to use emotion and subjective feeling to blind our judgment
- DA is also about **“stripping of” the instrumental “values”** of an artwork instance.
examples: not seeing a painting in terms of what it is made of

Active Discovery

- AD is more as a **cognitive act**, making use of our mind.
- It is a process of making **connections** and understanding **organizations**.
- It is about creating an **interpretation**, of what is perceived and what potential meanings can be drawn.
- It is about **“making sense of something”** and **“making something make sense”**

Wholeness

- **Wholeness**, in this case, is more about **coherence**.
- To cohere → to stick together, creating a unity
- Two levels of coherence:
 1. of the elements of the experience including the diverse mental acts, and events going in the mind, and
 2. of the self, the mind's healing sense of being all together and able to encompass perceptions, feelings, emotions, ideas, in a single integrated personhood.

That's all folks...