

The Nature of Aesthetic Appreciation.

Tutor: Fran Wilson-Copp

The following points are based on Chapter 5 of *Aesthetics: an introduction to the philosophy of art*, by Anne Sheppard, 1987, Oxford University Press, p. 56.

1. What is aesthetic pleasure? How is it distinguished from other emotions? What is an aesthetic response for, in terms of survival? Do animals have it?
2. How can something such as tragedy, which arouses pity or fear, be enjoyed? This must involve some sort of detachment. What is the nature of aesthetic detachment?
3. Immanuel Kant thought that aesthetic judgement could not be dictated by need or desire. We should have no interest in it except one of contemplation. Disinterestedness. Do you agree?
4. Kant considered beauty to be free or dependant. Dependant beauty takes into account specific criteria for judgement, as in Crufts dog contests. This is not therefore a true aesthetic judgement. Free beauty is experienced without applying a concept or a purpose to it, and this experience is therefore a true aesthetic response. Or is it?
5. Arthur Schopenhauer thought that aesthetic contemplation gives us knowledge of the Platonic Ideas, the universal conceived in the particular.
6. Edward Bullough used the example of fog at sea, which looks beautiful only if you are detached from the dangers or from practical navigation issues. Aesthetic appreciation will fail if we are too involved personally, as when we watch a play. We do not get up and physically attack the bad guy. Suspension of disbelief is not complete.
7. With an aesthetic response we may feel profound emotion but we take no action.
8. Can aesthetic judgement be taught? Are aesthetic judgements universal – do we all agree? There tends to be a majority who judge beauty similarly (or there would be no schools of design), but disputes arise and the role of the critic is to explain what he/she gets out of it, and to try and persuade us to react in the same way. Is it a matter of taste?
9. Can we make instant judgements? With complex works of art we may need to learn more about it to help us see what some others do, and especially to understand the manner of appreciation required.
10. We can be taught in different ways and from differing ideological points of view. Can aesthetic judgements be justified?

