Aesthetics

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Aesthetics (also spelled aesthetics or esthetics) is a branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of beauty, art, and taste, and with the creation and appreciation of beauty.[1] It is more scientifically defined as the study of sensory or sensori-emotional values, sometimes called judgments of sentiment and taste.[2] More broadly, scholars in the field define aesthetics as "critical reflection on art, culture and nature."[3][4] Aesthetics is a subdiscipline of axiology, a branch of philosophy, and is closely associated with the philosophy of art.[5] Aesthetics studies new ways of seeing and of perceiving the world.[6]

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Etymology

The term "aesthetics" was coined in the German form Ästhetik (modern spelling Ästhetik) by Alexander Baumgarten in 1735. It was derived from the Greek αἰσθητικός (aisthetikos, meaning "esthetic-sensitive-sentient"), which in turn was derived from αἰσθήση-αἰσθάνομαι (aisthese-aosathanomi, meaning "to

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aesthetics
Aesthetic judgment

Judgments of aesthetic value rely on our ability to discriminate at a sensory level. Aesthetics examines our affective domain response to an object or phenomenon. Immanuel Kant, writing in 1790, observes of a man "If he says that canary wine is agreeable he is quite content if someone else corrects his terms and reminds him to say instead: It is agreeable to me," because "Everyone has his own (sense of) taste". The case of "beauty" is different from mere "agreeableness" because, "If he proclaims something to be beautiful, then he requires the same liking from others; he then judges not just for himself but for everyone, and speaks of beauty as if it were a property of things."

Aesthetic judgments usually go beyond sensory discrimination. For David Hume, delicacy of taste is not merely "the ability to detect all the ingredients in a composition", but also our sensitivity "to pains as well as pleasures, which escape the rest of mankind." (Essays Moral Political and Literary. Indianapolis, Literary Classics 5, 1987.) Thus, the sensory discrimination is linked to capacity for pleasure. For Kant "enjoyment" is the result when pleasure arises from sensation, but judging something to be "beautiful" has a third requirement: sensation must give rise to pleasure by engaging our capacities of reflective contemplation. Judgments of beauty are sensory, emotional and intellectual all at once.

Viewer interpretations of beauty possess two concepts of value: aesthetics and taste. Aesthetics is the philosophical notion of beauty. Taste is a result of education and awareness of elite cultural values; therefore taste can be learned. Taste varies according to class, cultural background, and education. According to Kant, beauty is objective and universal; thus certain things are beautiful to everyone. The contemporary view of beauty is not based on innate qualities, but rather on cultural specifics and individual interpretations.

Factors involved in aesthetic judgment

Judgments of aesthetic value seem often to involve many other kinds of issues as well. Responses such as disgust show that sensory detection is linked in instinctual ways to facial expressions, and even behaviors like the gag reflex. Yet disgust can often be a learned or cultural issue too; as Darwin pointed out, seeing a stripe of soup in a man's beard is disgusting even though neither soup nor beards are themselves disgusting. Aesthetic judgments may be linked to emotions or, like emotions, partially embodied in our physical reactions. Seeing a sublime view of a landscape may give us a reaction of awe, which might manifest physically as an increased heart rate or widened eyes. These unconscious reactions may even be partly constitutive of what makes our judgment a judgment that the landscape is sublime.

Likewise, aesthetic judgments may be culturally conditioned to some extent. Victorians in Britain often saw African sculpture as ugly, but just a few decades later, Edwardian audiences saw the same sculptures as being beautiful. The Abuse of Beauty, Evaluations of beauty may well be linked to desirability, perhaps even to sexual desirability. Thus, judgments of aesthetic value can become linked to judgments of economic, political, or moral value.[8] We might judge a Lamborghini to be beautiful partly because it is desirable as a status symbol, or we might judge it to be repulsive partly because it signifies for us over-consumption and offends our political or moral values.[9]

"Part and Parcel in Animal and Human Societies". in Studies in animal and human behavior, vol. 2. pp. 115–195. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1971 (originally pub. 1950.) Aesthetic judgments can often be very fine-grained and internally contradictory. Likewise aesthetic judgments seem often to be at least partly intellectual and interpretative. It is what a thing means or symbolizes for us that is often what we are judging. Modern aestheticians have asserted that will and desire were almost dormant in aesthetic experience, yet preference and choice have seemed important aesthetics to some 20th century thinkers. The point is already made by Hume, but see Mary Mothersill, "Beauty and the Critic's Judgment", in The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics, 2004. Thus aesthetic judgments might be seen to be based on the senses, emotions, intellectual opinions, will, desires, culture, preferences, values, subconscious behavior, conscious decision, training, instinct, sociological institutions, or some complex combination of these, depending on exactly which theory one employs.

Anthropology, especially the savanna hypothesis proposed by Gordon Orians and others, predicts that some of the positive aesthetics that people have are based on innate knowledge of productive human habitats. It
had been shown that people prefer and feel happier looking at trees with spreading forms much more than looking at trees with other forms, or non-tree objects;[citation needed] also Bright green colors, linked with healthy plants with good nutrient qualities, were more calming than other tree colors, including less bright greens and oranges.

Are different art forms beautiful, disgusting, or boring in the same way?

A third major topic in the study of aesthetic judgments is how they are unified across art forms. We can call a person, a house, a symphony, a fragrance, and a mathematical proof beautiful. What characteristics do they share which give them that status? What possible feature could a proof and a fragrance both share in virtue of which they both count as beautiful? What makes a painting beautiful is quite different from what makes music beautiful, which suggests that each art form has its own language for the judgement of aesthetics.[10]

At the same time, there is seemingly quite a lack of words to express oneself accurately when making an aesthetic judgment. An aesthetic judgment cannot be an empirical judgement. Therefore, due to impossibility for precision, there is confusion about what interpretations can be culturally negotiated. Due to imprecision in the standard English language, two completely different feelings experienced by two different people can be represented by an identical verbal expression. Wittgenstein stated this in his lectures on aesthetics and language games.

A collective identification of beauty, with willing participants in a given social spectrum, may be a socially negotiated phenomenon, discussed in a culture or context. Is there some underlying unity to aesthetic judgment and is there some way to articulate the similarities of a beautiful house, beautiful proof, and beautiful sunset?[11] Defining it requires a description of the entire phenomenon, as Wittgenstein argued in his lectures on aesthetics. Likewise there has been long debate on how perception of beauty in the natural world, especially perception of the human form as beautiful, is supposed to relate to perceiving beauty in art or artefacts. This goes back at least to Kant, with some echoes even in St. Bonaventure.[citation needed]

Aesthetics and the philosophy of art

“Aesthetics is for painting as Ornithology is for the birds.”
— Barnett Newman [12]

Aesthetics is used by some as a synonym for the philosophy of art since Hegel, while others insist on a distinction between these closely related fields. In practice aesthetic judgement refers to the sensory contemplation or appreciation of an object (not necessarily an art object), while artistic judgement refers to the recognition, appreciation or criticism of art or an art work.

The philosophical aesthetics has not only to speak about art and to produce judgments about the art works, but has also to give a definition of what art is. Art is an autonomous entity for the philosophy, because art deals with the senses (i. e. the etymology of aesthetics) and art is as such free of any moral or political purpose. Hence, there are two different conceptions of art in the aesthetics : art as knowledge or art as action, but aesthetics is neither epistemology nor ethics[13].

What is "art?"

How best to define the term “art” is a subject of constant contention; many books and journal articles have been published arguing over even the basics of what we mean by the term “art”. [14] Theodor Adorno claimed in 1969 “It is self-evident that nothing concerning art is self-evident.”[15][16] Artists, philosophers, anthropologists, psychologists and programmers all use the notion of art in their respective fields, and give it operational definitions that vary considerably. Furthermore, it is clear that even the basic meaning of the term "art" has changed several times over the centuries, and has continued to evolve during the 20th century as well.

The main recent sense of the word “art” is roughly as an abbreviation for creative art or “fine art.” Here we
mean that skill is being used to express the artist’s creativity, or to engage the audience’s aesthetic sensibilities, or to draw the audience towards consideration of the “finer” things. Often, if the skill is being used in a functional object, people will consider it a craft instead of art, a suggestion which is highly disputed by many Contemporary Craft thinkers. Likewise, if the skill is being used in a commercial or industrial way it may be considered design instead of art, or contrariwise these may be defined as art forms, perhaps called applied art. Some thinkers, for instance, have argued that the difference between fine art and applied art has more to do with the actual function of the object than any clear definitional difference.[17] Art usually implies no function other than to convey or communicate an idea.

Even as late as 1912 it was normal in the West to assume that all art aims at beauty, and thus that anything that wasn't trying to be beautiful couldn't count as art. The cubists, dadaists, Stravinsky, and many later art movements struggled against this conception that beauty was central to the definition of art, with such success that, according to Danto, "Beauty had disappeared not only from the advanced art of the 1960’s but from the advanced philosophy of art of that decade as well."[15] Perhaps some notion like "expression" (in Croce’s theories) or "counter-environment" (in McLuhan’s theory) can replace the previous role of beauty. Brian Massumi brought back "beauty" into consideration together with "expression".[18] Another concept, as important to the philosophy of art as "beauty," is that of the "sublime," elaborated upon in the twentieth century by the postmodern philosopher Jean-François Lyotard.

Perhaps (as in Kennic's theory) no definition of art is possible anymore. Perhaps art should be thought of as a cluster of related concepts in a Wittgensteinian fashion (as in Weitz or Beuys). Another approach is to say that "art" is basically a sociological category, that whatever art schools and museums and artists define as art is considered art regardless of formal definitions. This "institutional definition of art" (see also Institutional Critique) has been championed by George Dickie. Most people did not consider the depiction of a Brillo Box or a store-bought urinal to be art until Andy Warhol and Marcel Duchamp (respectively) placed them in the context of art (i.e., the art gallery), which then provided the association of these objects with the associations that define art.

Proceduralists often suggest that it is the process by which a work of art is created or viewed that makes it art, not any inherent feature of an object, or how well received it is by the institutions of the art world after its introduction to society at large. Whereas if exactly the same set of words was written by a journalist, intending them as shorthand notes to help him write a longer article later, these would not be a poem. Leo Tolstoy, on the other hand, claims that what makes something art or not is how it is experienced by its audience, not by the intention of its creator. Functionalists like Monroe Beardsley argue that whether or not a piece counts as art depends on what function it plays in a particular context; the same Greek vase may play a non-artistic function in one context (carrying wine), and an artistic function in another context (helping us to appreciate the beauty of the human figure).

See also: Classificatory disputes about art

What should we judge when we judge art?

Art can be difficult at the metaphysical and ontological levels as well as at the value theory level. When we see a performance of Hamlet, how many works of art are we experiencing, and which should we judge? Perhaps there is only one relevant work of art, the whole performance, which many different people have contributed to, and which will exist briefly and then disappear. Perhaps the manuscript by Shakespeare is a distinct work of art from the play by the troupe, which is also distinct from the performance of the play by this troupe on this night, and all three can be judged, but are to be judged by different standards.

Perhaps every person involved should be judged separately on his or her own merits, and each costume or line is its own work of art (with perhaps the director having the job of unifying them all). Similar problems arise for music, film and even painting. Is one to judge the painting itself, the work of the painter, or perhaps the painting in its context of presentation by the museum workers?

These problems have been made even more difficult by the rise of conceptual art since the 1960s. Warhol’s famous Brillo Boxes are nearly indistinguishable from actual Brillo boxes at the time. It would be a mistake to praise Warhol for the design of his boxes (which were designed by Steve Harvey), yet the conceptual move of exhibiting these boxes as art in a museum together with other kinds of paintings is Warhol’s. Are we judging Warhol’s concept? His execution of the concept in the medium? The curator’s insight in letting Warhol display the boxes? The overall result? Our experience or interpretation of the result? Ontologically,

What should art be like?

Many goals have been argued for art, and aestheticians often argue that some goal or another is superior in some way. Clement Greenberg, for instance, argued in 1960 that each artistic medium should seek that which makes it unique among the possible mediums and then purify itself of anything other than expression of its own uniqueness as a form.\[19\] The Dadaist Tristan Tzara on the other hand saw the function of art in 1918 as the destruction of a mad social order. “We must sweep and clean. Affirm the cleanliness of the individual after the state of madness, aggressive complete madness of a world abandoned to the hands of bandits.”\[20\] Formal goals, creative goals, self-expression, political goals, spiritual goals, philosophical goals, and even more perceptual or aesthetic goals have all been popular pictures of what art should be like.

The value of art

Tolstoy defined art, and not incidentally characterized its value, this way: "Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings and also experience them."

The value of art, then, is one with the value of empathy.

Other possible views are these: Art can act as a means to some special kind of knowledge. Art may give insight into the human condition. Art relates to science and religion. Art serves as a tool of education, or indoctrination, or enculturation. Art makes us more moral. It uplifts us spiritually. Art is politics by other means. Art has the value of allowing catharsis. In any case, the value of art may determine the suitability of an art form. Do they differ significantly in their values, or (if not) in their ability to achieve the unitary value of art?

But to approach the question of the value of art systematically, one ought to ask: for whom? For the artist? For the audience? For society at large, and/or for individuals beyond the audience? Is the "value" of art different in each of these different contexts?

Working on the intended value of art tends to help define the relations between art and other acts. Art clearly does have spiritual goals in many contexts, but what exactly is the difference between religious art and religion per se? The truth is complex - Art is both useless in a functional sense and the most important human activity.

An argument for the value of art, used in the fictional work 'The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy', proceeds that, should some external force presenting imminent destruction of Earth, ask the inhabitants, of what use is humanity, what should humanity's response be? The argument continues that the only justification humanity could give for its continued existence would be the past creation and continued creation of things like a Shakespeare play, a Rembrandt painting or a Bach concerto. The suggestion is that these are the things of value which define humanity.\[21\]

Aesthetic universals

The philosopher Denis Dutton identified seven universal signatures in human aesthetics:\[22\]

1. Expertise or virtuosity. Technical artistic skills are cultivated, recognized, and admired.
2. Nonutilitarian pleasure. People enjoy art for art's sake, and don't demand that it keep them warm or put food on the table.
3. Style. Artistic objects and performances satisfy rules of composition that place them in a recognizable style.
4. Criticism. People make a point of judging, appreciating, and interpreting works of art.
5. Imitation. With a few important exceptions like abstract painting, works of art simulate experiences of the world.
6. Special focus. Art is set aside from ordinary life and made a dramatic focus of experience.

It might be objected, however, that there are rather too many exceptions to Dutton's categories. For
example, the installations of the contemporary artist Thomas Hirschhorn deliberately eschew technical virtuosity. People can appreciate a Renaissance Madonna for aesthetic reasons, but such objects often had (and sometimes still have) specific devotional functions. 'Rules of composition' that might be read into Duchamp's *Fountain* or John Cage's *4'33''* do not locate the works in a recognizable style (or certainly not a style recognizable at the time of the works' realisation). Moreover, some of Dutton's categories seem too broad: a physicist might entertain hypothetical worlds in his/her imagination in the course of formulating a theory.

Increasingly, academics in both the sciences and the humanities are looking to evolutionary psychology and cognitive science in an effort to understand the connection between psychology and aesthetics. Aside from Dutton, others exploring this realm include David Bordwell, Brian Boyd, Christine Buci-Glucksmann, Noel Carroll, Ellen Dissanayake, Nancy Easterlin, Bracha Ettinger, David Evans, Jonathan Gottschall, Torben Grodal, Paul Hernadi., Patrick Hogan, Carl Plantinga, Elaine Scarry, Murray Smith, Wendy Steiner, Robert Storey, Frederick Turner, and Mark Turner.

**Criticism**

The philosophy of aesthetics has been criticized by some sociologists and writers about art and society. Raymond Williams argues that there is no unique aesthetic object but a continuum of cultural forms from ordinary speech to experiences that are signaled as art by a frame, institution or special event. Pierre Bourdieu also takes issue with Kant's aesthetics and argues that it represents an experience that is the product of an elevated class habitus and scholarly leisure.

**History of aesthetics**

*Ancient aesthetics*

We have examples of pre-historic art, but they are rare, and the context of their production and use is not very clear, so we can little more than guess at the aesthetic doctrines that guided their production and interpretation.

Ancient art was largely, but not entirely, based on the seven great ancient civilizations: Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, Persia, India and China. Each of these centers of early civilization developed a unique and characteristic style in its art. Greece had the most influence on the development of aesthetics in the West. This period of Greek art saw a veneration of the human physical form and the development of corresponding skills to show musculature, poise, beauty and anatomically correct proportions. Furthermore, in many Western and Eastern cultures alike, traits such as body hair are rarely depicted in art that addresses physical beauty. More in contrast with this Greek-Western aesthetic taste is the genre of grotesque.

Greek philosophers initially felt that aesthetically appealing objects were beautiful in and of themselves. Plato felt that beautiful objects incorporated proportion, harmony, and unity among their parts. Similarly, in the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle found that the universal elements of beauty were order, symmetry, and definiteness.

*Islamic aesthetics*

Islamic art is not, properly speaking, an art pertaining to religion only. The term "Islamic" refers not only to the religion, but to any form of art created in an Islamic culture or in an Islamic context. It would also be a mistake to assume that all Muslims are in agreement on the use of art in religious observance, the proper place of art in society, or the relation between secular art and the demands placed on the secular world to conform to religious precepts. Islamic art frequently adopts secular elements and elements that are frowned upon, if not forbidden, by some Islamic theologians.

According to Islam, human works of art are inherently flawed compared to the work of God; thus, it is believed by many that to attempt to depict in a realistic form any animal or person is insolence to God. This tendency has had the effect of narrowing the field of artistic possibility to such forms of art as Arabesque, mosaic, Islamic calligraphy, and Islamic architecture, as well as more generally any form of
abstraction that can claim the status of non-representational art.

The limited possibilities have been explored by artists as an outlet to artistic expression, and has been cultivated to become a positive style and tradition, emphasizing the decorative function of art, or its religious functions via non-representational forms such as Geometric patterns, floral patterns, and arabesques.

Human or animal depiction is generally forbidden altogether in Islamic cultures because it is said to lead to sculptural pieces which then leads to worship of that sculpture or "idol". Human portrayals can be found in early Islamic cultures with varying degrees of acceptance by religious authorities. Human representation for the purpose of worship that is uniformly considered idolatry as forbidden in Sharia law. There are many depictions of Muhammad, Islam's chief prophet, in historical Islamic art.[25][26]

The calligraphic arts grew out an effort to devote oneself to the study of the Quran. By patiently transcribing each word of the text, the writer was made to contemplate the meaning of it. As time passed, these calligraphic works began to be prized as works of art, growing increasingly elaborate in the illumination and stylizing of the text. These illuminations were applied to other works besides the Quran, and it became a respected art form in and of itself.

Indian aesthetics

Indian art evolved with an emphasis on inducing special spiritual or philosophical states in the audience, or with representing them symbolically. According to Kapila Vatsyan, "Classical Indian architecture, sculpture, painting, literature (kāvyā), music, and dancing evolved their own rules conditioned by their respective media, but they shared with one another not only the underlying spiritual beliefs of the Indian religio-philosophic mind, but also the procedures by which the relationships of the symbol and the spiritual states were worked out in detail."

Of particular concern to Indian drama and literature is the term rasa referring generally to the emotional flavors crafted into the work by the writer and relished by a 'sensitive spectator' or sahodaya. Poets like Kālidāsa were attentive to rasa, which blossomed into a fully developed aesthetic system. Even in contemporary India the term rasa denoting "flavor" is used colloquially to describe the aesthetic experiences in films; "māsala mix" describes popular Hindi cinema films which serve a balanced emotional meal, savored as rasa by the spectator.

Rasa theory blossoms beginning with the Sanskrit text Nātyashāstra (nātya meaning "drama" and śāstra meaning "science of"), a work attributed to Bharata Muni where the Gods declare that drama is the 'Fifth Veda' because it is suitable for the degenerate age as the best form of religious instruction. While the date of composition varies wildly among scholars, ranging from the era of Plato and Aristotle to the seventh century CE. The Nātyashāstra presents the aesthetic concepts of rasas and their associated bhāvas in Chapters Six and Seven respectively, which appear to be independent of the work as a whole. Eight rasas and associated bhāvas are named and their enjoyment is likened to savoring a meal: rasa is the enjoyment of flavors that arise from the proper preparation of ingredients and the quality of ingredients. What rasa actually is, in a theoretical sense, is not discussed and given the Nātyashāstra's pithy wording it is unlikely the exact understanding of the original author(s) will be known.

The theory of the rasas develops significantly with the Kashmiri aesthetician Āndandavardhana's classic on poetics, the Dhvanyāloka which introduces the ninth rasa, shānta-rasa as a specifically religious feeling of peace (śānta) which arises from its bhāva, weariness of the pleasures of the world. The primary purpose of this text is to refine the literary concept dhvani or poetic suggestion, by arguing for the existence of rasa-dhvani, primarily in forms of Sanskrit including a word, sentence or whole work "suggests" a real-world emotional state or bhāva, but thanks to aesthetic distance, the sensitive spectator relishes the rasa, the aesthetic flavor of tragedy, heroism or romance.

The 9th - 10th century master of the religious system known as "the nondual Shaivism of Kashmir" (or "Kashmir Shaivism") and aesthetician, Abhinavagupta brought rasa theory to its pinnacle in his separate commentaries on the Dhvanyāloka, the Dhvanyāloka-locana (translated by Ingalls, Masson and Patwardhan, 1992) and the Abhinavabharati, his commentary on the Nātyashāstra, portions of which are translated by Gnoli and Masson and Patwardhan. Abhinavagupta offers for the first time a technical definition of rasa which is the universal bliss of the Self or Atman colored by the emotional tone of a drama. Shānta-rasa functions as an equal member of the set of rasas but is simultaneously distinct being the
most clear form of aesthetic bliss. Abhinavagupta likens it to the string of a jeweled necklace; while it may not be the most appealing for most people, it is the string that gives form to the necklace, allowing the jewels of the other eight rasas to be relished. Relishing the rasas and particularly śānta-rasa is hinted as being as-good-as but never-equal-to the bliss of Self-realization experienced by yogis.

**Chinese aesthetics**

Chinese art has a long history of varied styles and emphases. In ancient times philosophers were already arguing about aesthetics. Confucius emphasized the role of the arts and humanities (especially music and poetry) in broadening human nature and aiding “li” (etiquette, the rites) in bringing us back to what is essential about humanity. His opponent Mozi, however, argued that music and fine arts were classist and wasteful, benefiting the rich but not the common people.

By the 4th century A.D., artists were debating in writing over the proper goals of art as well. Gu Kaizhi has 3 surviving books on this theory of painting, for example, and it's not uncommon to find later artist/scholars who both create art and write about the creating of art. Religious and philosophical influence on art was common (and diverse) but never universal; it is easy to find art that largely ignores philosophy and religion in almost every Chinese time period.

**African aesthetics**

African art existed in many forms and styles, and with fairly little influence from outside Africa. Most of it followed traditional forms and the aesthetic norms were handed down orally as well as written. Sculpture and performance art are prominent, and abstract and partially abstracted forms are valued, and were valued long before influence from the Western tradition began in earnest. The Nok culture is testimony to this. The mosque of Timbuktu shows that specific areas of Africa developed unique aesthetics.

**Western medieval aesthetics**

Surviving medieval art is largely religious in focus, and typically was funded by the State, Orthodox or Roman Catholic church, powerful ecclesiastical individuals, or wealthy secular patrons. Often the pieces have an intended liturgical function, such as chalices or churches.

Medieval Art Objects were made from rare and valuable materials, such as Gold and Lapis, the cost of which was often superior to the wages of the maker.

Art and aesthetic philosophy was a continuation of ancient lines of thought, with the additional use of explicit theological categories. St. Bonaventure’s “Retracing the Arts to Theology” discusses the skills of the artisan as gifts given by God for the purpose of disclosing God to mankind via four “lights”: the light of skill in mechanical arts which discloses the world of artifacts, as guided by the light of sense perception which discloses the world of natural forms, as guided by the light of philosophy which discloses the world of intellectual truth, as guided by the light of divine wisdom which discloses the world of saving truth.

Saint Thomas Aquinas' aesthetic theory is arguably more famous and influential among the medieval aesthetic theories, having been explicitly used in the writing of the famous writer James Joyce as well as many other influential 20th century authors. Thomas, as with many of the other mediavels, never explicitly gives an account of "beauty" in itself, but the theory is reconstructed on the basis of disparate comments in a wide array of works. His theory follows the classical model of Aristotle, but with explicit formulation of beauty as "pulchrum transcendentale" or convertible with being among the other "transcendental" such as "truth" and "goodness." Umberto Eco's *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas* identifies the three main characteristics of beautiful things in Aquinas' philosophy as integritas, consonantia, and claritas. Aristotle identifies the first two characteristics, with the third being an "innovation" of Aquinas in the light of Platonic/neoplatonic and Augustinian thought. In sum, medieval aesthetic, while not a unified system, presents a unique view of beauty that deserves an in-depth treatment in the history of art. Coleridge devises two analogous terms: multeity and unity, which lead to effulgence (Aquinas' claritas), arising from the other two, and then causing an "effluence of delight" in the perceiver. Gerard Manley Hopkins would later coin
the terms inscape and instress to describe these effects.

As the medieval world shifts into the Renaissance, art again returns to focus on this world and on secular issues of human life. The philosophy of art of the ancient Greeks and Romans is re-appropriated.

Modern aesthetics

From the late 17th to the early 20th century Western aesthetics underwent a slow revolution into what is often called modernism. German and British thinkers emphasised beauty as the key component of art and of the aesthetic experience, and saw art as necessarily aiming at beauty.

For Baumgarten aesthetics is the science of the sense experiences, a younger sister of logic, and beauty is thus the most perfect kind of knowledge that sense experience can have. For Kant the aesthetic experience of beauty is a judgment of a subjective but universal truth, since all people should agree that "this rose is beautiful" if it in fact is. However, beauty cannot be reduced to any more basic set of features. For Schiller aesthetic appreciation of beauty is the most perfect reconciliation of the sensual and rational parts of human nature.

For Schelling, the philosophy of art is the "organon" of philosophy. Aesthetics is now the name for the philosophy of art. Friedrich von Schlegel, August Wilhelm Schlegel, Schleiermacher and Hegel have also given lectures on aesthetics as "philosophy of art" after 1800. For Hegel all culture is a matter of "absolute spirit" coming to be manifest to itself, stage by stage. Art is the first stage in which the absolute spirit is manifest immediately to sense-perception, and is thus an objective rather than subjective revelation of beauty.

For Schopenhauer aesthetic contemplation of beauty is the most free that the pure intellect can be from the dictates of will; here we contemplate perfection of form without any kind of worldly agenda, and thus any intrusion of utility or politics would ruin the point of the beauty.

The British were largely divided into intuitionist and analytic camps. The intuitionists believed that aesthetic experience was disclosed by a single mental faculty of some kind. For the Earl of Shaftesbury this was identical to the moral sense, beauty just is the sensory version of moral goodness. For Wittgenstein aesthetics consisted in the description of a whole culture which is a linguistic impossibility. That which constitutes aesthetics lies out side the realm of the language game.

For Oscar Wilde the contemplation of beauty for beauty's sake was not only the foundation for much of his literary career but was quoted as saying "Aestheticism is a search after the signs of the beautiful. It is the science of the beautiful though which men seek the correlation of the arts. It is, to speak more exactly, the search after the secret of life." [27].

Wilde famously toured the United States in 1882. He travelled across the United States spreading the idea of Aesthetics in a speech called "The English Renaissance." In his speech he proposed that Beauty and Aesthetics was not "not languid but energetic. By beautifying the outward aspects of life, one would beautify the inner ones." The English Renaissance was, he said, "like the Italian Renaissance before it,a sort of rebirth of the spirit of man",[28]...
intricacy, which provides employment for our active energies, leading the eye on "a wanton kind of chase"; and (6) quantity or magnitude, which draws our attention and produces admiration and awe. Later analytic aestheticians strove to link beauty to some scientific theory of psychology (such as James Mill) or biology (such as Herbert Spencer).

**Post-modern aesthetics and psychoanalysis**

Early twentieth century artists, poets and composers challenged the assumption that beauty was central to art and aesthetics. Various attempts have been made since then to define Post-modern aesthetics.

This challenge, thought to be original, is actually continuous with older aesthetic theory; Aristotle was the first in the Western tradition to classify "beauty" into types as in his theory of drama, and Kant made a distinction between beauty and the sublime. What was new was a refusal to credit the higher status of certain types, where the taxonomy implied a preference for tragedy and the sublime to comedy and the Rococo.

Croce suggested that “expression” is central in the way that beauty was once thought to be central. George Dickie suggested that the sociological institutions of the art world were the glue binding art and sensibility into unities. Marshall McLuhan suggested that art always functions as a "counter-environment" designed to make visible what is usually invisible about a society. Theodor Adorno felt that aesthetics could not proceed without confronting the role of the culture industry in the commodification of art and aesthetic experience. Hal Foster (art critic) attempted to portray the reaction against beauty and Modernist art in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. Arthur Danto has described this reaction as "kalliphobia" (after the Greek word for beauty - 'kalos').

Daniel Berlyne created the field of experimental aesthetics in the 1970s, for which he is still the most cited individual decades after his death.

Jean-François Lyotard re-invokes the Kantian distinction between taste and the sublime. Sublime painting, unlike kitsch realism, "...will enable us to see only by making it impossible to see; it will please only by causing pain."

Sigmund Freud inaugurated aesthetical thinking in Psychoanalysis mainly via the "Uncanny" as aesthetical affect. Following Freud and Merleau-Ponty, Jacques Lacan theorized aesthetics in terms of sublimation and the Thing.

**Aesthetics and information**

In the 1970s, Abraham Moles and Frieder Nake were among the first to analyze links between aesthetics, information processing, and information theory.

In the 1990s, Jürgen Schmidhuber described an algorithmic theory of beauty which takes the subjectivity of the observer into account and postulates: among several observations classified as comparable by a given subjective observer, the aesthetically most pleasing one is the one with the shortest description, given the observer's previous knowledge and his particular method for encoding the data. This is closely related to the principles of algorithmic information theory and minimum description length. One of his examples: mathematicians enjoy simple proofs with a short description in their formal language. Another very concrete example describes an aesthetically pleasing
human face whose proportions can be described by very few bits of information\(^{[41][42]}\), drawing inspiration from less detailed 15th century proportion studies by Leonardo da Vinci and Albrecht Dürer.

Schmidhuber's theory explicitly distinguishes between what's beautiful and what's interesting, stating that interestingness corresponds to the first derivative of subjectively perceived beauty. Here the premise is that any observer continually tries to improve the predictability and compressibility of the observations by discovering regularities such as repetitions and symmetries and fractal self-similarity. Whenever the observer's learning process (which may be a predictive neural network - see also Neuroaesthetics) leads to improved data compression such that the observation sequence can be described by fewer bits than before, the temporary interestingness of the data corresponds to the number of saved bits. This compression progress is proportional to the observer's internal reward, also called curiosity reward. A reinforcement learning algorithm is used to maximize future expected reward by learning to execute action sequences that cause additional interesting input data with yet unknown but learnable predictability or regularity. The principles can be implemented on artificial agents which then exhibit a form of artificial curiosity\(^{[43][44][45][46]}\).

**Pneumaist aesthetics**

**Pneumaist aestheticism** is a theory of art that posits the beauty of creating works of art without the constrictions of traditional and contemporary art theory or the limitations inherent in defining art by its historical “isms.” This is not to be confused with that branch of ancient knowledge called *pneumatism*, which originated in ancient Greece, and usually associated with medicine. “In medicine, the Alexandrian medical school, or sect, based on the theory that life is associated with a subtle vapour called the pneuma; it was, in essence, an attempt to explain respiration. Pneumatism was expounded by the Greek anatomist and physiologist Erasistratus about 300 bc, though the concept had been suggested earlier by other commentators. Unlike his contemporary, the Alexandrian anatomist Herophilus, who accepted the old theory of humoral pathology (i.e., that human temperament and features were determined by certain combinations of body fluids), Erasistratus held that health and disease and, in fact, the nature of life were intimately (connected).” — Britannica Online Encyclopedia (bracket added) Pneumaist, is “art of the spirit that is inspired by the Spirit of God.” The usage of this aesthetic form was first noted in the 1997 essays of Canadian drawing master, Gerrit Verstraete, to which he formally added the word *pneumaist* in 2000. In his writings he expanded pneumaist form to be “a revolution in art.” From “observations,” in June 2000, and the artist’s first attempt at a small pneumaist sketch in his journal, he observed the following:

To explore the art of Pneumaist, the artist must be in an "attitude" of creativity. Such an attitude must aim to limit external stimuli to a minimum so not to confuse that which he sees in the Spirit with things he has just observed around him in the natural. This attitude is fraud with temptation to preclude such an attitude is in fact a "trance." Attitude is not a trance, or trance-like state of being. Attitude of creativity is a (albeit brief) period of reflection that precedes drawing in Pneumaist form and style. Thus attitude differs from "en plein air," in that preparation for Pneumaist is not limited, as in "en plein air," to observation, contemplation, and materials at hand. Instead, attitude goes beyond observation and contemplation to include getting in touch with the Spirit of God. Attitude is not an artistic reaction, either to the emotions of a moment, or to an overwhelming desire to create. Neither is attitude induced by music, even though music is able to assist an attitude. Pneumaist art begins (on paper, on canvas, etc.) in the human spirit through direct contact with the Spirit of God, from where the artform is finished in the natural through conventional means of craftsmanship, discipline, medium, and technique. Pneumaist is a creative expression of the present, as the artist "sees" like the ancient "seers" of centuries ago. Pneumaist content, style, and form are not an attempt to express the subconscious. A Pneumaist draws (or paints) what he sees, without any attempt to represent form in realistic style, that is "to draw a picture." Nevertheless, portions of the drawing can be expressed in any one, or combination, of my Academy, Renaissance, and Mixed Media styles.(Gerrit Verstraete 19:37, 28 April 2010 (UTC))

**The pneumaist style of drawing and painting** embodies the process of classical construction and expressionist abstract deconstruction with conceptual construction as an objective for the final form of mark making. It enables the artist to embrace artistic traditions of the past, process them into contemporary modes of expression and liberate them into conceptual constructs. Pneumaist, which means “art of the spirit,” began as a free-form expression but with meaning, in antithesis to the plethora of consumer, market-driven art of the twenty-first century. During April 2004, a first exhibition of pneumaist work was held at the Centre Gallery on Gabriola Island, British Columbia, on the Pacific northwest coast of Canada. The exhibition was titled: “Outside the Box,” by artist Gerrit Verstraete (1945-). The series of
experimental paintings were the result of a relatively obscure time of birthing Pneumaism dating back even earlier to 1993. The greatest exposure for this new form of art, other than sporadic exhibitions, has been an increasing awareness in digital format online both in image format and critical writing. As a philosophy of art it comprises five critical stages: the search for meaning without, the search for meaning within, the mastery of technique and media, the inner voice within, the outer voice. The art form’s theosophical underpinnings embrace the belief that art of the human spirit, when inspired by the Spirit of God, brings new life to an exhausted contemporary world of art and artists. (Gerrit Verstraete 19:54, 28 April 2010 (UTC))

**Applied aesthetics**

*Main article: Applied aesthetics*

As well as being applied to art aesthetics can also be applied to cultural objects. Aesthetic coupling between art-objects and medical topics was made by speakers working for the US Information Agency[47] This coupling was made to reinforce the learning paradigm when English-language speakers used translators to address audiences in their own country. These audiences were generally not fluent in the English language. It can also be used in topics as diverse as mathematics, gastronomy and fashion design.

**Aesthetic ethics**

Aesthetic ethics refers to the idea that human conduct and behaviour ought to be governed by that which is beautiful and attractive. John Dewey [48] has pointed out that the unity of aesthetics and ethics is in fact reflected in our understanding of behaviour being "fair" - the word having a double meaning of attractive and morally acceptable. More recently, James Page [49] has suggested that aesthetic ethics might be taken to form a philosophical rationale for peace education.

**Truth as beauty, mathematics, analytic philosophy, and physics**

Mathematical considerations, such as symmetry and complexity, are used for analysis in theoretical aesthetics. This is different from the aesthetic considerations of applied aesthetics used in the study of mathematical beauty. Aesthetic considerations such as symmetry and simplicity are used in areas of philosophy, such as ethics and theoretical physics and cosmology to define truth, outside of empirical considerations. Beauty and Truth have been argued to be nearly synonymous.[50]

**Computational inference of aesthetics**

Since about 2005, computer scientists have attempted to develop automated methods to infer aesthetic quality of images. Large number of manually rated online photographs were used to "teach" computers about what visual properties are of relevance to aesthetic quality. The Acquine engine, developed at Penn State University, rates natural photographs uploaded by users.[51]

Notable in this area is Michael Leyton, professor of psychology at Rutgers University. Leyton is the president of the International Society for Mathematical and Computational Aesthetics and the International Society for Group Theory in Cognitive Science and has developed a generative theory of shape.

**See also**

- Aesthetes
- Aestheticism
- Aesthetic emotions
- Aesthetic Realism
- Aesthetic relativism
- Learning Islamic Aesthetes in Christchurch, NZ (Al-Huda Islamic Charitable Trust)
- Anti-art
- Art object
- Beauty
- Classificatory disputes about art
Cool (African philosophy)

Cultural sensibility

Gaze

Golden ratio

History of aesthetics (pre-20th-century)

Humanistic Aestheticism

Industrial Design

Japanese Iki (aesthetic ideal)

List of aestheticians

List of topics in philosophical aesthetics

Lookism

Marxist aesthetics

Mathematics and art

Music and emotion

Michel Tapié

Neuroaesthetics

Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime

Lyco art

Perfection ("Aesthetic perfection")

Physical attraction

Postmodern art

Psychology of art

Schopenhauer's aesthetics

Semiotics of Ideal Beauty

Sexual attraction

Sexual selection

Sublime

Taste (aesthetics)

Theological aesthetics

Ugliness

Wabi-sabi

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14. ^ Goodman,
15. ^ Novitz, 1992
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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aesthetics