

Introduction to Philosophy

Art and Aesthetic Judgment: Objective Features of Fine Art

As you read the material for the next class, keep the questions below in mind. To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages. Keep in mind that there are two basic kinds of information that you need to look for in the readings:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible conclusion about an issue, rather than another.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently to these issues in the next class meeting.

Reading

- Aristotle, *Poetics*.

Background

See the reading for a fine introduction to this material.

Questions

1. Why do people, according to Aristotle, naturally get pleasure from “mimesis” (imitation)? Is this a convincing argument for why we generally enjoy works of art?
2. Aristotle attempts to provide an account of the objective features that art must possess in order to be a piece of fine art. In particular, he focuses on the elements that a good tragedy must have. What are these elements? For instance: what type of tragic plot is best according to Aristotle? What is his distinction between spectacle and the structure of incidents in a tragedy and why is spectacle less significant than the structure of incidents? Do these elements apply to the films you enjoy? Ultimately, is Aristotle correct that fine art must possess certain objective features?
3. Why does Aristotle claim that “poetry is more serious and philosophical thing than history”? Is this convincing?