

## **Aesthetics: intercollegiate lectures**

**Aims of the course:** This course contributes to the general aims and objectives of the Philosophy Department by enabling students to acquire a detailed understanding of aesthetics and the philosophy of art.

**Objectives:** Students completing the course will (a) acquire a detailed knowledge of central figures in the history of philosophical reflection on art and beauty (including Plato, Aristotle, Hume, Kant, Schiller and Hegel) and of central problems in aesthetics and the philosophy of art (including the nature of artistic expression and of pictorial representation; the ontological status of works of art; the nature of aesthetic judgement and experience; the role of imagination); (b) be required in finals to answer questions to show knowledge of the problems and history of aesthetics and the philosophy of art.

Lectures take place on Thursday 1-2 p.m., in Room 508, Engineering Building, UCL. This year's lecture course is divided into three parts:

### **Part I: Art, Romanticism & Metaphysics** (Sebastian Gardner, UCL) Term 1 weeks 1-7

These lectures will look at the aesthetics of central figures in the post-Kantian philosophical tradition, with special attention to the romantic conception of art, the relation between art and truth, and the relation between the theory of art and metaphysics. Theorists discussed include Kant, Schiller, Fichte, Novalis, Hölderlin, Schelling, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer and Adorno.

### **Part II: Fiction: Imagination and Emotion** (Peter Goldie, KCL) Term 1 weeks 8-10 and term 2 weeks 1-5

These lectures will be concerned with the role of the emotions and imagination in our experiences of fictional works of all sorts: novels, movies, plays, opera, soap opera.

When we respond emotionally to fictional works, what is the nature of the emotional response, and are the emotions that we experience of the same kind as those that we experience in response to real life events? Why do we care about the

fate of characters in fiction even when we believe them not to exist? And why do we sometimes care *more* about fictional characters than we would if we knew them to be real people? What contrasts are there between our aesthetic emotional responses to fiction and our moral responses, and how do they interrelate? Are there appropriate and inappropriate emotional responses that one can have to a fictional work, and if so, how is the notion of appropriateness to be explained?

We often use our imagination when experiencing fictional works, particularly when responding emotionally. What sort of imagination is involved, and is it different in, for example, watching movies than it is in reading novels? Also, is the imagining different when we 'identify' or 'empathise' with a fictional character from when we respond as 'observers' or 'spectators', and how can this difference be explained? What is the relation between the imagining that we do when we respond to fiction and the imagining of other non-actual events and situations, such as is involved when planning what to do or when imagining what we will be like when we are twenty years older?

There may not be time to address all of these questions, let alone to attempt to answer them; but hopefully this gives a flavour of what will be involved. If anyone would like to do some reading in advance, there are some very good papers in *Emotion and the Arts*, edited by M. Hjort and S Laver.

### **Part III: Art and Authenticity** (Peter Gallagher, Heythrop) Term 2 weeks 6-10

This part of the course will consider a number of questions relating to art and authenticity. What makes a performance of a musical work or a play authentic? What precisely is the relation between the performance and the work itself? How does one distinguish the authentic and the inauthentic if they look the same? Can a work of art be both conventional and authentic? Can the inauthentic have any artistic merit? If to be authentic is not always to be sincere are there any other ethical characteristics of artistic authenticity? In what sense is authentic art true to nature? Is authenticity ever the same as originality? Is authenticity always culturally determined? Attempting to answer these questions will involve engaging with important arguments in a number of contemporary philosophers,

notably Danto, Gadamer, Goodman, and Wollheim. An additional vantage point will be some of the aesthetic and critical writings of Denis Diderot 1713-1784, who, in *Rameau's Nephew*, invented a certain kind of authenticity, and who in his notes about the paintings in the Salons of the 1760s offers highly instructive descriptions of the relationships between nature and culture and between invention and convention. In *The Paradox of the Actor* he defends the view that great acting requires moral and emotional detachment rather than engagement. He also suggests that artistic sensibility is an impediment to authentic action. Diderot's arguments, and the irony with which he may have advanced them, will be analysed and evaluated.

NB Lectures on **Kant's aesthetics** will also be given as part of the annual intercollegiate lectures on the Philosophy of Kant, in the second half of term 2 (i.e. weeks 6-10) on Monday 6-7 p.m., in B8 Gresse St, Birkbeck College. Also relevant to Part I of the course are the lectures on Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche given for the intercollegiate Nineteenth-Century German Philosophy lecture course (Thursday 6-7 p.m., in Room D103, 25 Gordon Street, UCL).