



Self-Portrait, Vigée Le Brun, 1790



Frederick and Jessie Etchells Painting, Vanessa Bell, 1912

(MOSTLY) 19TH CENTURY GERMAN AESTHETICS
Philosophy 290 Graduate Seminar
Fall 2017: Tuesdays, 5:20-8:45

Instructor:

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:15-5:15 and by appointment

Course Description:

In 1790, Immanuel Kant offered the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* as the final piece of his system of critical philosophy, the key to bridging his philosophy of nature and freedom. While the third *Critique* was thus a culminating point for Kant's philosophical system, it was at the same time served as a catalyst for philosophical aesthetics in Germany, and beyond, the 19th century. Indeed, if we look back at the third *Critique* from the perspective of Vernon Lee's 1912 *Beauty and Ugliness*, we see that Kant's work served as the touchstone for many of the major trends in aesthetics, ranging from German Idealism to psychologism, the aesthetics of art to the aesthetics of life.

Influence, of course, does not amount to agreement and the trajectory of 19th century German aesthetics is no exception. Though early on Schiller defends a broadly Kantian account of aesthetic education, the critical approach to aesthetics quickly gave way to the metaphysical approach to aesthetics that dominated German Idealism. Thus instead of analyzing the nature and conditions of the possibility of aesthetic experience as Kant and Schiller do, Schelling, Hegel, and Schopenhauer, and their heirs, including Coleridge, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard, pursue aesthetics with an eye to its metaphysical foundations and its capacity to reveal metaphysical truths.

To be sure, questions concerning the nature of aesthetic experience did not cease to be of philosophical interest for these thinkers. For their part, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard begin to think through the diversity of aesthetic experience, as something no longer tethered to the orderly pleasure of the beautiful, but as capable of manifesting more wildly in the intoxication or seduction of the aesthete. Meanwhile, Dilthey, in his more Kantian vein, and Lee, in her more Lipps-inspired

psychologistic vein, offer accounts of aesthetic experience consistent with empirical research in psychology.

Thus by the time Lee publishes *Beauty and Ugliness* in 1912, the landscape of philosophical aesthetics had transformed in radical ways since the third *Critique*, with the metaphysical and psychological approaches serving as serious competitors to the Kantian critical approach. And it is the development of this complex terrain in philosophical aesthetics between 1790 and 1912 that we shall explore in this class.

Of particular interest for us will be the following sets of questions about the arch of (mostly) 19th century German aesthetics:

- (1) *Aesthetic Education*. What role does aesthetic education play in connecting aesthetics and morality? In addition to the moral-oriented account of aesthetic education, are there non-moral or extra-moral accounts of aesthetic education that emerge?
- (2) *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*. What different models of aesthetic experience emerge? How cognitivist or non-cognitivist are these models? How important a role do pleasure, beauty, or the emotions play in them?
- (3) *The Place of Art*. What are the trends in how much value is placed on art in relation to nature? What are the trends in how much value is placed on art in relation to philosophy?
- (4) *Methodology*. How does the conception of the appropriate philosophical methodology for aesthetics shift?

Texts:

Required

Available at the Literary Guillotine:

- Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, transl. Guyer and Matthews. Cambridge University Press (2000)
- Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, transl. Tribe. Penguin (2016)
- F.W.J. Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, transl. Stott. University of Minnesota Press (2008)
- Samuel Coleridge, *The Major Works*. Oxford World Classics (2009)
- G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, Vol. 1, transl. Knox. Oxford University Press (1998)
- Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Vol. 1, transl. Norman, Welchman, Janaway. Cambridge University Press (2014).
- Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, transl. Speirs. Cambridge University Press (1999)

On Canvas:

- F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, transl. Heath. University of Virginia Press (1993)
- Wilhelm Dilthey, *Selected Works, Volume 5: Poetry and Experience*, transl. Makkreel, Rodi. Princeton University Press (1996)
- Vernon Lee and C. Anstruther-Thomson, *Beauty and Ugliness and Other Studies in Psychological Aesthetics*, John Lane (1912)

Recommended:

For background on modern aesthetics prior to Kant:

- Fred Beiser, *Diotima's Children*. Oxford University Press. 2009.
- J.M. Bernstein, ed. *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics*. Cambridge University Press. 2003.
- Paul Guyer, *A History of Modern Aesthetics*, Volume 1. Cambridge University Press. 2014.

For overviews of Kant's aesthetics:

- Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 2nd ed (1997)
- Henry Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste* (2001)
- Christian Wenzel, *An Introduction to Kant's Aesthetics* (2005)
- Rachel Zuckert, *Kant on Beauty and Biology* (2007)

For German aesthetics in the 19th century:

- Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche*. Manchester University Press, 2000 (2nd ed.)
- Andrew Bowie, "German Idealism and the Arts." Ch. 12 of the *Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, ed. Karl Ameriks
- Paul Guyer, *A History of Modern Aesthetics*, Volume 2, Parts 1 and 3. Cambridge University Press. 2014.
- Eldridge, Richard, ed. *Beyond Representation: Philosophy and Poetic Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Larmore, Charles. *The Romantic Legacy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.
- Savile, Anthony. *Aesthetic Reconstructions: The Seminal Writings of Lessing, Kant, and Schiller*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1987.

Course Requirements

(1) Attendance and Participation

Everyone is expected to come to class having thoroughly read the material and everyone is expected to participate, either by asking questions or making a contribution to discussion. If you are interested, you are also welcome (and encouraged) to make a brief 5-10 minute presentation in class.

(2) Two Reading Responses

In the course of the term, you are to write two 2-page, double-spaced reading responses on a single passage (i.e., a paragraph or a page) from the text we are reading that week. In this response you are to analyze the passage, then raise some questions and possible objections to it. You are to do one reading response during weeks 2-5 and one reading response during weeks 6-9.

Reading responses are due by 5pm on Mondays for the reading for the upcoming Tuesday, e.g., if you are writing about the assignment for Tuesday October 17th, the response is due at 5pm on October 16th. You are to post these on the discussion forum on XX for our course.

Everyone is expected to read what the others have posted prior to class.

(3) Paper Proposal

By Monday of Week 10 (or earlier if you like), you are to submit a 1-2 page paper proposal by email. In this proposal you should state your thesis, give a sketch of the argument you intend to pursue, and outline the organization of your paper.

(4) Final paper

By Friday, December 15th by 11:59 p.m., you are to submit a final paper (approx. 5000-6000 words) by email.

Course Policies:

Academic Honesty: While students are encouraged to discuss the readings and assignments with one another, students are expected to submit work that is their own and which includes appropriate citations. Cheating and plagiarism is strictly prohibited and students are expected to comply with the University's Academic Integrity Policy.¹ In the event of plagiarism, students will (a) be reported to the Academic Tribunal, (b) receive a failing grade on that assignment, and (c) may receive a failing grade for the course.

Schedule (subject to adjustment):

Week One, October 3rd: Kant's Aesthetics: Between Empiricism and Rationalism

Required: Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Published Introduction: Sections I-V and IX (pp. 59-68, 80-3); the Four Moment of Taste: §§1-22 (pp. 89-127); The Deduction: §38 (pp. 170-1); the Interest in the Beautiful: §§41-2 (pp. 176-82); The Doctrine of Fine Arts: §§46, 48-9, 51-3 (pp. 186-7, 189-197, 197-207)

Week Two, October 10th: Schiller and Aesthetic Education

On the Aesthetic Education of Man

October 17th: Schelling's Aesthetics and the Metaphysics of Identity

Selections from *System of Philosophy* and *Philosophy of Art*

October 24th: In Schelling's Wake: Coleridge and the Imagination

Biographia Literaria

October 31st: Hegel's Aesthetics and the Metaphysics of Spirit

Selections from *Lectures on Aesthetics*, Vol. I

November 7th: Schopenhauer's Aesthetics and the Metaphysics of the Will

Selections from *The World as Will and Representation*

November 14th: Nietzsche on Tragedy

The Birth of Tragedy

November 21st: Kierkegaard on the Aesthetic Way of Life

Either/Or

November 28th: Dilthey: Aesthetics and Lived Experience

Selections from *Selected Works, Volume V*

December 5th: Vernon Lee (aka Violet Page): Psychological Aesthetics and Sympathy

Chapters from *Beauty and Ugliness*

Final Paper Due Friday, December 15th.

¹ http://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic_integrity