

GENERAL EXAMINATION FOR LANDON SCHURTZ
Spring 2010

Please number your answers, using the section number and question number.

Answer a total of *four* (4) questions. You must answer *three* (3) questions from sections 1 and 2, including at least one (1) question from section 1 and *one* (1) question from section 2. Answer *one* (1) question from section 3.

SECTION 1: HISTORY OF AESTHETICS

Answer one or two questions from this section. (You must answer a total of three questions in sections 1 and 2.)

QUESTION 1: Kant (you may answer 1a or 1b but not both)

1a. Kant asks the following question about judgments of beauty: "how is a judgment possible which, merely from *one's own* feeling of pleasure in an object, independent of its concept, judges this pleasure as attached to the representation of the same object *in every other subject*, and does so *a priori*, i.e., without having to wait for the assent of others?"

- Explain Kant's account of judgments of beauty, including the four "moments" of the judgment.
- Explain the difference between judgments of beauty and judgments of the merely agreeable.
- Finally, explain Kant's answer to the question posed above: how are judgments of beauty possible?

OR

1b. Kant holds that great artworks are invariably the product of genius, or "the innate mental disposition [talent] through which nature gives the rule to art." Moreover, great artworks express aesthetic ideas.

- Discuss the creation of a great artwork, with reference to the concepts of genius and of the aesthetic idea.
- How are the imagination and the understanding implicated in the process of creation?
- Why are aesthetic ideas particularly valuable?

QUESTION 2: Hume

2. In "Of the Standard of Taste," Hume says it is "certain, that beauty and deformity ... are not qualities in objects, but belong entirely to the sentiment." Yet, he defends the idea of a standard of taste against which aesthetic judgments can be seen as more or less appropriate.

- Explain Hume's account of aesthetic judgment, including the conditions under which apt judgments can be made.
- How is it possible to reconcile the fact that aesthetic judgments involve subjective emotional experience with the claim that they can be correct or incorrect?
- What should we say about situations in which judges disagree in their verdicts about an object?

QUESTION 3: Schopenhauer

3. Explain Schopenhauer's account of aesthetic experience, with attention to the notions of the object's purpose and the perceiver's will.

- What are the conditions that make aesthetic experience possible, and why, according to Schopenhauer, is such experience so valuable?
- Should we agree with Schopenhauer's account?

SECTION 2: CONTEMPORARY AESTHETICS

Answer one or two questions from this section. (You must answer a total of three questions in sections 1 and 2.)

QUESTION 4: Intention and Interpretation

4. Explain the dispute between *actual intentionalists*, such as E.D. Hirsch, Jr., and *anti-intentionalists* such as Wimsatt and Beardsley.

- What are the strongest arguments on each side?
- Describe Levinson's account of the role of intention in interpretation, explaining how it differs from intentionalist and anti-intentionalist positions.
- Include a discussion of the different roles played by *semantic* and *categorial* intentions.
- Is Levinson's solution to the problem successful?

QUESTION 5: Context and Aesthetic Properties

5. Aesthetic formalists hold that the aesthetic properties of an object are exclusively a matter of its perceptible surface; where, when and by whom the object was made is irrelevant. Walton, in "Categories of Art," and Levinson, in "What a Musical Work Is," argue, in response, that the context in which a work was made is essential to determining its aesthetic properties.

- Explain Walton's and Levinson's arguments.
- How do these arguments relate to each other? Are they persuasive?
- Do the arguments establish that all the aesthetic properties of an artwork depend on context? Defend your view.

QUESTION 6: Institutional Theories of Art

6. Drawing explicitly on the work of Danto and Dickie, describe what you take to be the most plausible version of the institutional theory of art.

- Explain how the institutional theory purports to solve a serious problem with earlier attempts to offer a definition of art. Is it successful at solving this problem?
- In "Defining Art Historically," Levinson criticizes institutional theories and offers an alternative. Explain the criticism, and assess the adequacy of Levinson's alternative.

QUESTION 7: Feminist Aesthetics

7. In *Gender and Aesthetics*, Korsmeyer argues that "deep gender" is present in the structure of many traditional aesthetic theories.

- Explain what she means by deep gender.
- Why is deep gender such a serious problem?
- Give at least three examples of deep gender in traditional aesthetic theories, and describe an appropriate feminist response to each.

QUESTION 8: Ontology of Art

8. The most straightforward position about the ontology of singular visual artworks (such as paintings and carved sculptures) is that they are identical to particular physical objects.

- Describe some of the central difficulties with the claim that artworks are identical to physical objects.
- Describe what you take to be the strongest account of the relationship between artworks and physical objects.
- Acknowledge any difficulties that persist in the account you describe.
- In your discussion, make reference to at least two of the following:
 - o Wollheim (*Art and Its Objects*)
 - o Danto (*The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*)
 - o Levinson ("The Work of Visual Art")
 - o Margolis ("The Ontological Peculiarity of Works of Art")
 - o Currie ("Art Works as Action Types" and/or *An Ontology of Art*)

QUESTION 9: Aesthetic versus Moral Judgments

9. Strawson (in "Aesthetic Appraisal and Works of Art") and Sibley (in "Particularity, Art, and Evaluation") both acknowledge a difference between the aesthetic and the ethical domains: namely that while there appear to be general principles governing moral judgment (or general non-evaluative reasons that can be given in support of moral judgments), the same is not true for aesthetic judgments.

- Compare and contrast their explanations of this difference.
 - Are these explanations plausible?
 - Is there a genuine difference between aesthetic and moral judgments in this respect that needs to be explained?
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SECTION 3: AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

Answer one question from this section.

QUESTION 10: Contemporary Accounts of Aesthetic Experience

10. Contemporary theorists differ over the nature of aesthetic experience.

- Survey the recent debate, with attention to theories offered by at least four of the following: Stecker, Carroll, Levinson, Iseminger, Matravers and Scruton.
- Of the theories currently on offer, which is most plausible? Why?
- Say something about an attractive next move given the current state of the debate. Is a new kind of theory needed? Are there important issues the current debate neglects?

QUESTION 11: The Importance of Aesthetic Experience in Aesthetic Theory

11. Traditional and contemporary aesthetic theories, especially in the analytic tradition, have typically focused on questions about the nature of art, beauty and aesthetic judgment. The issue of aesthetic experience has sometimes been neglected or relegated to the background.

- What is at stake in offering an account of aesthetic experience?
- What problems should such an account aim to solve, and how is it related to questions about the nature of the artwork, of aesthetic value, and/or of aesthetic judgment?
- Give examples of the ways in which different accounts of aesthetic experience might have ramifications for the overall structure of one's aesthetic theory.

QUESTION 12: Art and Aesthetic Experience

12. In the twentieth century, there was a move away from aesthetic theories of art. Many art objects are not designed to be beautiful; some seem expressly designed to shock the senses or to disgust, while others are more concerned with ideas or conceptual content, which have often been excluded from the realm of the aesthetic.

- In the face of these developments, is it nonetheless plausible to account for the value of artworks in terms of their contribution to aesthetic experience?
- If you say yes, sketch an aesthetic theory of art and/or artistic value.
 - o Explain how such a theory could deal with examples of "anti-aesthetic" (ugly or disgusting) and "anaesthetic" (conceptual) art.
 - o Is such a theory more attractive than alternative ways of accounting for the nature and/or value of art?
- If you say no, explain why an aesthetic theory cannot survive developments in 20th- and 21st-century art.
 - o Should we regret the fact that aesthetic theories of art are no longer viable, or is this a neutral or even positive development?

QUESTION 13: How Special Is Aesthetic Experience?

13. When Kant distinguishes the aesthetic from the merely agreeable, it seems that part of his aim is to mark out the aesthetic as an especially significant domain of human experience. Schopenhauer and others have suggested, with Kant, that in order to be aesthetic, an experience must rise above the ordinary and be characterized by something like exaltation or transcendence. Dewey, on the other hand, rejects this perspective.

- Describe Dewey's account of aesthetic experience, with attention to (a) the relation between doing and undergoing and (b) the continuity between human and animal experience. What marks off an aesthetic experience from other aspects of experience?
- Should we regard aesthetic experiences as rare and transcendent, or should we, with Dewey, regard them as more widely available? Defend your view. You may wish to refer to Irvin's discussions in "Scratching an Itch" and "The Pervasiveness of the Aesthetic in Ordinary Experience," while feeling completely free to disagree with her.

GENERAL EXAMINATION FOR ZACHARY JURGENSEN
Spring 2012

Please number each of your answers, using the question numbers indicated below.

Answer a total of four questions. Answer three questions from section 1. Answer one question from section 2.

SECTION 1: AESTHETIC THEORY

Answer three questions from this section.

QUESTION 1: Hume

In "Of the Standard of Taste," Hume says it is "certain, that beauty and deformity ... are not qualities in objects, but belong entirely to the sentiment." Yet, he defends the idea of a standard of taste against which aesthetic judgments can be seen as more or less appropriate.

- Explain Hume's account of aesthetic judgment, including the conditions under which apt judgments can be made.
- How is it possible to reconcile the fact that aesthetic judgments involve subjective emotional experience with the claim that they can be correct or incorrect?
- What should we say about situations in which judges disagree in their verdicts about an object?

QUESTION 2: Intention and Interpretation

Explain the dispute between *actual intentionalists*, such as Hirsch, and *anti-intentionalists* such as Wimsatt and Beardsley.

- What are the strongest arguments on each side?
- Describe Levinson's account of the role of intention in interpretation, explaining how it differs from intentionalist and anti-intentionalist positions.
- Include a discussion of the different roles played by *semantic* and *categorical* intentions.
- Is Levinson's solution to the problem successful?

QUESTION 3: Context and Aesthetic Properties

Aesthetic formalists hold that the aesthetic properties of an object are exclusively a matter of its perceptible surface; where, when and by whom the object was made is irrelevant. Walton ("Categories of Art") and Levinson ("What a Musical Work Is") argue, in response, that the context in which a work was made is essential to determining its aesthetic properties.

- Explain Walton's and Levinson's arguments.
- How do these arguments relate to each other? Are they persuasive?
- Do the arguments establish that all the aesthetic properties of an artwork depend on context? Defend your view.

QUESTION 4: Theories of Art

In recent decades, definitions of art in terms of aesthetic properties have given way to *institutional theories* (Dickie and Danto), *historical definitions* (Levinson), and *cluster theories* (Gaut).

- Does it matter whether we have an adequate definition of art? Why?
- Explain the institutional theory of art, and explain why it was an improvement over aesthetic definitions of art.
- Explain either Levinson's historical definition of art or Gaut's cluster theory of art. Explain how the theory you have explained purports to be an improvement over the institutional theory of art, and critically assess its success.

QUESTION 5: Feminist Aesthetics

In *Gender and Aesthetics*, Korsmeyer argues that "deep gender" is present in the structure of many traditional aesthetic theories.

- Explain what she means by deep gender.
- Why is deep gender such a serious problem?
- Give at least three examples of deep gender in traditional aesthetic theories, and describe an appropriate feminist response to each.

QUESTION 6: Aesthetic and Moral Evaluation

Explain the debate between *moralists*, who hold that moral assessment is relevant to the aesthetic value of an artwork, and *autonomists*, who hold that it is not. Consider both *ethicism* (Gaut) and *moderate moralism* (Carroll). Critically assess the available positions and defend your own view. You may wish to discuss the following works:

- o Carroll, "Moderate Moralism"
- o Gaut, "The Ethical Criticism of Art"
- o Kieran, "Art, Morality and Ethics: On the (Im)moral Character of Art Works and Interrelations to Artistic Value"

QUESTION 7: Ontology of Art (you may answer either 7a or 7b, but not both)

7a. The most straightforward position about the ontology of singular visual artworks (such as paintings and carved sculptures) is that they are identical to particular physical objects.

- Describe some of the central difficulties with the claim that artworks are identical to physical objects.
- Describe what you take to be the strongest account of the relationship between artworks and physical objects.
- Acknowledge any difficulties that persist in the account you describe.
- In your discussion, make reference to at least two of the following:
 - o Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects*
 - o Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*
 - o Levinson, "The Work of Visual Art"
 - o Margolis, "The Ontological Peculiarity of Works of Art"
 - o Currie, "Art Works as Action Types" and/or *An Ontology of Art*
 - o Irvin, "The Artist's Sanction in Contemporary Art" and/or "The Ontological Diversity of Visual Artworks"

OR

7b. A current debate in the ontology of music concerns the issue of whether instrumental musical works in the Western classical tradition are simply sound structures (as Dodd argues), or are indicated sound-and-performance-means structures (as Levinson argues). Explain and critically discuss this debate. You may wish to make reference to:

- o Levinson, "What a Musical Work Is"
 - o Dodd, "Musical Works"
 - o Wolterstorff, "Toward an Ontology of Artworks"
 - o Kivy, "Platonism in Music"
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SECTION 2: THE AESTHETICS OF VIDEOGAMES

Answer one question from this section.

QUESTION 8: Interactivity

Explain two promising accounts of interactivity discussed in the literature; compare them with regard to their advantages and disadvantages. Then offer and defend the account you believe is correct.

QUESTION 9: The Ontology of Videogames

Ontologically speaking, videogames have interesting similarities to as well as differences from performable musical works. Discuss how the ontology of videogames might draw upon as well as diverge from an account of the ontology of musical works. Sketch what you take to be the most plausible account of the ontology of videogames.

QUESTION 10: Videogames, Performance and Aesthetic Experience

An interesting difference between videogames and other art forms is that the audience member plays an active, performative role in constituting a particular playing of the game. Discuss how the audience member's performative role is relevant to aesthetic experience of the videogame as a whole and of a particular playing of it.

QUESTION 11: Videogames as Art

Is the videogame an art form? Is every videogame a work of art? Discuss this question in relation to two promising definitions or theories of art that have been defended in the 20th or 21st century, and offer your own assessment. Do videogames reveal ways in which current theories of art need to be modified?

QUESTION 12: Videogames as a Distinct Art Form

Can videogames be subsumed under some other art form, such as moving images? Or must videogames be seen as a distinct art form? Discuss this question, making reference to Meskin and Robson's "Videogames and the Moving Image" as well as other relevant literature and your own ideas.