

PHIL 4403: Philosophy of Art
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Supervenience

*Supervenience is a philosopher's term of art. Here's an informal characterization of the concept (that is not strictly accurate, but good enough for our purposes):

Supervenience: Properties of type A are said to supervene on properties of type B if, and only if, there cannot be a difference in A properties without a difference in B properties. In other words, whenever two objects are exactly alike with respect to their B properties, they are also exactly alike with respect to their A properties. The B properties "fix" the A properties.

This characterization is general, and the concept of supervenience is supposed to cover all varieties of properties. But, we can make a specific application to aesthetic properties. Let A = the aesthetic properties of an object, and B = non-aesthetic properties of an object. We can ask, do the aesthetic properties of objects supervene on the non-aesthetic properties of those objects?

We can also think of this in terms of duplicates (or indiscernibles). If an object's aesthetic properties supervene on its non-aesthetic properties, then 2 objects that are duplicates (or indiscernible) as far as the non-aesthetic properties go are also duplicates (or indiscernible) as far as the aesthetic properties go.

Q: Which of the authors we have read deny that an object's aesthetic properties supervene on its non-aesthetic properties?