

PHIL 4403: Philosophy of Art
Prof. Funkhouser
3/18/05
Walton, "Categories of Art"

I.

*Walton considers the merits of the Anti-Intentionalist approach. He also imagines an advocate of such an approach making the following comment about aesthetic properties: "They [aesthetic properties] are *in* the works, to be seen, heard, or otherwise perceived there. Seeing a painting" sense of mystery or hearing a sonata" coherence might require looking or listening longer or harder than does perceiving colors and shapes, rhythms and pitches; it may even require special training or a kind of sensitivity. But these qualities must be discoverable simply by examining the works themselves if they are discoverable at all." (143)

--Walton argues against this approach.

II.

*Walton agrees with Sibley's account of aesthetic properties as depending on the non-aesthetic:

"Sibley points out that a work's aesthetic properties depend on its nonaesthetic properties; the former are "emergent" or "*Gestalt*" properties based on the latter." (143)

*Walton discusses among 3 types of nonaesthetic properties: standard, variable, and contra-standard. (They are defined on the right-hand column, p. 144.)

--Note Walton's use of 'perceptually distinguishable categories of works of art'. (144)

--Perceiving a work to be of a certain category is *non-inferential*:

"If I recognize a work as Brahmsian by first noting its lush textures, its basically traditional harmonic and formal structure, its superimposition and alternation of duple and triple meters, and so forth, and recalling that these characteristics are typical of Brahmsian works, I have not recognized it by hearing the Brahmsian *Gestalt*. To do that is simply to recognize it by its Brahmsian *sound*, without necessarily paying attention to the features ("cues") responsible for it." (145)

III.

*Thesis:

"...what aesthetic effect it [an artwork] has on us, how it strikes us aesthetically often depends (in part) on which of its features are standard, which variable, and which contra-standard for us." (145)

--Examples: Resemblance judgments depend on taking certain properties as standard (e.g., that the painting is flat) and other properties as variable. The

variable properties determine the resemblance judgment. Or, see the example of the marble bust of a Roman emperor. (146) Other examples include Walton's discussion of *guernicas*, the limitations of different musical instruments and the corresponding relativity of judgments this generates, and our expectations for certain types of music.

"Shock then arises from features that are not just rare or unique, but ones that are contra-standard relative to categories in which objects possessing them are perceived." (150)

IV.

*Aesthetic judgments are relative to the category the object is perceived in.

--Still, there is objectivity in aesthetic judgments because (at least) some works *should* be perceived in certain categories. (151, right column)

Q: But what determines the correct category to perceive the object in?
Walton answers this question on pp. 151-153. The answer includes fit, aesthetic charity, artist's intention, and societal recognition.

--Sometimes it is a virtue of a work that there are various permissible categories to perceive it in. (154)

"The aesthetic properties it actually possesses are those that are to be found in it when it is perceived correctly." (154)

V.

*It follows that Anti-Intentionalism is mistaken. (Consider the example of art from Mars, on the right-hand column, p. 154.)

--Still, aesthetic properties are *in* the artworks.

--It takes exposure and practice to perceive works in a given category. Hence, it takes exposure and practice to perceive aesthetic properties.