

PHIL 4403: Philosophy of Art
Prof. Funkhouser
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Kristeller, "The Modern System of Arts"

*The 18th Century saw aesthetics and the philosophy of art emerge as unifying the study of the various Arts. The 5 key arts, which form the core of "the modern system of arts" are: painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and poetry. (90) Kristeller wants to show that treating the Arts as a unity is a relatively recent phenomenon.

*The ancient Greek term closest to our 'art' covered crafts, sciences, and almost all of human activity. Their "art" was something that (they thought) could be taught. These differences account for some of the discrepancies regarding statements about "art" from then to now.

--Also, the Greek term for 'beauty' covered non-physical beauty and moral goodness as well.

--Poetry was always prized by the ancient Greeks, and was connected with possession by the Muses and religious prophecy.

--Music and dance were often thought of as parts of poetry, at least for Plato and Aristotle.

"Antiquity knew no Muse of painting or of sculpture..." (94)

--Interesting summary about the ancients:

"And the five fine arts which constitute the modern system were not grouped together in antiquity, but kept quite different company: poetry stays usually with grammar and rhetoric; music is as close to mathematics and astronomy as it is to the dance, and poetry; and the visual arts, excluded from the realm of the Muses and of the liberal arts by most authors, must be satisfied with the modest company of the other manual crafts." (94)

*The visual arts (painting, sculpture, and architecture) rose to prominence during the Renaissance, and separated themselves from the crafts.

*The 18th Century saw the first systemization of the arts, encapsulated in Batteux's classic *The Fine Arts Reduced to a Single Principle* (1746). (He too still accepted the Imitation Theory.)

--Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury, as the first aesthetician? But he still did not treat the arts as a unified whole, and intermingled the ethical and aesthetic subjects. (98)

--Kant was the first major philosopher to give aesthetics a prominent place in his philosophy (*Critique of Judgment*).

*There's a good summary of matters at the bottom of p. 100.

--An interesting comment:

“The fact that the affinity between the various fine arts is more plausible to the amateur, who feels a comparable kind of enjoyment, than to the artist himself, who is concerned with the peculiar aims and techniques of his art, is obvious in itself and is confirmed by Goethe's reaction.” (101)