



ARTS-L0112

Philosophy of Science

10. Art and Science

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Art from the Scientific Perspective

- ▶ Science offers fragmented perspectives
- ▶ Disciplinary perspectives:
 - ▶ Research questions
 - ▶ Theoretical and methodological tools
 - ▶ How the object is defined
- ▶ Limitations in scientific perspectives
 - ▶ Objectivity: research of the *medium*
 - ▶ Subjective experience are left outside science
 - ▶ But: reception studies – human experience of art is not wildly individual
 - ▶ Yet: individual differences exist, new interpretations are a part of art



Art as a Socio-cultural Phenomenon

- ▶ Cultural entities:
 - ▶ Social institutions (exist because we jointly create them)
 - ▶ Systems of norms and meanings
 - ▶ Social science and humanities study these as systems
- ▶ Art as an object of humanities research:
 - ▶ How the medium (e.g. literature, cinema) works (within a cultural context)
 - ▶ Phenomena within the medium (e.g. genres)
 - ▶ Cultural phenomena without aesthetic perspective

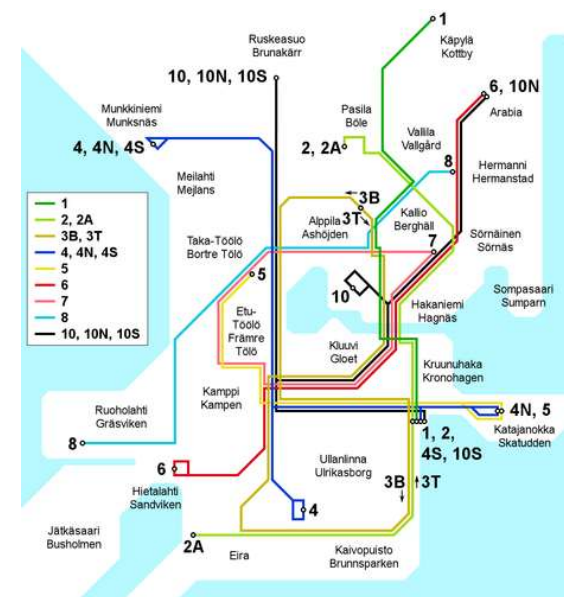


Understanding Art

- ▶ Understanding art – “getting” it, having an impression
- ▶ Scientific understanding of art: understanding how the work of art enables the impression in experiencing the work of art
- ▶ How? Why?
 - ▶ “Rules” of the medium
 - ▶ Explanation: how the rules work and why the impression is created by following (or breaking) the rules
 - ▶ Understanding: knowing how the impression would change if the details changed

Interpretation as a Theory-laden Observation

- ▶ The dual role of an art researcher:
 - ▶ Researcher making “external” observations
 - ▶ Recipient of art from within – the “instrument” of observations (interpretations)
- ▶ Theoretical tools
 - ▶ Theoretical language to articulate observations
 - ▶ Theoretical ideas of how the art form works – guide the interpretations
- ▶ The role of theory: a map, not a detailed picture



Interpreting Text

An Example: Hamlet in Purgatory



- ▶ Question: what is Hamlet's motivation for his actions in the play?
 - ▶ Depends on the perspective
- ▶ The historical context of the play
 - ▶ Switch from Catholicism to Protestantism made purgatory obsolete
 - ▶ Practices relating to purgatory and remembering the dead did not disappear
 - ▶ The ghost of old Hamlet: "remember me", not "revenge me"
 - ▶ A relevant perspective for the contemporaries, not today
- ▶ "Intentional fallacy": assuming the meaning is what the author meant by it
 - ▶ Meaning does not work that way
 - ▶ Epistemic problems in getting into what the author meant
 - ▶ The meanings change as the context changes (e.g. the Freudian interpretation of Hamlet)

Meaning and Interpretation

- ▶ Understanding the *meaning* of text: meaning for whom?
 - ▶ Meanings are *relational*
- ▶ The *holism* and *contextuality* of meaning
 - ▶ The meaning depends on the other meanings
 - ▶ The hermeneutical circle: understanding the whole through parts and the other way around
 - ▶ New context may create new meanings
 - ▶ The object of research is (usually) to understand the meaning in a given context



Genres of Interpreting Texts

1) Text as evidence

- ▶ For example, studying a culture or a historical event
- ▶ Making inferences from the text: making hypotheses about the context in which the text was produced, which informs the interpretation of what the text is revealing
- ▶ For example: using Gospels to find out about historical Jesus
 - ▶ Discussions that tell about the debates at the time of writing
 - ▶ Details that do not fit the narrative and are commented on are more probably true (e.g. birth in Nazareth, John the Baptist as the teacher, armed clash in capturing)



Genres of Interpreting Texts

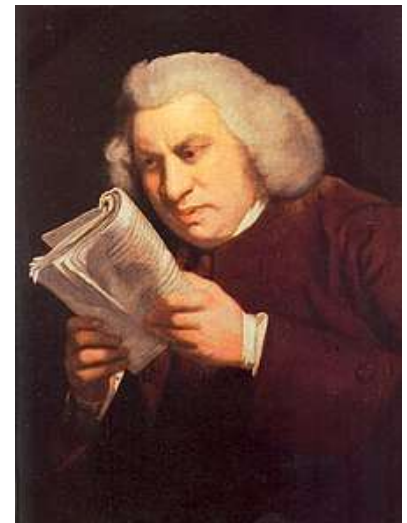
- 2) The meaning of the text to someone
- 3) Text itself: the language, the structure etc.
- 4) Dogmatic disciplines – law, theology
 - ▶ The text is given a normative meaning
 - ▶ The aim of the interpretation is to apply the text in a new context



Genres of Interpreting Text

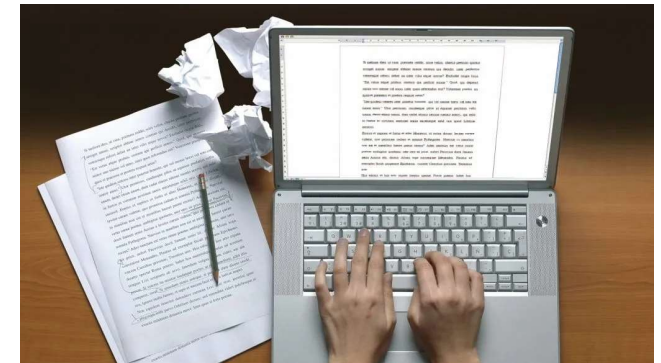
5) Interpretation in Literature Studies

- ▶ In addition to 1–3
- a) *Possible (sensible) ways to read the text*
 - ▶ The aim: to deepen the understanding of what the text can be read as
- b) *Deconstruction*
 - ▶ How different meanings can be found simultaneously and how they interact
- c) *Textual phenomena*
 - ▶ How the characteristics of the text enable/constitute different meanings
- d) *Literary phenomena*
 - ▶ Genres, irony etc.
 - ▶ Text as evidence



Artistic Research of Art

- ▶ A possible object of artistic research: art itself
 - ▶ Provides new tools that are complementary to traditional tools
- ▶ Deeper entanglement of roles
 - ▶ Tools for “external” observation + internal experience
 - ▶ Creator
- ▶ Studying through practice
 - ▶ Non-articulated “silent knowledge” of how the art form works
 - ▶ The “rules” are not theorized but used
- ▶ The possibility of experimentation
 - ▶ Analogical to scientific experimentation: testing hypotheses, studying the limitations of the “rules”



Art as Research

- ▶ Studying reality through art
 - ▶ The subjective experience that cannot be the object of science
 - ▶ A perspective to meaning in a particular setting
 - ▶ New perspectives to reality that reveal something
 - ▶ May tell us about our relationship to the world (but not about the world)
- ▶ Similarities to science:
 - ▶ Provides a way to make observations beyond everyday observations
 - ▶ Challenges conventional thinking
 - ▶ Allows sharing experiences (not entirely subjective)



Artistic Research and Science

- ▶ Theory in artistic research: means for articulation
 - ▶ Theories borrowed from science, humanities and philosophy may be used as *conceptual frameworks* or to bring *substantial content*
 - ▶ These roles should be distinguished: different criteria for application, different commitments to what the theory is saying
- ▶ The limits of artistic research: a *perspective* to reality is not the *reality*
- ▶ Pluralistic integration of views?
 - ▶ Scientific perspective + artistic perspective
 - ▶ + Art research perspective to understand how art works
 - ▶ Transdisciplinary research (the last lecture)

Artistic Research and Philosophy

- ▶ Philosophy is more about how to perceive world than how it is
 - ▶ Somewhere in between science and art
- ▶ Artistic perspectives may have philosophical significance
 - ▶ Especially in ethics
 - ▶ Speculative fiction: metaphysical significance
- ▶ “Thought experiments” in philosophy
 - ▶ Art may build richer contexts

