



AESTHETICS CS-E5600
Sanna Lehtinen, PhD

14 Jan – 25 March 2019

Sanna Lehtinen | sanna.lehtinen@aalto.fi

1st Meeting: 14th Jan

- Welcome to the course!
- Introductions + General course info
- Course schedule and program (MyCourses)
- Learning outcomes
- Tasks and establishing groups
- Comments/expectations/wishes/concerns?

Introduction: Teacher (1/2)

- Post-Doctoral Researcher at the Helsinki Institute of Sustainability Science / Faculty of Arts, University of Helsinki
- PhD in Aesthetics 2015:
 - Spatial experience, Architecture, Urban Planning, Applied Aesthetics

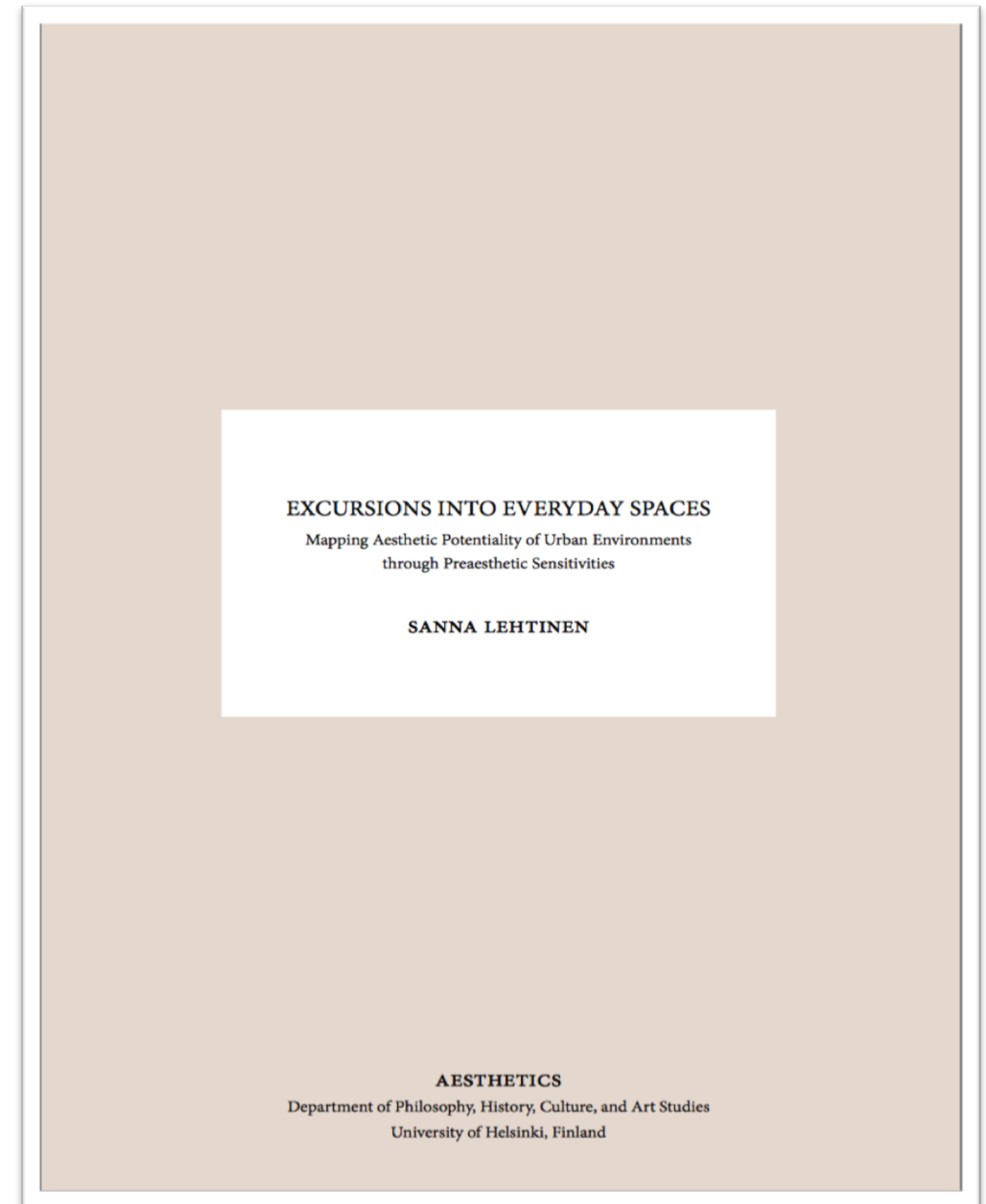
PhD in Aesthetics 2015
University of Helsinki

Supervisor Prof. Arto Haapala

Examiners

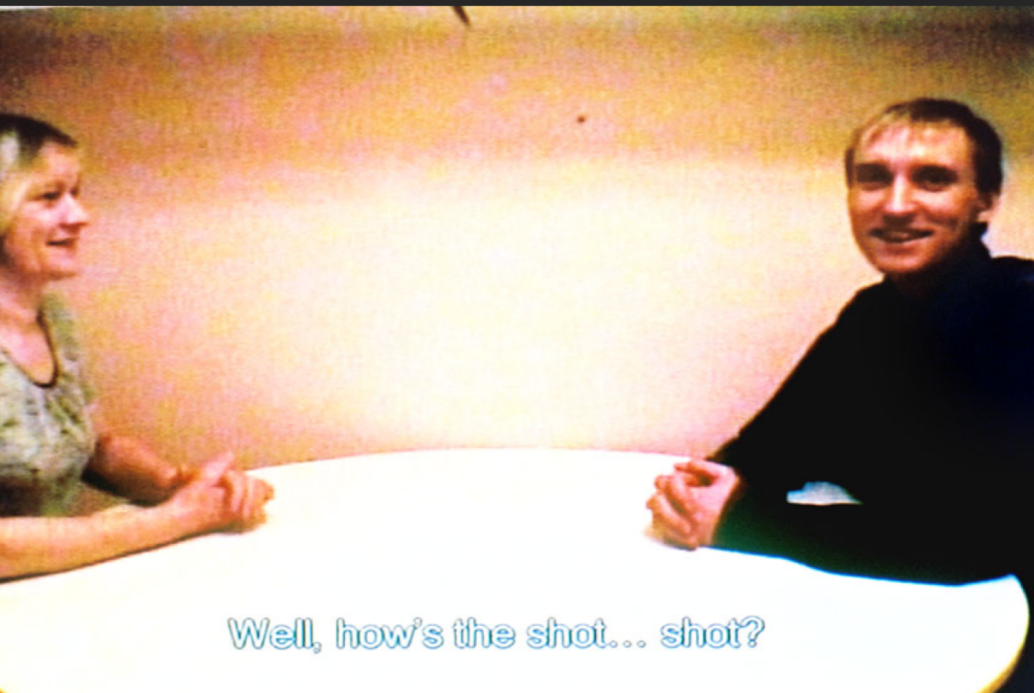
- Univ.-Doz. DDr. Mădălina Diaconu,
University of Vienna
- Prof. Andrew Ballantyne, Newcastle
University

”Excursions into Everyday Spaces:
Mapping Aesthetic Potentiality of Urban
Environments through Preaesthetic
Sensitivities”



Introduction: Teacher (2/2)

- Worked as a curator at the Amos Anderson Art Museum in Helsinki, 2007–09
 - Contemporary art (e.g. *Ars Fennica* 2008)
- Focus now on developing *Urban Aesthetics*; research project *Aesthetic Sustainability in Urban Transformations*
- Part of the research group *Urban Aesthetics in Motion: Bridging the Gap Between Philosophical Aesthetics and Urban Mobility Futures* (UrAMo) (Univ. of Helsinki & Aalto Univ.)
- Teaching is an integral part of research work (5–6 courses/year)



Well, how's the shot... shot?

Mark Raidpere, Shifting Focus
2006



Tea Mäkipää, Motocalypse now (yksityiskohta)
2007



Maria Duncker, Siunaus (yksityiskohta)

ARS FENNICA 2008

Urban Aesthetics in Motion (UrAMo)

A joint research consortium of University of Helsinki and Aalto University

About [Project Description](#) [Project time line](#) [Events and Activities](#) [Researchers and Bios](#) [Partners](#)



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Introduction: Students

- For an online survey (10 questions), go now to
→ [Kahoot.it](https://kahoot.it)

Why are you here?

After the course the student (Learning Outcomes)

- Is familiar with basic terminology of philosophical and applied aesthetics and able to apply that according to her/his own interest
- Is able to define and describe aesthetic values and preferences
- Is able to analyse the role of the aesthetic in decision-making processes of differing level
- Has basic understanding of some prominent phenomena of contemporary art
- Is able to discuss what role the aesthetic plays in current discussions on politics, science, technology, and the environment

General Course Info

- Student's workload: 3cr = 80hrs
 - Contact sessions 10x3hrs = 30hrs
 - Group assignment and independent work 50 h
- 80% attendance (8 out of 10 lectures)
- Assessment: grading 1–5
 - Learning diary 50% + Group task 40% + active participation during meetings 10%
- Course page in MyCourses

Pre-meeting work

- Prior to **some** meetings, you are required to either
 - 1) Read an assigned text
 - 2) Watch a video
 - 3) Do other type of small task independently
- These will be informed one week prior in the preceding meeting and in MyCourses "News forum"
- There might be some changes to the program during the course so follow MyCourses!

Learning Diary (50%)

- Charts your own individual learning path
- Will be submitted in 1 part (7 meetings + a conclusive reflection including also the Exhibition of the final tasks)
 - Deadline: 1st April
- Read detailed instructions from MyCourses

Group Task (40%)

- Theme: "Imaginary Garden"
- Group size 4–5 (8 groups altogether)
- Idea: To give a visual, shareable form to aesthetic concepts that have been presented during the lectures (each group chooses 3)
- The group produces:
 - Mood board, text, game, installation, service, application etc., choose method of presentation according to what serves your shared vision best
 - Group task report (c. 3 pages describing how the group task proceeded)
- Presentation:
 - On Mon 25th March (N.B. 9.00–12.00)
 - 15 min. allotted to each group for presenting their work for the whole group
 - 15 min. comments + discussion
- Grading: 1/3 concept + final work, 1/3 presentation, 1/3 group task report



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Goals of the Group Task

- Promotion of out-of-the-box thinking
- Application of philosophical concepts
- Working with material that affects directly the senses (visual, haptic, olfactory, auditory etc.)
- Tolerating ambiguity
- Self-organization
- Practising team work and presentation skills

Comments/questions/wishes/concerns?



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What is Aesthetics: Introduction

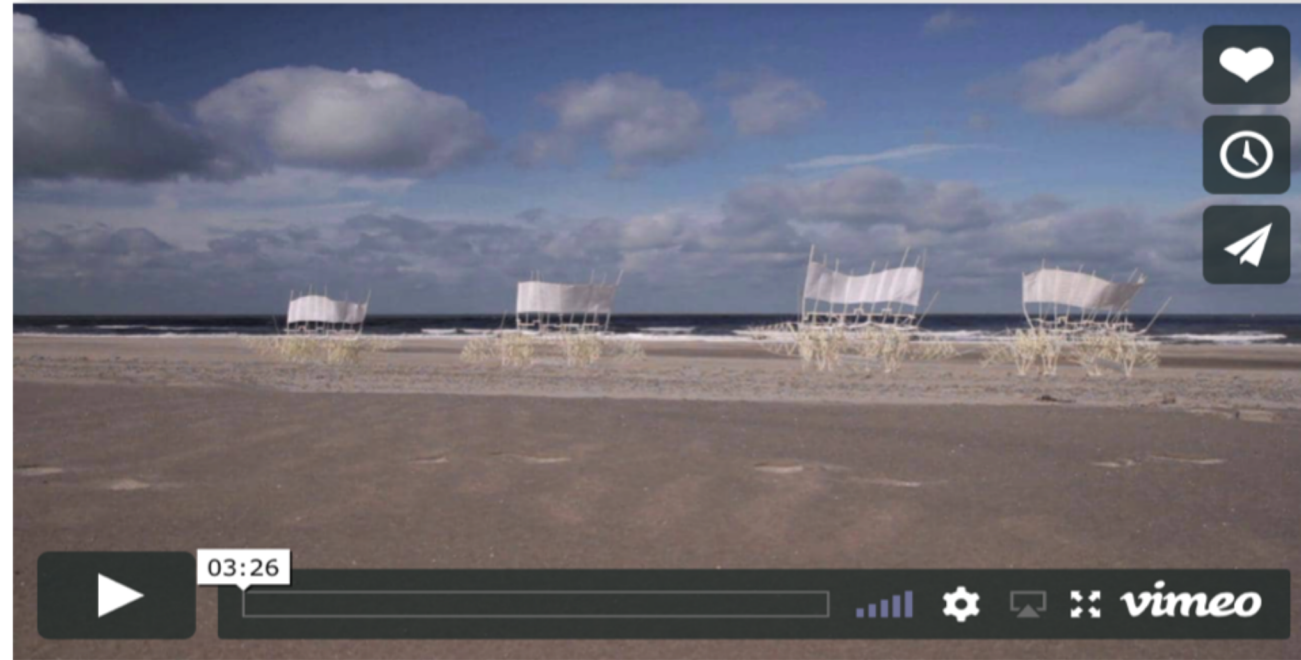
14 Jan 2019

What is Aesthetics 1: Introduction

- The Humanities > Philosophy > Aesthetics
- Aesthetics: Dictionary definition
- Aesthetics: Disciplinary definition
- Different branches of academic aesthetics

Theo Jansen: *Strandbeest*





"I try to make new forms of life," says Strandbeests creator Theo Jansen



Marcus Fairs | 12 December 2014 | 4 comments

Interview: Dutch sculptor Theo Jansen has spent the last 24 years developing a series of wind-powered machines called Strandbeests that he describes as "a new species on Earth". Dezeen caught up with him on Miami Beach last week, where he explained how his creations are now evolving without his help (+ movie).

What are the humanities?

The humanities can be described as the study of how people process and document the human experience. Since humans have been able, we have used philosophy, literature, religion, art, music, history and language to understand and record our world. These modes of expression have become some of the subjects that traditionally fall under the humanities umbrella. Knowledge of these records of human experience gives us the opportunity to feel a sense of connection to those who have come before us, as well as to our contemporaries.

Stanford Humanities Center <http://shc.stanford.edu/what-are-the-humanities>

“The humanities—including the study of languages, literature, history, jurisprudence, philosophy, comparative religion, ethics, and the arts—are disciplines of memory and imagination, telling us where we have been and helping us envision where we are going.”

—*The Heart of the Matter* (Report of the American Academy of Arts & Science’s Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences to the U. S. Congress in June 2013)

“The humanities are academic disciplines that study human culture. The humanities use methods that are primarily critical, or speculative, and have a significant historical element—as distinguished from the mainly empirical approaches of the natural sciences. The humanities include ancient and modern languages, literature, philosophy, religion, and visual and performing arts such as music and theatre. Areas that are sometimes regarded as social sciences and sometimes as humanities include history, archaeology, anthropology, area studies, communication studies, classical studies, law and linguistics.... The humanities and social sciences teach us how people have created their world, and how they in turn are created by it.”

–Wikipedia, “**Humanities**,” 2014.

The humanities are characterised by

... speculative thinking (Gr. *spekulatus*, “to look at”) vs. empirical thinking (Gr. *empirikos*, “experience”) in empirical sciences

... history and context consciousness

... an attempt to understand the human condition and its constituents

Philosophy in general is characterised by

... a quest for universal truth/wisdom

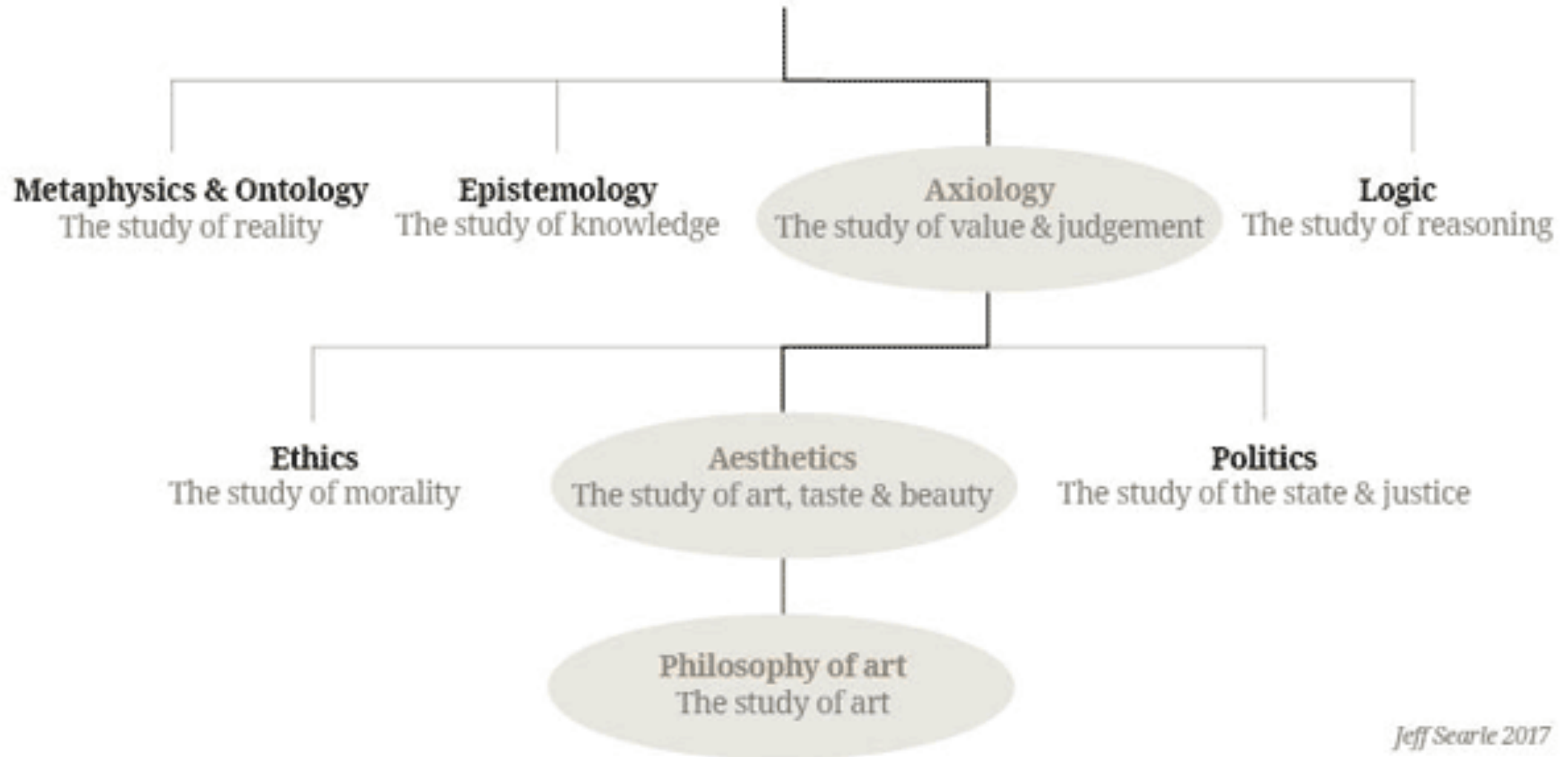
... deductive reasoning (starting from general ideas applying them to specific circumstances)
vs. inductive reasoning (starting from specific, experiential data leading to generalized conclusions)

Branches of Philosophy

- Metaphysics: what is the nature of existence/reality?
 - Epistemology: what is the nature of knowledge?
 - Logic: studies correct reasoning
 - Ethics (moral philosophy): what is right?
 - Aesthetics: what is the nature of beauty or art?
- All branches interrelated

Philosophy

The love of wisdom



Jeff Searle 2017



Ryan Reece

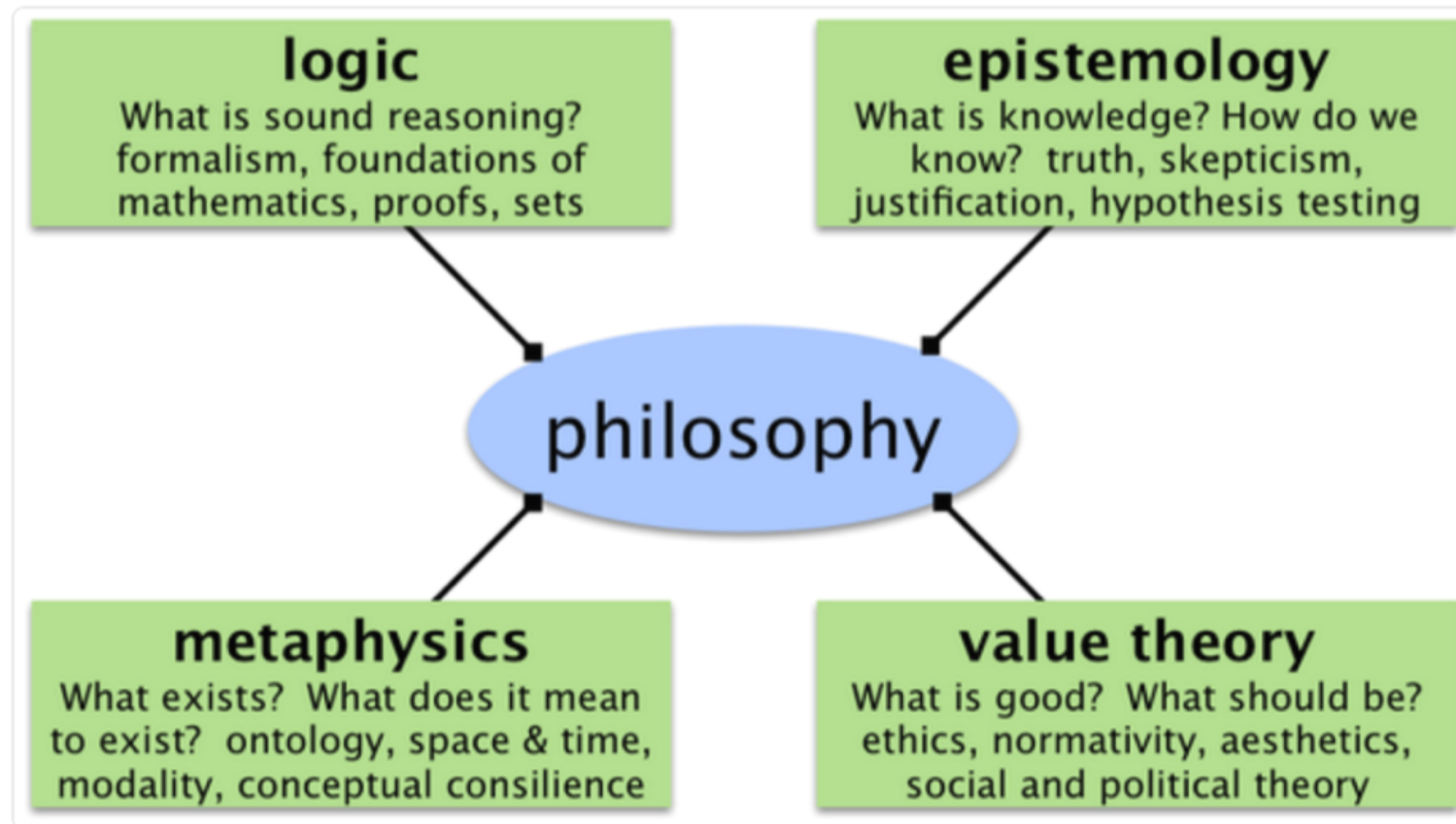
@RyanDavidReece

Following



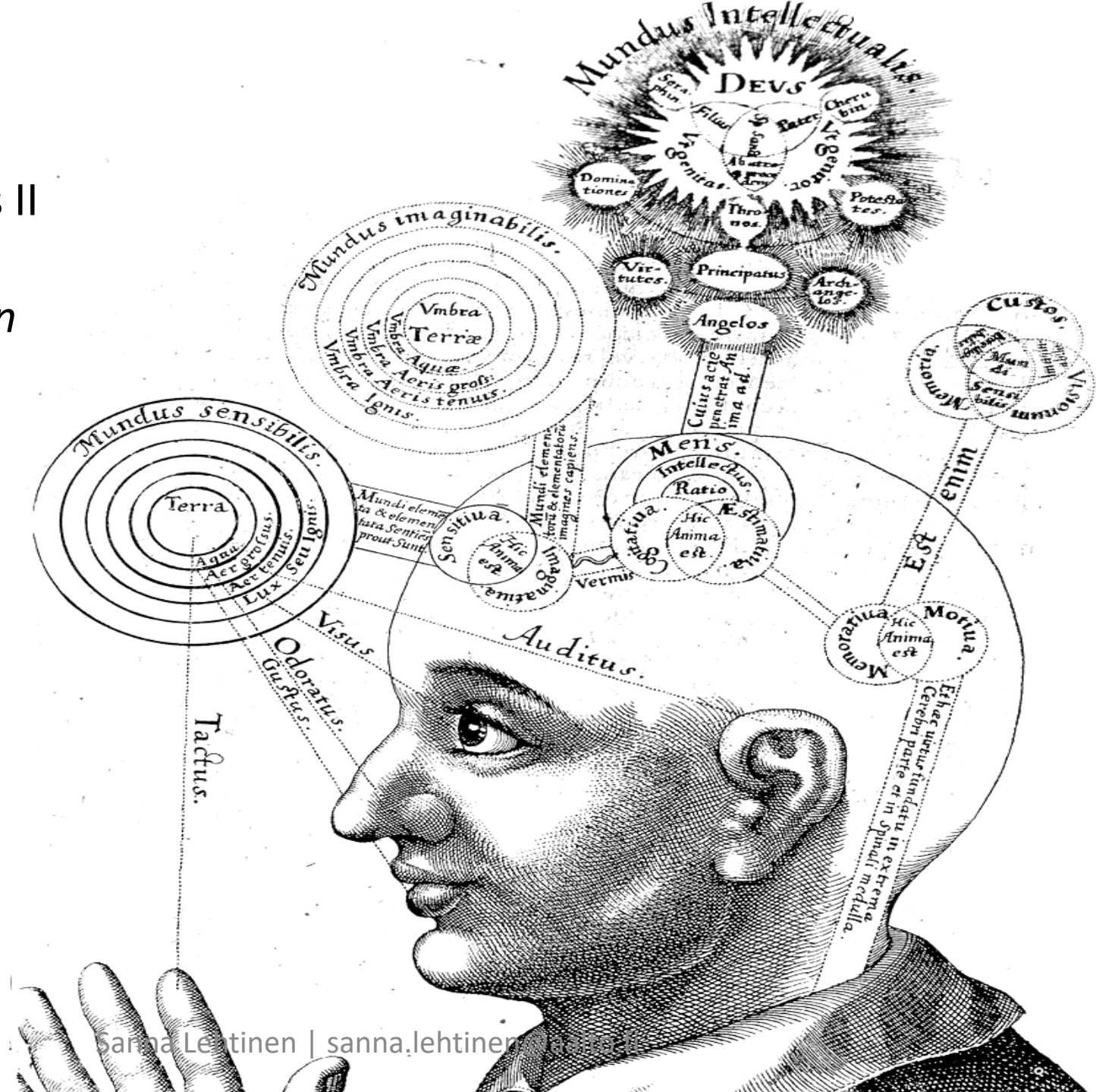
#philosophy in figures: main branches ift.tt/SAeoyR

Translate from French



12:34 AM - 12 Jun 2014

Robert Fludd - *Utriusque
cosmi maioris scilicet et
minoris [...] historia*, tomus II
(1619), tractatus I, sectio I,
liber X, *De triplici animae in
corpore visione*



art

mercedes

philosophy

facial aesthetics

medical

logo

medical aesthetics

2016

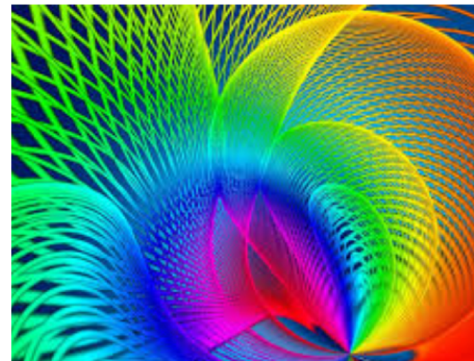
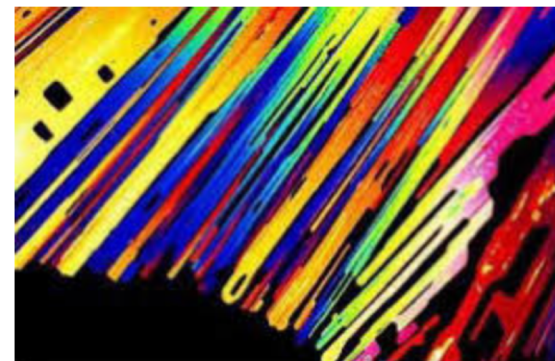
vaporwave

purple

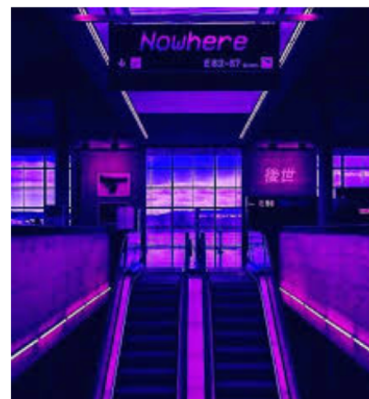
rohrer aesthetics

design

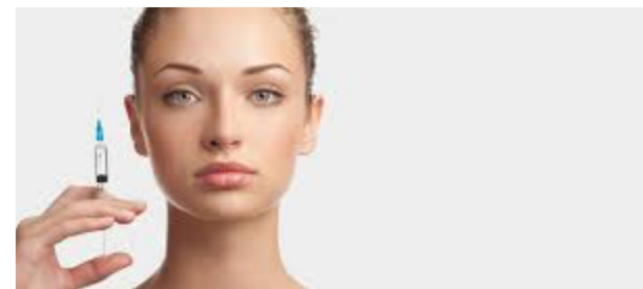
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Aesthetics



Aesthetics



Aesthetics: Dictionary definitions

- Philosophical but also a pragmatic concept: wide variety of uses
- In common usage referring to a certain *style* (e.g. Rei Kawakubo's aesthetics)
- In common usage *aesthetic* (sing.): "something pleasing to look at" (= beautiful, giving visual pleasure)
- Many specific fields and subcultural usages e.g. medical aesthetics, aesthetic surgery, bodybuilding, The New Aesthetic, vaporwave

WHAT THE FUCK IS THIS
AESTHETIC ANYWAY?



Aesthetics

#philosophy

Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of art, beauty, and taste, with the creation and appreciation of beauty. It is more scientifically defined as the study of sensory or sensori-emotional values, sometimes called judgments of sentiment and taste.

Different layers of Aesthetics

”Surface aesthetics”

- What is there in the world to be perceived?
- Sensory qualities of phenomena
- Practical, tacit, field-specific knowledge on ”what works”
- ”twenty-first century has become the age of aesthetics” (Postrel)

”Deep aesthetics”

- What kind of values and meanings do these perceivable elements convey?
- What is the relation between aesthetics and (other) cognitive skills (related to knowledge, memory and imagination)?

Aesthetics "before Aesthetics"

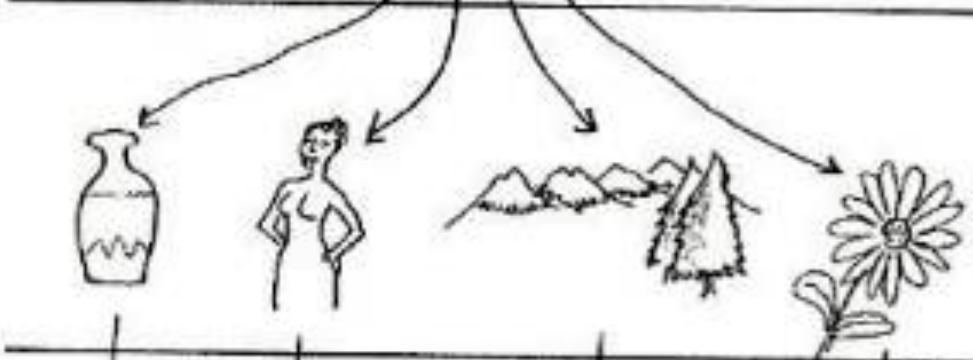
- Antiquity: Beauty, nature, value of aesthetic properties, mimesis, style
- Many currently used central concepts did not exist as such: beauty (ambiguous), art (Gr. *Techne*)
- Plato: criticism (*Republic*)
- Aristotle: catharsis (*Poetics & Politics*)
- "Peri Hupsous": The sublime



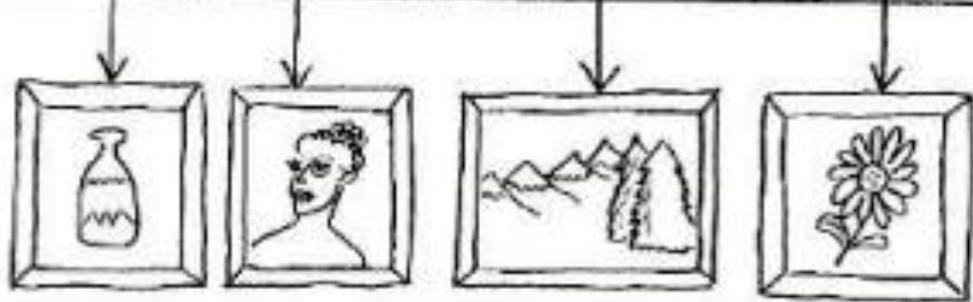
The
Form of
Beauty



The
Concept of
Beauty



Individual
Beautiful
Entities



Imitations of
Beautiful Entities
(paintings, photos,
reflections, shadows)

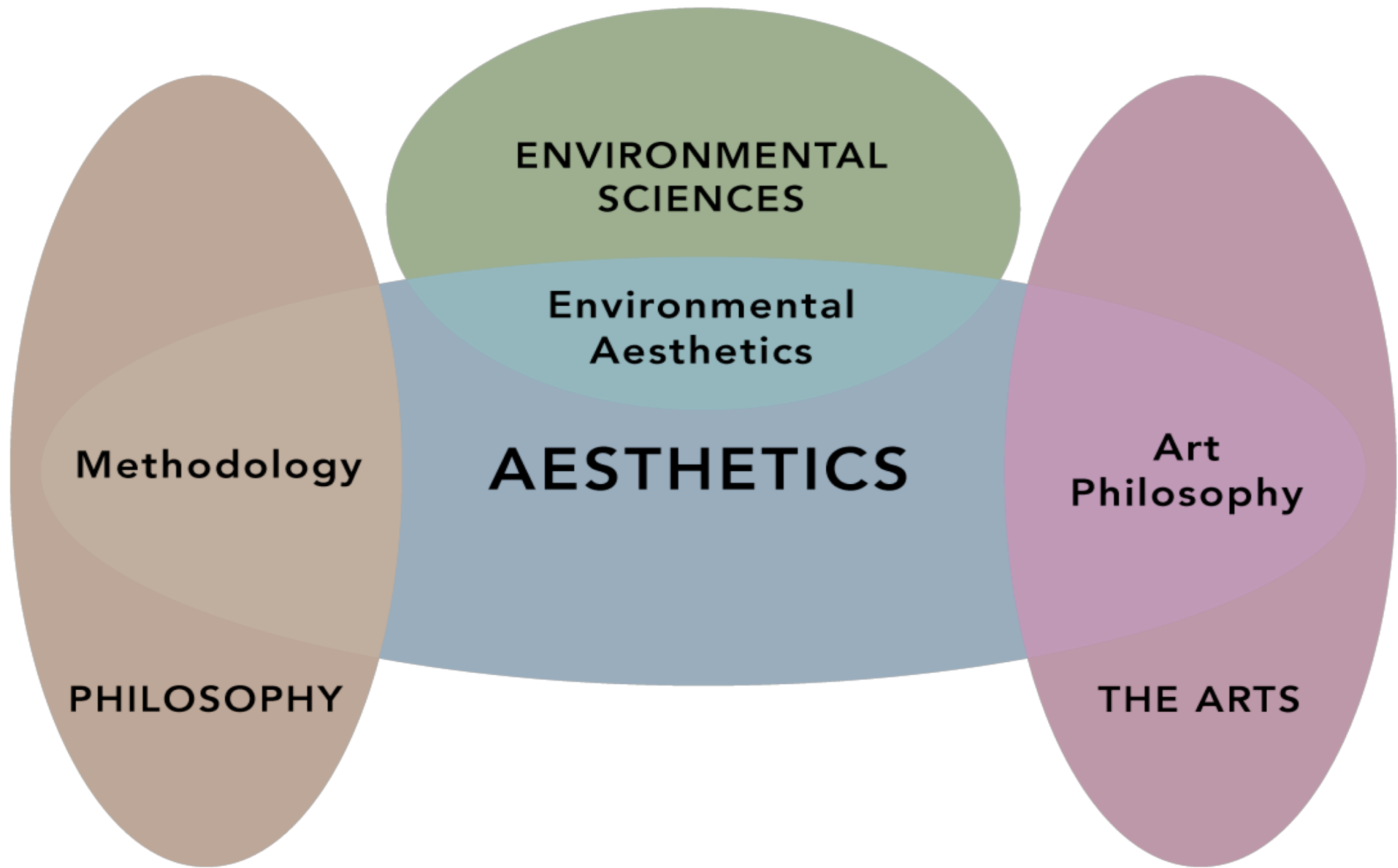
Aesthetics: Disciplinary Definition

Founder of the field: Alexander Gottlieb

Baumgarten (1735/50)

- αἴσθησις (aísthēsis); sensation, sensory perception
- “Science of sensible knowledge”
 - Truth as it is known through the senses
- Sensation < perception < sensory cognition
- Applicable to art, natural beauty, daily life etc.





Branches of Academic Aesthetics

- General theory of beauty, the aesthetic and aesthetic value
- Philosophy of art
- Environmental aesthetics
- Everyday aesthetics (newest branch)
- Applied aesthetics

Main Lines of Academic Aesthetics

- Anglo-American analytical tradition
 - Linguistic methods of analysis
 - Focus on language and logic (art)
- Continental tradition
 - Phenomenology/Hermeneutics
 - Critical theory
 - Poststructuralism
 - Focus on how the world becomes experienced (life)
- Pragmatism
 - Bridging the analytical and continental
 - Problem-solving & practical application in focus

Verbs of Academic Aesthetics

- To perceive/sense/experience (sensory)
- To contemplate/imagine (cognitive)
- To understand/interpret (cognitive)
- To evaluate/assess/compare (judgment)
- To define/conceptualize (philosophy in general)


More reading

- "The Concept of the Aesthetic" in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
- Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy
- Contemporary Aesthetics Journal
- Postrel, V. (2004) *Substance of Style: How the Rise of Aesthetic Value Is Remaking Commerce, Culture, and Consciousness*

Tasks for next week 1/2

Watch video:
"Intro to Aesthetics"
by Philosophy Tube

<https://youtu.be/2nLa-jF6hHY>



Intro to Aesthetics | Philosophy Tube

31 609 näyttökertaa

Philosophy Tube
Julkaistu 6.1.2017

TILATTU 170 T.

What's the definition of 'art'? A pretty fundamental question in aesthetics - the philosophy of art. I explain the basic theories, citing Wittgenstein and George Dickie, among others, touching on art history and modern art today.

Tasks for next week 2/2

Answer the survey: *Art Experience Archive Project*
University of Vienna, Faculty of Psychology

<http://www.univie.ac.at/expquest/Questionnaires/index.php/237362/lang-en>

Username: allgquest

Password: zugriff99

Art Experience Archive

English ▾

Welcome!

We are a group of researchers interested in how people experience art.

Specifically, we created this website as a forum for collecting people's most notable, or personally important, encounters with visual art. If you have a powerful, moving, unique, disturbing, or otherwise profound experience in the presence of visual art, we would love to hear from you. We have designed a special survey to document your experience.

- **The survey should take 45 to 90 minutes, depending in your speed of answering.**
- **It is composed of mostly multiple choice and short answer questions.**
- **We are interested in any type of experience, with any type of visual art media (including dance, theater, etc.). However, please tell us about the most significant art encounter in your life.**

We are professional academic researchers. All information that you share with us will be anonymous and will only be used to better understand our art experiences.

Please evaluate the work of art on the scales below.

You will be shown a series of adjective pairs (for example "hot : cold") on the left, and a scale on the right.

To answer, the word on the left (i.e., "hot") aligns with the left three choices on the scale ("very hot," "quite hot," "slightly hot"). The word on the right aligns with the right three choices on the scale ("slightly cold," "quite cold," "very cold"). The middle choice refers to neither adjective. Please click the circle that represents your evaluation of the art.

Try to answer quickly. We are interested in your immediate impression).

	Very			Neither			Very	No answer
hot : cold	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
beautiful : ugly	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
intimate : remote	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
full : empty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
relaxed : tense	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
deep : shallow	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
noisy : quiet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
strong : weak	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
pleasant : unpleasant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
lively : calm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
interesting : uninteresting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
unique : commonplace	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

"What is the role of aesthetics in my life?"

- Form groups of 4 people
- Find out what type of aesthetically important aspects of life do you recognise in your group:
 - > Discuss + compare (differences, similarities)
 - > Add the full list to MyCourses Group Work Area
- If it is difficult to get started, you can think for example:
 - What choices and decisions do I usually make based on clearly aesthetic reasons?
 - What is the aesthetic layer in my work/leisure time/everyday habits?
 - What (objects/experiences/actions/situations/people etc.) do I find beautiful or otherwise sensorially rewarding?