

Insight & Beyond: Lecture 11: *Insight*, Chapter 6 §2.3: Aesthetic and Artistic Patterns of Experience; and “Art,” Chapter 9 in *Topics in Education*

[0:00]

- Introductory remarks: Due to a technical difficulty, the audio for this class, originally given on November 18, 2009, was lost. The presentation you will be watching is a re-recording that was done on January 8, 2010. Unfortunately the students were on break, so the lecture has no student participation.

[1:30]

- This class is less talking about art, but a set of exercises of participating in art works, so that you the viewer can explore and appropriate your own aesthetic pattern of experience.

[2:52]

- The Meaning of Art “The work is an invitation to participate.”
- I invite you to participate in works of art in this class.

[3:23]

- The paintings presented in the slides for this class are not of the best quality. I encourage you to visit a local museum or obtain a book with high quality reproductions to develop more fully your aesthetic patterning of experiencing.
- Time allotted for contemplation of Degas’ painting *The Rehearsal in the Foyer of the Opera* (1872).

[6:50]

- Guided discussion of elements in the painting noticed as eyes explore it.
 - Color, shape, lighting, geometry, linear elements, grouping of figures, movement.
- Discussion of prior observations made by the students in the class while they viewed the painting.
- Other things to notice while viewing a painting: the path followed by the eye, the ‘rhythm’ of the painting, etc.
- Notice also the feelings you experience as you explore the world of the painting.

[16:20]

- Art and the Patterning of Experience
- Lonergan’s definition of Art, inspired by Suzanne Langer’s *Feeling and Form*:
- “Art is the objectification of a purely experiential pattern.”
- In *Topics in Education*, Lonergan slowly unfolds each word in his definition and his philosophy of art.
- By the word “pure” Lonergan is distinguishing the aesthetic pattern from instrumentalizations of experience (e.g., by practical and/or intellectual concerns) – those patterns will interfere with the aesthetic pattern, and vice versa.
- “Pure” as contrasted with instrumentalization of experience is comparable to what Kant means by the purposeless purpose of play (*Spiel*).

[24:45]

- The aesthetic experience and its relation to other patterns of experience is not an ‘either/or’ relation.

[26:56]

- The word “pattern” points to the importance of *internal relations* among the experiences.
- The primacy of internal relations (among the colors, tones, etc) over external relations (representational art).
- Representational relations are not the primary sources of the meaning of aesthetic experiences.
- Aristotle’s comparison of an well-lived human life to a work of art: no element can be added or subtracted from a masterpiece or a virtuoso performance.
- Example of the chair in Degas’ painting and its role in the internal relations in the painting – what happens if even something minimal is removed from a masterpiece.

[36:36]

- The aesthetic patterning of experiencing is something that has to be learned. One has to learn how to let oneself participate in and enter into the internal relations of a work of art, to enter into the space of the painting.
- Slide of Piet Mondrian’s painting *Landscape with Farmhouse* (circa 1906)
- This is somewhat representational, but it is not a very good representation; but that is Mondrian’s point. He is drawing us into a world of color and shape and association and their relations *in* the space of the painting.
 - The development of Mondrian’s abstract style as an exploration of the rhythms of the landscape; note the elimination of external relations and the exploration of internal relations.

[42:55]

- Guided contemplation of Mondrian’s geometric painting reveals its underlying biological forms and rhythms.
- We have to take time to enter into and participate in the biological rhythms in the painting.

[44:52]

- Lonergan’s view of “art as feeling recollected in tranquility” (borrowed from Wordsworth).
- Aesthetic patterning is something we *do*. It is a kind of mediated, active passivity which needs to be *learned* and *developed*.
- Aesthetic associations are those intrinsic to the patterns, not extrinsic.
- But the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic itself needs to be learned. For example, a viewer may bring in personal, or historical or psychoanalytic associations in her or his viewing. These may be mere projections extrinsic to the artwork; but they could be intrinsic. What are those elements doing *in* the painting?
- We need to learn how to enter into an art work, and let it be our guide, and not impose preconceived ideas on our viewing.
- Only way to do this is to spend lots of time entering into the aesthetic pattern of experience, and to let the other patternings fade away.

[52:30]

- Slide of August Renoir’s portrait entitled *Madame Renoir* (1884).
- Practice in “feeling recollected in tranquility.”
- Discussion of noticing the visual elements and the associations inspired by the painting.
- The significance of the hat being associated with halos in other paintings – *not* an extrinsic association. Interplays of color and shape shared among paintings across history. Paintings as situated in the history of art.
- What place is this painting? Not in ordinary space, not extrinsically related to “real” Space.

[58:44]

- The Elemental Meaning and Ulterior Significance of Art.
- Elemental meaning of a painting transcends words about the painting.
- Elemental meaning only accessible by participating.
- Artworks open up the world's majesty, goodness and adventure in very concrete ways.

[1:00:30]

- Georgia O'Keefe's ***Oriental Poppies*** (1928).
- Meaning as beyond words, as elemental.
- Prior to formulating insights, there is an elemental unity of the *subject* in act with the *object* in act.
- A painting needs the participation of human viewers to become an aesthetic entity.
- The elemental meaning is our discovery of ourselves as aesthetically patterning.
- "Subject in act, emergent, ecstatic, standing out."
- Prior to freedom of choice is the freedom to pattern our own experience, to transcend mere biological determinism.
- Opens up to us the ways that we can be aesthetically alive and creative.

[1:05:55]

- The aliveness of paintings arises from our participation.
- Paul Cezanne's ***Braque's Forest of Fontainebleau*** (1894-98) – its trees and stones are "alive."
- Time allotted for contemplation.

[1:07:54]

- Elemental meaning and ulterior significance: Why does Lonergan situate the aesthetic pattern second after the biological pattern in *Insight*?
- Humans are capable the liberation from using experiencing merely to survive, toward freely patterning experience in the aesthetic mode, to focus on beauty rather than survival.
- In Chapter 6 of *Insight*, Lonergan suggests art's ability to put us in touch with our elemental wonder – something he explores more systematically in Chapter 12.
- Artistic experience is companioned by intellectual inquiry in its pure unrestrictedness.
- Scientific inquiry is heuristic, guided; practical commonsense inquiry is restricted; in aesthetic patterning, we encounter our wondering in all its infinity and unrestrictedness.
- Letting our experiencing and wonder take us where it will.

[1:15:14]

- Wassily Kandinsky's ***Black Lines #1 B9*** (1913)
- Discussion of the kinetic (motion) qualities of the painting – the motion of course is *us*.
- What sounds would naturally accompany this play of shapes and colors?

[1:16:45]

- Ulterior significance – the painting and indeed the visible world as sign and cipher of something transcendent – something unnamed, encountered only by participating.

[1:18:25]

- El Greco's ***View of Toledo*** (1597)
- A painting of a city, but communicates more than a city. Forces carrying the city like a ship on the sea.
- The implied, invisible presences of the painting as part of its ulterior significance.

[1:19:46]

- Art as a “withdrawal for a return.”
 - We withdraw into aesthetic experience so as to return to a fuller actuation, an enriched, concrete dramatic pattern of experience.
 - The mistake of the aesthete: failing to allow living to be transformed by time spent experiencing in the aesthetic pattern.
 - Art criticism as a further withdrawal for another return: return to the aesthetic pattern with enriched capacity for noticing and participating.
 - This class has oscillated between aesthetic experiencing and the withdrawal into philosophical reflections, so as to return to the aesthetic pattern.
 - The achievement of the good art critic/historian/philosopher: enrich aesthetic patterning so as to then enrich our living out of our part in the drama of human history.

[1:29:33]

- The Aesthetic vs. the Artistic Patterns of Experiencing.
- Aesthetic patterning is the participation in the ‘purely experiential pattern.’
- Aesthetic patterning is heightened by artworks, but can also arise in response to “ordinary” natural or human scenes.
- Artistic patterning actively works to find the proper ways to express the aesthetically patterned experience.
- The aesthetic patterning is veiled, not-yet-unobjectified; the artistic pattern seeks insights and techniques in order to express and unfold that aesthetic patterning.
- Artistic patterning “selects” from the complex mixture of sensations in order to facilitate the entry of the viewer into the aesthetic patterning opened up by her or his artistic expression.
- Just as in the “inner word” formulates the intelligible content of an insight, so also the artist expresses the implicit and enfolded elemental meaning of the aesthetic pattern.

[1:37:43]

- The Meaning of Paintings.
 - The meaning of painting is the *space* into which we are invited – not an ordinary space – not a space “represented” by the painting.
 - Meaning of the place more elemental than the Space of Chapter 5, where the place is situated in an explicitly formulated network of intelligible relations.
 - Making a new world visible, and/or the old world visible with new meanings.
 - Examples of such spaces: Cezanne’s *Mont St. Victoire*, Van Gogh’s *Starry Night*.

[1:42:06]

- The Meaning of Architecture:
 - Architecture embodies the places and ‘ways’ of a particular group’s collective life.

[1:44:08]

- Conclusion: an invitation to further explore the aesthetic mode of experiencing artworks and the world.

End of Class