

AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE: THE ARTS



Nature of the Arts

- Does art have to have meaning? Conversely, if something is meaningless, can it be art?
- Is a work of art enlarged or diminished by interpretation? What makes something a good or bad interpretation?

Definition

- Can anything be art? For example: John Cage, 4' 33".



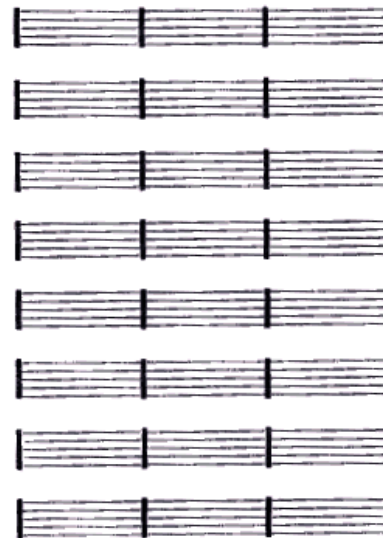
Préface

L'auteur de cette Marche funèbre s'est inspiré, dans sa composition, de ce principe, accepté par tous le monde, que les grandes douleurs sont muettes.

Ces grandes douleurs étant muettes, les exécutants devront uniquement s'occuper à compter des mesures, au lieu de se livrer à ce tapage indécous qui relève tout caractère anguste aux meilleurs obédiens.

A. A.

Leito rigolando.



- Are there limits to what is acceptable in art? Who decides?

Nature of the Arts

- Some languages, such as Balinese, have no generic word for “the arts”. To what extent might the concept be a culturally relative one?
- To what extent, even within those language that have a generic term is the term “the arts” elastic in definition?

Nature

- Do all the arts share certain common feature?
- What might these be? Is there a distinction between arts and applied arts (crafts)?

Nature

- What roles do the arts play in people's lives?
- Are these roles unique to the arts? (Can art change the way we interpret the world? Does involvement in the arts help the development of personal value systems?)
- Can art express emotion? Why? Why not?
- Does art enlarge what it is possible to think? Why? Why not?

Nature

- How important is form in art?
- “Life is very nice but it lacks form. It’s the aim of art to give it some.” --Jean Anouilh

Nature

- Are the arts a kind of knowledge, or are they a means of expressing knowledge? If the latter, what knowledge might they express?

Nature

- What is the origin and nature of a sense of beauty?
- Is this sense specific to the individual or to the culture, or is it universal?

Methods of Gaining Knowledge

- What is the proper function of the arts: to capture a perception of reality, to teach or uplift the mind, to express emotion, to create beauty, to bind a community together or to praise a spiritual power?
- Are there functions omitted here?
- Do the various arts have the same function?

The Arts: Methods of Gaining Knowledge

- To what extent and in what ways might the arts be regarded as a representation of reality?
- What kinds of art might be seen as “realistic”?

Gaining Knowledge

- Is originality essential in the arts?
- Is the relationship between the individual artist and tradition similar in all the arts, in all cultures across all times?

Gaining Knowledge



Gaining Knowledge

- Most arts have used technology, over many centuries (for example, musical instruments, pencils). Has the relationship between the arts and technology changed as a result of the possibilities of mechanical reproduction and digital manipulation?

Gaining Knowledge

- Is originality essential in the arts?
- Is the relationship between the individual artist and tradition similar in all cultures and times?

Gaining Knowledge

- In what ways does technology influence the arts?
- What, for example, might be lost or gained aesthetically by recycling visual images, or by composing music by computer?

Arts and Knowledge Claims

- Does familiarity with an art form itself provide knowledge and, if so, of what kind?
- Knowledge of facts?
- Of the creator of the art form?
- Of the conventions of form?
- Of psychology or cultural history?

Knowledge Claims

- Does art, or can art, tell the truth?
- If so, is artistic truth the same as truth in the context of the natural sciences, the human sciences, or history?
- How might the truth claims of art be verified or falsified?

Knowledge Claims

- What are the implications of the following claims?
“Far from being engaged in opposing of incompatible activities, scientists and artists are both trying to extend our understanding of experience by the use of creative imagination subjected to critical control, and so both are using irrational as well as rational faculties. Both are explaining the unknown and trying to articulate the search and its findings. Both are seekers after truth who make indispensable use of intuition.” --Karl Popper

Knowledge Claims

- In science the idea of progress is dominant: new knowledge builds on what is already known; knowledge once discovered cannot be “unlearned”. Is the same true in the arts?

Knowledge Claims

- Is explanation a goal of the arts?
- How do the arts compare in this regard with other Areas of Knowledge?

Knowledge Claims

- What did Frank Zappa mean when he claimed that “Talking about music is like dancing about architecture”?

Arts and Values

- What is the value of learning an art form (for example, music or visual arts)?
- What is the value in each of the different forms (dance, film, literature, music, theatre, visual arts and so on)?
- Are any of the arts of more or less value than the others?
- Can what is of value in arts education be learned in other ways?
- How are value judgments in the arts justified?
- How is “good art” recognized or decided on?

Arts and Values

- What are the justification and implications of claiming that there are absolute standards for good art, or that the only standard for good art is individual taste?
- How are value judgments in the arts justified?
- How is “good art” recognized or decided on?

Values

- Does the artist carry any moral or ethical responsibility?
- Is it possible for an artwork to be immoral?
- Should art be judged on its ability to shock?

Values

- What is the role of education in creating art

Linking Questions

- Perception: To what extent do the arts help us to see the world with new eyes?
- Reason: What role does reason play in artistic creation
- Language: How do poets help to keep language alive?
- Emotion: Is art the language of emotions?
- Religion: How is artistic creation similar to and different from divine creation?

Linking Questions (cont.)

- Mathematics: What is the connections between music and mathematics?
- Ethics: To what extent do the arts civilize people?
- Natural sciences: What role does creative imagination play in the sciences?
- History: How much can we learn about the past from the history of art?
- Human sciences: How does literature help us understand human nature?