

The peculiar allure of another's aesthetic worldview

Main claim: Interest in the aesthetic worldview of the other person has a distinctive and weighty value to many kinds of relationship.

Aesthetic worldview: an individual's set of evaluative criteria and attitudes that make sense of their aesthetic judgements and value-laden aesthetic experiences.

Aesthetic interest: active curiosity in another's aesthetic worldview – typically borne out through attention, imagination, and dialogue.

Distinctive value: Aesthetic interest is valuable in ways that are different from the value of curiosity into other aspects of a person's worldview, i.e., not reducible to the value of general attribution of credibility.

Intimacy requires appreciation

Personal relationships aim at flourishing intimacy. This requires that parties appreciate the core aspects of one another's characters.

Appreciation is valuing which calls for attention to the detail of the valued object.

Example of poet's funeral: Intimate relationships which lack appreciation of character are deficient as intimate relationships.

Merely trivial value?

Merely Trivial Value: Aesthetic interest is partly constitutive of a valuable form of intimacy with a person insofar as, only insofar as, and just because, their aesthetic worldview happens to be a core part of their personality.

Reasons against aesthetic interest: (i) harms resulting from the importance attributed to individual aesthetic qualities; (ii) scepticism about personal aesthetic value.

The scope of the aesthetic

Anti-Aestheticism: One can lead a flourishing human life without investing oneself in any aesthetic value.

Anti-aestheticism relies on narrow construal of the domain of aesthetic value, e.g., restricted to conventions of traditional artforms.

Aestheticism holds that the domain of aesthetic value must be construed broadly, to include: the abstract beauty of mathematics, the elegance and simplicity of scientific explanation, a sense of place, of play, of humour, of style, creativity in general, and, indeed, meaningfulness in general

Personal aesthetic qualities

Personal Aesthetic Qualities: any quality of a person in virtue of which the person, rather than just the quality, could aptly be described with an aesthetic predicate.

E.g., visual appearance: hairstyle, make-up, dress, facial expressions, gait and broader styles of movement; social qualities: humour, manners, firmness or softness (style) of interpersonal touch, music of speech; controlled surroundings: choice and arrangement of objects, colours, lights, spaces, materials.

Such qualities can embody a range of values as broad as the aestheticist construal of the aesthetic.

Conclusion: The aesthetic worldview borne out through a person's personal aesthetic qualities can represent a fundamental dimension of a person's character, appreciation of which is a correspondingly fundamental feature of valuably intimate interpersonal relationships.