

Ethics 106, 1996, 727–53). Searle does nothing to eliminate this option. Perhaps it will be claimed (*R*) that, necessarily, if and because a *rational* agent recognizes that he has a good reason to *A*, he desires to *A*. If *R* is true, perhaps being a rational agent depends on having generic desires of certain kinds. Might an agent be rational who has no generic desire to ‘carry out’ obligations he creates? If not, a proper account of rationality is committed to generic desires. And if some agents with no pertinent generic desires are rational, they look like potential counterexamples to *R*. What blocks the possibility that such a rational agent recognizes that his ordering a beer constitutes a good reason for paying for it and yet has no desire to pay for it?

As is the way of philosophers, I have concentrated on theses and arguments of which I am critical, but there is much to recommend this book. It creatively and instructively connects important topics that are often treated separately—for example, free will, rationality, and consciousness. It is written in Searle’s characteristically engaging prose. And it certainly is provocative!

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Performing Live: Aesthetic Alternatives for the Ends of Art, by Richard Shusterman. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2000. Pp. xii + 266. H/b £33.80, P/b £11.50.

Shusterman’s new book is a collection of mutually complementary essays which encompass a decade of writing. It represents his pragmatist aesthetics critically applied to a range of issues, theories, and methods foregrounded by recent work in both analytic and continental philosophy. Interestingly, the contemporary vitality of some of these issues is in part due to the influence of Shusterman’s previous writings.

A collection of essays is not always the easiest thing to review. However, those in this collection constellate around a number of well defined factors, both methodological and thematic. A central methodological factor, for example, is Shusterman’s attempt to negotiate between the idea of aesthetic responses having a natural basis and the recent fashionable notion that they are no more than historical constructions specific to western culture. In this task he is aided by a thematic preoccupation, namely the significance of art forms and media which are traditionally marginal to mainstream ‘high’ art. This theme allows Shusterman to give considerable emphasis to the way in which transformations of art media bring about transformations of experience. What is naturally grounded, can be given new meaning by the changing historical means of its expression.

Shusterman’s opening essay launches a section on ‘Aesthetic Experience and Popular Art’. It is an impressive defence of both the phenomenological vitality

and the logical centrality of aesthetic responses in relation to our understanding of art. He deploys insights from Dewey to counteract the exaggerated 'anaesthetic' emphasis (found in Danto and Goodman, amongst others) on aesthetic phenomena as semantic configurations. Shusterman's preferred focus on the aesthetic's felt character also informs the next essay where Shusterman considers the dichotomy between high art and those marginal forms associated with such media as pop music and film. He carefully analyses claims that the latter idioms can only issue in shallow or substitute aesthetic gratification, and offers a number of arguments against these contentions. Of key importance here are Shusterman's insights concerning the technically innovative character of recent developments in such idioms.

This character is given a significantly detailed analysis in the next essays. These centre on the complex cross-cultural relations which exist between the work and audience in rap, and those in country and western music. Such relations are also the main concern of a further essay on 'The Urban Aesthetics of Absence'. In this piece the weight of argument is sustained by substantial reference to Shusterman's own experience as an American-Israeli Jewish intellectual negotiating the physical, historical and cultural complexities of late twentieth-century Berlin. The personal emphasis here is by no means inappropriate. For as well as wishing to illuminate the way in which new media have extended the scope of aesthetic experience, Shusterman also wishes to show how questions of personal style (or the 'art of living') have been made central by postmodern existence as such.

Of course, it might seem as if these latter issues are merely a subject for sociological or historical analysis. However, the essays in the final part of the book offer a sustained and philosophically deep analysis of the nature of personal style and its significant conceptual ramifications. This begins with a discussion of where all style must begin, namely as an interpretative phenomenon. Shusterman, however, effectively distances himself from reductionist standpoints which would reduce all understanding to interpretation. Instead, he articulates a pragmatist theory which centres on and develops the notions of uninterpreted linguistic understanding and meaningful experience which is non-linguistic.

It is this more considered notion of interpretation which informs the remaining essays in the 'Soma, Self, and Society' section of the book. In these five chapters, Shusterman addresses the scope of personal style in relation to techniques of body care by developing his notion of 'somaesthetics'—the use of the body as a considered locus of sensory appreciation and creative self-formation. This notion also enables him to illuminate such issues as the positive potential which multiculturalism holds for personal style and the paradoxical nature of the striving for genius. Again, it might seem that such deliberations are not the province of philosophy. Shusterman, however, shows otherwise by contextualizing his position in relation to a number of philosophical traditions.

In assessing the book it is first worth emphasizing the sheer scope of this last mentioned point. Shusterman's text is enormously sophisticated not only in the range of philosophical and cultural sources which he is able to draw upon, but also in the probing and succinct way in which these are applied. The essay on country and western, for example, is something of a *tour de force* in the way that Shusterman's interpretative strategy reveals hidden and paradoxical cross-cultural meaning in an idiom which seems at first sight to manifestly exclude such a possibility.

The book also has a more general significance. It has become something of a commonplace in recent times for cultural theorists to talk about art and the aesthetic having come to an end. Such phenomena have, as it were, been washed away by the tide of pop culture and multiculturalism (amongst other factors). However, one of the many strengths of Shusterman's book is the way in which its richness of analysis in relation to specific media allows the work of art and aesthetic responses to reconnect with contemporary reality. The dynamic power of art is shown not to have disappeared, but to have shifted, rather, into those zones which were long regarded as peripheral. Here—as at the heart of all Shusterman's arguments—there is a notion of experience as both formative power and idiom of response which achieves an excellent balance between producer- and audience-orientated approaches to art. The result is aesthetic theory with genuine depth as well as breadth of understanding. Its innovations significantly extend the conceptual scope of aesthetics as a discipline.

This being said, one must make the inevitable caveats. For Shusterman's central arguments are also problematic in a major and complex respect. The burden of Shusterman's arguments fall on showing how it is possible for new popular-based idioms to evoke genuinely aesthetic feelings. All well and good. But this raises a number of questions. How, for example, should we distinguish between the mediocre and the aesthetically rewarding in such a context—or is it that any affective response to any kind of art format will always involve aesthetic feeling? The reason why this is important is that (as Wolfgang Iser and many others have argued) the great cultural problem of postmodernity is the way in which everything is aestheticized and consumed in terms of style rather than on the basis of its satisfaction of genuine human need.

One assumes that Shusterman's way of dealing with this would be to compare and contrast works or activities that innovate in relation to the relevant medium or activity and those which merely repeat what has already been done. The former would be an authentic vehicle of aesthetic response, whereas the latter would not. But if Shusterman were to adopt this strategy (and I see no other one available) he would have to offer far tighter criteria of aesthetic merit and demerit than he has been able to offer in this and other works to date. Indeed, this would then raise a related point. For whilst (as Shusterman amply demonstrates) pop idioms do make genuine innovations, it may be that

these are of only peripheral significance in relation to the broader development of the relevant medium. In this respect, for example, we might contrast the possibilities which rap has created with the extraordinarily broad innovations opened up by Steve Reich's minimal idioms. The former have application only to a limited range of musical endeavours whilst the latter has, in principle, application to many, including, of course, rock music.

Now irrespective of whether this particular contrast is apt or not, it at least indicates that there is a case still to be argued. What Shusterman needs to address in much more detail is the relation between pop idioms and the more general musical, literary or visual traditions of which they are instances. This may necessitate a turn on Shusterman's part towards a pragmatist history of the arts. He would certainly have the nous to undertake such a task.

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Approach to Aesthetics: Collected Papers on Philosophical Aesthetics by Frank Sibley, edited by John Benson, Betty Redfern and Jeremy Roxbee Cox. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Pp. 280. H/b £30.00.

Aesthetic Concepts: Essays After Sibley, edited by Emily Brady and Jerrold Levinson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Pp. 239. H/b £35.00.

The publication of a collection of Sibley's papers is a major event, and the editors, as well as Oxford University Press, are to be congratulated for this collection and its companion volume of critical essays. The collection contains Sibley's classic paper 'Aesthetic Concepts' and other papers related to this. It also contains five previously unpublished papers, including an interesting trio of essays concerned with the attributive/predicative distinction. The remaining two are papers entitled 'Tastes, Smells, and Aesthetics' and 'Why the *Mona Lisa* May Not be a Painting'. The former considers a neglected topic in aesthetics, arguing to the conclusion that there is no one notion of 'the aesthetic', rather 'many criss-crossing ones' (p. 254). The latter considers whether the *Mona Lisa* might be an appearance rather than a physical object, and hence could be instantiated in more than one place. Both exhibit Sibley's characteristically refreshing, rigorous and thought-provoking approach to his subject.

Sibley set himself very high standards. An ex-student of Sibley once told me of an occasion on which he had expressed to Sibley his joy at having his first article accepted for publication. Sibley apparently replied, 'Yes, but will it last ten years?' The question of whether these papers have themselves dated is an interesting one. The oldest in the collection is 'Aesthetic Concepts' (1959). On the one hand the paper is undoubtedly part of current debate in aesthetics. Most people who have studied the subject will have wrestled with it (and lost).