

This is a self-archived version of an original article. This version may differ from the original in pagination and typographic details.

Author(s): Saarinen, Jussi

Title: Book Note : Social Aesthetics and Moral Judgment: Pleasure, Reflection and Accountability

Year: 2019

Version: Accepted version (Final draft)

Copyright: © 2019 Australasian Association of Philosophy

Rights: In Copyright

Rights url: <http://rightsstatements.org/page/InC/1.0/?language=en>

Please cite the original version:

Saarinen, J. (2019). Book Note : Social Aesthetics and Moral Judgment: Pleasure, Reflection and Accountability. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 97(4), 844-845.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00048402.2019.1604778>

McMahon, Jennifer A., ed, *Social Aesthetics and Moral Judgment: Pleasure, Reflection and Accountability*, New York: Routledge, 2018, pp. xv + 229, £115 (hardback).

Social Aesthetics and Moral Judgment is a stimulating collection of essays that seeks to emphasise and explicate the socially situated nature of aesthetic-moral judgment. The socially accentuated approach is presented as a corrective alternative to the persistent analytic tradition of construing minds as isolated and self-contained entities. Thus, by way of focussing on aesthetic experience and judgment, the volume aims to open up fresh perspectives on the socially embedded mind and, in doing so, to bring aesthetics up to speed with more recent developments in philosophy of mind.

The volume features contributions from twelve prominent philosophers working on issues in aesthetics, ethics, and perception: Elizabeth Burns Coleman, Garrett Cullity, Cynthia A. Freeland, Ivan Gaskell, Paul Guyer, Jane Kneller, Keith Lehrer, Mohan Matthen, Jennifer A. McMahon, Bence Nanay, Nancy Sherman, and Robert Sinnerbrink. As the title indicates, the essays are organised into three parts based on the themes of pleasure, reflection, and accountability.

Summarizing the content and argument of each essay is not possible here; suffice it to say that the authors discuss a wide array of topics, including the functions of colour in contemporary visual art; emotional expression in dance; the connections between moral and aesthetic judgment; moral-cognitive dissonance in film; the motivational power of imagining; and the transfer of culturally charged material items from one society to another. The aims of the individual essays and the theoretical tools that are used to achieve them are likewise quite diverse.

In the Introduction, McMahon anticipates the potential impression of disjointedness by explaining why the essays are grouped under pleasure, reflection, and accountability and by spelling out how the essays form a complementary whole vis-à-vis the overarching themes of social aesthetics and moral judgment. However, even after careful perusal of the texts, some additional thematic dot-connecting may be required from the reader. Also, considering that McMahon frames

the social aesthetics approach in terms of distributed systems, extended mind, and social cognition, it is somewhat surprising that none of the essays truly engage with the rich research done in these areas.

On the whole, *Social Aesthetics and Moral Judgment* nonetheless provides an abundance of thought-provoking and valuable ideas for philosophers of art, aesthetics, and mind, as well as other scholars interested in related issues.

Jussi A. Saarinen

University of Jyväskylä