

# “Aesthetic”

- The discussion on what is beautiful obviously preceded Baumgarten
  - Plato
  - Aristotle
  - Kant
  - Hume
  - Modern takes on Aesthetics
- What do you think these philosophers said about art / aesthetics?



# Plato on Art

- **Mimesis** – an imitation of life, an imitation of the World of Forms
- To identify with mimetic art forms is to indulge in emotion which, in real life should be avoided or rationalized. Mimetic forms are seen to address the inferior emotional part of us at the expense of the rational good seeking part “that should rule a healthy soul”.
- Lovers of “sights and sounds” seek “many beautifuls” rather than a single form of the beautiful which only the philosopher recognises



# Plato on Beauty

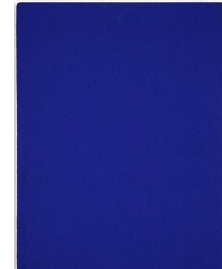
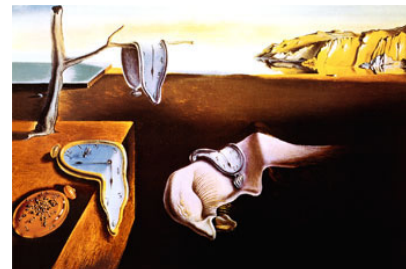
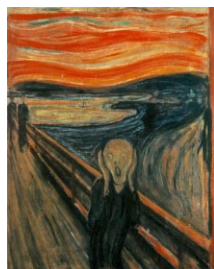
- **Beauty is a Form**, allied to the Form of the Good
- Plays a significant role in the soul's struggle to transcend delusive appearance and gain acquaintance w/ reality
- It is instantiated in an object of love
  - Begins with infatuation, love of a particular person, love of an ideal beauty, appreciation of the beauty of a just state, the form of beauty itself.





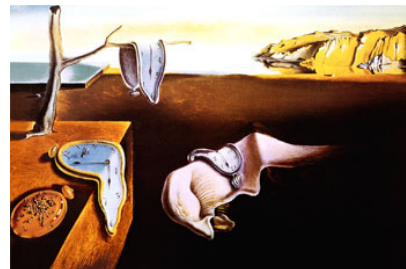
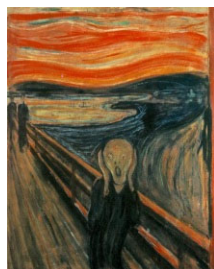
# Question

- Relate Plato's criticism of mimetic art to the current debate about the effects of television. To what extent do you think that Plato makes a good point?



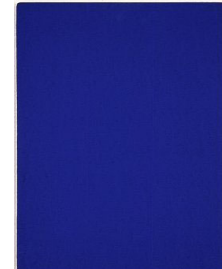
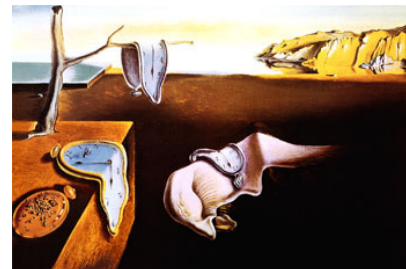
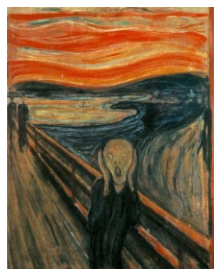
# Question

- Is Beauty a subjective concept or does beauty have any absolute, and/or unchanging qualities?



# Question

- Discuss Plato's idea in relation to politically restricted/defined art such as that produced by communist and fascist regimes. Should art have a social function to contribute to any given idea as to what constitutes a “good” society?



# Aristotle on Art

- Art = **the realization in external form of a true idea**
- Stems from a **natural love for imitation**
  - Children learn by imitation; mimesis is a natural way to learn about the world
- We feel pleasure when we recognise likenesses
- Art **idealizes** nature and completes its deficiencies:  
**it seeks to grasp the universal type in the individual phenomenon**





# Aristotle on Art

- **Poetry** depicts things in their universal character
- Such imitation may represent people either as better or as worse than people usually are, or it may neither go beyond nor fall below the average standard
- **Comedy** – imitation of the worse examples of humanity (what is low/ignoble => what is laughable/comic)
- **Tragedy** – representation of a serious or meaningful and more or less extended or far-reaching action





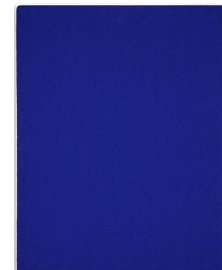
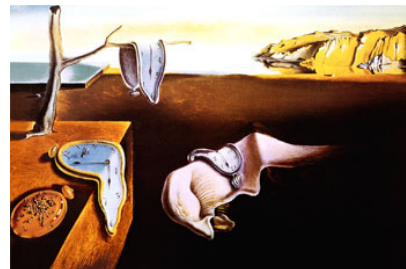
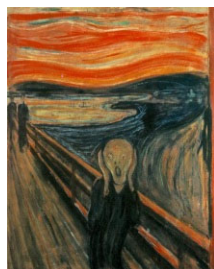
# Aristotle on Art

- Art helps us **understand and control emotions**
  - By rousing powerful emotions with a simpler train of events than life provides, tragedy teaches how fear and pity feel and where they are appropriate.
  - It takes the observer outside the selfish and individual standpoint
- This understanding forms part of the ground work for ethical behaviour
- Art has an important place in the life of a community



# Key KI Questions

- What is the place of art in society? What is its function?
- Does art contain knowledge or truth?  
Plato says no; Aristotle claims that it does.
  - *What would the answer to this question depend on?*
- Can art be a **source** of knowledge?



# Key KI Questions

- What kind of knowledge claims do we make in aesthetics?
  - X is art iff...
  - X is good art iff...
  - X is beautiful iff...
  - ???
- How do we *justify* our beliefs about anything to do with the aesthetic?

