Inter-subjective Judgment

Objectivity without Objects

Associate Professor Jenny McMahon
Philosophy
University of Adelaide
Aims

• The relevance of pragmatism to the meta-aggregative approach (an example of qualitative evidence synthesis)

• The idea that reference to context and end-users’ comments can be drawn upon in an evidence based rigorous methodology for gathering data and designing practices and procedures based on that data.

• I will set out Kant’s concept of aesthetic reflecting judgment and then relate it back to pragmatism. It is aesthetic not because it concerns artworks but because it engages one’s perspective and feeling.
Pragmatism & Critical Realism

• A subjective judgment engages outlook, attitude and individual perspective.

• However, all judgment exercises shared terms of reference.

• Shared terms of reference established over time through a process of giving and asking for reasons, hone perspectives and attitudes into communicative form without making them explicit.

• As such, a judgment that is subjective nonetheless implicitly makes a claim of universality. It is communicative rather than idiosyncratic and private.

• Attitudes and outlook are calibrated with community attitudes and outlook in virtue of understanding shared terms of reference.
Immanuel Kant

1724-1804
German Philosopher

- Aesthetic reflecting judgment is a judgment that engages subjectivity, i.e. individual perspective yet is not personal, but universal.
- Subjective and universal.
John Dewey

1859-1952

American Pragmatist

Recognising in an individual’s report, the universal voice: the difference between idiosyncrasy (impressions) and speaking from a more public platform (providing reasons).
Stanley Cavell

1926-
American philosopher

It is when traditions are weak, that we realise the extent to which the meaning and significance we attribute to things/events/objects etc., is based on other than objective or mind independent phenomena.
Key Concepts

• inter-subjectivity (Kant)
• community of enquiry (Dewey)
• facts blur into value when traditions are weak (Cavell)
• The more one finds a way of communicating feeling, the more one structures one’s feeling to community norms.

• The attitudes, outlook and perspectives built into concepts are acquired through social interaction (giving and asking for reasons) when the conditions are appropriate, e.g.:
  – No principled resistance
  – Spirit of trust or respect and cooperation
  – Learning through modelling, emulation rather than copying
Inter-subjective judgment

• A judgment necessarily involves a comparative edge: a comparison with how we would consider others would judge which depends on our prior experience, education and training

• A subjective judgment involves one’s attitude, outlook and feelings; but in a way which is seeking consensus. That is, one assumes others would or should agree (not that they do actually agree).
Doris Salcedo, *Shibboleth* Tate Modern 2007

http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/dorissalcedo/default.shtm

Turbine Hall:
167 metres, five storeys high
3,400 square metres
of floor space
The artworld provides an analogy for the way

- systems of belief are ordered, prioritised and communicated
- endorsed
- based within a history and tradition of practices, beliefs and ways of prioritising them

It demonstrates the principles and procedures involved in the way meaning and significance is constructed within communities more generally and attached to objects/events/actions and behaviours; hence the way apparently personal responses are communicable and answerable to critical reason (an exercise of agency).
Some References

Cavell, Stanley. *Must We Mean What We Say*. CUP, 1969

Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education* 1916
  *Human Nature and Conduct* 1922
  *Art as Experience* 1934
  *Freedom and Culture* 1939

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of the Power of Judgment* 1790
