

LEVINSON, Jerrold. *Music, Art, and Metaphysics: Essays in Philosophical Aesthetics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. xx + 419 p. 978-0-19-959662-1.

This book is an updated reissue of *Music, Art, and Metaphysics* published in 1990, a collection of sixteen essays, twelve of which had previously appeared in diverse academic journals, completed with four new essays, organized and commented upon by Levinson. The resultant work — which influenced contemporary philosophical aesthetics internationally, but had since gone out of print — is presented once again in this volume with a new introduction by the author.

American philosopher Jerrold Levinson is an established authority in his field, both by reason of the numerous respected works authored and edited by him, and his years as a university professor in the United States and a visiting professor abroad, currently Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at the University of Maryland. His extensive bibliography reveals a multidisciplinary approach to aesthetical topics, including ontological and ethical perspectives. It also shows that while his aesthetic writings have touched on a variety of art forms over the years, he has consistently given special consideration to the issues surrounding music; an allocation of interest effectively reflected in the title and the content of this particular publication. The essays chosen cover a wide scope of aesthet-

ic interests ranging from art definition, creation, content, interpretation and appreciation.

In the original preface preceding the new introduction, Levinson situates the essays of this volume at the intersection of aesthetics and metaphysics. He sets the tone for the book by describing his position in art theory, overall, as one of “historicist and contextualist objectivism” (p. viii-ix), making it clear that this orientation sets him apart from other contemporary currents. One particularly useful aspect of the book, in fact, is its exhaustive representation of the intellectual climate in which each topic unfolds, citing a host of relevant names, works and theories contributing to the discourse on the theme.

Levinson has grouped his essays into three parts, thus emphasizing three main areas of his aesthetical concern. Part One, entitled “Art and History”, contains three articles on the topic of art in general, aimed at defining how a work of art is regarded as such in light of factors such as historicity and intention. During the course of his exposition, he identifies diverse aesthetical theories and their respective explanations for these questions, clearly marking out his own distinct theory. A notable example of this is found in the first essay, “Defining Art Historically”, in

which he sets forth his theory of historic contextualization as inseparable from the definition of art as art, as a challenge to the institutional theory's account of adoption into the art-world as being the determining element. After dealing with the topic of defining "Hybrid Art Forms" in the second essay, the third, "Refining Art Historically" returns to the theme of confronting the institutional theory of art, further enriching his theory with intentionalist and indexical considerations, emphasizing the important role of the intentionality of the creator in determining what can be classified as art.

Part Two brings together seven essays that highlight the "Metaphysics of Art". Here, it is interesting to note that this section begins with an essay entitled "What a Musical Work Is" (4) and ends with a sequel article published later, "What a Musical Work Is, Again" (10), which is suggestive of the author's strong penchant for music-related topics, given that the third part of the book will be entirely devoted to music themes. These two articles assert the ontological character of a musical work as being integral to its full aesthetic appreciation. One of the points that stand out in the first essay of this section is that music works are *created*, not merely discovered, as some have argued, and that they are causally and ontologically linked to their composers. In short, what a musical work is not, he concludes, is a pure sound

structure. This is reiterated in "What a Musical Work Is, Again", specifically in response to the opposition of Peter Kivy — the author's compatriot and critic — who defines music in terms of pure eternal structures, which are only discovered by their authors. This essay, written ten years after the original, is essentially a response to Kivy's challenges, along with those of David Pearce, on the role of intentionality in music works, and finally the arguments of James Anderson on musical creation. The remainder of the essays (5-9) in Part Two deal with predominantly metaphysical questions concerning the nature, properties, content and identity of aesthetic objects. The consistency of the author's views are confirmed as closely-related themes, such as the imitative, representational, expressive, associative, and symbolic attributes of art, are repeatedly called into play.

The third part of the book, "Musical Matters", is arguably its high point, possibly due to Levinson's manifest proclivity for applying his art theories to music, lending a special energy and clarity to his expression in these essays. Starting off with "The Concept of Music" he carries out an in-depth review of the criteria for recognizing music. For Levinson, classifying it as organized sound is insufficient; he proposes that it must also be produced by intelligent creatures, i.e., *persons* (cf. p.270). Interestingly, he makes a point of not restricting the production of music to humans,

but to a wider group of intelligent *creatures*, presumably including angelic music in his classification. With a cohesiveness that comes as no surprise to the reader by this time, the author further stipulates that the organized sound be produced within a series of intrinsic parameters and concomitant *intents* (cf. p. 271-273), prompting him to discard John Cage's definition of music as any and all sound as "simply false, and the most cogent of Cage's reflections fails to establish it" (p.275). In the article that follows, Levinson applies much of what has been established about art's representational and expressive capacity, to discuss the possible existence of "Truth in Music" (12). After exploring the seeming paradox of why people use music as for its ability to convey sadness and other dark emotions in "Music and Negative Emotions" (13), he makes a convincing argument for music's ability to express higher emotions, claiming to hear "Hope in the Hebrides" (14), Mendelssohn's overture. The book's last two essays are concerned with issues related to musical criticism and appreciation; "Evaluating Musical Performance" (15) aims at delineating the characteristics of an aesthetically "good" performance, while "Authentic Performance and Performance Means" (16) concludes the book on a more speculative note, returning to historic theories accounting for authenticity.

The reading of this book confirms what Levinson's declares in its pref-

ace concerning his overall metaphysical approach to art, namely that his position is generally "opposed, in style as well as substance, to sociological, relativist — and more narrowly, deconstructivist — approaches to the realm of art which have been fashionable of late" (p. ix). In a similar vein, the author describes the background of "formalist, expressionist, and aestheticist accounts of arthood" (p. xiv) against which his contributions were made, and which they aim to confront. In short, within a philosophical climate of metaphysical pluralism, Levinson's insights represent a plausible affirmation of realism, meaning and causality.

There is evidently a difference between an entirely new work and an anthology-type publication such as this one. While the former offers the value of being a possibly groundbreaking contribution, an attribute that this book can no longer claim, the latter, under several perspectives, holds some definite advantages of its own. For example, the essays herein offered are papers on which the author has had considerable time—decades in some cases—for further reflection on the affirmations made, and has enriched the text with relevant commentaries made by way of additional notes. In several cases, we see the convenient juxtaposition of essays that were written chronologically as follow-ups, or logically as a defence to peer critique, all of which contributes to a well-rounded and enlightening experience for the read-

er. Thus, in “Music, Art and Metaphysics: Essays in Philosophical Aesthetics”, researchers can avail themselves of the expertise of a leading figure in the field of philosophical aesthetics whose work has been subject to academic scruti-

ny and whose arguments have stood the test of time, making it a worthwhile and authoritative resource for students and scholars.

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DOUGHERTY, Michael V. *Moral Dilemmas in Medieval Thought: From Gratian to Aquinas*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011. 226 p. ISBN: 978-1-107-00707-9.

É sempre possível evitar o erro moral? Ou seja, alguém, posto diante de dois deveres opostos e simultâneos, pode ser compelido a agir erradamente? Michael Dougherty traz a lume a resposta de diversos teóricos medievais — sobretudo de São Tomás de Aquino — aos dilemas que fazem parte da vida moral, concluindo que, à luz destas olvidadas contribuições medievais, a história do dilema moral deve ser reescrita. Pois “muito do que parecia exclusivo da teoria moral do século XX era já bem conhecido há muito tempo” (p. 1).

De fato, Dougherty contraria a opinião corrente de que a primeira teorização séria a respeito dos dilemas morais foi alcançada na filosofia moderna, sendo apenas depurada pelos pensadores contemporâneos, e analisa em seu livro o pensamento ético do período medieval. Segundo o Autor, é comumente aceito que na Idade Média a totalidade dos teóricos morais aderiu à máxima “deve, implica, pode”. Entretanto, ele

apresenta aderentes medievais ao “deve, mas não pode”, demonstrando que os moralistas desse período não somente trataram do problema dos conflitos morais, mas propuseram soluções com um nível de sofisticação surpreendente. Para comprovar sua afirmação de que a filosofia medieval foi a primeira a fazer uma análise profunda da questão dos dilemas morais, Dougherty oferece uma amostra dos debates morais desde Graciano até João Capreolo, compreendendo um período de 300 anos (1150-1450).

No capítulo I, vemos o *Decretum Gratiani* e sua *Glosa*. A influência de Graciano sobre a tradição canonista e o pensamento medieval é patente, especialmente pelos amplos debates suscitados em torno dos dilemas morais abordados no *Decretum*.

O capítulo II apresenta 20 dilemas morais retirados da *Summa Aurea* de Guilherme de Auxerre e da franciscana *Summa Halensis*. É tratada aqui a clássica divisão dos dilemas morais em casos