

anything about the present-day culture industry would inspire Adorno to soften the crushing verdict of the 1940s.

Elsewhere, we meet Charlie Chaplin at a party in Malibu during the war, essaying a pitch-perfect gestural impersonation of Adorno; the man himself perusing the impressionist paintings in the Jeu de Paume; reflecting on the Italian temperament on vacation in Lucca; lamenting the loss of atmosphere at the Prater fairground in Vienna, before going to see Irmgard Seefried sing Marie in *The Bartered Bride* at the Staatsoper; ruminating in his beloved Amorbach, the Bavarian scene of idyllic childhood holidays; and engaging in a little intellectual detective work in Sils Maria, where a guest-book at the Hotel Privata still bears Nietzsche's signature from the nineteenth century. In a grocery shop there, Adorno and Herbert Marcuse were once regaled by the owner, one Herr Zuan, with an anecdote to treasure. A band of mischievous children, of whom Zuan had been one, filled Nietzsche's furled umbrella with little stones, so that when he went out, rain or shine, for his constitutional, plotting an eternal return and saying 'Yes' to the whole of existence, his head was pelted on opening it. Hearing the peals of youthful laughter, he tried chasing the children, but could not catch them. The pang of sympathy Adorno registers at the tale dissolves to a supposition that Nietzsche probably, on reflection, acknowledged the children's merriment as the very life-force that he celebrated as standing in defiance of the arid motions of the spirit.

*Without Model*, which might have been better rendered as *No Bigger Picture* to denote the miscellaneous nature of the collection, permits a glimpse of a thinker still at the peak of his intellectual powers, but happy to relax a little in public. What Adorno calls 'the language of the self's free expression' in Romantic music after Beethoven is on abundant display here too.

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THE SOCIAL AESTHETICS OF HUMAN ENVIRONMENTS: CRITICAL THEMES. By Arnold Berleant. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023. 204 pp.

There often arises a conceptual conflict when two distinct ideas shape a new rationale. Is the human environment constructed of only immediate surroundings? Or, is it also the construction of considered decisions to meet immediate needs? Most crucially, can aesthetic be an effective tool of social critique? To these inquiries, Arnold Berleant's *The Social Aesthetics of Human Environments: Critical Themes* critically opens up with the discussion on the formative presence of 'social,' in 'aesthetics,' in the present discourse of environmental aesthetics. The book takes the readers through some thought-provoking original as well as well-known conceptions within the environmental and aesthetical discourse from the East and the West to felicitate the readers with a holistic understanding of aesthetics as a tool of social critique.

Berleant purposefully traces the root of the term 'aesthetic' only to ensure that the basic idea of aesthetics is grounded in sense perception; and, perceptual experience is never pure sensation but coated with associations, history, meaning and somatic memories. The book exemplifies the scope of aesthetics for a critical assessment of social practices realising the fact that it is our excessive consumer behaviour that devalizes the very ground of our sustainability. Hence, it promulgates to safeguard aesthetic, qualitatively perceptual values, to promise a global civilization that is both ecologically sound and morally humane. Being focused on the evolution of different art movements, the author portrays how the aesthetics of an object has changed to the aesthetics of experience/sensibility. Modern art became the narrative of transformation, witnessing the audience no more as spectators but rather as participants and co-creators, and responding intellectually and emotionally

to its social critique. With this, the academic world witnessed the transformation in existing aesthetic theory where aesthetic appreciation was no longer focused on a discrete object, but within a situation, that is, contextual. Thus, the first part of the book concludes by briefing how the human environment became the locus of aesthetic investigation.

The second part of the book remarkably draws references from various sources to delimit social aesthetics, emphasizing that “sensibility,” an advanced cognizance of perceptual experience, is key to the aesthetic value ascribed to art and nature. It critically elaborates on how the usage of “the” environment turns our immediate surroundings into an object separate from the perceiver. To confirm this, he cites social psychologists Kurt Lewin and J. J. Gibson who saw environment as not just an open space comprising independent objects but rather as a field of compelling forces that involves the human participant. That is, the human environment not only comprises natural things but also their social and environmental relationships, which is an aesthetic dimension that goes unnoticed. Thus, Berleant makes it easy to see how aesthetic engagement recounts human relations permeating a social situation. The book, then, demonstrates that aesthetic presence is an integral part of social relations, and its influence can enhance aesthetic engagement through educational practices and environmental designs. It is revealed that aesthetic is a distinctive experiential character of a situation, and not a substance, an object, a quality, or a feeling. It is an experience that exhibits four principal aspects: creative, performative, appreciative and focused, which occur in different environmental settings and in everyday life situations. Here, the book suitably exemplifies educational binary relations between teacher and student to exhibit that aesthetic is an experiential, perceptual process reciprocally influenced by environmental factors such as space, quiet, visual and physical comfort, and stimulation, which can transmute the experience and stimulate the outcome. Thus, the book makes sure to provide suitable illustrations to avoid ambiguity, which makes the reader stay focused on the critical discourse.

It is noticeable to see that the book always takes the readers to the founding notions of a term for its basic understanding. For this purpose, the third part of the book starts with a discussion on environment, aesthetics, and ecology to provide conceptual clarity. Environment is seen as to be inviting an inclusive understanding rather than just climate change and crisis, embracing preservation and protection of resources, public policy making, recreation and enjoyment. For this, the sensible experience of environment stands out as a peculiar experience. Hence, aesthetics comes at the centre to play its role as part of the human experience of the environment. Adding to this, environment and aesthetics get further clarified with conceptual simplification of ecology. Ecological perspective sees environment as a system of interdependent participating factors, which makes environment an unstable complex in precarious balance to sustain its coherence but never united. Therefore, environment should be considered all-inclusive with nothing outside or apart, which makes it clear that ecological aesthetics is inseparable from ecological ethics. Further, it is not only the environment that is a complex whole, but also human experience; for understanding experience is crucial to understanding environment. Since human experience is contextual, it can be experienced ecologically, and since experience is primarily perceptual, it is always aesthetic. So, the idea of environment is basically ecological aesthetics, and the aesthetics of environment is ecological. Thus, environmental aesthetics translates ecology into experience. Central to this discourse is the distinction between the Western and Eastern experiences of the natural world. Here, the book sturdily exposes Western cultures which, unlike Eastern cultures, present a sense of separation of humans from the natural world, rooted in the sources of the Hebrew Bible and Platonic Philosophy. This further influenced the Western culture linguistically, which turned environment into an object to be exploited. Hence, the book stresses the important of recognizing the basic cultural differences to understand environment conceptually rather than just perceptually. This connected illustration of the book augments its discourse and provides the readers with a critical impetus for the topic.

The fourth part of the book, henceforth, is dedicated to Disney World to critically expose its perceptual dimensions through sensory qualities which, combined with knowledge, create a unified

experiential situation. The book exposes the realities of Disney World by showing the reader its lucrative ambience which offers us a distinct, individual domain of time, place, or pursuit. Such offerings suspend people's typical attitude and behaviour, making the environment carefree. The inherent postmodernity of the Disney World environment and its multiple meanings label it as a monument of consumer culture where "everything is converted into matter for consumption: national and ethnic traditions, science, technology, education. Even the family is transformed into a unit of consumption" (p.77). Hence, Disney World is indeed the quintessence of consumer culture. Here, the book remarkably reveals the exploitation of people's sensibility by rendering the "co-optation" ("appropriation") technique, which is a tool to victimise people in contemporary corporate culture. The reviewer observes that this accounts for the author's idea of 'critical aesthetics', an aesthetics of social and political critique, as crucial to understanding social aesthetics.

The book takes a stimulating turn in the fifth part, engaging with the topic of 'negative aesthetics' and dealing with the nature of aesthetics in terrorism and other violent activities. Taking help from Burk's and Kant's ideas of the sublime, the author critically appraises terrorist activities as a source of the sublime, evoking the Mathematical Sublime, and, aesthetic in violence as a kind of disinterested engagement, as proposed by Kant. Here, the author evaluates that there is undeniably an aesthetic pleasure in the benign sensible experience of the destructive and violent forces in the human environment, and shows how acts of violence and terrorism have been a prolific element in different forms of art since antiquity. Hence, the aesthetic of violence is unqualifiedly negative and appalling. It should be noted here, the author stresses, that the culprits of terror may be disinterested and victims impersonal, but the sensible experience of witness is personal and compelling—aesthetically engaged, which is intimidating to the human environment, hence, condemnable. Henceforth, dwelling on the idea of postmodernism in the sixth part of the book, the author confirms that the postmodern sublime is, both dynamically and mathematically, a negative sublime.

The concluding section, the seventh part of the book, sketches out the case for a social aesthetics through its contextual theory. Berleant is elaborative here to illustrate that a number of factors—acceptance, perception, sensuousness, discovery, uniqueness, reciprocity, continuity, engagement, and multiplicity—combine in an inclusive situation of human environment. It is vital to see how these contextual characters bear a remarkable resemblance to human relations and reveal the social significance of the aesthetic. The book shows that all the situational arts—architecture, film, theatre and television—exemplify a distinct mode of aesthetic engagement and constitute a sequence of aesthetic situations which are fundamentally social. In a broader perspective, social aesthetics forms an aesthetic community that unites the realms of art, human and nature. In short, aesthetics is indeed an effective tool of social critique, which the book establishes through its well-knitted discussions on various realms of environmental aesthetic discourse.

To mention specifically, the book raises some pertinent questions in all its seven parts, which critically enlighten the reader to seek their answers in the subsequent proceedings. Thus, the reader keeps on building ideas and resolving the raised issues through the running discourse. Though the book displays a great deal with some of the well-known discourse of aesthetics, however, its topicality is exemplified through the interweaving discussions of the original propositions. The broad range of references and citations used in the book find their cruciality in establishing aesthetics as a tool of social critique. Thus, the book offers several facets of aesthetic discourse which unleashes many novel perspectives to critique the world of human environment, which scholars may find as a crucial tool of social aesthetics to perceive human engagements in the world distinctively.

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