

Authors: Alex Radulescu & Emanuel Viebahn

Title: Art, language, and the limits of intentionalism

Intentionalism about the content of things of some kind is the claim that one of those things has a particular content only if its author intended it to have that content. This paper is about two intentionalist views. Aesthetic intentionalism claims that the correct interpretation of an artwork cannot go beyond what the artist intended. Linguistic (context) intentionalism claims that the referent of many context-sensitive expressions cannot be something that the speaker did not intend. There are dissimilarities between these two views, but in this paper we are more interested in their similarities. More specifically, we have two goals. First, we will respond to an objection against aesthetic intentionalism, namely that it cannot account for the fact that critics often attribute contents that the artists did not intend, for example because they lacked some concepts that are required to have those intentions (Gaut 1993). We respond by using recent work on a parallel objection to linguistic intentionalism about gradable adjectives. We will see that there is a common way of responding to this type of objection, though the details are interestingly different. Our broader goal is to illustrate and thereby provide evidence for an integrative approach to metasemantic questions in aesthetics and the philosophy of language.