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The Function of Aesthetic Experience in the Philosophy of Art

The talk addresses the question to what extent the dimension of experience is of relevance for a philosophy of art. In the course of the argument two frequent positions are rejected: firstly the position which assumes the existence of one specific form of aesthetic experience, which characterizes every situation of art reception and which can be used to define the concept of art and be called on to measure the quality of an artwork. Secondly the position which is aware of the theoretical problems of such a notion of aesthetic experience and therefore holds that a theory of art should abandon the notion of experience altogether. In contrast to both positions this paper claims that it is crucial to take the dimension of experience into account to understand the processes of understanding and evaluating works of art; however the plurality and the respective contexts of different forms of experience in art reception have to be considered.