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Aesthetics of intoxication

Abstract
The goal of the article is to present an overview of the aesthetics of intoxication. Various kinds of intoxicants have been widely used throughout known history, and they are closely related to the core issues of aesthetics such as art, perception, and emotions. The use of intoxicants often has aesthetic grounds, and they affect aesthetic phenomena in several ways. However, the theme has been addressed only rarely in philosophical aesthetics. After commenting some earlier accounts, I suggest that the many-faceted topic can be systematized by analyzing the relation of intoxicants and intoxication to four aesthetic perspectives: the creation of aesthetic phenomena related to intoxication, the phenomena themselves, their reception, and their context. Lastly, I compare aesthetics of intoxication to aesthetics of art and environmental aesthetics to highlight some of its typical features.

Keywords
Aesthetic experience, Alcohol, Drugs, Intoxication

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1. *Introduction*

Intoxicants and stimulants from opium via alcohol to tea have been used all over the world throughout known history. Although they are in many ways linked to art, perception and emotions, i.e., the core areas of our aesthetic life, they have been discussed surprisingly rarely in philosophical aesthetics. In this article, I present a preliminary overview for aesthetics of intoxication; I both comment existing literature on the theme and introduce some possible but previously unexplored routes further.

I start by addressing Simon Fokt's (2024) and C. Thi Nguyen's (2024) recent articles. Despite their many merits, they only cover a part of the field, and their perspectives need to be broadened. I do that with the help of Marty Roth's book *Drunk the night before* (2005). He analyzes the theme through numerous examples and reveals that although the aesthetics of intoxication has largely been ignored in philosophical aesthetics, many of its dimensions have been addressed elsewhere. However, his survey is rather unsystematic from the point of view of philosophical aesthetics. My task is to present an outline that explores the topic extensively but is more structured than Roth's approach.

I am fully aware that my synoptic essay covers such a broad area that it would require a book or two for a deep-going treatment of everything I mention. In part, I only summarize ideas others have presented without analysing them in detail, and I have more questions than answers. However, as the theme has not been much discussed before, I believe that at this point the kind of initial overview I offer has its place. In my view, for philosophy, it is often more interesting and important to find questions and start something new than to try to reach the final solution – which is reached hardly ever anyway even if formal features of certain academic article writing traditions might fool us believe the contrary. My aim is thus twofold: to introduce some of the main strands of the discussion that seems to be developing and offer some potential alternatives for future analyses.

Overall, I agree with Nguyen that the experience of intoxication itself is at the core aesthetics of intoxication, although other issues such intoxicating substances and the contexts in which they are used also deserve attention. By concentrating on intoxication, new perspectives can be opened in comparison to, for example, the aesthetics of wine which typically concentrates on the properties of the drink. For instance, Douglas

Burnham and Ole Martin Skilleås state at the outset of their *The aesthetics of wine* (2012) that they do not discuss intoxication, and despite its title, Cain Todd's *The philosophy of wine: a case of truth, beauty, and intoxication* (2010) does not really address it either.

After presenting Fokt's, Nguyen's and Roth's main ideas, I build an overall picture of intoxication aesthetics by examining how intoxication is related to four overlapping perspectives: the creation of aesthetic phenomena, the aesthetic phenomena or "objects", their reception, and their context. I conclude the article by comparing art, the environment, and intoxication as objects of aesthetic analysis.

I consider intoxicants to be substances that alter the state of mind and sensory functions of the user, and which are intentionally used for this specific purpose. Examples include psychedelics, opioids, and alcohol – LSD, psilocybin-containing mushrooms, amphetamine, cocaine, cannabis, opium, heroin, wine, etc. The boundaries between them and other substances are imprecise; medication that relieves allergy symptoms and thus makes you feel better alters the state of mind, too, and many substances can be used for medicinal and intoxicating purposes. Often, the amount is decisive between whether the substance works as a medicine, a stimulant, an intoxicant, or a poison, and the amount also affects the degree of intoxication. Moreover, a state similar to intoxication can be achieved without intoxicants through sports, video games, religious rituals, sex, and art, for instance.

The use of legal and illegal intoxicants is very common and has significant health, economic, cultural, political and environmental impacts. Some of the effects are negative, some positive. The physical health of over-users inevitably deteriorates (although it is not self-evident what amount of each substance is too much for whom) while social situations related to intoxicants bring joy and are good for mental health; the alcoholic's financial situation may collapse at the same time as the tax authorities receive income; the world of illegal intoxicants includes brutal violence, but legal ones are an essential part of many valuable cultural rituals and traditions; the growing of coca and opium poppy leads to deforestation and hinders nature conservation work while farmers receive income.

There are countless reasons for use of intoxicants, as well as a plethora of consequences. However, I will only focus on the aesthetics of intoxication. There is a need for this because intoxicating substances are so common, and their use has clear aesthetic grounds and effects. Yet, by

looking into the key publications of aesthetics, such as the most important journals and reference works, it is easy to see that the subject has not attracted much attention; for example, the four-volume Encyclopedia of aesthetics (2nd edition, Kelly 2014) and seven-volume *Ästhetische Grundbregiffe* (Barck 2001) do not contain entries or search terms that would be clearly related to intoxicants and intoxication, with the exception of Nietzsche's "Rausch". In recent years, some publications that at least mention it in passing have been published, but they are still rare. If aesthetics is understood as a philosophy of sensation, perception, and emotion in the spirit of Alexander Baumgarten, the connection between intoxicants, intoxication, and aesthetics should be quite obvious.

2. *Simon Fokt's* High art, high artists

In his article *High art, high artists* (2024) Simon Fokt states that there has never been much discussion on what aesthetic or artistic relevance drugs might have to artworks and their reception, and he takes on a task to analyze some prominent examples what he calls "high artworks". In such artworks, he argues, drug experiences are encoded, i.e., "their drug-related contextual and intrinsic properties or content are aesthetically or artistically relevant and should be mentioned in any in-depth analysis" (Fokt 2024: 61, abstract).

This does not mean that any use of intoxicants by artists and audiences is equally and similarly important to the reception of art related to intoxicants. Fokt presents a seven-point taxonomy between substance use and making art. 1. Some artists keep their drug intake and their creative output separate. 2. Other artists might use substances to "get their artistic juices flowing" (which does not necessarily show in any particular way in their works). 3. There are works which explicitly reference drug use by containing narratives which involve them, referencing the artists' experiences with them, and so on, but these references have little or no impact on the aesthetic properties of the works (their structure, style, etc., is similar to "non-high artworks" even if drugs are mentioned). 4. Artists might create art while under the influence, allowing their experience to noticeably mark their work. 5. Other artists might not have been creating while high, but they used their narcotic experiences as inspiration for their works. 6. There is a class of artworks that more or less clearly indicate that they are intended for (and likely created by) people who have had

experiences of a drug, or even to be enjoyed while under the influence of that drug. 7. Many artworks combine two or more of the above. (Fokt 2024: 63-5.)

For versions 4-7, "drug-related contextual and intrinsic properties of the works, as well as their content, are aesthetically relevant: the work would be aesthetically different if drugs were not involved" (2024: 65). They would look and sound different. Fokt claims, "that it is impossible or at least very difficult to fully appreciate or produce optimal evaluations of high artworks, unless one has oneself had drug-induced experiences of the kind encoded in the work. This is because such experiences afford one the relevant phenomenal knowledge that is otherwise inaccessible, yet required to gain an adequate level of competence allowing one to fully grasp the work" (2024: 61, abstract). According to him, this is comparable to any other experiential knowledge related to the reception of art, which is essential for a deep understanding of the work. For example, understanding may be more profound if one visits the city that the author describes in their work, and it is likely that a person who has experienced depression understands art that deals with depression better than someone who has no personal experience of it.

Fokt's perspective differs from the strictly formalist approach to art, which sees that only the observable formal elements of a work of art – not, for example, the artist's life, intentions or context – is relevant to its reception and evaluation. However, he goes on to say that "Still, most consider inquiring into the context of a work's creation a *sine qua non* of interpretation and there seems to be no reason why such inquiries should exclude the artist's use of drugs" (2024: 70). Fokt's view can be supported by the central arguments in Kendall Walton's *Categories of art* (1970): sensory properties alone are not enough for a relevant interpretation of a work of art. It is essential to know in what category the work is fruitful to examine, and knowing the category requires the contextualization of the work, which in turn often also reveals something of the artist's intention.

I would add that the artists' drug experiences most probably have an impact also on the formal qualities of their work, make them look and sound different, and the audience who has similar experiences can acknowledge this impact and the related formal qualities. It is probable that also those audiences who don't have drug experiences can perceive these formal qualities (at least when pointed out) even if they do not have the same kind of experience-based relation to them. If there was no impact

at all on formal qualities that can be perceived, Fokt's point would make no sense.

Fokt's main message is that in certain cases it is impossible for the audience to understand art works properly if they have not experienced intoxicants in the same way as the artist has. In other words, the use of intoxicants enables correct, profound interpretation, experience and understanding, and does not prevent it, as has sometimes been thought of.

This does not mean that drugs could not lead to misinterpretations. If drugs have no relationship to a certain work within the framework of the seven-point division presented by Fokt and a recipient examines it under the influence of LSD and ends up somewhere completely different from the other observers, it is very likely that their interpretation is at least very original, perhaps even irrelevant, even though the experience may be rewarding for them. Michael Pollan, a well-known popularizer of psychedelic research, tells how a dose of psilocybin mushrooms made everything in the surrounding nature appear magnificent, and he calls this an "aesthetic experience" (Pollan 2018: 5-6); it is unlikely that a person who had not taken the mushrooms would have been as ecstatic about the same environment. If something like that happens, it may be more sensible to talk about the aesthetic features of the experience itself. Then, the emphasis may no longer be on the works or on any factors outside oneself. This brings us closer to C. Thi Nguyen's account.

Before moving on to Nguyen, one more observation about Fokt: he presents a position on how drugs and the intoxication they cause should be taken into account in connection with one of the basic questions of aesthetics, i.e. when considering the reception, interpretation and evaluation of art: in certain cases, without experiences of intoxicants, the reception is incomplete. The experience of intoxication is therefore a necessary prerequisite for a thorough reception, even though you can get something out of the works without it. Whether it is a sufficient prerequisite for a successful reception remains unspecified by Fokt, but I believe there are no good arguments to claim that it is. The competent reception of such works also requires other things, i.e., everything that any competent criticism and interpretation does, such as experience of the genre, verbal ability to describe things, and sensitivity to nuances. Experimenting with drugs is not enough to make anyone a competent critic.

3. *C. Thi Nguyen and* The aesthetics of drugs

C. Thi Nguyen starts his article *The aesthetics of drugs* (2024) with the question "Can there be an aesthetics of drugs?" His answer is positive, and unlike Fokt, he does not restrict his analysis on art and its reception but sees a much broader field.

He proceeds via analyzing possible reasons for why the answer has previously often been negative, i.e., why there has not been an aesthetics of drugs, at least not in the sense he proposes (2024: 638-9). He sees two main reasons.

First, drugs lead to intoxication, and this has been seen as something that prevents an accurate appreciation and judgment of aesthetic objects such as works of art. Sober, correct perception and understanding is considered to be necessary for a proper and true interpretation. It has been claimed that in the worst case, any heap of garbage can appear aesthetically intriguing after taking LSD. Then, it is said, we are not really experiencing the qualities of the heap (which would not, in reality, be gratifying) but some sort of illusion created by the drug which is not proper aesthetic approaching of the object in question at all. For Monroe C. Beardsley (1970), for example, this shows that drugs necessarily distort accurate evaluation.

Second, when we appreciate works of art, we should be interested in and affected by the actual, real, and particular features of the work itself. Our experience is supposed to be related to and caused by the particularity of the external object (a painting, concert, dance performance, etc.) that we consciously focus on and attend. With (many) drugs, this is not the case: how an LSD pill looks or tastes like doesn't matter. What matters is the altered state of mind, and if that can be achieved by some other kind of pill or powder that looks and tastes different, that is enough.

Nguyen questions the relevance of both points (also Fokt's approach questions the first but for a different reason). Instead, we can quite well think that the actual object of our aesthetic attention and interest is the altered state of mind, the state of being inebriated. If so, it is indeed irrelevant whatever there is in the external world, whether we perceive things around us accurately or in the same way as sober people would (as if sober people would necessarily manage to perceive things accurately), and how the drug looks and tastes like. We can be interested in the feeling of being intoxicated and how the world appears under the influence of certain substances and even reflect this when the state is on and afterwards.

From here, Nguyen continues to inebriation related to "gastronomical drugs", substances such as tea and wine where we can appreciate both the taste, look, etc. of the substance ("how the world is") and the state of being inebriated, often in a social setting which is important in its totality. Both aspects can be aesthetically rewarding, and we can discuss them like we discuss art. For some reason, even in wine criticism and wine aesthetics, it has been customary to focus on the features of the wine (color, bouquet, taste, and so on) rather solely and set the inebriation aside. Indeed, it is typical to spit the tasted wine so that one won't become intoxicated. As Nguyen describes, this is never done with tea that can also cause mild inebriation which is appreciated by many connoisseurs.

Roger Scruton is one of the few other philosophers who have something to say about intoxication. In his book, *I drink, therefore I am* (2009) that concentrates on wine, he seems to be close to Nguyen's point of view – in respect to wine. The difference is that he does not appreciate non-gastronomic drugs that don't offer gratification on the level of taste and bouquet at all. Moreover, he has a clear hierarchy for gastronomic drugs, and (French) wine is in its own, superb category. In his case it is important to emphasize that intoxication is not a simple chemical reaction induced by the substance, but he claims that he tastes the intoxication as a quality of the wine. He tells that when he got a chance to taste a sip of Château Trotanoy 1945 in his youth, he "was overwhelmed by the sense of this drink and the distillation of a place, a time and a culture" (2009: 12) and the whole experience was intoxicating. He repeatedly describes how everything he knows about the wine and especially its *terroir* becomes one with the taste, look, and scent, and, if I understand correctly, it is the experience of the totality that is the intoxication.

Nguyen points out and Scruton would probably agree that some aspects of being inebriated are close to things that have repeatedly been considered important in aesthetics, even though in other contexts. He mentions three (2024: 635-7). 1) Aesthetic empiricism: one has an aesthetic experience if one engages with an aesthetic object not for the sake of some further purpose, but for the intrinsic value of the experience itself. 2) The view that the aesthetic is marked out by a broad and keen attention to an object. 3) Aesthetic judgment should proceed from the judger's own experience. If we accept that our own state of being intoxicated can be an object of our attention, it seems clear that these three points can be related to inebriation itself. It can have intrinsic value, we can focus on it, and we can judge it from our own experience.

Nguyen, too, seems to be most interested in cases when we have a "gastronomic drug" such as a tea and wine. With them we can, so to speak, move between our inner states of being inebriated and the world around us, paying attention to the qualities of the substance that causes the inebriation and the surrounding setting more broadly. This is what can happen over a pleasurable dinner. It is the whole of what we eat and drink, whom we meet, how we dress, and how we discuss that matters, and being intoxicated is this whole. According to him this experience is not a mistaken or false, chemically caused interpretation of the situation, and being drunk does not prevent us from understanding how the dinner really is. I would agree that our inebriated experience is the real object of our aesthetic evaluation, and, at the same time, it is the experience. In a way, we can oscillate between being intoxicated and evaluating the experience of being intoxicated. We are drunk and assess how we are drunk[1].

Nguyen and Scruton value very cultivated versions of intoxication. Although they are not interested in other, very different types, Nguyen's approach can cover such as well. Nothing prevents one from appreciating abyss-like, sozzled vodka sessions in loneliness or very high-flying LSD trips for which one doesn't need anything else but the substance that induces the experience. One does not have to be socially oriented and culturally knowledgeable. I see no reason why the brutal excess bingeing Scruton disdains could not offer aesthetic experiences for those who want to have such – at least until the state of an-esthesia is achieved.

While both Fokt and Nguyen emphasize things that are relevant for aesthetics but that have not been much addressed in philosophical aesthetics lately they are not completely without predecessors. Their historical roots that broaden the picture deserve more attention.

4. *Broadening the perspective with Marty Roth*

Marty Roth's book *Drunk the night before: an anatomy of intoxication* (2005) mainly focuses on the relationship between alcohol and, to some extent drug, intoxication and literature, and discusses the subject through very rich sources from antiquity to the present day.

[1] His analysis is a variation of his general approach to aesthetics that he calls "process aesthetics" where inner experiences have a central role (see Nguyen 2020). With this, he comes close to many working in everyday aesthetics, relational aesthetics, and aesthetics of sports.

Roth discusses all Fokt's seven variations between making art and substance use, his examples cover cases that Nguyen and Scruton write about, and he also goes through other interesting cases throughout the documented history of mankind. He addresses at least the following topics:

- How writers and other artists have used alcohol and other intoxicants.
- How it has been related to the way they work (have they written sober or drunk).
- How it can be seen in their works both in style (how they deal with things) and as a subject (alcohol as a theme).
- How real intoxication acquired by intoxicants is related to the metaphors of intoxication and other non-literal intoxications, such as Nietzsche's Dionysian Rausch.
- How the works of art themselves are sometimes perceived as intoxicating (at its strongest as Stendhal syndrome, which Roth does not mention).
- How intoxicants are associated with a certain kind of image or myth of the artist (the artist is a free and wild, creative genius who is even expected to drink or use other intoxicants).
- How the connection to intoxicants has affected the reception of their art (has the effect of intoxicants been noted at all, has its thematic significance been downplayed, or has it encouraged the audience to use the same intoxicants as the author).

Roth finds a large body of fiction and some research literature that discusses intoxication in numerous ways, and he focuses more on the positive than negative aspects of it. He shows that aesthetic aspects of intoxication have been dealt with a lot, although not in philosophical aesthetics. There are examples from all periods for which there are written sources at all. The earliest Western examples are parts of the Bible, the entire Anacreontic tradition of literature, and certain Plato's dialogues, and the list of artists and works mentioned closer to the present day is very long. In some sources, intoxication is viewed as a positive, in others as a negative phenomenon, but it has not been left unaddressed. The sources tell what intoxication feels like, why people want it, what dangers it has, how it affects perception and thinking, how it influences making art, what is the best way of getting drunk, how alcohol inebriation differs from opium intoxication, what kind of aesthetic terms has been used

around it, and so on. Works of art tell us again and again how significant things intoxication and intoxicants are in art and in the aesthetically colored emotional life outside art.

On top of Plato, Roth mentions some other philosophers of aesthetics in passing, such as Theodor Adorno and Charles Batteaux, but a more thorough analysis of the history of aesthetics from the intoxication point of view remains to be done. Here, one example not discussed by Roth is worth mentioning: Immanuel Kant also offers his interpretation on the matter. The theme is by no means the most central to him, but it seems to be related to his key ideas. Kant's position has been analyzed by Matthew Perkins-McVey (2022). According to his reading of *The metaphysics of morals and anthropology from a practical point of view*, as related to *Critique of judgment* and to what is known of Kant's interest in the so called brunonian system of medicine guiding his daily practices, including regular consumption of moderate amounts of tea, tobacco, wine, and spirits, it seems that Kant appreciated intoxication and linked it to aesthetics. For Kant, alcohol and other intoxicants, if used wisely, can excite imagination in a pleasurable and useful way. Intoxicants can stimulate imagination and understanding into an active (*thätig*) play. As is well known, for Kant, aesthetic beauty is related to free (*frei*) play of imagination and understanding that find 'law-likeness' in the world and ourselves without following existing conceptual 'laws'. Free play of these capacities can be seen to be related to free will and moral duty, and beauty symbolizes this: we are not bound to pre-given, particular laws but are able to create them. Active play, however, does not function like this. Rather, intoxicants can liberate imagination from its daily restrictions in a way that is not simple agreeable sensual pleasure but is not full-fledged moral edification either. If free play is, in a way, controlled by genius that turns this play into beauty (and moral duty), active play should also be controlled and not let run complete unchecked. However, in active play, there's no element of law-likeness. Intoxication is, for imagination, a creative state where we all can experience something of that what genius-artists experience but without being geniuses and without creating works of art. It is its own kind of aesthetic, pleasurable, and creative experience, which, if not taken to excess, is good for us and makes our lives better.

Despite its abundance and expertise, Roth's treatment is not very systematic, but rather anecdotal. He rolls in one example after another and has done a tremendous job in finding them. His book serves above all as an excellent reminder of the fact that there has always been an interest

in the aesthetic dimensions of intoxication, both in terms of being intoxicated and being delighted about that, and in terms of enthusiastic treatment of intoxication in works of art as well as, to a certain extent, in art criticism – and sometimes even in philosophy. In view of all this, the blindness of modern philosophical aesthetics to intoxicants is indeed remarkable[2].

5. *Preliminary systematization of intoxication aesthetics*

How can we get from the abundance of sample material to a philosophical systematics?

One possible way is this: questions related to aesthetic activities and phenomena can be seen to form a continuum. First, we have issues related to producing or creating aesthetic phenomena, second, ones related to aesthetic objects or phenomena, third, to their use or reception, and fourth, to their context. In many ways, these are interlaced and can only kept separate analytically. I present a set of questions related to all four areas, and if we want to understand intoxication aesthetics, none of them can be forgotten.

The four-part frame can help us tame the plenitude without simplifying it too much. I understand philosophical approaches to refer to ones where we go into fundamental issues and question self-evident facts, where we don't typically find one final answer but several alternatives that are presented in natural languages, and that (implicitly and explicitly) make use of earlier and contemporary discussions in philosophy. I present my example questions within this type of framing; different examples paving the way to different answers can easily be found.

5.1. *Creation*

There is a family of question in aesthetics that relate to how aesthetic objects and events come about, how they are produced and created. In art works, memoirs, and art history, the drug and alcohol use of artists

[2] Some other works of cultural history work in a somewhat similar way as Roth's book. They address specific themes and examples, but do not provide a systematic philosophical picture of aesthetics of intoxication. These include Alexander, Roberts (2003); Colman (2019); Jay (2010); and Stein *et al.* (2022).

has been described extensively, and there seem to be (at some point) addicted artists in all fields of art and for every alphabet from Apollinaire via Charles Bukowski, Nick Cave, Philip K. Dick, Vincent van Gogh, Max Ernst and Ernest Hemingway to ZZ Top. Each and every one has their own story about how the use has affected their working and creation.

There are plenty of philosophical aspects to these stories. On top of or as variations of the points raised by Fokt and Nguyen, we face the following questions. Why is it important at all to know whether something is created while besotted? If we think that intentions and life experiences of an artists are important for understanding their work, which intentions and experiences are relevant for us to know? What does intention in these cases mean? Does the person remain the same under different conditions? How controlled can a creation process be under the influence? If we think that creativity is important for artistic work, how do intoxicants affect it? Are intoxication and creativity the same thing because Nietzsche wrote in his *Twilight of the idols* (Chapter 9, section 8: 46-7): "For there to be art, for there to be any kind of aesthetic doing and seeing, one physiological precondition is indispensable: intoxication". What is intoxication in his case, and is this attitude still relevant? If intoxication is a necessary precondition for art, is it also a sufficient one, i.e., is everything done in the state of intoxication, art? Or the other way round: are there artworks or other aesthetic phenomena that cannot or must not be produced while intoxicated? Why? Perhaps some aesthetic activities which require extreme physical virtuosity and accuracy cannot be done when stoned – even if many musicians do play in that condition. A graceful bouldering act?

As Ngueyn points out, a separate, external work of art is not needed at all but the thing we might be creating is the very experience of being intoxicated. We know that it will happen if we take enough of the intoxicant of our choice. What will happen after that is less clear and can lead to surprises – which, again, may be the goal, and then, the question of controlling one's 'work' becomes even more tangled. Technically, such creation is typically much less demanding than, say, creating a painting or concert. Depending on the substance, the creation process and experience is different. Alcohol affects differently from cocaine, LSD, and heroin. How? I don't know, because I have only tried alcohol. Thus, I have no personal, practice-based knowledge of these other creation processes and there's a much more at stake to broaden one's knowledge base in this sense than in, say, trying to learn to play the guitar or going to a new

kind of art exhibition. If it was legal and I could be sure that there won't be negative health consequences and violence and abuse in the supply chain, I might try other intoxicants, but as things stand now, I won't. Here, aesthetic questions are related to ethics and health much stronger than in many other contexts.

An interesting, separate questions is how intoxicated creation should be taken into consideration in aesthetic or artistic education. We don't teach drinking and drug use at school, but they are normally learned somewhere else, from friends, family, movies, novels, and so on. True, schools offer education but typically focusing on dangers and risks, and that is something quite different. Wine clubs and wine literature teach to concentrate on properties of wine, not on how inebriation feels. What is the philosophy behind of that kind of education that is almost always unofficial and often illicit? As we know that getting high and drunk are very, very common practices, why the whole 'educational system' is almost totally uncontrolled and wild, based on volunteers, and peers? Do we have any other sector of culture that is as widely spread and still as uncontrolled in this, educational, sense?

5.2. *Objects*

Intoxication is also visible in the works themselves or other aesthetic objects. It has already become clear that the state of intoxication itself can be a 'work', an object of aesthetic examination, a goal. Its ontology is an interesting and challenging philosophical question. Where, when and how does such an 'object' exist? Which are its standard, variable and contra-standard properties if we look at it through Kendal Walton's (1970) approach to the categories of art? What kind of aesthetic qualities or features can it have? Are some moments of tipsiness aesthetically rewarding while some others are insignificant? Why? What could be the criteria for a good or excellent drunkenness? An exercise would be to analyze John Dewey's aesthetics from the point of view of intoxicants. How would they change 'an experience'? And what is intoxication in the first place? Am I intoxicated if I have one beer? Or only after the second? Is intoxication induced by wine the same as the one caused by a song? As Scruton's approach above showed, intoxication is hardly a simple chemical reaction, a natural kind, but the word refers to a family of phenomena that are only bound together in a cultural (philosophical) discussion.

In addition to the fact that the state of intoxication itself can be aesthetically rewarding, there are other ways in which an aesthetic phenomenon itself is linked to intoxication and intoxicants. A work of art can describe intoxication or experiences and observations during intoxication, and there are countless examples of this in literature, visual arts, film, and other arts, as Fokt and Roth showed. In addition to their examples, we can mention the short stories by Lucia Berlin and the film Trainspotting. One philosophical question is what is interesting about such descriptions, for example, from the point of view of whether fiction can increase our knowledge or empathy for this particular topic – if we haven't experienced similar intoxication ourselves, in Fokt's sense. Can that be compared to what we learn about murders in detective stories? It is also interesting why the topic seems to be quite popular, even though it is often described with an emphasis on problems and negative dimensions. The question belongs to the same family as the reflection on why people want to watch and listen to (other) sad or violent works.

Outside art, the aesthetic features of intoxicants are of interest, too. As said, in the case of wine, that has even been the dominant way of approaching them, and how drinks look like is very important also in cocktails. Ngyuen discusses qualities of teas in detail, and coffee and cigar aficionados can discuss their favorites for hours. A slightly different area is the aesthetics of the packaging and utensils of intoxicants, i.e., bottles, cigar boxes, wine glasses, and hashish pipes. A broader style associated with certain intoxicants is yet another issue. In fashion, the style called heroin chic was in favor in 1990s (and it now seems to be coming back), for which very thin and pale models such as Kate Moss were wanted. A philosophical question is how such a style is defined as its own, recognizable trend. Moreover, in the eyes of the sober, drunken people often appear either ugly or comical – both aesthetic qualifications that are not easy to define. Why the same behavior looks repulsive to me and hilarious to you?

5.3. *Reception*

The use or reception of intoxicants and intoxication also opens up a number of questions. Because intoxicants change our senses, perceptions, and emotions, they affect the aesthetic examination of everything. Music, landscapes, other people, food portions. Again, it is quickly concluded that

the intoxicated experience itself may actually be the interesting thing. But sometimes the attempts to avoid it are recommended. One might wonder: if wine professionals advice to spit everything after tasting so that you won't become intoxicated, why isn't that abuse of an intoxicant? If you don't want to become inebriated, why drink wine? A philosophical question is, what is the best way to approach intoxicants aesthetically and why?

Reception is closely connected to how do you describe it to others. What kind of criticism intoxicants and intoxication experiences can generate, and how can we learn to master it? Are there experts on what kind of taste and fashions are associated with different types of intoxication? How to compare being high on cocaine and LSD? What kind of concepts and terminology are required? For wine, tea, and some other substances we have well-developed practices but even there the experience of being inebriated is not a standard issue. If we discuss that, is some kind of intoxication right or wrong? Is it possible to examine another person's intoxication, and can it be experienced – and in what sense? How can it be received? Is there anything to share? In art criticism, one can point toward perceivable features of art works, but is there anything like that in being drunk?

Yet another question is what should we think about criticism done under the influence? Is it necessarily distorted or can it, a least sometimes, be even more insightful than sober one? Is it impressionistic criticism à la Oscar Wilde or something else? Here, we don't only need to refer to cases Fokt writes about but can cover criticism of any kinds of art works or other objects. If a stoned critic writes aesthetically brilliant text (Hunter S. Thompson?), we might simply accept that it's not accurate and true in every respect, at least not in the same way as some sober critic's work, but still interesting.

5.4. *Contexts*

The aesthetics of a broader contexts of intoxication can be considered a separate area. This is when we talk about the aesthetics of a complex cultural phenomenon, a network of things that, at least in our own interpretation, belong together. In the case of wine, it involves the region of cultivation, its history, production methods, marketing, restaurants, bottles, cork trees, dishes, and occasions suitable for each wine, and much more

– the whole Scruton emphasizes. The aesthetics of champagne culture are quite different from sherry and amarone, not to mention whiskey or rum. The English pub culture is very different from the Japanese sake culture, but neither exists without their core intoxicant. Neither does the certain kind of cannabis-related culture often associated with Jamaica with its hair and music styles. It is a philosophically interesting question how each intoxicant has shaped a style that looks and sounds as it does and what it actually consists of. And what is the role of intoxicants in it? An opera house has different intoxicants than a rock festival. Some areas of certain cities are sadly known for their fentanyl problem that has its own distinctive aesthetics.

6. *Art, environment, and intoxication*

I end with a brief comparison of aesthetics of art, environment, and intoxication. When, above, I listed a set of questions requiring more attention in the future, this comparison is a draft for an answer from one perspective. It seeks to explain what kind of aesthetic phenomenon intoxication is in relation to the division just described, i.e., to creation, objects, reception, and context.

In his book *Beauty of environment* (1986), Yrjö Sepänmaa develops a comparison of the key similarities and difference between art works and environments when addressed in the context of aesthetics. His notions can be combined with the ones presented by Denis Dutton in his *The art instinct* (2009) that lists twelve features that have been considered typical for art in a variety of cultural contexts. Putting Sepänmaa's and Dutton's notions together, we have a roster of characteristics against which aesthetics of intoxication can be reflected; here, I don't go through their remarks in detail but base my own synthesis on their work. Such a reflection by no means offers a definition of aesthetics of intoxication but it refers to a set of issues that are worth attention.

If we take the experience of intoxication to be a very common and appreciated aesthetic phenomenon, what kind it is in the light of this comparison?

Being intoxicated, if seen as an aesthetic phenomenon, is like art in the sense that

- It is deliberately created for aesthetic purposes (taken broadly), not born without human involvement like natural environments are.
- It gives (or can give) direct pleasure and emotional stimulation.
- Its pleasure is associated with sensory and perceptual experiences.
- There are conventions, traditions, even institutions for getting and being drunk (weekend drinking, parties, after work, ...)
- There are different (contextual) styles for different intoxicants.
- An experience of intoxication can have a certain duration and optimal context, like a frame (restaurant evening, dinner…)
- Intoxication brings certain things into specific observational focus (features of art works cf. features of intoxication itself).

It is less like art in these respects:

- Skills and virtuosity needed for creating art works is appreciated – getting drunk doesn't require skill (even if making and knowledgeable tasting of wine does).
- Novelty and creativity are appreciated in art – this is not required with intoxication.
- Art sparks (systematic and institutionalized) criticism – being intoxicated normally does not.
- Representing and referencing are essential for art; art works are 'about' something – being drunk is not.
- Art is often used for expressing subjective, personal, individual views about the surrounding world – being intoxicated does not need to express anything (even if it can express, for example, someone's attitude towards a certain event).
- Art is often intellectually challenging – being high is not or does not have to be.
- Art is closely related to imagination – being intoxicated does not have to be even if it can.
- Art requires an art-world context, intoxication doesn't necessarily need any specific context (even if rituals etc. also exist).

Being intoxicated as an aesthetic phenomenon is like an environment:

- It is true, a part of reality, not fiction.
- It is itself, does not refer to anything as a 'work'.

- Different occasions of intoxication are usually not named as their own, individual 'works'; they may be more like different instances of a more general type like different oak trees are instances of the species.
- It is a multisensory experience.
- It is a process, not a static object.
- It will disappear rather quickly and nothing of it is typically documented (cf. documents of disappearing and time-bound art works).
- Although it has a temporal duration, otherwise it is limitless, frameless, and the experience can draw in anything. The duration can also be changed according to one's own desire.

In certain senses, it is unclear in which ways intoxication would approach art or environments or is it rather of its own kind:

- The focus is very strongly on the inner experience of the one who in intoxicated which, as such and directly, cannot be shared with others. The (external) substance that physically causes the experience is not necessarily very interesting (unlike works of art and aesthetically rewarding environments).
- It is unclear how and to what extent the experience can be controlled.
- It is unclear what kind of skills acquiring different types of intoxication requires.
- It is unclear where and what is critique of intoxication (on which aesthetician could build meta-criticism?).
- It is unclear what characterizes positive and negative cases of intoxication and why.

7. *Conclusion*

Intoxication is an important part of our aesthetic life. Because intoxicants are so commonly used, they quite often affect both creation and reception of aesthetic phenomena, there are various kinds of contexts for intoxication related aesthetics, and the experience of being intoxicated is a significant aesthetic phenomenon in its own right. Philosophical aesthetics has not actively addressed this broad and versatile area. However, aesthetics of intoxication has been dealt with a lot in arts, and philosophers can learn from there; relevant philosophical questions are repeatedly at least hinted at in art works. A fruitful way of structuring different aspect

of intoxication aesthetics is to compare it with other, more traditional areas of aesthetics, such as philosophy of art and environmental aesthetics. Through this, especially when the central focus is on the experience of intoxication itself, a unique combination of important features for intoxication aesthetics emerges.

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