

Criticism and Theory II Past Papers Solved Short Questions

Past Paper 2014

Q: 1 Answer the following questions?

Q: 1 How Wilde has described criticism?

A: 1 In his essay "The Critic as Artist," Oscar Wilde describes criticism as a multifaceted and transformative art form. According to Wilde, criticism is not simply the act of dissecting and judging a work of art but rather an act of creation in itself. He emphasizes that the true critic goes beyond mere analysis and interpretation; they bring their own unique perspective and imagination to their critique, effectively co-creating a new work of art through their interpretation. Wilde believes that criticism should be a subjective and personal exploration, where the critic's individuality and passion shine through. He argues that criticism, when done with creativity and depth, can elevate both the critic and the artist, revealing new layers of meaning and beauty within the work. So, in Wilde's view, criticism is a vibrant and artistic endeavor that adds richness to the world of art and literature.

Q: 2 Why Freud considers dreams important and significant in human life?

A: 2 Freud and his fascination with dreams! According to Sigmund Freud, dreams are important and significant in human life because they provide a window into our unconscious desires, fears, and thoughts. Freud believed that dreams were a manifestation of our suppressed wishes, and they offered a pathway to understanding the hidden depths of our psyche. He believed that dreams were symbolic in nature, and by analyzing them, we could gain insight into our true selves. Freud argued that dreams act as a form of wish fulfillment, allowing us to experience and express our deepest desires and emotions in a disguised or symbolic way. By unraveling the hidden meaning within our dreams, Freud believed that we could gain a greater understanding of ourselves and potentially uncover unresolved conflicts or repressed memories. So, for Freud, dreams held great significance as a pathway to self-discovery and the exploration of the unconscious mind.

Q: 3 Modern life is fueled by artificial manufacture of artificial desires. What role can an artist play in such an environment?

A: 3 In a world where artificial desires seem to dominate, the role of an artist becomes crucial. Artists have the power to challenge the status quo, provoke critical thought, and offer alternative perspectives. They can dismantle the manufactured desires and show the beauty and truth beyond the artificial facade. Through their work, artists can critique and question the shallow consumer culture, urging society to reconnect with deeper meanings and genuine human experiences. They can inspire introspection, awaken emotions, and encourage reflection on the complexities of life. In this environment, artists become agents of change, reminding us of the importance of authenticity, originality, and the pursuit of genuine fulfillment. They have the ability to spark conversations, inspire empathy, and reshape perceptions. So, in a world dominated by artificial desires, artists play a vital role in challenging, reshaping, and enriching our understanding of what it means to be human.

Past Paper 2016

Q: 1 Answer the following questions?

Q: 1 Discuss the relationship between critic and artist in Oscar Wilde?

A: 1 For him, criticism is not subject to the work of art, but can in fact precede it: the artist cannot create without engaging his or her critical faculties first. And, as Wilde writes, “To the critic the work of art is simply a suggestion for a new work of his own.”

Oscar Wilde had an intriguing perspective on the relationship between critic and artist. He believed that critics were also creators in their own right and that their interpretations of art were an art form in itself. For Wilde, the critic's role wasn't simply to pass judgment or analyze but to bring their own creativity and imagination to the table. He argued that the critic's individuality and uniqueness should shine through their critiques, making them a form of artistic expression. Wilde saw the artist and the critic as intertwined, with the critic adding another layer of interpretation and meaning to the artist's work. Rather than being adversaries, Wilde believed that the artist and critic could engage in a creative dialogue that enhanced both their perspectives. So, in Wilde's view, the relationship between critic and artist was symbiotic, with the critic contributing to the creative conversation and enriching the appreciation of art.

Q: 2 Discuss Plotinus's idea "On the Intellectual Beauty?"

A: 2 Plotinus encourages individuals to recognize the beauty within themselves. He emphasizes that beauty exists within every person and that self-awareness is the key to unlocking this beauty. To him, a lack of self-awareness results in a failure to recognize one's intrinsic beauty.

Plotinus's idea on "On the Intellectual Beauty" is a fascinating concept. According to Plotinus, true beauty lies not in the physical realm, but in the realm of the intellect or the soul. He believed that intellectual beauty surpasses the superficiality of physical appearances and is a reflection of the Divine. For Plotinus, intellectual beauty arises from the contemplation and understanding of abstract ideas and universal truths. It is a beauty that transcends the limitations of the senses and connects us to the realm of higher knowledge and enlightenment. Intellectual beauty is said to evoke profound spiritual experiences and a sense of awe and wonder. Plotinus emphasized the importance of cultivating the intellect and nurturing philosophical and spiritual growth in order to access this higher form of beauty. Through this perspective, Plotinus invites us to explore the depths of our own intellect and recognize the inherent beauty that lies within.

Q: 3 What is the standard of taste in Hume?

A: 3 Hume calls these observable regularities in human sentimental response the “principles of taste.” judge”: delicacy of taste, practice, comparison, lack of prejudice, and strong sense; “and the joint verdict of such, wherever they are to be found, is the true standard of taste and beauty”.

In Hume's "Of the Standard of Taste," he explores the question of how we judge and evaluate works of art. According to Hume, there is no universal or objective standard of taste. Instead, our judgments of beauty are based on our individual sentiments and subjective experiences. Hume argues that taste is not solely determined by reason or principles, but also by our emotions and feelings. He suggests that a person's judgment of beauty is influenced by their sensitivity to various aesthetic qualities and their ability to discern the merits of a particular work. Hume acknowledges that different individuals may have different tastes and preferences, and that there is no absolute or definitive measure for determining what is objectively beautiful. Ultimately, he emphasizes the importance of open-mindedness and a willingness to engage in thoughtful and respectful dialogue when discussing matters of taste. Overall, Hume's perspective on the standard of taste invites us to embrace the diversity and subjectivity of aesthetic experiences.

Past Paper 2017

Q: 1 Answer the following questions?

Q: 1 Write a short note on Hume's idea of taste?

A: 1 Taste, according to Hume, is the source of our judgments of natural and of moral beauty. We rely on taste, and not on reason, when we judge a work of art to be beautiful or an action to be virtuous. Taste "gives the sentiments of beauty and deformity, vice and virtue".

According to Hume, taste isn't just about flavors and food - it's about how we judge and appreciate works of art, literature, and beauty in general. Hume believed that taste is subjective and based on our individual sentiments and experiences. He argued that there is no universal standard of taste, and that different people may have different preferences and judgments when it comes to aesthetics. Hume thought that our sentiments and emotions play a significant role in shaping our taste. So, when it comes to art and beauty, it's not just about reason and logic, but also about how we respond emotionally. Hume encourages us to embrace the diversity of taste and engage in open-minded discussions to better understand and appreciate different perspectives. Overall, Hume's idea of taste reminds us that beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Q: 2 What does Freud argue in the essay in your course?

A: 2 Sigmund Freud, a renowned psychologist, contributed significant ideas throughout his career. One of his notable works is "The Interpretation of Dreams," where he explores the role of dreams in uncovering hidden desires and unconscious thoughts. Freud also discusses the structure of the human mind, including the conscious, unconscious, and preconscious.

"The Interpretation of Dreams" is a significant work by Freud where he explores the role of dreams in uncovering hidden desires and unconscious thoughts. He argues that dreams are a window into the unconscious mind, a way for repressed or suppressed thoughts and desires to surface. Freud suggests that dreams fulfill wishes and represent the fulfillment of repressed desires in symbolic ways. He delves into dream analysis and techniques such as free association to decipher the hidden meanings within dreams. Freud's essay revolutionized the field of psychology and laid the groundwork for psychoanalysis. Dreams, according to Freud, hold valuable insights into our psyche. Feel free to share any thoughts or questions you might have about Freud's ideas.

Q: 3 Show your acquaintance with Baudelaire?

A: 3 Baudelaire was a remarkable poet from the 19th century. Baudelaire is well-known for his collection of poems called "Les Fleurs du Mal" (The Flowers of Evil). His poetry explores themes of beauty, melancholy, and the complexities of modern life. Baudelaire's writing often delves into the darker aspects of human existence with vivid and rich imagery. His poetry is considered influential in the Symbolist movement and has left a lasting impact on literature.

Past Paper 2018

Q: 1 Answer the following questions?

Q: 1 Write a short note on Plotinus argument in “On the Intellectual Beauty”?

A: 1 Plotinus implies that there is a struggle between the artist and his materials, and that in the successful work of art the materials are partly subdued. When this occurs, the form in the artist's mind, which is derived from intellect and ultimately from the One, is given some visible expression.

"On the Intellectual Beauty," Plotinus, an ancient philosopher, explores the concept of beauty as an intellectual and transcendental experience. He argues that true beauty resides in the realm of the intellect and the soul, rather than in the physical world. According to Plotinus, intellectual beauty is beyond the superficial attributes of the physical form and is instead connected to the higher realms of truth and goodness. He suggests that through contemplation and the pursuit of knowledge, we can access this intellectual beauty and experience a deeper understanding of the world. Plotinus' ideas laid the foundation for Neoplatonism, a philosophical school that emphasized the ascent of the soul to the divine through contemplation and mystical experiences.

Q: 2 What does Roland Barthes argue in the essay in your course?

A: 2 Barthes argues that myths have two basic, interrelated components: a form and a concept. The form of a myth is concrete: It is the actual object, image, or phrase that we perceive with our senses. Barthes explains that, on their own, these materials have a literal meaning.

Roland Barthes and his thought-provoking essay collection, "Mythologies"! In this collection, Barthes explores various aspects of contemporary culture and media, uncovering the hidden meanings and ideologies behind them. One of the key arguments in "Mythologies" is that everyday objects, events, and even popular culture are laden with cultural and ideological significance. Barthes argues that these cultural signs and symbols shape our understanding of the world and reinforce certain dominant narratives or myths. He analyzes how these myths are constructed and maintained through language, imagery, and cultural practices. Barthes challenges us to question and critically engage with the hidden ideologies and meanings behind these seemingly mundane aspects of our daily lives. It's a fascinating exploration of the power of signs and symbols in shaping our understanding of the world around us.

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Past Paper 2019

Q: 1 Answer the following questions?

Q: 1 Can a critic be also a creative artist? Discuss with reference to Oscar Wilde?

A: 1 Absolutely! Oscar Wilde is a shining example of a critic who was also a highly creative artist. He was known not only for his wit and cleverness in literary criticism but also for his incredible talent as a playwright, novelist, and poet. Wilde's famous play, "The Importance of Being Earnest," displays his brilliance as both a writer and a keen observer of society. His witty and satirical commentary on Victorian societal norms is evident in his plays and writings. Wilde's ability to analyze and critique the world around him undoubtedly informed his creative works, making him a versatile and accomplished artist. So, it's clear that a critic can indeed be a creative artist like Oscar Wilde, combining intelligence, analysis, and creativity to produce remarkable pieces of art.

Q: 2 Write a note on the primary and secondary qualities in Hume?

A: 2 David Hume, the Scottish philosopher, had this interesting distinction between primary and secondary qualities. According to Hume, primary qualities are inherent properties of objects that exist independently of our perception, such as shape, size, and mass. They are objective and can be measured or described consistently by different observers. On the other hand, secondary qualities are subjective and depend on the sensory experiences of individuals. These qualities, like color, taste, and smell, are not inherent to the objects themselves, but rather arise from the interaction between the object and our senses. Hume argued that secondary qualities are not properties of objects in the external world but are instead products of individual perceptions. So, Hume's distinction highlights the role of human perception in shaping our understanding of reality.

Q: 3 What does Plotinus mean by the phrase “Intellectual Beauty”?

A: 3 Plotinus views the artist as a creator of vehicles for valuable, albeit imperfect, spiritual insight. Unlike working with rational principles, the artist's role is to express insights into the "One" through artistic means. This expression embodies what Plotinus terms "intellectual beauty."

Plotinus and his concept of "Intellectual Beauty"! Well, in Plotinus's philosophy, "Intellectual Beauty" refers to a beauty that transcends the physical realm and is associated with the realm of the intellect or the soul. It goes beyond mere physical appearances and material manifestations. According to Plotinus, true beauty lies in the realm of ideas, forms, and principles. It is the beauty that is perceived by the intellect or the higher faculties of the soul, rather than through the senses. So, for Plotinus, "Intellectual Beauty" is a higher, more profound type of beauty that resonates with the deepest aspects of our being.

Past Paper 2020

Q: 1 Answer the following questions?

Q: 1 Write a note on aesthetics of Oscar Wilde?

A: 1 Oscar Wilde's Aestheticism was heavily focused on the ideas of the flâneur, a person whose sole pursuits were beauty and sensation and whose function in the world was as a trendsetter (someone who dictates contemporary style) in not only literature, but also art, fashion, and culture.

Oscar Wilde and his aesthetics! Wilde was known for his unique and flamboyant approach to aesthetics. He believed that art should serve no purpose other than its own intrinsic beauty and pleasure. Wilde valued the concept of "Art for Art's sake," emphasizing the importance of artistic expression and the aesthetic experience. He celebrated the idea of creating art solely for the sake of its own beauty and believed that art should remain independent of moral or social expectations. Wilde also emphasized the role of the artist as a creator, someone who brings beauty into the world through their work. His own literary style reflected his aesthetic beliefs, as he often incorporated wit, humor, and the exploration of beauty and decadence in his plays, novels, and poetry. Wilde's aesthetics were certainly unconventional, but they left a lasting impact on the artistic world.

Q: 2 Write a short note on Hume's idea of Beauty?

A: 2 Hume claims that “beauty is nothing but a form, which produces pleasure, as deformity is a structure of parts, which conveys pain; and since the power of producing pain and pleasure make in this manner the essence of beauty and deformity.

Hume had an interesting perspective on beauty. According to him, beauty is not an inherent property of objects, but rather a perception that arises from our subjective experiences and sentiments. He argued that beauty is not an objective quality that exists in the external world, but rather something that is created by our senses and emotions. Hume believed that our individual preferences, cultural influences, and personal experiences shape our perception of beauty. So, beauty, for Hume, is a complex interplay between our sensory perceptions and our emotional responses.

Q: 3 Write a short note on Plotinus's main argument?

A: 3 Plotinus, a prominent philosopher in ancient Greece, put forth a complex and profound philosophical system known as Neoplatonism. His main argument revolves around the concept of the One, which he regarded as the ultimate reality and the source of all existence. According to Plotinus, the One is beyond all concepts, beyond being and non-being. It is pure unity and perfection, devoid of any multiplicity or division. From this One, emanates the Nous (the divine mind) and the World Soul, which in turn generate the physical world.

Plotinus believed that the ultimate goal of human existence is to achieve a state of union with the One through contemplation and ascent of the soul. By transcending the material realm and purifying the soul, individuals can attain a direct experience of the divine and reunite with the source of all being. This spiritual union, for Plotinus, leads to liberation and the realization of one's true nature.

His philosophical system has had a significant influence on subsequent thinkers and continues to inspire philosophical and mystical inquiries into the nature of reality and the human experience.

Past Paper 2021

Q: 1 Answer the following questions?

Q: 1 How can the critic function as an artist according to Wilde?

A: 1 Wilde advances this notion in The Critic as Artist, with the idea that it is more difficult to discuss or write about a work of art than to create it. The underlying concept here is that those who have the resources to spend time on thinking and observing are the true artists.

According to Wilde, the critic can function as an artist by infusing their criticism with creativity and artistic sensibilities. He believed that criticism should not be a dry and mechanical analysis, but rather a form of art in itself. Wilde emphasized the importance of wit, style, and aestheticism in the work of a critic. He argued that a critic should engage with the subject matter in a way that is imaginative, innovative, and thought-provoking. By approaching criticism as an artistic endeavor, Wilde believed that the critic could elevate their work to a higher level of beauty and expression. In other words, the critic becomes an artist through their unique perspective and the artistry they bring to their critiques.

Q: 2 Do we really need to abolish English Departments for the purpose of decolonization?

A: 2 The idea of abolishing English Departments for the purpose of decolonization is certainly a topic of debate and discussion. It's important to note that the perspective on this issue can vary among scholars and activists. Some argue that English Departments, as traditionally structured, have centered around a predominantly Western canon, perpetuating colonial legacies and excluding voices from marginalized communities. They believe that decolonization requires reevaluating and diversifying the curriculum to include a wider range of literary traditions and perspectives.

On the other hand, some argue that English Departments can be spaces for critical engagement and transformation by actively incorporating works from diverse cultural backgrounds and challenging colonial biases. They believe that rather than abolishing departments, it's essential to reform and reimagine the curriculum to foster inclusive and decolonized approaches to literary studies.

Q: 3 How does David Hume define taste?

A: 3 Hume calls these observable regularities in human sentimental response the “principles of taste.” judge”: delicacy of taste, practice, comparison, lack of prejudice, and strong sense; “and the joint verdict of such, wherever they are to be found, is the true standard of taste and beauty”.

According to Hume, taste refers to our ability to make judgments about beauty and aesthetic value. He believed that taste is a subjective faculty that allows us to discern and appreciate qualities of art, literature, and other forms of creative expression. For Hume, taste is influenced by our individual sentiments, emotions, and personal preferences.

Hume emphasized that while taste may vary among individuals, there can still be a general consensus on what is considered aesthetically pleasing or beautiful. He argued that our judgments of taste are not solely based on reason or objective criteria, but also on our innate feelings and sensibilities.

In essence, Hume sees taste as a personal and subjective experience that combines our emotional responses with our ability to perceive and evaluate artistic qualities.

Past Paper 2022

Q: 1 Answer the following questions?

Q: 1 What does Oscar Wilde mean by “soul speaking to soil”?

A: 1 In "The Critic as Artist," Oscar Wilde explores the idea of art and the relationship between the artist and the viewer. While Wilde doesn't explicitly use the phrase "soul speaking to soil" in the essay, he does discuss the concept of art as a form of communication between the artist's inner self, or soul, and the material world, represented by the soil. Wilde believes that true art surpasses mere imitation and becomes a means for the artist to express their unique perspective and emotions.

Therefore, it can be inferred that by "soul speaking to soil," Wilde implies the artist's ability to transmit their inner thoughts and feelings through their creative work, allowing their voice to connect with the external world. It's a beautiful way of illustrating the profound impact that art can have on both the artist and the audience.

Q: 2 What does Hegel mean by beauty as an idea?

A: 2 Hegel famously claims that beauty is the 'sensuous appearing of the Idea which entails that the higher form of the idea is non-sensuous and takes the form of philosophy, in the broad sense of that which integrates particular forms of knowledge and norms of action into a system.

Hegel, in his philosophical framework, explored beauty as an idea or concept. He argued that beauty, rather than being limited to sensory perception or physical appearance, exists as an expression of deeper truths and universal ideas. For Hegel, beauty is not merely surface-level aesthetics but a manifestation of the ideal or the absolute.

He believed that through the experience of beauty, we can access a higher level of understanding and insight into the nature of reality. Beauty, according to Hegel, transcends individual tastes and preferences, and instead reflects the harmonious synthesis of subjective and objective elements.

In essence, when Hegel refers to beauty as an idea, he suggests that beauty is not just a superficial quality, but something that resonates with our intellectual and emotional faculties, offering glimpses into fundamental truths and universal concepts.

Q: 3 Discuss the feminist concern in Mary Wollstonecraft?

A: 3 Wollstonecraft is best known for A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792), in which she argues that women are not naturally inferior to men, but appear to be only because they lack education. She suggests that both men and women should be treated as rational beings and imagines a social order founded on reason.

Mary Wollstonecraft, an influential figure in feminist philosophy, was deeply concerned with advocating for the rights and equality of women. She believed that women should be granted the same educational opportunities and social liberties as men. Wollstonecraft's groundbreaking work, "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman," published in 1792, highlighted the systematic oppression and limited opportunities faced by women in society.

Wollstonecraft argued that women should receive education and be independent, as this would empower them to contribute to society on equal footing with men. She challenged the prevailing notion that women were intellectually inferior and argued for their right to pursue knowledge and engage in public life. Wollstonecraft believed that true progress could only be achieved through the liberation and empowerment of women.

Her work laid the foundation for modern feminist thought, inspiring future generations of activists to fight for gender equality. Wollstonecraft's feminist concerns continue to resonate today as we strive for a more inclusive and equitable society.

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Past Paper 2023

Q: 1 Answer the following questions?

Q: 1 Can the critic functions as an artist?

A: 1 The role of an art critic is to analyze, interpret, and evaluate artworks, providing insights and opinions on their aesthetic and cultural value. While critics are not typically considered artists in the traditional sense, they do engage in a creative process of their own. Critics must have a sound knowledge of the history of art and make judgments about new and unfamiliar art. They may defend old standards and values against new ones or advocate for art that departs from prevailing norms. In this way, critics can play a role in shaping the art landscape and influencing artistic discourse.

However, it is important to note that the function of an art critic is distinct from that of an artist. Artists create original works of art, expressing their ideas, emotions, and perspectives through various mediums. Critics, on the other hand, analyze and interpret these works, offering their own perspectives and evaluations. While both artists and critics contribute to the art world, they do so in different ways.

Q: 2 Discuss Frederic Hegel's idea of beauty?

A: 2 Hegel's Idea of Beauty: Frederic Hegel, a prominent German philosopher, had a unique perspective on beauty. According to Hegel, beauty is the sensuous appearance of the Idea, which implies that the higher form of the idea is non-sensuous and takes the form of philosophy, encompassing knowledge and norms of action integrated into a system. Hegel's understanding of beauty goes beyond the realm of art and also includes the beauty of nature.

Hegel emphasized the unity of spirit and nature in beauty, particularly in ancient Greek culture. He believed that art has the capacity to give intuitive, sensuous expression to ideal beauty. Hegel recognized that art serves various functions, such as teaching, provoking, adorning, and more, but he aimed to identify its most distinctive function. He argued that the primary function of art is to give sensuous expression to the ideal, allowing the idea to manifest itself in a tangible form.

It is important to note that Hegel's discussion of beauty primarily focuses on beauty as found in fine art, rather than beauty in nature. He saw beauty in art as a manifestation of the self-unfolding idea of beauty, which is realized through individual works of art. Hegel believed that the architect and builder of the wide pantheon of art is the self-comprehending spirit of beauty, and its completion requires the history of the world's development over thousands of years.

Q: 3 Share your understanding of Mary Wollstonecraft?

A: 3 Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) was an influential Enlightenment philosopher and writer who is widely regarded as the founder of feminism. She advocated for women's rights and equality, particularly in the areas of education and social status. Wollstonecraft's most famous work is "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" (1792), which argued for equal educational opportunities for men and women and emphasized the benefits of improving the situation of women for society as a whole.

Wollstonecraft's ideas were groundbreaking for her time, challenging the prevailing notions of women's inferiority and subordination. She argued that women should have access to education, enabling them to develop their intellectual and moral capacities and participate fully in society.

Wollstonecraft believed that women's rights were essential for the progress and well-being of society as a whole.

Despite her significant contributions to feminist thought, Wollstonecraft faced criticism and ridicule during her lifetime. She was often dismissed as radical and received derogatory labels such as "hyena in a petticoat". However, her ideas and writings laid the foundation for the first-wave feminist movement and continue to inspire feminist thinkers and activists today.