

Natural and artificial orders: the Enlightenment shift in art and politics

G.S. Bowe

Istanbul Technical University

Abstract

The Lecture has two parts.

The first part attempts to show how Plato begins with a theory of art and beauty that is grounded in eternal formal algorithms. The shift to which the title of the lectures refer is illustrated with Descartes' *cogito*, whereby originality and creativity are located not in the eternal and the divine, but rather in the mind of man. Over time this leads to difficulties in establishing what Hume called a standard of taste, and the abandonment of definitional theories of art, culminating in the Wittgensteinian fueled Anglo-American tradition in institutional theories of art in the second half of the 20th Century.

The second part investigates, albeit in a very cursory manner, the implications for politics in the aftermath of the Cartesian articulation of man as a source of truth. We move politically from a natural conception of justice initiated by Plato and Aristotle, and reaching its apex in the Natural Law theory of Thomas Aquinas to the contract theory of Thomas Hobbes. The latter is not a coincidence, but rather characteristic of Enlightenment theories of politics that lead, in my estimation, to a kind of ethical atomization in the 20th Century, where concerns over the kind of psychological health that Plato envisions as central to his political theory is all but abandoned.