

Excerpt from

The Difficulties with a Nominalist Account of Aesthetic Terms

By Dena Shottenkirk, May 2008

Aesthetics depends upon terms such as “expression”, “emotion”, “feelings”, etc. It is my intention in this paper to examine the difficulties in giving a strict nominalist account of such aesthetic terms devoid of any Platonist associations using Nelson Goodman’s theories as an example of strict nominalism and through that to examine the precise difficulties inherent in applying a strict non-idealism to aesthetic discussions. While I don’t intend this as an argument for Platonism, I do hope to elucidate some ontological assumptions at work behind the usage of certain aesthetic terms.

1.0 Goodman’s Nominalism

Goodman’s nominalism is pluralistic and constructional. The only existents in his constructional system are *qualia* and their sums, both of which are ontological individuals of the lowest kind. *Qualia* are defined as phenomenal units, individuals that can each be located as an entity discreet from other entities and defined as the presented particular quality specifying color, place, and time.