

Having the same root as aesthetic, the word “aesthete” refers to a person who professes a superior appreciation of what is beautiful. Oscar Wilde, who dedicated his life and work to a love of art and beauty, is often cited as an aesthete. Wilde believed that art should be valued for itself alone and not for any purpose or function.



Wilde attempted to preserve an area of aesthetic experience – the appreciation of beauty – apart from utilitarian values fostered by Capitalist economics. The tradition of *philosophical* aesthetics on the Continent went further than Wilde by questioning whether experience could be represented or assigned a moral value. This tradition had its origins in the 18th century.