



Remembering George Dickie

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Professor Dickie served in the Marine Corps from 1944 to 1946. He then received his BA from Florida State University in 1949 and his PhD from UCLA in 1959. He began teaching in 1956 at Washington State University, then briefly at the University of Houston, finally coming to University of Illinois-Chicago in 1965 (“persuaded by Ruth Barcan Marcus”) where he taught for 30 years. After a distinguished career, he became Emeritus in 1995 and retired to Florida. He died peacefully on March 24, 2020, survived by his wife, Suzanne Cunningham, his sons Garrick and Blake, and two grandchildren. It was always a pleasure to socialize with Suzanne (Professor Emerita, Philosophy, Loyola University Chicago) when she accompanied George to various ASA meetings.

Professor Dickie was an important and influential figure in aesthetics and philosophy of art. His critique of the so-called aesthetic attitude and his Institutional Theory of art were landmarks in twentieth century analytic philosophy of art, and his book *The Century of Taste* (Oxford University Press, 1996) remains among the most prominent works on eighteenth century aesthetics. Others of Professor Dickie’s books include *Aesthetics: An Introduction* (Pegasus, 1971), *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis* (Cornell University Press, 1974), *The Art Circle* (Haven Publications, 1984), *Evaluating Art* (Temple University Press, 1988), *Art and Value* (Blackwell, 2001), and *Aesthetic Journey: Selected Essays* (Chicago Spectrum Press, 2007). He co-edited *Aesthetics: A Critical Anthology* (St. Martin’s Press, 1977, second edition 1989), and *Introduction to Aesthetics* (Oxford, 1997). Of the 1971 text, architect Russell L. Quacchia wrote, “I came to know him first through reading *Aesthetics: An Introduction*, which to this day stands on my bookshelf in well-worn condition along with his other books. If one can reward the contributions he has made it is to say that his books are

necessary reading to the subject of aesthetics and art." Ronald Moore (Washington) notes, "I think all of us ASA old-timers felt a special fondness for George. He was a thoughtful, smart, kindly, perceptive colleague, always willing to engage fellow philosophers (even relative novices) in conversation on matters aesthetic and otherwise. I look back with special fondness to times we went on and on at Asilomar. . ."

In 1994, Robert J. Yanal (Wayne State University) edited a collection of essays entitled *Institutions of Art: Reconsiderations of George Dickie's Philosophy* (Penn State University Press) that included reconsiderations of the institutional theory (with contributing authors Noël Carroll, Jeffrey Wieand, Susan Feagin), the evaluation of art (Bohdan Dziemidok, Peg Zeglin Brand [Weiser], Marcia Muelder Eaton), the history of aesthetics (Peter Kivy, Ted Cohen, Robert J. Yanal), a biography and bibliography. In the "Preface," Yanal notes, "A considerable amount of philosophical aesthetics during the past twenty-five-plus years has been stimulated by ideas of George Dickie," going back to the often reprinted, "The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude" (1964), "Is Psychology Relevant to Aesthetics?" (1962), and the first publication of the institutional theory of art, "Defining Art" in *American Philosophical Quarterly* (1969) which became Chapter 1 of *Art and the Aesthetic* (1974). Yanal concluded by noting, "The contributors dedicate this collection to George Dickie, whose influence and example we all warmly acknowledge." Yanal comments now, "George was very important in my life. He was a major influence on me philosophically. My early work was commentary, sometimes critical, on his work. And his clear writing style was a great example. Besides being a great teacher and mentor, George was a very gentlemanly person, of an "old school" manner. He seemed to eschew contact during his final years, though I thought of him often. I'll miss him."

Other students of Professor Dickie include Peg Brand Weiser (University of Arizona), David Brubaker (University of New Haven), Noël Carroll (CUNY), and Daniel Nathan (Texas Tech). As Nathan recalls, "George was a kind and generous, good-natured (and humorous) teacher and mentor for me; he was the principal force in my decision to do aesthetics altogether, and his counsel made me a better writer and scholar in general. He took interest in me and in my work for many years after I completed the program. I remember that he was a student and great admirer of Monroe Beardsley, and was (obviously) very strongly influenced by him."

"I also recall with pleasure my first seminar in aesthetics, which was team-taught by George, Marcia Eaton, and Ted Cohen and was held in Marcia's apartment in Hyde Park. As I remember it, there were only three students enrolled – so, three faculty and three students – it was great. And I think Bob Yanal was one of those three students as well. The UIC department at the time was heavily weighted in aesthetics, with George, Marcia, Paul Ziff, and Richard Sclafani all teaching or directing students in the area."

Peg Brand Weiser remembers George Dickie as an all-too-rational philosopher after her previous six years studying studio art. "I am sure I tried his patience; I was a typical art student with cultivated angst and emotion. It is a tribute to George that he was patient and understanding but firmly instructive and inspirational. Once I learned more about him, his stature within the field – sparring with ed Cohen and Arthur Danto – it was an honor to learn from him."

Professor Dickie received numerous prestigious fellowships, including from the National Endowment for the Humanities (twice), the Guggenheim Foundation, the A.C.L.S. (twice), and the Advanced Studies for the Humanities at Edinburgh. He was a member of the Humanities Institute at the University of Illinois at Chicago during 1993-1994. He served on the Board of Trustees of the American Society for Aesthetics from 1967-69 and again 1995-97, Vice President from 1991-2, and President 1993-1994.

Marcia Muelder Eaton (University of Minnesota), past president of the ASA from 1995-1997, recalls her time as an assistant professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago from 1966-1970, "George was my mentor and one of the finest, kindest men I have known. I would like to emphasize that a sense of honor and integrity permeated both his professional and personal life."

Noël Carroll (CUNY), past president of the ASA from 1999-2000, adds, "I feel especially lucky to have had George as a mentor. He was a great pleasure to work with not only because he was so critically careful, clear, and astute, but because, although he had every right to take himself seriously, he never did. He was always the bright soul of amiability."