Here Burke makes the shocking and innovative observation that the sublime is in fact an important aesthetic category because of the terror and “pain” it causes us, owing to how the sublime reveals the finitude of our understanding and projects. Oftentimes we cannot even fully understand or experience sublime objects and concepts, since clear (and one might add, beautiful) ideas are “small” ideas. Burke's analysis of aesthetics remains important to us because it is a corrective to the popular belief, mentioned in the introduction, that “facts” and reason are more important than our emotions. In the Enquiry, as in his later, more political works, he consistently emphasizes how many of our behaviors are often motivated far more by emotional effect than through reasoned reflection.  

Aestheticism (also the Aesthetic Movement) is an intellectual and art movement supporting the emphasis of aesthetic values more than social-political themes for literature, fine art, music and other arts. This meant that art from this particular movement focused more on being beautiful rather than having a deeper meaning — “art for art’s sake”. It was particularly prominent in England during the late 19th century, supported by notable figures such as Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde. The movement started