

A REASONABLE OBJECTIVISM FOR AESTHETIC JUDGEMENTS:
TOWARDS AN AESTHETIC PSYCHOLOGY.

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ABSTRACT.

This doctoral thesis is an examination of the possibility of ascribing objectivity to aesthetic judgements. The aesthetic is viewed in terms of its being a certain kind of relation between the mind and the world; a clear understanding of aesthetic judgements will therefore be capable of telling us something important about both subjects and objects, and the ties between them. In view of this, one of the over-riding aims of this thesis is the promotion of an ‘aesthetic psychology’, a philosophical approach, that is to say, which emphasises the importance of the psychological processes involved in the making of aesthetic judgements.

One of the aims of this thesis is to develop a revisionary account of the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity in the domain of value. This revision will undertake to dismantle some of the assumptions implicit in a metaphysical framework which traditionally ascribes objectivity only to judgements about facts, and not to judgements about values and other concerns such as norms and emotions. Further, the thesis examines the intricate ways in which aesthetic properties, the focus of aesthetic judgements, depend on the (emotional and other) responses of the subjects of experience. The particular role played by first-hand experience in the making of aesthetic judgements is among the things critically investigated in the interests of reaching a clearer understanding of the manner in which aesthetic judgements may be objective in the sense of being justifiable. Eventually, a defence is outlined of the view that aesthetic judgements can be supported by good reasons, but not in the same way as ordinary cognitive judgements. Finally, I outline the main tenets of a proposed ‘reasonable objectivism’ for aesthetic judgements, an objectivism grounded on justifying reasons.

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The perspective of eternity is not a perspective from a certain place beyond the world, nor the point of view of a transcendent being; rather it is a certain form of thought and feeling that rational persons can adopt within the world. And having done so, they can, whatever their generation, bring together into one scheme all individual perspectives and arrive together at regulative principles that can be affirmed by everyone as he lives by them, each from his own standpoint. Purity of heart, if one could attain it, would be to see clearly and to act with grace and self-command from this point of view.¹

¹ Rawls (1971), p. 587.

INTRODUCTION.

The starting point of philosophy is that we do not understand ourselves well enough. We do not understand ourselves well enough ethically... [W]e do not fully understand our political ideals... Philosophy's methods of helping us to understand ourselves involve reflecting on the concepts we use, the modes in which we think about these various things; and sometimes it proposes better ways of doing this... In any area of philosophy, the concern that gets reflection going, the failure to understand ourselves, must start from where we are. Who 'we' are, who else is part of 'us', may very well be disputed, above all in ethical and political cases. But reflection must start with us in the narrowest sense – the people who are asking the question and the people to whom we are talking – and it starts from now.¹

Questions about value matter to human beings. Although this claim could be seen as something of a truism, the case it presents is far from straightforward. It is notoriously problematic to have anything but an imperfect grasp of the nature of values and our relation to them. One might even describe it as a particularly ironic aspect of human life that these things upon which so many of our thoughts, goals and acts converge and depend are also among the things we have the most difficulty in understanding fully.

The claim that questions about value matter to human beings is not limited to the relatively trivial point that values help us in our daily decision-making and conduct. Rather, the questions raised by value and evaluative thought are mainly significant because they are concerned at the most fundamental level with what it is to be, in Williams' words, an 'ethical' and 'political' being. They are concerned with what it is to be a thinking and feeling person within a community of other persons; with how to understand our fellow human beings and our relations to them as sharers of certain values and axiological paradigms. And it is precisely because values are important to us both as individuals and as members of a community that we must aim for a

communicable and correct understanding of the issues related to them. It is for this reason that the following question is of considerable philosophical and non-philosophical weight. Can there be value judgements that allow for objectivity?

The more specific target of this thesis is to ask whether aesthetic judgements can be objective; and if so, in what sense. As we shall see, the question is hardly a new concern to philosophers, and is discussed for example in both Hume's essay 'Of the Standard of Taste' and Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (albeit not in precisely the same terms as are used here).² The aesthetic case is, I believe, one in which questions of objectivity are both pressing and beguiling. Pressing, because the aesthetic case has been seen to be to a certain extent paradigmatic of subjectivity. Were we to find a way of being objective in our aesthetic judgements – which, as 'mere questions of taste', are traditionally and commonly held to be among the least objective kinds of report – then the requisite notion of objectivity, or at least some aspects of it, might be transferable to other areas in the sphere of value in which inferential principles (and other, similar, objective methodologies) fail to provide the decisiveness required of objective judgements. Aesthetics, in a sense, is an extreme 'test case' for non-scientific conceptions of objectivity. Similarly, the aesthetic case is a beguiling one for the simple reason that (*prima facie* at least) while aesthetic judgements can strike us with great conviction, the epistemological means of assessment they allow for cannot be the traditional ones. The question therefore arises: is it the case that such judgements cannot be rationally assessed at all, or might our traditional means simply be inadequate to the task?

In the process of examining whether there really are good grounds to hold, as it has traditionally been held, that aesthetic judgements cannot be objective, I will regularly

¹ Williams (2002), p. 7.

² It will become apparent that, although I have not sought to present my thesis as specifically neo-

draw on the ethical case. In particular, I shall make use of a methodology that focuses on the psychological processes underpinning evaluative assessments. Indeed, whereas moral psychology has been considered a net contributor to moral philosophy for some years now, one cannot speak of a similar development in the field of aesthetics. One of my main tasks, then, will be to indicate why what I call ‘aesthetic psychology’ is desirable for philosophical aesthetics. Further, I will ask how an examination of the psychological processes involved in the making of aesthetic judgements might be a necessary part of the groundwork for any project seeking to accord objectivity to aesthetic judgements.

The aim of this thesis is largely clarificatory. That is to say, rather than establishing a conclusive case for the possibility of ascribing objectivity to aesthetic judgements, I have made it my task to clear away the main worries surrounding this possibility. In other words, I will highlight and discuss the areas which seem the most threatening to the possibility of objectivity for aesthetic judgements and explain why they are not problematic in the way typically assumed. Obviously, this question of the possible objectivity of aesthetic judgements cannot be treated adequately in isolation, and much of my inquiry will be concerned with various aspects of the epistemology of such judgements in general. The ‘reasonable objectivism’ my thesis is intended ultimately to promote should be seen as a foundation for a structure that can be built once the ground has been cleared. While being, then, in many respects the conclusion of my thesis, I consider this sketch of a reasonable objectivism to be perhaps more of a beginning, the first few (very possibly faltering) steps towards a more consistent understanding of the aesthetic and the status of the judgements we make about it.

In the first chapter of this thesis I will mainly be concerned to introduce the terms of my discussion. I start by outlining the main tenets of an approach in which the

Kantian, I am particularly influenced by some of the ideas developed in the third *Critique*.

distinctively aesthetic is held to reside in the relation between the subject and the object of experience. As part of my further clarification of this relation, I will examine more fully the notions of objectivity and subjectivity, the various uses to which they are put, and, especially, the relationship between them. Of particular importance to my thesis is the way in which this relationship has traditionally been conceived as dichotomous, and the associated fact that this has resulted in each having been construed in an over-polarised and ‘monolithic’ way. Such an understanding has done much to undermine the possibility of ascribing objectivity to aesthetic judgements. Thus, my aim in examining these notions, and the connections that obtain between them, will be explicitly orientated towards a revisionary account such that the possibility of objectivity for aesthetic judgements will not automatically be precluded.

The main task of Chapter II will be to clarify how the perception of the distinctively aesthetic involves taking a certain kind of perspective on the world. One of the apparent problems that comes to light when this perspective is brought into focus is – at least on accounts drawn from projects in other philosophical disciplines such as that which I call the ‘naturalising project’ in the philosophy of mind and elsewhere – that the grounds for ascribing objectivity to judgements made from within that perspective seem irredeemably remote. Objectivity, it is usually held on such accounts, simply cannot be ascribed to judgements that do not allow for confirmation according to the standard of correctness applicable in the empirical or mathematical sciences. The rigid separation between objectivity and perspectivity that this confrontational model enforces is, I argue, insufficiently subtle with respect both to aesthetic judgments in particular and to the notion of perspective as such. It is only by operating with notions of objectivity more able to account for the kinds of correctness perspectival judgements can, and in many cases do, afford that we can progress beyond the *aporia* presented to us by the more rigid conceptions that I examine in this chapter.

One reason why value judgements belong to the personal perspective is that the properties with which those judgements are concerned are not like most other properties. Values and norms are specifically human concerns and the properties in which they are instantiated cannot really be said to exist without human beings and their points of view. Aesthetic properties, in other words, are anthropocentric. In Chapter III, I will examine this critical aspect of aesthetic properties by looking at the influential doctrine of response-dependence. I will investigate the manner in which aesthetic properties are dependent on our responses, and, more specifically, I will look into the kind of response on which aesthetic properties invariably rely for their manifestation. In this process I will look at the crucial role played by the emotions in both aesthetic perception and judgement.

In Chapter IV I turn from the ontology of aesthetic properties to the epistemology of the judgements about them. Given the number of shared concerns in this context, I will look at relevant aspects of Kant's aesthetic theory; namely, his 'Antinomy of taste', and his 'deduction' of aesthetic judgements. The absence of inferential principles capable of taking us reliably from non-aesthetic to aesthetic properties makes for an epistemological situation in which first-hand perceptual experiences become almost indispensable to aesthetic justification. Although I shall advocate the importance of what might in Kantian terms be called the 'inward turn', I will depart from Kant's account when I move to consider the delicate relationship between first-hand perceptual experience and the process of justifying aesthetic judgements.

The purpose of the final chapter is to explore the options that remain open after the Kantian door has been partially shut. After a detailed examination of some accounts of the response-dependency of evaluative concepts that seem most promising in terms of aesthetic objectivity, I will argue that these 'sensitivity theories' ultimately fail to measure up even to my revised conception of what it is for an aesthetic judgement to be

objective. I then outline what I think the justification of aesthetic judgements should look like, and provide a sketch of the way in which aesthetic judgements can be grounded in generally available – and justifying – reasons.

The issues brought up, more or less directly, by this thesis have ramifications both in aesthetics and other areas of philosophy. In aesthetics, I believe that the approach I seek to encourage should be seen to make two general points. First, the promotion of aesthetic psychology should be taken to indicate just how important it is to view aesthetics as a branch of philosophy that is close not only to ethics and value-theory, but the philosophy of mind, philosophy of psychology, and philosophy of perception. Second, it should encourage a concern with questions that can be called ‘meta-aesthetic’. Philosophical aesthetics is not just concerned with the arts, but is also occupied with wider epistemological and ontological issues. In particular, it examines a certain kind of relation between mind and world.

On a more general level, this thesis will suggest that objectivity need not be the prerogative of judgements about facts and properties that count amongst the concerns of the empirical sciences. In this sense, my general argument could be viewed as belonging to an approach that aims to weaken the traditional distinctions between facts and values, reason and emotion; distinctions that have contributed to establishing a metaphysical landscape in which value judgements are more often than not relegated to some form of *binterland* beyond objectivity and truth.

CHAPTER I.

THE RELATIONAL APPROACH AND THE BEGINNINGS OF AN AESTHETIC PSYCHOLOGY.

A). Aesthetic phenomenology.

We are like sailors who have to rebuild their ship on the open sea, without ever being able to dismantle it in dry-dock and reconstruct it from the best components.¹

1. The need to examine the phenomenology and our assumptions about it.

In most forms of aesthetic inquiry, the phenomenology – or the ‘what it is like’ – is a Janus-faced methodological device. On the one hand, our aesthetic phenomenology can be a priceless source of understanding and insight. It can, and indeed often does, serve as an invaluable indicator of the kind of aesthetic character an object of appreciation enjoys, and, perhaps even help to render intelligible any further non-aesthetic significance that character might have. On the other hand, it can be the cause of considerable epistemological concern and the root of many a distorted judgement. It is perhaps precisely because our aesthetic experience can touch us so deeply and intensely that its phenomenology cannot by itself serve as a reliable tool of inquiry. After all, the more forcefully we perceive an element of our felt experience, the more difficult it can be to provide a rational assessment of that element and its relative importance. For example, we are struck by the beauty of a particular portrait. On the strength of our response, our ensuing *bona fide* judgement about its aesthetic character is easy to make:

¹ Neurath (1959), p. 201.

we make the judgement that the portrait is strikingly beautiful. In reality, however, the case may be that one's perceptual experience – and by extension one's judgement – of the painting is influenced by the fact that the person depicted reminds one of one's first love. In aesthetic perception, perhaps more than in most other kinds of perception, our phenomenology thus seems capable of serving two masters intermittently: on the one hand, a trustworthy source of understanding, and, on the other, a cause of more or less serious misrepresentation. We need, in other words, to keep our aesthetic phenomenology both in view and in check.

Whichever way our aesthetic phenomenology happens to face in its role of methodological device, it is generally simply taken for granted that our felt experience must uncontroversially, and just as it stands, be the starting-point of aesthetic inquiry. In other words, the philosopher's task with regards to the content of the aesthetic phenomenology is taken to be chiefly descriptive; suspicions arise only when we seem to have good reasons to believe this phenomenology to be misleading. In aesthetic inquiry, perhaps more than in most other branches of analytic thought, the philosophy has, so to speak, 'followed on' from the phenomenology. The point I wish to make here, however, is that there is a sense in which the direction of that philosophical process needs to be reversed, even when there don't seem to be any grounds for suspicion on a phenomenological level. Above and beyond our individual aesthetic experience, aesthetic phenomenology itself must be carefully scrutinised if we are to take it to be the starting-point of our investigation. Only by incorporating the 'what it is like' in the remit of philosophical examination can its role as the undisputed beginning of aesthetic inquiry be legitimised. It is in this sense that our aesthetic phenomenology needs, like Neurath's ship, to be repaired 'on the move'. What is required, I will argue, is an intricate disentangling procedure, which eventually will enable us to establish whether the way in which we think of our phenomenology's constitutive elements and

their roles is accurate. Such an exercise is required if we want to provide the pursuit of objectivity for aesthetic judgements with a fair and neutral launching-pad.

2. *What is it like?*

What is our aesthetic experience like? Of all the things that can be said in reply to this question, one of the first that springs to mind is ‘rich’. By this I mean simply that there are *many* things going on in aesthetic experience, things often very easy to conflate with one another, and that these things operate at different levels of depth. My aim here is not to give an exhaustive account of the contents of aesthetic phenomenology, or the ways in which those constitutive elements can interact. After all, there is some truth to the claim that there are ways in which the ‘concept of the aesthetic experience’ is rather ‘vague, complex’ and ‘recondite’.² To shed light on all aspects of aesthetic experience would be to exceed the aims of this chapter considerably. Instead, I shall limit my task to sketching a general description of some its most prominent characteristics. My intention will rather be a clarificatory one for the purpose of establishing the central points of concern for my thesis.

The kinds of mental episodes or events that can be at work when we are confronted with an object of aesthetic appreciation include beliefs, judgements, desires, perceptions, feelings, emotions, evaluations, imaginations, personal preferences, memories, and the expression of all these occurrences. So that when I am looking at, say, Rodin’s ‘Poet and Muse’, I may have beliefs and judgements (such as ‘That line is curved’ or ‘This sculpture is a particularly representative example of Rodin’s early work’), emotions (such as feeling uplifted or being moved), sensations (such as feeling a pang of longing), or desires (such as wanting to visit the museum every day in order to admire it). Not only

² Mitias (1988a), p. 8.

do the ways in which those elements combine vary greatly from case to case, but so too does their explanatory power in relation to the aesthetic judgements we make about them. Thus, in some cases our memories or personal inclinations might determine – and consequently explain – the character of our aesthetic experience more than the beliefs we have about the artist; at other times, this priority might be reversed. A point worth noting here is that there do not seem to be one or several generic kind(s) of mental events or episodes that are exclusive to the aesthetic; no kinds of events or episodes that distinguish them from other kinds of experiences merely in virtue of their occurrence.

Further, our aesthetic phenomenology counts a great diversity of concepts and properties, ranging from ‘sublime’ to ‘gaudiness’ and ‘kitsch’ *via* ‘vigour’ and ‘being tightly knit’. Several attempts have been made at imposing some kind of order to this perhaps particularly heterogeneous class by drawing distinctions between various kinds of aesthetic concepts, properties and even judgements.³ I shall mention only one such division here, namely the differentiation, originally drawn in ethics, between ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ concepts.⁴ The distinction, initially formulated by Bernard Williams, is, roughly speaking, an attempt to account for the difference between kinds of moral concept in terms of descriptive content. ‘Thick’ concepts are said to have more descriptive content, and are thus generally more specific; ‘thin’ concepts, by contrast, contain less descriptive content, and so are generally less specific. Concepts such as ‘evil’, ‘good’, ‘virtue’, and the like, are ‘thin’ concepts, whereas concepts such as ‘rude’, ‘generous’ or ‘compassionate’ are ‘thick’ moral concepts. Applied to the aesthetic case, concepts such as ‘beauty’ or ‘sublime’ become ‘thin’ aesthetic concepts, whereas notions such as ‘vibrant’ and ‘garishness’ are ‘thick’ aesthetic concepts. That is to say, as in the case of

³ For more on distinctions between kinds of aesthetic judgement, see for example, Kant (2000), §16 and Sibley (2001d). For more on distinctions between kinds of aesthetic properties, see for example, Sibley (2001e) and Hermerén (1988).

⁴ See Williams (1985), p. 129 and pp. 140-145.

its moral counterpart, ‘thin’ aesthetic concepts have less descriptive content than ‘thick’ ones and are thus harder to describe in terms of their non-aesthetic features.⁵

In short, then, one can say that our experience of the aesthetic is complex both in the sense that (i) it involves a great many kinds of mental events and episodes (none of which in themselves seem to be distinctive of the aesthetic), and (ii) it covers a considerable variety of concepts and properties.

3. Methodology and main aims.

Disentangling the main elements of our aesthetic phenomenology and their roles and responsibilities can only increase the likelihood of that phenomenology being a trustworthy source of understanding and evaluation. What notions will I be operating with in this largely clarificatory investigation?

In this first chapter I shall use the expression ‘the aesthetic’ rather sketchily to refer to the field of experience – and the things that lie within it – we engage with during aesthetic perception and the making of aesthetic judgements. I hope that this relative imprecision will be overlooked; I have felt it advisable to leave certain of these institutional questions open in the interests of my overall argument which, after all, is orientated towards a reshaping of certain elements of the aesthetic as such.

Throughout the thesis, I shall take an aesthetic judgement to be a judgement about some thing as having an aesthetic property (or not); a judgement, that is to say, recording the presence or absence of an aesthetic property. Similarly, a value judgement will be taken to be a judgement about a thing as having an evaluative property (or not), where an evaluative property is simply either an aesthetic or a moral property.⁶ I will

⁵ There is an on-going debate about the validity of Williams’s distinction in the moral sphere. See, for example, Gibbard (1992) and Tappolet ([2003]).

⁶ I am aware of the fact that there are other kinds of properties that could qualify as ‘evaluative’, but will concentrate exclusively on aesthetic and moral properties throughout this thesis.

not be concerned with comparative judgements about aesthetic properties, or judgements that seek to place aesthetic judgements in some hierarchical order, such as judgements like ‘*Anna Karénina* is a finer novel than *The Krentzer Sonata*’ or ‘Derain’s works are more accomplished *fauvist* paintings than those by Vlaminck’. There are several kinds of judgements, then, more or less directly involved in aesthetic deliberation that will not qualify as ‘aesthetic’ on my account. In addition to the ones already mentioned, there are, on the one hand, judgements which appear to be straightforwardly cognitive, such as ‘that object is a flower’, or ‘the flower is light purple’. On the other, there are judgements that appear to express individual orientation, such as ‘I particularly like that shade of purple’, or ‘that kind of beautiful flower reminds me of my summers in Sweden as a child’. These kinds of judgement, despite having some aesthetic content, don’t appear to be aesthetic judgements as such: the first appears merely to be a report of information of a non-aesthetic kind, and the second appears to be the expression of a personal inclination or recollection.⁷

I shall work mainly with aesthetic concepts and properties. An aesthetic concept will simply be taken to be the concept that picks out the aesthetic property with which it is associated. In its most basic form, an aesthetic judgement is, then, the ascription (or not) of an aesthetic property to an object of aesthetic appreciation.

The remainder of this chapter will bring the following question to our attention: where does the distinctively aesthetic ‘reside’, so to speak? In an attempt to answer this query, I will examine the idea that the locus of the aesthetic is the object and subject of appreciation respectively. With the help of a selective historical overview of the origins of the notion of the aesthetic generally, and of Kant’s theory of the aesthetic more specifically, I shall hold that an exclusive focus on either subject or object cannot help

⁷ I shall therefore take judgements such as ‘I like elegant things’, which are to a certain extent about aesthetic properties, to be expressions of emotions caused by aesthetic properties instead. That particular emotional states are not directly equivalent to aesthetic properties is something this thesis is, in part, intended to establish.

us meet the initial challenge. Instead, the distinctively aesthetic is to be found in the relation between subject and object in a sense to be specified in the first two chapters of this thesis. Subsequently, I move on to outline the main tenets of what I call the ‘relational approach’ to the aesthetic. So doing leads me to a critical investigation of the subjective/objective distinction as it is usually conceived. My aim in this will be to spell out the main source of tension implicit in two conceptions of the distinction, and, eventually, to reject both. Finally, I draft the skeleton of an explanation as to how aesthetic psychology might help us circumnavigate some of the problems that arise for aesthetic judgements because of the more traditional conceptions of subjectivity and objectivity and the distinction between them.

This chapter proposes to support my over-riding aim of making a case for what I will call a ‘reasonable objectivism’ for aesthetic judgements in two ways.⁸ First, and most directly, it outlines the beginning of an argument in favour of an alternative conception of the subjective/objective distinction. The possibility of ascribing objectivity to aesthetic judgements does indeed, I shall hold, rely on revising the way in which that distinction is understood. Second, this chapter seeks to introduce the idea that methods that give due consideration to the concerns of what I have dubbed ‘aesthetic psychology’ provide the most fruitful means by which to secure a reasonable objectivism for aesthetic judgements. On the whole, the aesthetic inquiry that this chapter engages with is significant mainly in virtue of the manner in which it invites us to reflect upon how philosophical aesthetics should be guided by the more general aim of increasing our understanding of the relation between the mind and the world.

⁸ As I shall explain in greater detail in Chapter V, I contrast my account with that developed by David Wiggins under the name ‘sensible subjectivism’. See Wiggins (1998c).

B). The locus of the aesthetic.

1. Where is the distinctively aesthetic?

I will begin this section by briefly examining two rather straightforward answers to this question. The first proposal claims that it is the object of appreciation that is the locus of the aesthetic; the second proposal has it that the distinctively aesthetic resides in the subject of experience. Having examined the founding ideas of both proposed answers, I shall claim that neither actually manages to capture the whereabouts of the aesthetic, which I will argue instead is to be found in the relation between the two. Further, I will try to highlight how the main difficulty with object- and subject-based approaches arises from their ‘one-sidedness’, or the way in which they emphasise *either* the subject *or* the object to the exclusion of the other. The key to the aesthetic will, I argue, lie in the interaction between the subject of experience and the object experienced.

In order to set up the dialectic of the problem, it is helpful to throw a quick glance at some more broadly metaphysical theories that build on our phenomenology of evaluative properties, albeit in different ways. Generally, the phenomenological accounts of aesthetic and moral properties preceding such theories converge on the point that aesthetic and moral properties tend to be experienced as being external to our own minds. In other words, they are – at least *prima facie* or pre-philosophically – thought of as ‘residing in an object and available to be encountered’.⁹ Ordinary evaluative thought thus ‘presents itself as a matter of sensitivity to aspects of the world.’¹⁰ This agreement about the ‘what it is like’ of aesthetic experience does not, however, reflect a similar concord about what this phenomenology should be taken to mean. Thus, according to John Mackie, values ‘are not part of the fabric of the world’¹¹

⁹ McDowell (1998b), p. 112.

¹⁰ See McDowell (1998c), p. 131.

¹¹ Mackie (1977), p. 15.

even though the phenomenology suggests otherwise. What should be endorsed instead, Mackie argues in concurrence with others such as Simon Blackburn, is a projectivist model; a theory whereby aesthetic and moral properties are simply projected from our minds onto the world.¹²

In contrast to this projectivism, John McDowell, amongst others, has argued that our phenomenology and common sense should *not* be convicted of error in this manner.¹³ Rather, for McDowell, the error lies in adopting a projectivist account according to which reality contains, to use Blackburn's words, 'nothing in the way of values, duties, rights and so forth'.¹⁴ To reject projectivism in the domain of value is, the argument goes on to point out, not automatically to commit oneself to the existence of aesthetic and moral facts on a par with the facts of the empirical sciences. In other words, the options open to us with regards to evaluative properties are not limited *either* to projectivism – a view whereby such properties are considered to be the 'children' of our responses – *or*, alternatively, a radical realism for which the evaluative 'features of things are the parents of our sentiments'. Why, McDowell asks, 'do we have to limit ourselves to those two options? What about a position that says the extra features are neither parents nor children of our sentiments, but – if we must find an apt metaphor from the field of kinship relations – siblings?'¹⁵ The suggestion McDowell puts forward here is at the root of the 'sibling sensibility theories' I shall examine, and in some respects reject, in Chapter V (and to a lesser extent in Chapter III).

The idea underlying this 'siblingism' about evaluative properties and our responses to them is of use to us here primarily in so far as it leads us to spell out the question about the locus of the aesthetic in the following terms: does the distinctively aesthetic reside in the properties of the object of appreciation, or in the subject's appreciation, or again,

¹² For the differences between Blackburn's and Mackie's accounts, see for example Blackburn (1993b).

¹³ See McDowell (1998c).

¹⁴ Blackburn (1981), pp. 164-165.

¹⁵ McDowell (1998d), p. 159.

and here lies the important point, somehow in *both*? One could say that the question is one about metaphysical priority, in that one may wonder whether it is (some of) the object's properties that renders the subject's experience aesthetic, or whether it is, rather, the subject's experience that renders (some of) the object's properties aesthetic. It should, however, be clear that my concern in this thesis is not with what Sir Peter Strawson describes as the 'genetic-psychological' approach, or the outlook that attempts to understand something in terms of its developmental history.¹⁶ Rather, my focus is on what Strawson calls the 'analytic-philosophical' question, and whether the way in which, once the dynamics of the subject's experience and the object experienced is 'up and running', something like the third option presented to us in 'siblingism' can be suggestive of where the distinctively aesthetic is to be found.

2. Subject or object?

Where, then, is the locus of the aesthetic? Does it lie in the subject or the object? The main idea underlying the object-based approach is the thought that the 'aesthetic-making' element, so to speak, is the object of appreciation. In this vein, Kingsley Price, for example, presents a view to the effect that

what makes an experience aesthetic is not the awareness of that experience... The concept 'aesthetic experience' finds its character in the fact that it is applied correctly not where awareness is of a certain kind... but where the object of awareness is of a certain kind.¹⁷

On this understanding, it is the object of awareness that enables our experience of it to become distinctively aesthetic.

There are, roughly, two ways in which the object of appreciation might be the locus of the aesthetic: first, in virtue of the *kind of thing* it is; second, because of the *properties*

¹⁶ Strawson (1979).

¹⁷ Price (1979), p. 139.

that can be ascribed to it. I shall concentrate on the second suggestion, as arguments against the idea that only a certain kind of object (generally works of art) can be experienced aesthetically have been amply and lucidly rehearsed.¹⁸ What of the idea, then, that the object of experience is the locus of the aesthetic in virtue of its properties? Let us be entirely clear about what kind of properties are relevant here. If, as the object-based approach holds, the object of experience is where the distinctively aesthetic is to be found, the kind of properties that are of interest to us must be the *aesthetic* properties that can be ascribed to that object. Only these properties can actually render our experience of the object aesthetic.

One of the main things that should worry us about the object-based approach (at least in so far as it is presented here) is the circularity inherent in the suggestion that the locus of the distinctively aesthetic is the aesthetic properties of objects. This circularity is not as malign as it would be were we engaged in an attempt to *define* the notion of the aesthetic by appealing to that of aesthetic properties. However, it does give rise to a serious difficulty in so far as it begs the question of how an approach can rightly be called ‘object-based’ if, as this one clearly does, it relies entirely on the presence of properties that are not intrinsic to the object itself, but are, rather, relational? A relational property is one which, like, say redness, cruelty or the smell of white roses, does not exist in an object independently of subjects of experience. If there can, then, be no aesthetic properties without subjects, how can the object-based approach – which rests on the idea that it is the object alone in which the aesthetic resides – be viable? The main difficulty with the object-based approach is, thus, that it does not do justice to the way in which the mind is actively involved in the aesthetic. If an account is committed to the view that there can be no aesthetic properties without subjects, and

¹⁸ For work on how nature can be the object of aesthetic appreciation in, see Carlson (1995), and Hepburn (1967); for work on the break-down of the distinction between artworks and non-artworks, see Mitas (1988b), pp. 155-164.

that these properties are said to be the locus of the aesthetic, how can that account uncontroversially hold that the distinctively aesthetic is to be found solely in the object?

Is this to say that the distinctively aesthetic lies in the subject instead? As we shall see in greater detail in Chapter III, aesthetic properties do rely on the subjects of experience for their realisation in very intricate ways. Yet does this relation of ontological dependence indicate that the subject of experience is the sole locus of the aesthetic? What is under the spotlight here is something like the projectivist account of the aesthetic along the lines outlined above; an approach whereby the distinctively aesthetic is simply projected from our minds onto the world. Now, one of the advantages of such a theory is that it seems to help us make sense of the way in which aesthetic properties are not intrinsic to the object of appreciation, like properties such as shape and size are. More generally, it does what the object-based approach failed to do, and that is to take into consideration the participation of the subject in the realisation of aesthetic features. Broadly speaking, the subject-based approach is related to the idea that an experience becomes aesthetic when we assume an ‘aesthetic attitude’ towards a certain object.¹⁹ As David Pole points out, ‘[a]esthetic experience has often been said to be characterised by a peculiar detachment; it requires a disengaged, purely contemplative attitude.’²⁰ This attitude is generally described as the ‘manner, vision, or attitude by means of which we approach and perceive the artwork.’²¹

Supporters of the aesthetic attitude cite Kant’s notion of disinterestedness as the source of their approach. In the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, Kant writes that aesthetic ‘[t]aste is the faculty for judging an object or a kind of representation through a satisfaction or dissatisfaction *without any interest*.’²² What is meant here is, roughly, that an object is assessed for its aesthetic character alone rather than for any purpose it may

¹⁹ See, for example, Scruton (1974) and Stolnitz (1961).

²⁰ Pole (1983), p. 3.

²¹ Mitias (1988a), p. 4.

²² Kant (2000), §5, 5: 211, p. 96.

serve, and that the pleasure experienced on being confronted with a beautiful thing is merely concerned with the object's appearance (or, in Kant's case, form). For Kant, this notion of disinterestedness distinguishes aesthetic pleasure from both sensory gratification and moral satisfaction.²³

In the twentieth century, this approach has been developed by philosophers such as Edward Bullough and Jerome Stolnitz. Thus, Stolnitz states that 'an object is "aesthetic" whenever we perceive it in a certain way... We are defining the realm of the aesthetic in terms of a distinctive kind of "looking"'.²⁴ According to Bullough, the aesthetic attitude is to be characterised in terms of a 'psychical distance'.²⁵ The point here is that the subject of the aesthetic experience must metaphorically 'distance' herself from the object of aesthetic contemplation in order to clear, as a more recent account has put it, 'a space for rapt absorption'.²⁶

But the notion of aesthetic attitude is not without difficulties. Perhaps most famously, in 'The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude', George Dickie argues that the notion of the aesthetic attitude is a ghost unjustifiably sneaked into our analysis of the artwork and the aesthetic experience.²⁷ In a similar vein, John Hospers argues that the aesthetic attitude is 'at least, a welter of overlapping ideas, and at worst, a phantom no longer worth chasing'.²⁸ And here, charges of circularity do really seem to bite: does the notion of an aesthetic attitude not presuppose the aesthetic rather than elucidate it? To this effect, it has been convincingly argued, amongst others by Malcolm Budd, that since it is very unlikely that there can be a characterisation of the aesthetic attitude that describes its nature without appealing to the notion of the aesthetic, and that accounts of the

²³ See Kant (2000), §5, 5: 209-211, pp. 94-96.

²⁴ Stolnitz (1960), p. 29.

²⁵ Bullough (1912).

²⁶ Levinson (1995) p. 331.

²⁷ Dickie (1964).

²⁸ Hospers (1982), p. 353. See Mitias (1988a), pp. 12-16.

aesthetic attitude have for their aim to analyse the aesthetic, there can be no such thing as an aesthetic attitude.²⁹

Whatever the case may be with regards to the aesthetic attitude, one of the main advantages of the subject-based approach is that it seems capable of rendering intelligible the way in which any kind of object can be viewed aesthetically, ranging from orchestral symphonies to dead cows. Most importantly, it incorporates the participation of the subject of experience in its account of the aesthetic. Nevertheless, the subject-based approach, and more specifically the idea whereby evaluative properties are the ‘children’ of our responses, runs into serious difficulty by keeping in relative obscurity the particular way in which the character of the object of aesthetic appreciation leads us to view it in a certain way, or have a certain response towards it. Surely there must be something about the object itself that actually *invites* us to view it aesthetically? As McDowell points out, while

a sensible person will never be confident that his evaluative outlook is incapable of improvement, that need not stop him supposing, of some of his evaluative responses, that their objects really do merit them. He will be able to back up this supposition with explanations that show how the responses are well-placed.³⁰

Despite this, the challenge of projectivism, and the idea underlying the subject-based approach are not easily made redundant. Such approaches allow for a great deal of sophistication to which an introductory discussion such as this cannot do proper justice.³¹ I shall return to this theme throughout this thesis (albeit indirectly), in an attempt eventually to reject the idea underlying it. I shall argue that whilst it certainly is the case that the subjects of experience need to figure in any adequate account of

²⁹ See Budd (1998c).

³⁰ McDowell (1998c), p. 145.

³¹ In any case, much of the groundwork for the taking up of such claims lies in commitments to various types of metaphysical position which it would obviously be beyond the scope of an introduction to dismantle.

aesthetic perception and judgement, there must also be something about the object in question that invites the subject to get involved in the way required. In the next section,³² one of my aims is then also to develop what I call the ‘relational approach’ in parallel with pursuing the possibility of a reasonable objectivism for aesthetic judgements. Before this, however, it will be instructive to examine the origin of the notion of the aesthetic and the transformation of that notion into what we think of as ‘aesthetics’ today.

3. The origin of ‘aesthetics’ and the subject/object relation in Kant’s account of aesthetic judgement.

As the title suggests, my aim in this section is twofold: first, to give a brief (and partial) outline of the origins of the notion of the aesthetic or ‘aesthetics’; second, to show how Kant’s use of the notion in his *Critique of the Power of Judgement* brings it to a new stage in its development, and also how this progress draws out an important – and perhaps defining – point about aesthetic judgements.

In Ancient Greek, ‘*aesthesis*’ or ‘*aisthanomai*’ refers to the senses, or more precisely, to perception by means of the senses.³³ It was, however, not until the eighteenth century, that the German thinker Alexander Baumgarten developed the understanding of ‘aesthetics’ as the critique of taste in his *Aesthetica* (1750). From then on, aesthetic truth was said to be that truth which is addressed by the senses and the capacity of *Feinfühligkeit* (‘sensitivity’). Implicit in Baumgarten’s approach was an acceptance of the traditional rationalist dichotomy between, on the one hand, what can be known ‘clearly’ and ‘distinctly’ according to reason and, on the other, what can be known rather

³² ‘Section’ refers to the largest internal divisions in each chapter, denoted by capital letters ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’, etc.

³³ See Sparshott (1982), p. 473.

‘confusedly’ by the senses. Although representations of aesthetic phenomena were, for Baumgarten, irreducibly sensory, aesthetic cognitions were subject to a system of *a priori* rules.³⁴

On the other side of the Channel, the British Empiricists, stressing the importance of how knowledge is to be gained from the senses, concentrated on developing standards of taste and studied the possibility of aesthetic justification. Shaftesbury’s *Miscellaneous Reflections* (1711) and Hume’s *Of the Standard of Taste* (1742) are particularly noteworthy examples of such inquiries. On these accounts, explanations of aesthetic phenomena turn on empirical generalisation and the experience of sentiment.³⁵

In the light of the above, it might seem rather surprising that in the first edition of his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), which, after all, appears over thirty years after Baumgarten’s *Aesthetica*, Kant still uses the term ‘aesthetic’ merely to refer to the sensible or perceptual. However, as some scholars have pointed out, there are passages where Kant does show some awareness of the debate about standards of aesthetic taste.³⁶ In the second edition of the first *Critique* (1787), for example, we find that Kant has re-written a footnote in the first section of the ‘Transcendental Aesthetic’. He writes, that

[t]he Germans are the only people who currently make use of the word ‘aesthetic’ in order to signify what others call the critique of taste. This usage originated in the abortive attempt made by Baumgarten... to bring the critical treatment of the beautiful under rational principles... But such endeavours are fruitless. The said rules or criteria are, as regards their chief sources, merely empirical, and consequently can never serve as determinate *a priori* laws by which our judgment of taste must be directed.³⁷

It is, however, not until the publication of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1791) that the notion of the aesthetic acquires the meaning that lays the foundation for Kant’s

³⁴ For a clear account of Baumgarten’s philosophical commitments, see Townsend (1998).

³⁵ Hume’s aesthetic theory will be examined in detail in Chapter III.

³⁶ For more on this see, for example, Crawford (1974).

³⁷ Kant (1929), A21n, B35n, p. 66.

philosophical aesthetics. In this, the final *Critique*, Kant distances himself from empirical generalisations, determinate principles, conditions of perfection, and other notions central to empiricist aesthetics. This is not to say that he associates himself with the rationalist camp. Rather, one might say, there is a sense in which Kant's aesthetic theory from now on seems to balance between a rationalist and an empiricist approach. On the one hand, there are the sentiments of pleasure that ground the judgements of aesthetic taste, and on the other, his pursuit of a non-empirical 'deduction' or justification for judgements of aesthetic taste. Again, on the one hand, there is Kant's downgrading of beauty as perfection (alternatively 'dependent' or 'adherent' beauty) to second-class citizenship,³⁸ and on the other, the mental faculties that act *as if* for acquiring knowledge. Without wishing to commit myself to any particular view about Kant's position on this matter, it is worth noting that these seemingly conflicting elements of his aesthetic theory draw attention to one of its most original aspects.

In ordinary perception and judgement, Kant holds, the mental faculties of imagination and understanding interact so as to produce knowledge claims or 'logical' judgements. Very roughly, what occurs is that the imagination receives the (re)presentations which the understanding then subsumes under the appropriate concepts. In the aesthetic case (or in Kant's vernacular, with beauty) there is, according to Kant, no concept to apply. Nevertheless, the understanding and the imagination interact *as if* for cognition and enter into a 'free play' instead. This state is generally referred to as the 'harmony of the faculties'.³⁹ For there to be a concept in Kant's sense, there must be rules for its application, but as we are repeatedly told throughout the third *Critique*, there are no rules for beauty or aesthetic principles of this sort. As we will see

³⁸ Eva Schaper and Nick Zangwill argue against the claim that there is, for Kant, a hierarchy between 'free' and 'dependent' beauty. In contrast, Malcolm Budd, Ronald Hepburn and Anthony Savile favour an interpretation according to which Kant holds that free beauty is paradigmatic. For more on this distinction, see the first section of Chapter IV.

³⁹ See, for example, Kant (2000), §9, 5: 216-229, pp. 102-104.

in greater detail in Chapter IV, there are no inferential rules of application for aesthetic concepts in the sense that there cannot be a delimited set of criteria which, when satisfied, guarantees the presence of a particular aesthetic property.

One particularly distinctive feature of Kant's approach to the aesthetic in this respect is suggested by the way in which our mental abilities interact. That is to say, they interact just as they would have done in a cognitive case had it not been for the absence of rules for the application of the aesthetic concept to the (re)presentation in question. This is what Kant means when he holds that in the aesthetic case, the mental faculties involved act *as if* for cognition. Now, despite his commitment to the 'harmony of the faculties' and the notion of an aesthetic attitude, Kant does *not* adhere to a view whereby the distinctively aesthetic resides solely in the subject of experience, or according to which it is the subject's experience alone that renders the properties in question aesthetic. The fact that disinterestedness is a necessary part of the process of the perception of, say, beauty, is not also to say that it is the manner of perception that is the primary, or sole 'aesthetic-making' feature. Rather, this harmony of the imagination and understanding is brought on by something about the object of aesthetic appreciation, namely its form (of finality or purposiveness to be more specific).⁴⁰ Clearly, this form is not a property intrinsic to the object in question since, as Budd has pointed out, a judgement predicating beauty of a thing attributes 'to the item's form a relation in which this is alleged to stand to all human beings. In other words, for Kant beauty is a certain kind of relational property of an item.'⁴¹ Although there is, then, on the Kantian account, something unique about the way in which our mental abilities interact in the aesthetic case, this mental operation must be triggered off by something about the object's character, namely, its form.

⁴⁰ For more on the form of finality or purposiveness, see Kant (2000), §10-17 and, among others, Guyer (1997), Chapter 6.

⁴¹ Budd (1999), p. 296.

And this brings us to what is perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Kant's aesthetic theory, namely the 'dual character', as I refer to it, of aesthetic judgements. As a result of the absence of rules of application for concepts such as beauty, and of the mental faculties acting only *as if* for cognition, the grounds of aesthetic judgements 'cannot be other than subjective'.⁴² It is our emotional experience, or more precisely, our pleasure, that invariably serves as the 'determining ground' for aesthetic judgements. Nevertheless, such judgements, Kant writes, lay claim to 'universal validity' – the beautiful is indeed that 'which pleases universally without a concept'.⁴³ How, one may ask, is the subjective ground of aesthetic judgements to be combined with this claim to something which in contemporary language is best described as objectivity?

⁴² Kant (2000), §1, 5: 203, p. 89.

⁴³ Kant (2000), §9, 5: 219, p. 104.

C). The beginnings of an aesthetic psychology.

1. The relational approach.

We can now return to the discussion about the locus of the aesthetic, and the idea that the distinctively aesthetic is best seen to lie in the relation between subject and object. I suggested, to a certain extent in line with ‘siblingism’, that neither the object-based nor the subject-based approach can account adequately for the problematic in question. To put it another way, there must not only be an invitation, well-grounded in an object, to engage with it aesthetically, but there must also be some kind of acceptance to be engaged thus. If such is the case for aesthetic properties, what of the judgements we make about them? What can we mean in ascribing objectivity to judgements that refer to properties that are explicitly relational?

One of the primary concerns of this thesis is the tension that arises for aesthetic judgements in virtue of the facts that (i) the distinctively aesthetic arises from a certain kind of relation between subjects and objects, (ii) that the properties judged are relational, and (iii) that such judgements are grounded in subjects yet, at least at times, seem to lay claim to an objectivity in so far as it aims for a validity that extends beyond that of the subject herself. My approach is thus avowedly Kantian: for Kant, to use Marcia Eaton’s words,

[t]he drive to account for both subjectivity and objectivity is at the heart of...*The Critique of Judgment* [where Kant] provides a many-faceted definition of ‘the beautiful’ (as an exemplar of aesthetic concepts) that incorporates metaphysical, epistemological, psychological and logical analyses and which he believes reconciles the attractions of both subjectivity and objectivity. Kant, like Hume, agrees that aesthetic concepts are ‘taste concepts’, whose existence depends upon human experience.. Hence they are subjective...[On the other hand, s]ince aesthetic concepts are not connected to anything special about me... I must believe that all human beings who similarly respond as human beings, and not as individuals with special histories, will react as I do – that they similarly feel pleasure or pain in the presence of this object...⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Eaton (1998).

What Kant's account points to, I believe, is that in thinking about subjectivity, objectivity and the distinction between them in relation to judgements, we need a more sophisticated model than the traditional conception of that distinction.

2. Being subjective and being objective: typical uses.

As is often the case with notions that are both hard-worked and ubiquitous, be it in philosophy or elsewhere, objectivity and subjectivity are put to a large variety of different uses. For example, we often ascribe subjectivity to opinions we take to be valid only for the particular person holding them; at other times, we apply the notion to all judgements that are of a certain generic kind, such as moral judgements perhaps. Similarly, we often take 'being objective' to mean that something can be verified by the means available to assess truth in the empirical sciences, and on other occasions, we use it to refer to something we simply want to describe as impartial. As we shall see, some of these uses are more closely connected than others, both in our conception of them and in terms of logical entailment. What, then, are the most typical uses to which we put the notions of objectivity and subjectivity in relation to judgements?

Perhaps the most common sense in which a judgement can be said to be objective is for it to allow for truth or correctness. A judgement is objective, in other words, if it is 'correctness-' or 'truth-evaluable'. Examples of judgements that are objective in this sense, which I will hereafter call being objective in sense 'O1', include claims such as 'the train from Cambridge is twelve minutes late on arriving at King's Cross,' and 'the bikini was launched as a fashion-item in North America in the late forties.' Similarly, it is equally usual to refer to a judgement as 'subjective' when what is meant is that a judgement cannot allow for truth or correctness. In this class of judgements we

traditionally find statements such as ‘honeysuckle smells nicer than roses,’ ‘an adult can *never* be forgiven for hitting a child,’ and ‘Monteverdi’s *Orfeo* is a cacophonous opera.’

The second sense in which a judgement can be held to be objective is where it is considered to be impartial or unbiased. Anyone should agree that, for example, ‘Lance Armstrong was the best cyclist of the Tour de France this year,’ or ‘the history of Rome is more interesting than that of Reading.’ I will refer to this way of being objective as being objective in the sense ‘O2’. In contrast, subjectivity is regularly ascribed to judgements that are considered as partial or biased; for example, ‘New York is nicest in December,’ or ‘men are more attractive after not shaving for three days.’

Third, a judgement is often called ‘objective’ when it is held to be grounded in generally available (and good) reasons. Examples of such judgements include ‘lemon juice is less sweet than lemonade,’ ‘the sun is a star,’ or ‘the pyramids were built before St. Paul’s Cathedral.’ This manner of being objective will hereafter be referred to as being objective in sense ‘O3’. On the other hand, judgements that are considered not to be grounded on generally available (and good) reasons, such as ‘my mobile telephone’s ring-tone is prettier than yours,’ are often said to be subjective.

Fourth, we call a judgement objective when what we have in mind is that a judgement is not perspectival, such as ‘he thinks that genetic research of human embryos should be encouraged because it increases the chances of finding remedies to terrible diseases,’ or ‘my English is not as good as that of native speakers even though I would like it to be.’ We can, and often do, correspondingly call judgements subjective when we mean to say that they are perspectival. For example, ‘she believes in God because she was brought up in a very religious family,’ or ‘my school-uniform was dark brown, and as a result, I think brown is far less flattering to me than any other colour,’ or again, ‘the binding of young girls’ feet is wrong.’ I will call being subjective in this sense being subjective in sense ‘S1’.

Fifth, and finally, judgements such as ‘the kite has a mass of exactly 1 kg,’ and ‘that is a perfect square,’ can be called objective because the concepts they invoke are not anthropocentric; that is to say they are not ontologically dependent on human beings. In contrast, judgements such as ‘the shawl is lilac,’ and ‘my neighbour has an ugly house’, are anthropocentric, and subjective in the sense ‘S2’.

What we get, in short, is this schema:

Objective judgements:	Subjective judgements:
Allow for truth or correctness (O1).	Does not allow for truth or correctness.
Unbiased and impartial (O2).	Biased and partial.
Grounded in generally available reasons (O3).	Not grounded in generally available reasons (i.e. only in idiosyncratic reasons).
Non-perspectival.	Perspectival (S1).
Non-anthropocentric.	Anthropocentric (S2)

Obviously, some of the examples outlined above are perfectly capable of illustrating more than one ‘typical use’ of the notions in question here. For example, the judgement ‘Lance Armstrong was the best cyclist of the Tour de France this year’ could serve as an example both of a judgement’s being objective in the sense O2 *and* in the sense O1. This transferability of examples is then also characteristic of how these various uses are inter-related. And, as mentioned above, some uses are more closely connected than others. Thus, to be objective in the sense of being correct (O1) is intimately linked to what it is to be objective in the sense of being well-grounded (O3). Generally, too, being objective in the sense of being impartial (O2) is a condition on being objective in

the sense O3. But as we shall see more and more clearly throughout this thesis, it is, despite these inter-relations, very important to maintain the distinctions between the various uses to which we put objectivity and subjectivity. For example, if a judgement is objective in the sense O1, that usually suggests that there are reliable means of assessment, such as principles, say, from which the correctness of the judgement has been inferred. This is clearly connected to being objective in the sense of being well-grounded in generally available reasons (O3) because there will be good reasons at the basis of those principles (i.e. the reasons which grounded the principles in the first place). But those reasons can easily be, and indeed often are, ‘eclipsed’ by the established principles with which we work, and it is a conflation along these lines that can make it so difficult to keep the various senses of the notions of objectivity and subjectivity apart.

The aim of this thesis is to defend the view that aesthetic judgements can combine O1, O2, O3 with S1 and S2. My claim is thus that despite allowing for subjectivity in the senses of being both perspectival and anthropocentric, aesthetic judgements can still be ‘robustly objective’,⁴⁵ that is to say, allow for correctness, be impartial, and be grounded in generally available and good reasons.

3. How is the distinction to be conceived?

(a). Two misleading conceptions.

How, then, should we conceive of the distinction between the notions of subjectivity and objectivity in aesthetics? The remainder of this section contains a negative and a positive part. First, I will outline the main tenets of two conceptions of the distinction that I take to be, principally for the same reasons, both counter-productive and also

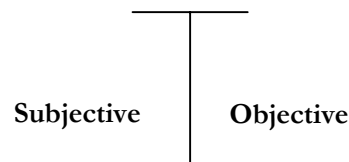
⁴⁵ Expression coined by Peter Goldie.

partly responsible for the difficulties that the pursuit of objectivity has encountered in the domain of value in general, and in that of the aesthetic in particular. Second, and more constructively, I shall sketch some important strands of an alternative and more favourable way of viewing the distinction.

The two conceptions of the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity that I wish to reject are, first, the understanding that interprets the distinction in terms of a dichotomy, and, second, the account whereby the distinction is thought of in terms of a horizontal spectrum. My aim here is simply to outline the main ideas of each of these views respectively, and to point to a conception of the subjectivity/objectivity distinction that seems to stand a better chance of defusing the tension that arises from the dual character of aesthetic judgements described by Kant in his third *Critique*. This section should be seen as preliminary to my exposition of the distinction in an aesthetic context.

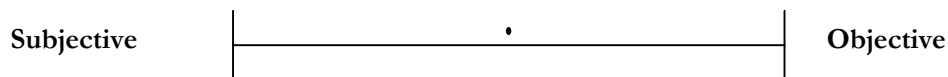
The first, and I believe the most common, conception of the subjectivity/objectivity distinction is one whereby a judgement must be *either* objective *or* subjective. The distinction, in other words, is thought of as a dichotomy because no possible overlap is conceived between the subjective and the objective. (See Figure 1). Classically, then, judgements about facts and the subject-matter of the empirical sciences are objective, whereas judgements about value and other generally non-scientific concerns are subjective.

Figure 1.



The second conception of the distinction that I wish to reject is one according to which subjectivity and objectivity are at two opposite ends of a horizontal spectrum. As is clear from Figure 2, there are, according to this model, certain judgements that although objective, are still more or less objective than other judgements, and similarly with subjective judgements. At a first glance, this conception seems more plausible than the first, in that it is more capable of being sensitive to the complexities that are brought out by the distinction. Indeed, there are judgements that are somehow more objective than others, and similarly with subjectivity. The kind of objectivity that certain judgements of physics allow for is, after all, probably not the same as the objectivity we ascribe to certain sociological judgements. However, this conception of the distinction still rests on the polarity that underlies the first model.

Figure 2.



The primary feature that is shared by these two conceptions and that leads me to see it as desirable to reject them both, at least in an aesthetic context, can be understood as having two main expressions.⁴⁶ First, despite the variety of typical uses outlined above, both models seem to rely on a view of subjectivity and objectivity whereby the two notions are taken on as a ‘block-concepts’, so to speak. That is, if an application of a particular (typical) use of one of these notions seems appropriate, it appears to follow that the other various (typical) uses of that notion be applicable too. For example, in describing a judgement as truth-evaluative, it must, it is assumed, also be non-perspectival. And as I intend to demonstrate during the course of this thesis, this is

⁴⁶ I am not intending that any logical priority of the one over the other be assumed here.

neither inevitably nor desirably the case for a number of reasons, some of which I alluded to in relation to my discussion of how the typical uses of the notions in question may be inter-related without thereby being inseparable.

Second, the oppositional conception proffered by both models promotes an understanding of each notion as mutually exclusive in every respect. To use the same example, a judgement, it is held, cannot be perspectival and truth-evaluative at the same time. In other words, the understanding that polarises subjectivity and objectivity is also responsible for the rather monolithic understanding of both notions that prevents the selective application of either. And yet, however, neither the desirability nor the correctness of understanding subjectivity and objectivity to be both exclusive and opposite has been, at least as far as I am concerned, conclusively established.

One of the driving forces of this thesis is, then, the idea that on closer inspection the aesthetic case urges us to consider seriously the possibility that these notions might not be opposites after all. I want to question whether something's being subjective necessarily entails its being subjective in all other senses; similarly with objectivity. All in all, this thesis could be seen as an argument to the effect that any conception of the subjectivity/objectivity distinction whereby these two notions are thought of as mutually exclusive is inadequate with regards to aesthetic judgements.

(b). Objectivity as the opposite of subjectivity?

In her *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, Christine Korsgaard highlights an important issue about distinctions in general which has a particularly interesting bearing on our current concern. Where a distinction is drawn, she argues, there are, more often than not, actually four rather than two elements at play: one of the contrasting elements (P); its opposite (-P); the other contrasting element (Q); and its opposite (-Q). So, for example, in the case of the distinction between intrinsic and instrumental value discussed by

Korsgaard, the elements involved are not simply intrinsic value and instrumental value, but (i) intrinsic value (P), (ii) non-intrinsic value (-P), (iii) instrumental value (Q), and (iv) non-instrumental value (-Q).⁴⁷ The important point here is that the two initially contrasting elements (P and Q) are not necessarily each others' opposites (even though ascribing both to an object might in practice still be impossible). The opposite of intrinsic value seems then not automatically to be instrumental value but, simply, non-intrinsic value (within which class instrumental value may nevertheless be shown to belong). It is, therefore, a *further* question of whether instrumental value and non-intrinsic value amount to the same thing or not.

What Korsgaard's point can, I suggest, help us clarify in relation to the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity, is just how misleading it can be to translate a *distinction* into a *dichotomy*. Objectivity and subjectivity should not, then, be taken to be opposites until it has been established that (i) non-objectivity (-P) and subjectivity (Q), and (ii) objectivity (P) and non-subjectivity (-Q), are, in both cases, one and the same notions. Clearly, what the possibility of aesthetic objectivity requires is that the notions in (ii) are not equivalent; that all forms of objectivity do not *per se* rule out subjectivity.

Although this cautionary tale about opposites is instructive in any philosophical environment, Korsgaard's argument brings out a particularly important aspect with regards to the aesthetic, and especially so in the light of the relational approach that I wish to support in this thesis. If the notions of objectivity and subjectivity are not to be conceived as opposites, and thus as mutually exclusive, there are several aspects of the epistemology of aesthetic judgements and the ontology of aesthetic properties that might stand in need of revision. This point is not limited to the idea that there are properties that can qualify as subjective which are nonetheless capable of admitting objective judgements about them in the same way that colour properties can be

⁴⁷ See Korsgaard (1996), pp. 250-253.

subjective yet colour-judgements still be true or false. As we will see, appealing to an analogy with colour properties and judgements will prove helpful in some respects, but only partially so. Rather, an alternative conception of the subjectivity/objectivity distinction might contribute to bringing about a way of accounting for aesthetic judgements that does not rest on viewing them as necessarily belonging *either* to the subjective *or* the objective camp.

D). How might aesthetic psychology help us out of the impasse?

In view of the Janus-faced character of our aesthetic phenomenology as a tool of aesthetic inquiry, I have suggested that there is a sense in which we, like Neurath's sailors, need to reconstruct the vessel upon which we now find ourselves at sea.⁴⁸ If, indeed, we are to increase the likelihood that our phenomenology may succeed in shedding light on the mental abilities, events and episodes that figure in it, we must question some of our assumptions about the relation in which these constitutive elements of our aesthetic phenomenology stand. But there is no philosophical dry-dock from which to do so; there is a sense in which our phenomenology is the only place from which our inquiries can start. And so I advocate that we turn to aesthetic psychology for help.

Much like its moral counterpart, aesthetic psychology is centrally concerned with the psychological issues that arise in connection with a certain (in this case aesthetic) kind of assessment or evaluation. Aesthetic psychology is then perhaps best seen as a philosophical discipline according to which examinations of the psychological processes that underlie aesthetic evaluations can help us clarify and/or resolve at least some of the more persistent difficulties of philosophical aesthetics. Overall, it sets out to deal with three main questions: (i) the psychological assumptions connected with aesthetic practice (both descriptive and prescriptive); (ii) the psychological foundations of particular aesthetic evaluations; and (iii) issues about abilities and dispositions involved in the making of aesthetic judgements. Central to the idea of aesthetic psychology is, then, the concern of how the mind works in an aesthetic context. This question finds expression in a multitude of ways. What is it to perceive something as aesthetic? How is our mind led to pick out those features of objects that are salient to particular

⁴⁸ Without quite being 'all at sea', I hope.

aesthetic evaluations? How do we acquire the ability to apply aesthetic concepts? What is the role of the emotions in aesthetic evaluation?

How, then, can aesthetic psychology assist us in the attempt to pursue the possibility of ascribing objectivity to aesthetic judgements? In a first instance, the methodological approach implied by aesthetic psychology sets out to understand the role that the various elements involved in aesthetic evaluations not only *do*, but also *ought to*, play. It does so mainly by separating those elements of our phenomenology that we tend to conflate. In a second instance, it aims to restore the appropriate role of each such constituent, and so to rebuild a more solid and reliable base from which the pursuit of objectivity can genuinely be undertaken. This method, I contend, will eventually show how it is possible to be committed to a reasonable objectivism for aesthetic judgements.

CHAPTER II.

SUBJECTIVITY AND OBJECTIVITY: DISARMING THE DILEMMA.

A). How 'far out' does the subjectivity of aesthetic judgements reach?

In the first chapter of this thesis, I suggested that the aesthetic is best seen as some kind of relation between the mind and the world. The distinctively aesthetic does not pertain solely either to the subject or the object of perceptual experience, but, rather, to the relation between them. In this chapter there are two aspects of the relational approach that I would like to address. First, the way in which the aesthetic is tied to the personal perspective that human beings can take upon the world and its contents. Second, the manner in which this approach invites us to question the main tenets of a metaphysical framework that underscores a certain conception of the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity. I will begin by outlining a dilemma that would appear to deny the possibility of ascribing objectivity to aesthetic judgements whichever way we turn. Eventually, I hope to show that we are impaled necessarily on neither of the dilemma's putative horns, and that this avoidance is due largely to the notion of the personal perspective.

The dilemma in question is based on two claims about aesthetic judgements which, although seemingly incompatible, capture something crucial about the way in which we think about such judgements. The first claim is that aesthetic judgements are subjective, and can therefore not be correct (or incorrect). The second has it that (at least some) aesthetic judgements seem to allow for (some kind of) correctness, and thereby seem to allow for objectivity. The options open to us initially, then, are roughly these. *Either we*

take the view that aesthetic judgements, in virtue of their subjectivity, cannot allow for any correctness or means of justification capable of leading to objectivity. Or we take seriously the idea that at least some aesthetic judgements *do* seem capable of justification and correctness, thereby doing away with the subjectivity of such judgements. Now, neither of these options is entirely satisfactory for relatively straightforward reasons.¹ On the one hand, the first reading seems not only to make little, if any, sense of the thought that at least some aesthetic judgements (e.g. that *King Lear* is stylistically poor or that German expressionist paintings are never garish) are correct or incorrect, but also leaves us unable to explain the considerable agreement that does, at times, prevail about aesthetic matters (e.g. that Leonardo's *Giaconda* is a striking painting). Most importantly, it makes little, if anything, of the possibility of appealing to the features of the object of aesthetic appreciation in the process of explaining and justifying our aesthetic judgements about it – a possibility the discussion of which most of Chapter V will be devoted to. On the other hand, the second putative horn seems to impale us by robbing aesthetic judgements of their very distinct character. How, on this reading, can we account for the specific way in which such judgements rely on the emotions, beliefs, 'pro-attitudes', past experiences, etc. – the various psychological 'personalities' – of the person making the judgement? Moreover, how, on this reading, do we explain not only the disagreements that unquestionably do occur, but also the manner in which the subject-matter of aesthetic judgements depends on there being subjects of experience?

My aim here is not to suggest that aesthetic judgements are in no way subjective. Aesthetic judgements are probably grounded in our psychology in more intricate ways than most other judgements.² Rather, my intention is to propose an understanding in which this implicit subjectivity of aesthetic judgements is not such that the possibility of

¹ I mention these reasons rather fleetingly here as I take much of my thesis to be a more or less direct exposition of why neither option is completely satisfying.

² I take the term 'psychology' here to refer to that manifest in the thought of individual human beings rather than as that which in some sense can be taken to define human beings as such.

objectivity is precluded in all senses of that term. Nor do I see it as necessary to settle for either of the two philosophically rather primitive options sketched above. At the very least, the possibility of there being a third option, or some sort of dissolution of the dilemma, should be explored first.

Obviously, the two putative horns of the aforementioned dilemma rest on a conception of objectivity and subjectivity that still envisages those notions as somewhat monolithic. In the light of the various uses outlined in the previous chapter, we can, then, see that what the first claim of the dilemma amounts to is the idea that because a judgement is subjective (in some unspecified sense), it cannot be objective (again, in some unspecified sense), and thus cannot be correctness-evaluable (O1). In opposition to this, the second claim has it that because a judgement is objective in the sense O1, it cannot be subjective (seemingly in any sense). The second claim thus relies on subjectivity corresponding directly with the absence of correctness-evaluability (O1). By contrast, the first claim of the dilemma takes subjectivity to rule out the possibility of objectivity *per se*, and then only by extension correctness, or O1. The two 'horns' are thus seen not to be exactly equal partners, and, moreover, to be reliant on assumptions that, if pulled apart a little, would lead to the dissolution of any residual aspect of the dilemma's presenting us with a sufficient 'either' and 'or'.

Part of my intention in writing the current chapter is to begin my argument for the claims I made in this respect in Chapter I; that is to say, to argue towards more plastic conceptions of both terms. In view of advancing my claims, then, one section of this chapter will mainly be concerned with an examination of some ontological accounts of evaluative properties that underlie philosophical approaches relying on or implying similarly – and related – monolithic arrangements. As will be gradually become clear, the predominance of both the oppositional and exclusive conceptions of the either/or of the dilemma is precisely such that the more fragmentable notions I intend to advance

become indispensable to any account of aesthetic judgements that hopes to proceed without jettisoning all prospects of objectivity from the outset. Unless I specify otherwise, I shall, therefore, use the notions of objectivity and subjectivity rather broadly in this chapter, to refer to all senses outlined in the previous one.

I shall begin this chapter with a brief overview of some of the most common worries that philosophers and non-philosophers alike have expressed about the possibility of objectivity for aesthetic judgements. As we shall see, the discussion of these worries – developed in two epistemological arguments and one ontological argument – parallels in a number of respects a running debate about the distinction between facts and values. Part of my aim when I move on to investigate a deeper problematic for the possibility of aesthetic objectivity,³ is then also to bring out the way in which different conceptions of the fact/value distinction influence the starting-point from which one engages with the aforementioned dilemma. I shall argue that the metaphysical framework which both relies on and supports a certain understanding of the fact/value distinction shapes not only our ontological commitments, but also our epistemological method *vis-à-vis* aesthetic matters. In this context, my over-riding goal in examining the worries that arise for the pursuit of objectivity for aesthetic judgements, is to render explicit how a certain world-view lies at the heart of the overly simple formulation of our seemingly incompatible convictions about aesthetic judgements. Finally, I turn to the notion of perspective, and draw several distinctions between kinds of perspectives, all in an attempt to further our understanding of the way in which we view the world when we view it aesthetically.

Attempts to transcend one's own perspective on the world and its contents have long been administered to many a philosophical and non-philosophical ill. Indeed, since the epistemological gap between the objects and the subjects of this world has more

³ Hereafter I shall take 'aesthetic objectivity' to refer to the objectivity that might be ascribed to aesthetic judgements.

often than not been considered rather treacherous, detaching oneself from the point from which one views the world has been thought to be a critical step towards making impartial and correct judgements about that world. Once this much has been conceded, two questions arise immediately. First, is it actually possible to transcend one's own perspective? Second, is such transcendence something one should always strive for in epistemological inquiry? The driving force of my project will also involve another, yet closely related, question: namely, does transcending the personal perspective inevitably bring us closer to 'reality'? One of the main claims of this chapter is that detachment from the personal perspective – in the sense of transcending it – is not always desirable; nor is it inevitably the most appropriate means by which to make correct judgements or increase our knowledge and understanding of the world. More precisely, the intellectual manoeuvre in question here does not seem at all suitable for the aesthetic case.

The aim of this chapter does not consist in settling all the worries that arise in connection with pursuing objectivity for aesthetic judgements. Rather, what I wish to do here is to give a rough outline of the state of the debate. This state of affairs – and indeed much of the debate as a whole – has largely been determined by what I call the 'naturalising project' with regards to value in general. The naturalising project can be seen to rest on a metaphysical distinction that manifests itself in several different ways, many of which I will return to time and time again throughout the thesis. In this chapter I will focus on the divergence as expressed between (i) aesthetic and material properties,⁴ and (ii) value and fact. This chapter is, then, best understood as setting up the wider challenge around both the subjectivity/objectivity dilemma and the case against the possibility of objectivity in aesthetics in general – a case for which, I hope to show, there is less of a philosophical buttress than generally expected.

⁴ I shall also refer to 'material' properties as 'non-evaluative' properties.

B). Worries about the pursuit of objectivity.

1. Three common objections.

(a). Argument from rational determinability.

The first main epistemological worry about ascribing objectivity to aesthetic judgements is based on the occurrence of disagreements about matters to do with value. The idea, in a nutshell, is that whereas disputes about non-evaluative questions are capable of being resolved by appealing to reason, experience and reasoning processes referring to them, disagreements about values do not demonstrate this capacity. From there, it is argued that value judgements cannot be correct or incorrect because they do not allow for the same manner of ‘determination’.

Clearly, there would be little, if any, philosophical mileage in claiming that disagreements about aesthetic properties allow for the same means of resolution as disputes about, say, size. With regards to the former, there can be no demonstrations or proofs capable of decisively settling a dispute; there are, as Kant tells us in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, no rules for beauty.⁵ Moreover, even with the ‘thickest’ evaluative properties, it would seem that it is still not possible to make them adequate to an invariant set of rules or principle. However, whilst one must concede this much to the argument from rational determinability, it is not obvious that one thereby finds oneself obliged to agree with what is presented as a consequence of this absence of aesthetic proofs, namely that there are *no* rational means by which disputes about aesthetic properties can be settled. The discrepancy highlighted by the argument from rational determinability between how to settle disputes about value judgements on the one hand, and judgements about facts on the other, does not, I will argue in Chapters IV and V, imply that *no appeal whatsoever* can be made to reason, experience and certain forms of

⁵ Kant (2000), especially §7-9, 5: 212-219, pp. 97-104.

rational argumentation in the evaluative case. Nor does it entail that aesthetic judgements cannot be grounded in generally available reasons. After all, when the art critic gets her audience to 'see', say, the subtle gracefulness of a work of art, is she not, at least tacitly, appealing to features of the work, to our previous experiences, and our knowledge about other artworks? And does not, too, our acceptance of this judgement depend on its credibility (to us), where this credibility owes itself, one would hope, to a reasonable basis?

There is no doubt that the issues raised by the argument from rational determinability are far from easily dealt with. Two further points may help us assess the strength that the argument could afford to a view that not only endorses the subjectivity/objectivity dilemma, but also sees it as putting an end to the philosophical inquiry about the objectivity of aesthetic judgements in virtue of ceding to the first alternative. First, it is important to reflect on whether the argument is right to rely, on the one hand, on what seems to be a very pessimistic conception of the convergence of value judgements, and, on the other, a rather optimistic account of the convergence of non-value judgements. Second, and perhaps more importantly, one must bear in mind that the mere occurrence of disagreements does not imply that there is no truth of the matter that *could* be agreed upon. Disagreements reflect something about the epistemic access we have to the things we disagree about; it does not necessarily reveal the absence of something to agree upon.

(b). Argument from perception.

One of the most straightforward cases put forward in support of the view that aesthetic judgements cannot be objective rests on an issue about perceptual skills. The claim here is, very roughly, that since human beings have no special perceptual abilities for

perceiving ‘value facts’, there can be no such things. And since objectivity can only be ascribed to facts, values therefore cannot be objective.

The thesis on which the argument from perception rests raises a host of questions not only about facts, values, and the distinction between them, but about perception as such. It takes no more than a quick glance to see that the argument relies on at least two misconceptions – one about perception, and another about value. First, it depends on a particularly implausible and unsophisticated view of perception in at least two respects. On the one hand, it seems questionable, to say the least, that something can only be said to exist if its potential perceivers have perceptual skills that are somehow especially designed for perceiving that (kind of) thing. There is nothing, in other words, that prevents the possibility of there being such things as ‘value facts’ even though human beings are not endowed with special abilities designed to perceive them.⁶ On the other, the argument appeals to an account of perception (seemingly far more ‘naïve’ than ‘naïve realism’) whereby perception is simply a matter of mechanically registering those things in the world that are rather basic on a phenomenal level. Surely the intricacies of the processes involved in perception have been studied sufficiently to establish that not even the perception of children are to be accounted for in that manner.

In contrast to these assumptions, perception is generally regarded to be a particularly complex ability, drawing heavily on numerous other, perhaps more specific abilities such as imagination and memory. And this complexity is far from unique to the perception of evaluative properties. In the case of emotional properties, say, it seems impossible to deny that we can perceive sadness or elation in other persons, even though it is clearly not the case that we have a special ‘perceptual ability’ for detecting distinctively emotional responses. According to Hilary Putnam,

⁶ Several ambiguities surround the notion of ‘value fact’. I will take a ‘value fact’ to be a fact about value, and will assume that a ‘value fact’ is first and foremost a fact.

we can tell that other people are elated, and sometimes we can even *see* that other people are elated. But we can only do so after we have acquired the *concept* of elation. Perception is not innocent; it is an exercise of our concepts... Once I have acquired the concept of elation, I can see that someone is elated, and similarly, once I have acquired the concept of a friendly person,... I can sometimes see that someone is friendly...⁷

As I will argue at length in Chapters III and IV, the perception of evaluative properties (like most other kinds of perception) involves applying concepts. For now, the point I wish to make is that the very possibility of perceiving certain evaluative properties, such as an engraving's being delicate or a friend's being generous, need not require that we have a specific sense organ or ability with which to perceive it. The mind is fully capable of working in more intricate ways than that.

All in all, this epistemological argument against the possibility of ascribing objectivity to aesthetic judgements, seems fairly unconvincing. Nonetheless, the main weakness of this argument is actually a valid pointer for the opposing view too: if aesthetic judgements are to be capable of sustaining objectivity, a solid account of the perception of evaluative properties will need to be developed. After all, perception is our gateway to the world, and as such, one of the most interesting questions that arises from the argument from perception is this: could there be distinctively evaluative sensibilities which we exercise in the perception of evaluative properties?

(c). Argument from ontological 'queerness'.

The second misconception on which the argument from perception relies is an idea most explicit in the so-called argument from 'queerness'. This argument holds that values – conceived again as 'value facts' – were they to exist, would be ontologically odd, and so are better explained by the claim that they do not. Since there are no 'value facts', it cannot be possible to ascribe objectivity to value judgements.

⁷ Putnam, H. (2002), p. 102.

Evidently, the main concern of the argument from ‘queerness’, most famously formulated by John Mackie in his *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, is the ontological status of values.⁸ According to Mackie, values would be ontologically strange if they were to exist, and *therefore*, the argument goes, it is most probably the case that they do not exist (at least, in the world external to our minds). In other words, the very idea of values being ‘in the world’ (so conceived) must be mistaken because of the ‘queerness’ they would exhibit. Now, there is a sense, albeit rather basic, in which values are ontologically rather unusual. Despite the inadequate terminology, one might even go so far as to characterise values as ‘queer’ in comparison to things such as doors and tennis-balls. What is uncontroversially the case here is that values, whatever their ontological status may be, are not like most other things in the world. However, what does not follow from this is that values do not exist at all: from the fact that values are not part of the ‘fabric of the world’ in the same sense as trees and marble, it does not follow that the notions of right- and wrongness have been wantonly invented. And even if there is a sense in which evaluative concepts and properties have indeed been invented or created by human beings, this is not to say that now that they have come into existence, they should not be treated as elements very much constitutive of human life.

It is worth noting that the notion of queerness implies a relation – ‘Queer in relation to what?’ one may ask. To predicate queerness of something is, so to speak, to involve it in some form of comparative scheme. What is beginning to emerge from these, the most common, arguments against the possibility of ascribing objectivity to aesthetic judgements, is an approach which is not merely eager to distinguish between values and facts, or evaluative and non-evaluative properties, but which also in some sense takes the former to be the ‘lesser’ partner of the two. In what follows of this section I shall

⁸ Mackie (1977), pp. 38-42.

expand this point, in an attempt to shed some light on how a certain world-view has undermined the possibility of a viable solution to the subjectivity/objectivity dilemma.

2. The metaphysical framework.

(a). Philosophically motivated difficulties.

Underlying the arguments outlined above, there is a fundamental set of difficulties that arises for the pursuit of aesthetic objectivity, namely the approach that seeks to undermine the authority of value and evaluative properties, and once and for all establish the superiority of those properties that participate in the 'language of science'. I call the difficulties that emerge from this approach 'philosophically motivated' because their concern is rarely with values in particular, but instead with an entire metaphysics. Matters pertaining to value are then more often than not accounted for first and foremost in the way that suits that over-riding agenda best.

The kind of project I have in mind here is generally one which advocates a certain philosophical programme with regards, amongst other things, to the mind-body problem. This problem, perhaps more than any other in contemporary philosophy, invites one to commit oneself not merely to a position about how that particular relation is best understood, but also to a specific framework in which the mind-body duality is embedded. As I will soon explain, it is a rather interesting feature of this debate that whilst the metaphysical framework of concern to us here is in one sense the consequence of a certain view on the relation between mental and physical properties, it also seems to have become one of the main arguments in support of that view. A related concern might, then, be one keen to explore the idea that, to use Thomas

Nagel's words, 'the mind-body problem arises because certain features of subjective experience resist accommodation by one very important conception of objectivity.'⁹

(b). The fact/value distinction and the 'naturalistic fallacy'.

At first sight, the distinction between facts and values seems to capture an important metaphysical contrast. After all, facts seem both epistemologically and ontologically more straightforward than values. Facts can, it is generally held, either now or in the future be 'checked' and disproved against empirical evidence. In virtue of this, facts figure in the causal explanations of the physical world. Most importantly perhaps, facts do not – *prima facie* at least – seem to depend on human beings for their existence; facts are 'there anyway'.

One of the most significant philosophical ramifications of the fact/value distinction is the manner in which that distinction has shaped our conception of what it is to be such as to belong to the realm of facts, as opposed to that of value. How, one may ask, has this distinction come to bolster not only a metaphysical landscape, but also an epistemological approach which takes it as a given that only statements of fact are capable of being warranted and well-grounded in generally available (and good) reasons, whilst value judgements, in virtue of their subjectivity, are automatically incapable of it?

The precursor of the fact/value distinction (as it figures in analytic philosophy) is generally held to be Hume's claim about the impossibility of inferring 'ought' statements from 'is' statements (also called 'Hume's Law' or the 'non-reducibility thesis'). The main idea underlying this claim, to use John Searle's words, is that 'there is a class of statements of fact which is logically distinct from a class of statements of value' and that '[n]o set of statements of fact by themselves entails any statements of value.'¹⁰ Now, whilst the main thrust of 'Hume's Law' can rightly be said to be one concerned with our

⁹ Nagel (1980b), p. 78.

¹⁰ Searle (1964), p. 43.

inferential practices, the assumption underlying it is really a metaphysical dichotomy between so-called ‘matters of fact’ and ‘relations of ideas’. For Hume, there can be no ‘matter of fact’ about virtue or about what is morally right. The two domains are, so to speak, ‘unbridgeable’. Indeed, to impose any entailment relation from the descriptive to the evaluative would be to commit, in the language of G. E. Moore, the ‘naturalistic fallacy’.¹¹

In his *Principia Ethica*, Moore argues that no argument from factual to evaluative statements can be rendered valid by inserting a premise which defines ‘ought’ in terms of ‘is’. The driving force of this argument is a concern to refute ethical naturalisms purporting to give *semantic* reductions of moral to non-moral or ‘natural’ terms, such that statements of the form ‘X ought to be done’ are *analytically* equivalent to ‘X is desired’, or ‘X maximises happiness’. However, as the work of Hilary Putnam and Saul Kripke have led us to see, the reductivist move Moore terms the ‘naturalistic fallacy’ looses its tight grip on the relation between descriptive and evaluative statements if the naturalist's argument is reformulated in terms of a *synthetic* identity. The suggestion is, then, that both evaluative and non-evaluative concepts refer to the same property, even if they have different senses, just like the concepts ‘H₂O’ and ‘water’ refer to the same substance whilst having slightly different senses.¹² If the claim about *synthetic* identities can be defended and transposed to the domain of value, the fact/value distinction still appears firmly grounded despite the seeming inevitability of some form of metaphysical reduction.

Three decades after his attack on Moore’s argument against the ‘naturalistic fallacy’, Putnam highlights how, once in the hands of the logical positivists, the Kantian division between analytic and synthetic judgements played an additional role in the debate by contributing to the epistemological preconceptions we have about matters of fact and

¹¹ Moore, G. E. (1971), p. 10.

¹² Putnam, H. (1975), and Kripke (1980).

value respectively. For the logical positivists, judgements about value are neither empirically verifiable (i.e. ‘synthetic’), nor true or false on the basis of logic alone (‘analytic’). Instead, aesthetic or moral or metaphysical judgements are ‘cognitively meaningless’, and so incapable of being true or false.¹³ Closing the circle by returning to the distinction’s historical origins, the logical positivists are shown by Putnam to have supported their threefold distinction mainly by appealing to Hume’s claim that moral judgements are not statements of fact but expressions of sentiment.

Despite the rise of ethical neo-naturalisms based on synthetic identity claims, and Quine’s devastating attack on the analytic/synthetic distinction,¹⁴ the view of value judgements as incapable of being either impartial or well-grounded in generally available reasons seems as firmly rooted in our conception of values as ever. The question we must rally round, then, is whether this conception stands in need of revision. Having indicated some of the main historical catalysts of the distinction’s philosophical development, I now turn to the metaphysical framework I have been referring to, and eventually, the naturalising project in which it is manifested.

(c). *The ‘absolute conception’.*

(i). What is the ‘absolute conception’?

The metaphysical framework that generally goes hand in hand with a strict distinction between facts and values in analytic philosophy is, as we saw above, one that tends to emphasise facts at the expense of value. One of the key tenets to this approach is that the world as it is ‘in itself’ can be exhaustively described in scientific terms. Thus, for Bernard Williams, a fact is something that can be described in the language of science and upon which we are destined to converge.¹⁵ The vernacular in question here is the

¹³ See Putnam, H. (2002), p. 10.

¹⁴ Quine (1994).

¹⁵ Williams (1978), pp. 247-248.

vocabulary of physics and will involve only primary qualities. The underlying idea is thus, roughly, that non-evaluative properties, in contrast to evaluative ones, figure in explanations of how the universe works physically, and can thereby be said to be ontologically more ‘heavy-weight’.

In his *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry*, Williams describes a world-view which he calls the ‘absolute conception’. This is a conception that includes not only that which perspectives are of, but the perspectives themselves. Thus, the ‘absolute conception’ represents the world ‘in a way to the maximum degree independent of our perspective and peculiarities’.¹⁶ Williams’s argument for the possibility of such a conception is fuelled by an epistemological ambition: if knowledge is to be possible, he argues, the ‘absolute conception’ must be possible too, since knowledge is of what there is ‘anyway’.¹⁷ Implicit in Williams’s theory is the idea that facts, or non-evaluative properties, are the only kind of things that figure in the ‘absolute conception’ of the world in virtue of participating in the causal explanations of physics, and are thus the only kind of thing of which knowledge can be had.¹⁸

This project, which is at heart a Cartesian one,¹⁹ raises several thorny questions. Setting aside purely theoretical issues about the epistemological outlook it promotes, one may wonder whether it really is always the case in practice that abandoning one’s perspective is a necessary requirement for acquiring understanding and knowledge? The question is of considerable concern to anyone interested in evaluative concepts, since on Williams’s account, concepts such as ethical ones are, to use Jane Heal’s words, ‘to be assigned to the perspectival group’; which is to say that they are concepts not of what is

¹⁶ Williams (1985), pp. 138-139.

¹⁷ See Williams (1978), p. 65ff.

¹⁸ Thus in the ‘absolute conception’, the content of our perspectives, and the perspectives themselves, will have been subsumed under causally explaining facts. For a short but helpful summary of Williams’s view on this matter, see Heal (1989), pp. 49-51. My concern with Williams in this chapter is mainly with the idea of the ‘absolute conception’ as such, and not with the details of Williams’s theory.

¹⁹ Williams is, after all, writing about Descartes, albeit with a delicately administered combination of descriptive and prescriptive intentions.

there ‘anyway’, ‘but rather of things which we take to be there only because of some peculiarity of our constitution or nature.’²⁰ As Williams himself writes, ‘science has some chance of being more or less what it seems, a systematized theoretical account of how the world really is, while ethical thought has no chance of being everything it seems.’²¹

(ii). Is the ‘absolute conception’ attainable?

The question that now arises is one that casts doubt on the very possibility of the assumption underlying the ‘absolute conception’, namely whether attaining some form of ‘Archimedean point’ is actually possible.²² Can there really be a conception of the world as ‘center-less’?²³ Is it, in other words, possible, as Adrian Moore claims, to think about the world with complete detachment?²⁴

There are at least two ways in which this question can be broached. On the one hand, one may ask whether it is technically possible for persons to transcend their own point of view: are we, so to speak, constituted in such a way that we can rid ourselves of our own perspective whilst retaining our perceptual and analytic abilities? Are we, to use John McDowell’s words, ‘equipped with a pure or transparent mode of access to reality as it is in itself, such as is constituted by scientific enquiry on Williams’s Peircean conception’?²⁵ In his *Points of View*, Moore presents a convincing case for the possibility of so-called ‘absolute representations’, or representations from no point of view. Two main arguments are outlined in support of his position. First, a line of reasoning based on the idea, shared by Williams, that ‘correct representations are representations of what

²⁰ Heal (1989), p. 50.

²¹ Williams (1985), p. 135.

²² In this section my target is simply the general idea underlying Williams’s account of the ‘absolute conception’, and Adrian Moore’s view about ‘absolute representations’, etc. I am aware that there are significant differences between these theories and do not aim to capture all there is to say about them respectively.

²³ Nagel (1986), p. 18.

²⁴ Moore, A. (1997), p. 2.

²⁵ McDowell (1998b), p. 120.

is there *anyway*?²⁶ This Moore calls the ‘basic assumption’.²⁷ Second, an argument which holds that if there can be no ‘absolute conception’ of reality, one would ‘lose one’s grip on the idea that reality is what is there *anyway*’ which is an idea ‘crucial both to our concept of reality and to our concept of a representation.’²⁸

From the arguments presented by Williams, Moore and others in favour of the possibility of attaining something like the ‘absolute conception’, we see that amongst the multitude of pressing questions that such accounts raise, we find a host of not only epistemological, but metaphysical queries too, such as ‘what does it mean to say that reality is that which is “there anyway”?’ ‘what is “reality as it is in itself”?’ and ‘can that which is somehow not there “anyway” not be real in *any* way?’ Until these, and other similar, questions have been satisfactorily dealt with by the supporters of the ‘absolute conception’ and/or absolute representations, it seems imprudent to commit to its attainability. So, instead of examining whether these notions are actually attainable, I intend to embark on an inquiry about whether something like an Archimedean point is always *desirable*? Let us begin by looking at what the naturalist about evaluative properties has to say on these matters.

3. The naturalising project.

(a). The reductivist urge.

Generally, reductivists about value hold that evaluative properties are – more or less directly – reducible to non-evaluative properties. Within the tradition of Anglo-American analytic philosophy, this line of argument can be traced back at least to the debate surrounding Moore’s discussion of the ‘naturalistic fallacy’, and the idea that the

²⁶ Moore, A. (1987), p. 14.

²⁷ Moore, A. (1997), pp. 61-76.

²⁸ Moore, A. (1987), p. 15.

distinction between facts and values (or non-evaluative and evaluative properties) does not really reflect a division between two ‘equal partners’.²⁹ The idea central to reductivist approaches is that evaluative properties, perhaps rather like the broader class of ‘mental properties’, have no role to play in the causal explanations of the physical workings of the universe, and are therefore ontologically superfluous. Now, reductivism is best understood as a family of doctrines that come in more and less moderate versions. Broadly speaking, weaker reductivisms claim that evaluative properties, although they do not figure in such causal explanations, are a part of our everyday lives and capture notions that are important – and even indispensable – to the way in which we think of ourselves and others. So, despite fundamentally being reducible to non-evaluative properties, and thus themselves not really being ‘in the world’ (since only what is ‘there anyway’ can be so described), we can continue to talk and think ‘as if’ evaluative properties were external to our minds.³⁰

How, then, does reductivism account for the manner in which evaluative properties *are* present in the world? By appealing to the doctrine of supervenience, reductivists commit themselves to a view whereby evaluative properties depend on non-evaluative (or ‘material’) properties, so that the elegance of Picasso’s ‘La Célestine’ depends, or supervenes upon, the shape of the lines drawing the elderly woman’s dark cape, the combination of colours used, and so on.³¹ Generally speaking, supervenience is a relation between two kinds of properties (A and B), where one kind (A) depends (or supervenes) on the other (B) if and only if there can be no change in the former (A)

²⁹ Although, as explained above, the ‘naturalistic fallacy’ in its initial form was directed towards the threat of semantic reductions, the risk presented by more moderate ‘synthetic’ reductions is widely agreed to be more difficult to avert for non-naturalists (assuming, *contra* Quine, that there is something to the analytic/synthetic distinction in this context).

³⁰ Indeed, not all physicalist accounts propound that values and the language we use to discuss it should be entirely omitted from our lives. Bernard Williams’s account, for example, does not claim that we can *in practice* get along only with a vocabulary consisting of the terms that figure in the empirical sciences.

³¹ As we shall see, reductivists are far from alone in appealing to the doctrine of supervenience in order to account for the ontology of evaluative properties. So, even though reductivists generally do resort to supervenience, it is important to distinguish between the doctrine of reductivism and the doctrine of supervenience.

unless there is an alteration in the latter (B). To use the words of Donald Davidson, who famously applied the term in the context of the philosophy of mind,

mental characteristics are in some sense dependent, or supervenient, on physical characteristics. Such supervenience might be taken to mean that there cannot be two events alike in all physical respects but differing in some mental respect, or that an object cannot alter in some mental respect without altering in some physical respect.³²

So, it is held that an aesthetic property (e.g. elegance) supervenes on non-aesthetic properties (e.g. shape of lines drawn, colours used) in that there can be no alteration in the aesthetic properties unless there is a change amongst the non-aesthetic ones.³³

Amongst the properties that can form the subvening base for a supervening aesthetic property are, I take it, the artist's intentions and the historical context in which the object of aesthetic appreciation was produced.³⁴

By contrast, stronger versions of reductivism are generally grounded in the view that the relations of supervenience linking evaluative and non-evaluative properties are so strong (i.e. allow for so few variations), that it is unnecessary to posit two distinct kinds of properties. On such accounts, the world really contains nothing over and above non-evaluative properties.³⁵ I shall return to this kind of supervenience relation and discuss its implications for aesthetic judgements in greater detail in Chapter IV. In the meantime, one should note that it can be held that there is nothing about supervenience *per se* such that an adherence to it commits one to some form of reductivism. Moreover, as we will discover towards the end of this section, it may even be possible, albeit not uncontroversially, to adopt a form of naturalism which is not essentially reductivist about evaluative properties.

³² Davidson (1970), p. 98.

³³ For more on supervenience, see for example Kim (1993), Wicks (1992), and Zangwill (1992), (1994).

³⁴ In this case of artistic intention and historical context, the subvening properties can hardly be said to be 'physical' on Davidson's model. However it is still true that they act as subvening properties by virtue of the fact that they are used (reliably and credibly) to explain the presence of the supervening properties. For more on the influence of historical contexts in aesthetics, see Levinson (1979).

³⁵ What such accounts defend, in other words, is some form of property-identity between supervening and subvening properties.

(b). *Naturalising value.*

(i). Main concerns.

Ever since Quine's attempt at 'naturalising' epistemology,³⁶ several branches of philosophy have had to undergo similar naturalistic endeavours, not least the philosophy of value. The concerns of aesthetics and ethics have, indeed perhaps more than that of other areas, been subjected to this 'modern weakness for reduction'³⁷ in various forms. Common to all such attempts, however, is the idea that evaluative properties are to be accounted for in terms of 'natural properties'. Thus, even for naturalistic theories that rely on a weak form of supervenience, and admit that evaluative properties do play some distinct explanatory role (albeit not in causal explanations), there is an important sense in which evaluative properties simply have a lesser share in 'reality' (if indeed any at all). What such naturalist accounts have in store for evaluative properties might be something like the following possibility: whilst all evaluative properties are fundamentally reducible to 'material' or 'natural' properties, there is still a place in philosophy for different ways of referring to one and the same property, like the concepts of 'H₂O' and 'water'.³⁸

A great amount of research has been undertaken on the issue of naturalising aesthetic and moral properties, and no complete overview of it could be possibly be given here.³⁹ Nevertheless, although all the convictions that motivate these research projects are important, there is one that is particularly relevant to our concerns. This is the commitment to establish as paradigmatic the epistemological model of the natural sciences, where this model is understood to be the most reliable means of

³⁶ Quine (1969).

³⁷ Nagel (1980b), p. 80.

³⁸ This brings to mind a combination not unlike that of substantial monism and conceptual dualism for mental properties with regards to the mind-body problem.

³⁹ For some more extensive accounts, see for example, Foot (1978), Lewis (1989), May, Friedman & Clark (1996), Railton (1993).

understanding and acquiring knowledge. This is why such projects emphasise those aspects of the world about which knowledge can be had, as Williams claims, with ‘certainty’.⁴⁰ And indeed, if the goal of philosophy is, as I think it should be, to attain truth and understanding, this method looks like a safe bet. The question, however, is whether what constitutes the most reliable methodology in the sciences can be transferred to other areas of investigation in that same role.

(ii). The ‘open question’ argument.

Let us begin by returning to an issue I touched upon in relation to Moore’s complaint about the ‘naturalistic fallacy’. According to the naturalism directly under attack in the *Principia Ethica*, which I will hereafter refer to as ‘analytic naturalism’, evaluative terms such as ‘good’ can be analysed analytically. That is to say, that for each evaluative term, there is an analytic truth such as ‘a good thing is a thing which is pleasant’. Now, the argumentative device Moore makes use of in rebutting this view is one which brings out certain features of evaluative vocabulary which make it difficult to accept a naturalistic analysis along these lines. So, the ‘open question’ argument has it that

whatever definition be offered, it may always be asked, with significance... whether it is itself good... for instance... it may easily be thought, at first sight, that to be good may mean to be that which we desire to desire. Thus if we... say “When we think that A is good, we are thinking that A is one of the things which we desire to desire,” our proposition may seem quite plausible. But if we carry the investigation further, and ask ourselves “Is it good to desire to desire A?” it is apparent, on a little reflection, that this question is itself as intelligible as the original question “Is A good?”... It may indeed be true that what we desire to desire is always so good; perhaps even the converse may be true: but it is very doubtful whether this is the case, and the mere fact that we understand very well what is meant by doubting it, shews clearly that we have two different notions before our minds.⁴¹

The point of Moore’s argument is that a question is ‘open’ if it is possible for someone to completely understand the question, yet not know its answer. Thus, if the property

⁴⁰ I do hereby not wish to commit myself to the claim that Williams is a naturalist about evaluative properties.

⁴¹ Moore, G. E. (1971), pp. 15-16.

of goodness were really identical with the property of pleasantness in virtue of the meanings of the words, it would not be possible to understand the question ‘is what is good really what is pleasant?’, without knowing the answer to it. But as it stands, the question is one which still makes sense to ask. In contrast, if a person is an unmarried man (and always has been), then it is not an open question whether that man is a bachelor.

The idea underlying Moore’s attack against analytic naturalism is worth examining in so far as it might still carry some weight against non-analytic naturalisms. What, then, of ‘synthetic naturalisms’, whereby the identity that prevails between evaluative and natural properties cannot be derived directly from reflection on the meaning of the terms, but which holds as a matter of fact, in a similar way in which water is identical to H₂O? Can an evaluative property be identified with a non-evaluative property that ‘pulls its weight’ in the empirical sciences; can what is morally good be identified with, say, what maximises well-being or what is ugly can be identified with what produces a distinctive feeling of displeasure?

Although I refrain from delving into a discussion of these highly complex, yet pressing, issues at present, much of Chapters III and V is committed to such an examination. What I wish to do here is merely raise the point that there is a sense in which even synthetic naturalisms seem unable to shake off the ‘openness’ of the ‘open question’ argument. *Contra* synthetic naturalisms about evaluative properties, it seems, that we *can* still ask whether what maximises well-being or what produces a specific feeling of displeasure really is good or ugly; so that questions such as ‘yes, I recognise that this particular action maximises well-being or that this object produces a distinctive feeling of displeasure, but is it not still possible to wonder whether this action or thing really is good or ugly?’ is still significant. If it is, then even synthetic naturalisms, and their proposed identification, may find significant resistance at the level of the semantics

of evaluative concepts. Thus, to assume that naturalisms promoting synthetic reductions have nothing at all to fear from the ‘open question’ argument might still be to underestimate the distinctive role of the aesthetic and the moral within the non-evaluative sphere. I shall return to this issue in Chapter V as it occurs in relation to the ‘siblingism’ raised in the previous chapter.

(iii). Thick evaluative concepts and the entanglement of facts and values.

One of the reasons why one might suspect that the operation of naturalising evaluative properties really can fail not only to succeed, but even to get off the ground at all, is what seems to be a rather deep entanglement of facts and values. The kind of case where facts and values are the most obviously entangled, are contexts involving thick evaluative concepts. In what sense, then, do thick evaluative properties such as ‘stubborn’ and ‘garish’ serve as counter-examples to the idea that there is a division to be upheld between facts and values which is not only strict but also deflationary about the evaluative side? Generally, defenders of such a distinction insist on either of two views on this matter: *either* it is held that thick evaluative concepts are in reality just plain factual concepts, *or* that thick evaluative concepts are constituted by on the one hand a descriptive, and on the other an ‘attitudinal’ component. Leaving aside strong reductivisms advocating a complete assimilation of evaluative concepts to factual ones, I suggest we turn directly to the second (more plausible) suggestion and a brief evaluation of it.⁴²

John McDowell gives an instructive description of accounts that cash out thick evaluative concepts into two distinct components. He has it that, according to such accounts,

⁴² For an example of the first view, see Mackie (1977).

[c]ompetence with an evaluative concept involves, first, a sensitivity to an aspect of the world as it really is... and, second, a propensity to a certain attitude – a non-cognitive state that constitutes the special perspective from which items in the world seem to be endowed with the value in question.⁴³

Despite seeming more accommodating than the first option, the view that thick evaluative concepts are constituted by one descriptive and one attitudinal or prescriptive component has been severely criticised. Both McDowell and Hilary Putnam, amongst others, argue that the attempt to factor out thick ethical concepts into two such components falters because of the impossibility of formulating what the descriptive meaning of, say, ‘cruel’ is without using that same word or a synonym.⁴⁴ Thus,

[i]t seems reasonable to be sceptical about whether the distentanglement manoeuvre here envisaged [factoring in a descriptive and a prescriptive component] can always be effected; specifically, about whether, corresponding to any value concept, one can always isolate a genuine feature of the world – by the appropriate standard of genuineness, that is, a feature that is there anyway, independently of anyone’s value experience being as it is – to be that to which competent users of the concept are to be regarded as responding when they use it: that which is left in the world when one peels off the reflection of the appropriate attitude.⁴⁵

Clearly, the main worry about attempting to cash out thick evaluative concepts into these two components is related to the manner in which this, the analysis that at least initially seemed to be the most plausible, still relies on a rather devastating reduction on behalf of the evaluative. Does it really, after all, seem feasible that all there is to say about a concept like, say, gaudiness, can be captured by a specific attitude on the one hand, and on the other, a ‘feature that is there anyway, independently of anyone’s value experience?’ I think not.⁴⁶ Indeed, I rather suspect that the case of thick evaluative concepts may be one in which, simply, we have considerable difficulty in abstracting the evaluative content from the non-evaluative character of the thing in which it finds itself so often exemplified.

⁴³ McDowell (1998f), pp. 200-201.

⁴⁴ See McDowell (1998f), p. 201, and H. Putnam (2002), p. 35.

⁴⁵ McDowell (1998f), p. 201.

⁴⁶ This debate might bring to mind a similar analysis about emotions, whereby emotions are said to be exhaustively composed of (i) beliefs, and (ii) desires.

Whatever the case may be with regards to the analysis of thick evaluative concepts, such concepts are but the most obvious case of how facts and values can be entangled. The over-arching idea here is, more interestingly, that the entanglement of facts and values is not limited to thick evaluative concepts; but that, to use Ruth Anna Putnam's words, generally speaking, values are 'fact-laden' and that facts are 'value-laden'. The central tenet of such a suggestion is that values and evaluative properties somehow permeate many more aspects of the world than is generally thought (such as determining why one scientific theory is to be preferred over another), and, moreover, that values and evaluative properties cannot be described without some reference to facts or non-evaluative properties. Thus, Putnam writes that 'there are no objects-of-knowledge, there are no conceptions of the world and of the objects in it, that are not value laden.'⁴⁷ Perhaps rather like the classical pragmatist accounts developed by William James and John Dewey, value and normativity are said to be capable of permeating *all* aspects of experience. If this is so, and a deeper kind of entanglement of facts and values is not only fundamental, but actually indispensable, then attempts to reduce evaluative properties to non-evaluative or natural ones that in any way belittles the former seem to be on the wrong track.

(iv). Kinds of naturalism.

Perhaps the most fundamental question to ask in relation to more or less reductivist naturalist approaches is this: 'why do we call "natural" only that which pertains to the empirical sciences?' Why, indeed, are all those properties that do not belong to that domain deemed 'un-' or 'non-natural'?

Recently, two British philosophers have developed independent accounts of the view that the concept of the natural with which most self-proclaimed naturalists work is

⁴⁷ Putnam, R. A. (1998), p. 14.

unduly limited. In the introduction to his 'Two Sorts of Naturalism', McDowell expresses some doubts about the prospects of a naturalism based on such a restricted concept of nature.⁴⁸ In contrast with a rather narrower naturalism, which McDowell describes as purporting to 'found the intellectual credentials of [a certain realm]... on facts of the sort that the natural sciences discover', an alternative approach is suggested, namely a naturalism of 'second nature'. This naturalism is based on the Aristotelian idea that besides our 'mere' nature, there is also a concept of nature which is 'something whose realization involves transcending that [mere nature]'.⁴⁹ This second nature is capable of combining the view that a normally endowed human being is a 'rational animal' with the idea that rationality operates freely in its own sphere.⁵⁰ What is at stake here is thus an incitation to broaden the notion of nature so as no longer to exclude from it all notions that do not figure in the empirical sciences. In a similar vein, Jennifer Hornsby, in her *Simple Mindedness*, denounces naturalisms that assume that the world is 'a world free of norms, a world such as scientists describe'.⁵¹ On such accounts, naturalising the mind 'would be a matter of finding... norm-free (impersonal) things to say which correspond to the ordinary things that are said when action-explanations are given'.⁵² Hornsby's alternative – 'naïve naturalism' – is opposed both to traditional dualists and materialists, and sets out to show that we can discard the approach by which our actions and thoughts, to be real, must be subject to scientific explanation.⁵³

What McDowell's and Hornsby's accounts have in common is (i) a rejection of the theory that mental properties can be exhaustively reduced to physical properties, and (ii) the conviction that the notion of nature must be widened so as to develop new kinds of

⁴⁸ McDowell (1998e), p. 167.

⁴⁹ McDowell (1998e), p. 173.

⁵⁰ McDowell (1998e), pp. 170-173.

⁵¹ Hornsby (1997), p. 7.

⁵² Hornsby (1997), p. 87.

⁵³ Hornsby (1997), pp. 7-8: 'When it is allowed that not everything in nature is visible from the perspective adopted by the naturalizer, we can see ourselves as inhabitants of a natural world without thinking that our talk about ourselves needs to be given special treatment to make this possible.'

naturalisms that do not simply discard some properties in virtue of not participating in the causal explanations of the empirical sciences. Ultimately, these tasks are important in order to pave the way both for a philosophy of mind and for a metaphysics less cornered by some of the demands of modern science. Once endowed with a broader conception of nature, ample room can be made for non-reductivist accounts of mind, value, language and action *within* a naturalist structure.

One of the main thoughts that underlies non-reductivist versions of naturalism such as these is the idea that it might be a matter of contingency rather than necessity that the empirical sciences have come to monopolise the term ‘natural’. What ‘naïve’ or ‘second nature’ naturalisms highlight so well in relation to the concern of this thesis is, in a first instance, that the notions that do not figure in the explanations of the physical workings of the universe need not be ‘non-’ or ‘un-natural’; and, in a second instance, that what might be a trustworthy kind of reasoning for physics or biology need not necessarily be the best means of acquiring understanding about aesthetic or moral properties.

C). Transcending perspectives – impersonal and personal – as a means to objectivity.

1. The personal perspective.

(a). Main concerns.

I began the previous section by sketching what are perhaps the three most common objections raised against the possibility of ascribing objectivity to value judgements. I then gave a brief historical outline of the main philosophical developments that have influenced the evolution of our conception of the fact/value distinction in order to shed some light on the broader framework in which aesthetic properties (and the judgements thereof) are generally dealt with. Following this, I looked at the metaphysical framework that seems not only to ensue from, but also to lend support to a conception of that distinction whereby the importance of the evaluative is deflated in favour of that which is ‘there anyway’. I then briefly outlined the main tenets of reductionist naturalisms about evaluative properties, and took issue with some of the ideas underlying the project.

Now, the pivotal question about the fact/value distinction is not so much whether a distinction should be kept or not, but rather how we should conceive of that distinction. It is hardly controversial to say that the facts we take to be paradigmatic of facts in general (usually the facts operative in the physical sciences) differ from the paradigmatic kind of values (perhaps aesthetic values). The interesting philosophical question does not lie there. What is important in this context is that when we think of facts and values as interacting or being entangled, we can ask how the relation between the distinct spheres of fact and value should be envisaged.

A world-view such as that encapsulated by the metaphysical framework discussed above, rests on the assumption that acquiring knowledge and understanding of the

world requires distancing oneself from ‘perspective and its peculiarities’.⁵⁴ Perspectival concepts, amongst which evaluative concepts belong, do not refer to properties that are ‘there anyway’ or ‘natural’ (where that term is narrowly construed), and thus, it is held, do not pick out any properties that are such that our judgements about them can eventually converge.⁵⁵ What a conception such as that developed by Williams encourages us to do in our epistemological inquiries, then, is invariably to move from the personal to the impersonal, from values to facts, and from the subjective to the objective, though it should be clear from my discussion in Chapter I that this last case is far from simple or even equivalent to the others.

What I now turn my attention to is the idea that pursuing objectivity for judgements (in senses O1, O2, and O3, but mainly O3) requires not only (i) transcending one’s perspective, but also (ii) transcending what I call the ‘personal perspective’ as such. More precisely, I intend to begin an explanation of how it is possible to hold (i) without adhering to (ii). In other words, I will argue that what needs to be transcended in this context is not the personal perspective itself, since from outside it we can only very imperfectly grasp (if at all) matters pertaining to value, but rather our own individual personal perspective. So, there are cases in which what one actually needs to distance oneself from in attempting to gain understanding of something are one’s own peculiar preferences and idiosyncrasies, and not the entire set of concerns implicit in one’s being a person.

(b). Perspective as a feature of conscious beings.

When we think of ourselves and fellow humans as beings with certain kinds of relations, commitments and needs, capable of making certain forms of evaluations (or as ‘holders of value’), we think of ourselves and others in a different way to when we consider the

⁵⁴ Williams (1985), pp. 138-9.

⁵⁵ See Williams (1985), pp. 138-152.

same beings as, say, animals participating in a certain eco-system, or in the light of evolutionary theories. As Tim Crane writes in his *Elements of Mind*, '[w]hat the daffodil lacks and the 'minded' creature has is a *point of view on things* or... a *perspective*. The minded creature is one *for which* things are a certain way: the way they are from that creature's perspective.' To have a certain perspective is thus to take a certain standpoint or position, a 'place' from which one 'sees' things.⁵⁶

The notion of perspective is one fundamentally connected with conscious beings in so far as only things with minds can *take* perspectives on the world. When we think of ourselves and other humans as beings with certain kinds of relations, or as 'holders of value', we think of ourselves and others in a different way to when we consider the same beings as, say, *homo sapiens* at a particular stage of our evolutionary history. Putting aside concerns to do with perspective as non-human animals might experience it, the capacity for taking perspectives on the world is something essential to what it is to be a human being.

Should this be taken to mean that all human understanding and assessment is perspectival, as some philosophers have argued? Taken in one sense, the question calls for a negative answer. If what we have in mind here is the idea that human beings, in virtue of being endowed with an ability to encounter the world from a given perspective, are necessarily constrained to their own idiosyncratic perspective – in the sense of being both theoretically and practically unable to perceive or conceive the world as it is independently of our personal selves – the conclusion must be rejected. To hold that the notion of perspective is a feature shared by all conscious human beings is not to say that that perspective somehow invariably acts as a sort of dimming veil on our epistemic relations with the world. Viewing the world from the personal perspective might certainly, at times, make it more difficult to come to understand the

⁵⁶ Crane (2001), p. 4.

autonomous workings of that world. Yet that is not to say that no such understanding can be had. Whilst the personal perspective might make certain avenues of knowledge more difficult to embark upon, the difficulty involved is generally not insurmountable.

More importantly though, the personal perspective does enable us to grasp features of the world that are closed to other means of investigation in at least two ways. First, viewing things from the personal perspective can help us grasp certain aspects of the physical world. One can, for example, spend a night in an astronomical observatory studying the heavens, and be overwhelmed by the enormity of the various galaxies and solar systems. Although such insights will probably be value-laden, there is nothing to prevent them being the impetus for other, properly scientific insights about the universe that any amount of reading of science books cannot lead one to comprehend. Second, there are certain features of the world that simply cannot be grasped from outside the personal perspective. We will return to this question presently.

Taken in another sense – namely to suggest that there can in practice be no such thing as entirely ‘perspective-less’ perception – it seems very likely that there is, as Thomas Nagel has compellingly argued, no ‘view from nowhere’,⁵⁷ and thus that it is impossible to detach oneself from oneself *qua* person entirely in relating to the world. Again, that this is so is not to say, perhaps along Williams’s line, that knowledge can only be had of ‘that which is there anyway’. According to Nagel, a conception of the notion of objectivity based on the empirical sciences, the ‘physical conception’, is actually incapable of supplying a satisfactory understanding of the mind, and it is ‘the phenomena of consciousness themselves that pose the clearest challenge to the idea that physical objectivity gives the general form of reality.’⁵⁸ To this extent, then, the idea that transcending the personal perspective as such is a necessary means to acquire all kinds of knowledge may be a philosopher’s myth.

⁵⁷ See Nagel (1986).

⁵⁸ Nagel (1980b), pp. 81-97.

(c). *Personal versus impersonal.*

The need, as expressed in a world-view like the ‘absolute conception’, to transcend one’s own perspective relies on the further distinction between, on the one hand, the personal perspective, and, on the other, the impersonal stance. As Peter Goldie writes in his *The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration*, the personal perspective is ‘the point of view of a conscious person, capable of thoughts and feelings, and able to engage in theoretical and practical reasoning’, and is to be contrasted with the impersonal stance of the empirical sciences that ‘has no place for a point of view as such’.⁵⁹ So, when we try to deliberate about what morally might be the best course of action in a certain situation, or how one should interpret the emotional experience of a friend, or again, when we assess the artistic quality of a musical piece, we do so from the personal perspective. However, when our work consists of analysing empirical data in a scientific setting, we must try to detach ourselves from the personal perspective, and investigate how things are independently of human beings. For this purpose, transcending the personal perspective in order to attain the impersonal stance is a helpful and reliable investigative method.

At a first glance, the notion of an impersonal perspective, where that perspective is defined as a stance which ‘has no place for a point of view as such’ might seem a contradiction in terms. To avoid any confusion on this matter, I shall use the expression ‘impersonal stance’ to describe this kind of perspective. Nevertheless, although the original expression may be seen to sit quite uncomfortably with the idea of a perspective generally, I believe that the thought behind it captures something important, namely the way in which we can view the world as if there were no distinctively human concerns in it. When scientific researchers develop the technology

⁵⁹ Goldie (2000), p. 1.

needed to enable paralysed persons to walk artificially, their primary concern is not with the psychological suffering these persons have endured or the immeasurable joy that new developments can bring to them. Rather, their focus is on the technicalities of constructing appropriate tools. In this sense, they take an impersonal perspective or stance in virtue of adopting something like a ‘scientific attitude’.

At this point, the force of the question about the entanglement of facts and values makes itself felt again. Adding a certain dimension to the question about the possibility of separating personal and impersonal stances, the point about the entanglement of facts and values leads one to ask the following questions: can the work of scientists, the paradigm of the impersonal stance, really be said to be solely concerned with facts as opposed to values? For instance, one could say of the case above that while the research is undertaken from an impersonal stance, it is of course the physical suffering that prompts the scientific inquiry in the first place. How, in such a case, can we say where the human concern ends and the scientific one begins? One of the concerns fuelling these questions is a certain ambiguity surrounding exactly what an impersonal stance is supposed to consist of. Might it be a stance entirely devoid of more distinctively human concerns, or is it simply one where scientific questions dominate? I leave these questions for others to answer. More relevant to my present purposes is merely the idea that it seems more and more misleading to hold that there are just two clear-cut ways of viewing the world – either from the point of view of the empirical sciences, or from one’s own highly personal (idiosyncratic) perspective. I therefore suggest that understanding what it is we are trying to do when we aim to transcend our own perspective represents the first step of moving away from the unsophisticated idea that the world and its contents counts, roughly, two kinds of things or domains: on the one hand, facts and ‘material’ or ‘natural’ properties, the empirical sciences, and

objectivity; and on the other, values and evaluative properties, all that which is not the concern of the empirical sciences, and subjectivity.

2. Transcending perspectives.

(a). What does transcending one's own perspective involve?

If, to acquire knowledge and understanding of the world and its contents, one must somehow strive towards the 'perspective-less', what steps are necessary in order to activate that process? How, so to speak, does one go about transcending one's perspective? On an account like Williams's, to transcend one's own perspective involves distancing oneself not only from one's idiosyncratic perspective on the world, but also from the kind of non-scientific concerns one person might have for another. Striving for such transcendence is, then, not merely a matter of detaching oneself from oneself, but also of distancing oneself from a certain kind of interest or inquiry (anything to do with, say, emotional or evaluative concerns).

As already mentioned, the Cartesian epistemological project as outlined by Williams is in many ways an admirable one. Indeed, it belongs to the very nature of pursuing objective judgements to be wary and cautious. In this way, the attempt to transcend one's own perspective must be constitutive of most processes aimed at increasing our understanding of the world and ourselves. But what is it exactly that calls for the 'method of doubt' here? As is well known, the Cartesian project sets out to vindicate the possibility of knowledge by rejecting that which may be doubted. Indeed, the 'pure search for certainty seeks certainty against any conceivable doubt.'⁶⁰ The main advantage of an 'absolute conception' is, then, that in detaching ourselves from our own

⁶⁰ Williams (1978), p. 66.

point of view, we also distance ourselves from those things that risk diverting us from the course leading to truth and knowledge.

The question I want to raise in this context is whether it might not be possible to retain the advantage of the epistemological method applied in order to reach the ‘absolute conception’, without having to transcend the personal perspective as such? My point here is the following: when we attempt to detach ourselves from anything that might interfere with the process of making objective judgements, are we really trying to avert the personal perspective as such, or are we simply trying to distance ourselves from our biases and prejudices? Aiming for the latter does not necessarily involve aiming for the former, but may bring about similar advantages. A personal perspective is not necessarily a biased or distorting view. It is the stance from which we more often than not interact and form cognitive relations with the world. It is from the personal perspective, and not from an Archimedean point, that we increase our understanding about other persons, reflect on our experiences, and deliberate about actions and thoughts. It is therefore, both in theory and in practice, important not to confuse the personal perspective as such with our own individual or idiosyncratic personal perspective, especially since the latter is more likely to be ridden with prejudice and distortion. Clearly, it might not always be easy to distinguish preferences and biases from qualitatively similar features of experience that are not founded on some partiality. For example, it is no uncommon occurrence to be unsure about whether one’s experience of a particular emotion, say, of jealousy, is really the appropriate emotional response to have. The only way in which an adequate assessment of this sort can be made is by engaging in rational processes and by drawing on examinations of the kinds of *reasons* that support our beliefs. I postpone until Chapter V my discussion of the difference between reasons which, on the one hand, *explain*, and on the other, *justify* beliefs, and of the way in which reasons can be rationally compelling in an aesthetic

context. For now, we can say that what we should aim to transcend in making value judgements is, then, not so much the distinctively personal perspective, but those features of our individual perspectives that might represent a genuine risk of clouding our judgements. In other words, one important part of aiming for objectivity is to overcome partiality. And it is only in deeming the personal perspective to be somehow inextricably linked with these notions that perspective as such becomes something we must guard ourselves against in pursuing objectivity.

(b). Is transcending one's perspective invariably a suitable epistemological method?

As mentioned above, there are two main worries about the question of whether a world-view like the 'absolute conception' should be considered to play a regulative role in the pursuit of objectivity. The first, outlined in the previous section, is concerned with the conceptual and practical possibility of such a conception. In that context, we saw that although philosophers such as Adrian Moore do adamantly defend the possibility of 'absolute representations' and the idea of an Archimedean point, it is far from uncontroversial to hold that such a conception is at all feasible. I now come to the second worry, which is the one I will engage with, and which centres not around the *possibility*, but *desirability* of such a world-view. So, the question now is this: is it really invariably the case that attempting to transcend the personal perspective as such is the most appropriate manner of acquiring understanding and knowledge of all kinds? I believe that it is not.

I base my contention on the claim that there are many important things that can neither be grasped for what they are, and so can only be very incompletely understood, from outside the personal perspective. Primarily, the things I have in mind here are features that include those characteristics we generally think of as defining of human life: norms, emotions, practical reasoning, values, needs, desires, feelings, evaluative

deliberation, hopes, moods, and so on. Clearly, the subject-matter of aesthetics belongs to this category. Nonetheless, this claim should not be taken to mean that no light whatsoever can be shed on these notions from outside the personal perspective. Our insight into and knowledge of the emotions, to use but one example, has increased considerably by recent studies undertaken by evolutionary biologists and cognitive scientists. It is without doubt the case that most of the notions listed above not only allow for, but also benefit greatly from examinations made from the impersonal stance. My contention is, rather, that when these notions are examined from outside the personal perspective, their distinctive character is simply lost. They are, so to speak, not only ontologically but also qualitatively reduced to something else.

Accounts of normative standards, both higher- and lower-order emotions, moral and aesthetic properties, agency, to name but a few of the notions touched by this point, require that we approach them from within the personal perspective. So, be it grief, ugliness, or the manner in which we reason in a moral situation, these things cannot be understood if the only material we scrutinise are data about neural activities, say, and material properties. Indeed, unless we look at these notions from a different perspective than that which we occupy when we examine the subject-matter of the empirical sciences, we will not just fail to come to a complete understanding of what they involve and comprise, but we will not even recognise them as such. From outside the personal perspective, aesthetic properties are said to be exhausted by the properties on which they supervene. It is in this sense that one could say that from outside the personal perspective, there is no such thing as the aesthetic.

3. *Kinds of personal perspectives.*

(a). *First- and third-person reports within the personal perspective.*

There are at least two different ways of relating the content of the personal perspective: either by first-person reports (e.g. ‘I am scared of the lion’, or ‘I am enjoying this painting by Cézanne’) or by third-person reports (e.g. ‘she is scared of the lion’, or ‘Guy is enjoying that painting by Cézanne’).⁶¹ The two ways of describing the personal perspective thus refer to the same event, but from the perspective of two different reporters – the subject herself and someone else.

One way in which the ‘method of doubt’ ramifies further still within the personal perspective is in terms of the distinction drawn between these two kinds of reports with regards to epistemic reliability. And views differ quite widely on this subject. For Franz Brentano and contemporary followers of his such as Tim Crane, it is ‘inner perception’ that is the infallible kind of perception. What a person says, using the first-person report, is thus true or false insofar as it is an expression of what she has inwardly observed.⁶² On the other hand, according to Wittgenstein, there is an important asymmetry between the first- and third-person singular use of a verb: that *someone else* believes or expects X is something I find out by observation, but that *I* believe or expect X is not something I find out about by observation.⁶³ Since a first-person report cannot be verified by observation, Wittgenstein continues, it cannot be true or false. Hence, third-person reports are more reliable sources of information than first-person reports of the same event.⁶⁴

⁶¹ One should be careful not to confuse the impersonal stance with third-person reports of the personal perspective. To use Goldie’s words, ‘one can think and talk of another third-personally without being impersonal – without losing sight of the fact that the other person has a point of view; indeed, his having a point of view is presupposed in this way of thinking and talking.’ Goldie (2000), p. 4.

⁶² See Crane (2001), p. 2.

⁶³ For a helpful article on Wittgenstein’s position with regards to a solipsistic metaphysics in the *Tractatus*, see Child (1996).

⁶⁴ Wittgenstein (1958), §201ff. See also Vesey (1994).

Now, value judgements in general, and perhaps aesthetic judgements in particular, are often thought of in terms of first-person reports, and this contributes to the scepticism surrounding the possibility of ascribing objectivity to value judgements. If aesthetic judgements are cast as first-person reports of experience, and such reports are considered epistemically unreliable, the case for ascribing objectivity to such judgements seems considerably weakened.⁶⁵ As I shall argue eventually, however, there is a certain sense in which making aesthetic judgements requires that we think of ourselves ‘as if’ from the third-person, that is to say, impartially. We must, so to speak, detach ourselves from our own idiosyncrasies and go beyond first-person reports of emotional responses such as ‘I like this painting by Velasquez’. Exactly in what way, then, can the introduction of the distinction between first- and third-person reports illuminate the way in which one’s perspective must be transcended in the process of making aesthetic judgements?

(b). The first person – singular and plural.

It would be misleading to deny that aesthetic judgements are closely connected to first-person reports. One of the ways in which such judgements rely on first-person reports has to do with the relation between aesthetic judgements and first-hand experience of aesthetic properties. So, for example, if I claim that Van Dyck's 'Holy Family' is a very beautiful painting merely on the grounds of someone else telling me so, and not because I have admired and perceived the beauty of the painting myself, it is unclear whether I really am making an aesthetic judgement at all, or rather merely repeating someone else’s judgement. Other kinds of judgements differ from aesthetic judgements in this respect – I can claim that Addis Ababa is the capital of Ethiopia without ever having been there

⁶⁵ At least if we accept Wittgenstein’s diagnosis as presented above.

to 'see' or 'experience' it myself without running in to the same difficulty. I defer until Chapter IV my examination of this actually rather thorny issue.

What I want to do here is to draw a distinction between two kinds of first-person reports, namely singular and plural – 'I' and 'we'. I take this 'we' to refer to the community one sees oneself as belonging to.⁶⁶ The special way in which aesthetic judgements do, as we shall see, rely on their relation to first-person experiences and reports involves both these notions. My suggestion here is that when we make aesthetic judgements, there is an important sense in which we engage in a mode of thought that relies on this sense of 'we'. So, when one makes claims like 'I find Beethoven's last piano sonatas very moving', it is perfectly possible that one is making a judgement purporting to be valid not merely for oneself. Unless one supplements the judgement with a provisional thought such as 'because it reminds me of the winter after my divorce', the idea behind the judgement is something along the lines of how most people within the community I see myself as belonging to would share this view.⁶⁷ The distinction here is like that between, on the one hand, 'I am scared of the spider because I am arachnophobic', and, on the other, 'I am scared of the spider because it is of a particularly poisonous kind and is therefore a dangerous feature of a world in which self-preservation is taken to be a regulative principle for the community as a whole'. In other words, we are no longer dealing with idiosyncratic reports of affective responses, but with judgements that may be very well-grounded and generally relevant.

The notion of the first person plural captures something fundamental about some of the judgements made from within the personal perspective; namely the friction, so difficult to make sense of, which results from oscillating between viewing these

⁶⁶ Obviously, there can be, and indeed often are, important changes in the members that belong to a community, since attachments to groups change from one context to the next.

⁶⁷ And even with the proviso given, one could simply demote the community from 'us who have the capacity for hearing', to 'those of us who have been divorced and find Beethoven's introspective late work very comforting.'

judgements on the one hand as mere first-person reports (such as ‘I like that Cézanne painting’), and on the other as judgements with a wider scope (such as ‘this painting by Cézanne is beautiful’). As we will see in Chapter IV, Kant expresses this point in strong normative terms. He writes,

[i]t would... be ridiculous if... someone who prided himself on his taste thought to justify himself thus: “This object... is beautiful *for me*.” For he must not call it *beautiful* if it pleases merely him. Many things may have charm and agreeableness for him... but if he pronounces that something is beautiful, then he expects the very same satisfaction of others: he judges not merely for himself but for everyone.⁶⁸

So, although first-hand experience plays a crucial role in the making of aesthetic judgements, the scope of such judgements need not be limited to first-person singular reports.

⁶⁸ Kant (2000), §7, 5: 212, p. 98.

D). The personal perspective and the subjectivity/objectivity dilemma.

I began the last section with a brief examination of what the notion of perspective amounts to and what transcending it entails. I then drew several important distinctions: firstly, that which obtains between personal and impersonal perspectives; secondly, between first- and third-person reports within the personal perspective; and thirdly, between the first person singular and the first person plural. How, if at all, can the notion of personal perspective and the distinctions within it help us disarm the subjectivity/objectivity dilemma of aesthetic inquiry?

Aesthetic judgements are concerned with properties that cannot be grasped from outside the personal perspective; aesthetic properties can only be perceived from within it, and in this sense inevitably depend not only on subjects, but on those subjects taking a certain kind of perspective on the world that they are perceiving. This is, then, what it means for an aesthetic judgement to be perspectival, or subjective in sense S1. For example, one might be able to see the colours and shapes of a Velasquez painting from the impersonal stance, but not its intensity and beauty.⁶⁹ What this means is that the pursuit of objectivity for aesthetic judgements is a project that can only take place from within the personal perspective. This project, if taken seriously, might provide a good position from which to dismantle the unquestioning denial of the status of objectivity to the subject-matter of the personal perspective.

In virtue of having ‘presented itself as the very exemplar of access to objective truth’,⁷⁰ the empirical sciences have shaped our conception of objectivity in such a way that very little room has been left for more axiological conceptions of objectivity to take root. But if to pursue objectivity is no longer necessarily to strive for the truths of

⁶⁹ It is another thing to hold that aesthetic judgements are anthropocentric, or subjective in the sense S2. I shall explore that theme in Chapter III.

⁷⁰ McDowell (1998e), p. 175.

physics, but can also include the process of transcending one's own individual perspective within the personal perspective, it might be possible to ascribe objectivity to aesthetic judgements without giving up their distinctive character. Reductivism need not then, one might say, be the price to be paid for objectivity. Distancing oneself from those aspects of our experience that might distort our judgements about it, is an important feature of making judgements and acquiring knowledge about the world in general. So too with aesthetic judgements – we should, and can, detach ourselves from our own idiosyncrasies and inclinations and thereby increase the likelihood of making judgements that reflect something over and beyond features of the subject making them.

CHAPTER III.

AESTHETIC RESPONSE-DEPENDENCE: EMOTIONS AND ESTIMATIONS.

A). Euthyphro's question in an aesthetic context.

One of the main aims of the previous chapter was to show how the metaphysical framework in which the reluctance to ascribe objectivity to aesthetic judgements is generally rooted is unduly deflationary about the perspective from which value and evaluative properties can be grasped as such. The personal perspective on the world is, I argued, the one that affords us acquaintance with and understanding of a great number of issues about human beings and their lives, a lack of which might lead to a particularly impoverished – or even unrecognisable – conception of what it is to be human. Yet this point, if accepted, represents but the first hurdle to pass in the pursuit of aesthetic objectivity, since it is undoubtedly the case that many judgements about features that belong to the personal perspective cannot be justified in a manner that legitimises the ascription to them of objectivity.

In the case of aesthetic judgements, the scepticism surrounding the possibility of objectivity seems to arise not only in virtue of the fact that the properties with which they are concerned can only be perceived from the personal perspective, but also, roughly speaking, because of the intimate connection between the aesthetic and the emotions. Indeed it has become almost a truism to hold that aesthetic judgements cannot be objective simply because such judgements invariably (it is asserted) involve emotional responses. This idea rests on several serious confusions and misconceptions

about aesthetic judgements, two of which I shall tackle in this chapter.¹ First, it assumes that there can be no perception of aesthetic properties without the occurrence of an emotion. Second, it seems to rely on the assumption that there is a (causal) justificatory relation between emotional responses and aesthetic judgements.

Some aspects of the philosophical concern I am bringing up here can be related to a question asked by Socrates in the *Euthyphro*: ‘is the holy loved by the gods because it is holy, or is it holy because it is loved by the gods?’² What, in a first instance, the question may be taken to highlight, in terms of my present concerns at least, is how properties that tend to give rise to emotional responses also seem to have a propensity to raise uncertainty about whether that property really is such as to call for a certain perception and judgement of it, or whether it is something which is completely shaped by our individual psychology and projected by us onto the world. The risk which the possibility of aesthetic objectivity runs at this level is, clearly, that if aesthetic properties are merely projected onto the world, it seems difficult – if at all achievable – to ground aesthetic judgements on objective features of the world.

Whatever might be the psychological reality of the way in which we are inclined to think of the ontological status of properties that seem to call for emotional responses, the main point of Socrates’s question in the present context is a far more pressing one and concerns the rational justification of such properties. In this, its second, instance, the question poses this challenge: is it the case that judgements about evaluative properties can only be justified by appealing to the responses of the subjects of experience, or can such justification refer to something external to those subjects? Can, in other words, judgements about evaluative properties be justified by anything over and beyond the authority of those making judgements about them?

¹ It also rests on several misconceptions about emotions that I do not have the time to go into here.

² Plato (1883), 10c.

In this chapter I shall argue that even though the full ontological story about aesthetic properties is not one of how we simply ‘gild and stain’³ the world with such properties, it is one which must refer to the responses of subjects of experience. (This might not be all that surprising in the light of how the aesthetic belongs to the realm of the personal perspective.) But the question that hereby arises quite naturally is this: in what sense exactly are aesthetic concepts and properties dependent on the responses of subjects? What, one may ask, does belonging to the personal perspective tell us about the ontology of aesthetic concepts and properties. Most importantly, does that ontology preclude the possibility of objectivity for the ensuing aesthetic judgements in any sense of the term (but perhaps particularly O1 and O2)? The main concern of this chapter is then also with the so-called ‘doctrine of response-dependence’, and how that doctrine is best understood in the aesthetic case. According to Mark Johnston, who first coined the term in his ‘Dispositional Theories of Value’, response-dependent concepts are ‘those concepts which exhibit a conceptual dependence on or interdependence with concepts of our responses.’⁴ The question for us is, thus, whether aesthetic concepts – and the properties they pick out – are, as Johnston and many others suggest, response-dependent, and if so, in what sense.

My inquiry into the way in which the aesthetic depends on our responses will proceed in three main stages. First, I will look at the doctrine of response-dependence in general, both in an evaluative and non-evaluative context. Second, I shall begin my investigation into what response-dependence amounts to in the aesthetic case by critically examining one aspect of Hume’s account of aesthetic objectivity. What I take this examination to show is that if the relation between emotional responses and aesthetic judgements is conceived of as directly causal (i.e. from the emotion to the judgement), then the kind of justification needed to ensure the objectivity of aesthetic

³ Hume (1946), Appendix I, p. 294.

⁴ Johnston (1989), p. 145.

judgements (again, mainly in sense O1 and O2) seems inaccessible. Third, I go on to develop the claim that the kind of response on which aesthetic properties depend ontologically is not necessarily emotional in character. The occurrence of emotional responses represents but one possible element of the process I call 'aesthetic perception', one the satisfaction of which is by no means a necessary condition for that perception to take place. None of this is to say that aesthetic judgements are entirely non-emotional. My claim will be that aesthetic judgements are linked to emotions in a more subtle way than most simple subjectivisms, emotivisms, and projectivisms would have us believe. Indeed, I shall claim that they play an active part, perhaps even their *most* active part, in the acquisition of aesthetic concepts. Consigning emotional responses somewhat to the background of aesthetic contemplation is by no means to undermine their significance; it is to shed light on what is perhaps their most important role in relation to aesthetic judgements.

B). Response-dependence: what is it?

1. What is it for something to be response-dependent?

In philosophy, the notion of response-dependence aims to capture, however loosely, the idea that certain concepts, and the properties they pick out, rely on our responses for them to ‘come into existence’ in some sense. This idea immediately gives rise to two questions in relation to our concerns. First, what exactly is meant by ‘response’ in the aesthetic case? Second, how can response-dependence account for evaluative properties such as aesthetic ones? The final section of this chapter will be concerned with the first of these questions. Here, my examination will centre around the second query. The preliminary result of these enquiries will be that in the form most prevalently found in aesthetic contexts, the doctrine of response-dependence is not as helpful as it might seem. For aesthetics at any rate, response-dependence, I will argue, is the very beginning of a philosophical story, not the end of one.

Generally, it is held that a concept or property is response-dependent if our usage of it, or the practice of picking it out in the world, somehow depends on our responses to it. Indeed, the main thought that underlies the doctrine of response-dependence is that certain concepts and properties are intimately connected with their users and perceivers in a way such that the former are simply not instantiated without the occurrence of their responses. Numerous views about what response-dependence amounts to have been put forward in recent years.⁵ On the joint account of Michael Smith and Daniel Stoljar, a ‘response-dependent concept is a concept defined via reference to the psychological responses of suitably related subjects’.⁶ Alternatively, according to Johnston, response-

⁵ See, for example, Holton (1991), Johnston (1989), and Pettit (1991).

⁶ Smith & Stoljar (1998), p. 85.

dependent concepts are those that are ‘biconditionally connected as an *a priori* matter with how things appear to human beings’.⁷

The aim of this chapter is by no means to reject the idea that aesthetic concepts and properties are response-dependent. Rather, it is to begin to cast some doubt on (i) whether the particular structure on which the ontology of evaluative properties has often been modelled – namely that of paradigmatic response-dependent properties (i.e. secondary qualities) – is really adequate for the aesthetic case; (ii) whether the specific kind of response assumed to be appropriate for aesthetic properties is in actual fact the most suitable one; (iii) whether the way in which the emotions are connected to aesthetic judgements is really best accounted for in terms of traditional response-dependence.

More specifically, the goal of this section is twofold: in a first instance, my aim is to set up the main issues about response-dependence as a general doctrine; and, in a second, it is to narrow down the concerns about response-dependence which are the most pressing to my project. In this process, I shall look at a distinction between two kinds of concepts which is particularly helpful in coming to understand one of the ways in which the paradigmatic kind of response-dependent properties differ from non-response-dependent properties. So doing will lead me to a discussion of so-called ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ qualities, and the account given of the latter in terms of dispositions. I then examine an influential analogy between secondary qualities and evaluative properties, and sketch what I consider to be the most important disanalogies between them. Finally, I indicate how the difference between primary and secondary qualities brought to light by the distinction between two kinds of concepts in turn highlights a difference between secondary qualities and aesthetic properties. This further disanalogy between secondary qualities and aesthetic properties takes several

⁷ Johnston (1989), p. 145.

shapes. One of its manifestations will be developed in the beginning of Chapter V in relation to a suggestion about how to evade the ‘open question’ argument. In this chapter, however, I intend to put this point to another use, namely one to do with the challenge posed by Socrates in the *Euthyphro*.

2. Response-dependence and concepts: phenomenal and natural.

What kinds of things qualify as response-dependent? Response-dependence is generally thought to be first- and foremost a feature of concepts. How so? Why do Mark Johnston, Richard Holton, Philip Pettit and others take this view?⁸ Holton writes,

response-dependence is a feature of concepts, not of properties. Suppose there were a straightforward characterization of the reflectance property that an object must have to be seen as red, a characterization which is given by a description couched in the language of physical science. The concept expressed by that description picks out the same property as is picked out by the concept of red; but it is not a response-dependent concept. There is no *a priori* connection between it and a response.⁹

The idea, roughly, is that in some cases at least, there can be more than one kind of concept that picks out the same property in the world. So, the property of being red can be picked out both by what has been called a ‘phenomenal concept’ (the ‘what it is like’ concept which is *a priori* response-dependent), *and* a natural concept (the ‘scientific’ concept which is not response-dependent). If it were the property that was primarily response-dependent, there could be no non-response-dependent concept of that property (which there can be, namely the ‘natural’ one). Hence, the response-dependence of properties is derivative of that of (phenomenal) concepts.¹⁰

⁸ See Johnston (1989) and Pettit (1991).

⁹ Holton (1991), p. 4.

¹⁰ Although I accept the generally held view that response-dependence is, as mentioned above, primarily a feature of concepts, I will focus on the response-dependence of properties in this chapter. This is for the reason that, in the aesthetic case, the move from the response-dependence of concepts to that of properties is a particularly smooth one: for an aesthetic property to be picked out at all, it seems that we need to have acquired the response-dependent concept of it.

The distinction between these two kinds of concepts is perhaps best illustrated by the experience undergone by Mary in Frank Jackson's seminal argument against materialism.¹¹ Mary is a scientist who works and lives in a laboratory. She knows all there is to know about colour, but has never actually perceived it. The philosophical question is whether Mary, upon leaving the laboratory and seeing colour for the first time, has learned something new – has she acquired some new concept? Jackson's conclusion is affirmative – Mary has acquired knowledge about a property that cannot be accounted for purely in materialist terms. Even those that draw a different conclusion with regards to the consequences of this point for materialism agree that Mary has acquired a new concept, namely a phenomenal one.¹² The content of Mary's colour-judgement (e.g. 'that balloon is red') is, then, different once she has acquired the new (phenomenal) concept – she now understands what it is for a thing to be red in a different way. I take it that what happens to Mary when she experiences the 'what it is like' of seeing red is *not* that she is suddenly endowed with a new and neatly distinguishable concept of red on top of the one she already had. Instead, her new concept 'subsumes and transforms the old way of thinking.'¹³ One could say that Mary now has a 'richer' or 'fuller' concept of redness.

3. Dispositional accounts and biconditionals.

(a). Primary and secondary qualities.

Philosophical theories of response-dependence have mainly been inspired by attempts to account for the ontological status and workings of secondary qualities. Concepts are thus response-dependent when they conform to the traditional image of secondary

¹¹ Jackson (1986).

¹² See, for example, Dennett (1991) and Lewis (1989).

¹³ Goldie (2002a), p. 12.

quality concepts.¹⁴ As is well known, Locke's distinction between primary and secondary qualities encourages the following reading of secondary qualities: to be red is to be such as to produce the experience of red in normal perceivers under normal circumstances.¹⁵ In other words, to be red is to have the disposition to elicit a red experience in perceiver(s). Primary qualities such as size and shape, on the other hand, are not to be cashed out in terms of dispositions. They are, rather, generally considered to belong to the object intrinsically (that is to say that they are not relational or extrinsic properties).

In the context of my discussion, the interesting difference between these two kinds of properties is, as mentioned above, the one brought out by the distinction between phenomenal and natural concepts. Indeed, one of the things that Jackson's argument highlights is the special way in which our ability to pick out secondary qualities depends on us having acquired the phenomenal concept in question. What this seems to suggest is that our competence with regards to recognising and classifying certain properties (such as secondary qualities) relies on us having experienced the 'what it is like' of that property considerably more (or at all) than does our competence in recognising and classifying other kinds of properties (such as primary qualities). So that even though it seems perfectly possible to recognise and measure squareness without having the 'what it is like' concept of that particular property, it is not possible to recognise and isolate the smell of honeysuckle without it. In other words, whereas the acquisition of the phenomenal concept is of paramount importance to our ability of picking out secondary qualities, such is not the case with our ability to isolate primary qualities.

¹⁴ See, for example, Pettit (1981).

¹⁵ Locke (1975), Book II, Chapter VIII, Section 10, p. 135: 'such *qualities* which in truth are nothing in the objects themselves but powers to produce various sensations in us by their *primary qualities*, i.e. by the bulk, figure, texture, and motion of their insensible parts, as colours, sounds, tastes, etc. These I call *secondary qualities*.'

(b). *The analogy between secondary qualities and evaluative properties.*

What is it about secondary qualities, then, that has inspired some philosophers to model our understanding of evaluative properties on them? Colours, smells and the like, are – on the Lockean account – powers eliciting a certain kind of response in perceivers. If there are no perceivers, the secondary qualities are not manifested; and so, if there are no perceivers or responders, there is a sense in which there are no such properties.

Herein lies one of the most important motivators behind theories of response-dependence, namely the challenge to account for features of the world that seem to be ‘nothing in the objects themselves but powers to produce various sensations in us’.¹⁶

In what way, then, are the aesthetic properties we perceive or sense (or ‘detect’)¹⁷ powers to produce sensations in us? Transferring some of Locke’s insight to the moral domain, Hume writes in his *Treatise of Human Nature* that moral value

lies in yourself, not in the object. So that when you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing, but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of blame from the contemplation of it. Vice and virtue, therefore, may be compared to sounds, colours, heat and cold, which, according to modern philosophy, are not properties in objects, but perceptions in the mind.¹⁸

A judgement predicating an evaluative property of an object is, then, the expression of ‘a feeling or sentiment’, and not a property intrinsic to the object in question. In reply to the question raised in the *Euthyphro*, this passage thus seems to suggest that holiness, like the viciousness of an action, is nothing but a ‘perception in the mind’ of the Gods.

In contemporary value theory, dispositional theories tend to analyse evaluative properties in terms of dispositions to take an affective attitude (towards certain outcomes or objects) under certain conditions.¹⁹ Just as secondary quality predicates have sensory states as part of their satisfaction conditions, evaluative predicates have

¹⁶ Locke (1975), Book II, Chapter VIII, Section 10, p. 135.

¹⁷ Johnston (1998), p. 11.

¹⁸ Hume (1964), Book III, Part I, Section 1, p. 469.

¹⁹ Recently the analogy between secondary qualities and evaluative properties has been given considerable attention. See, for example, Campbell (1993), McDowell (1998c), Wiggins (1998c), and Wright (1988).

certain affective mental states as part of theirs: any account of what it is for an object to have an evaluative property will refer to certain affective psychological responses. So, whereas a property generally is response-dependent if there is some predicate 'is F' which expresses the property such that 'X is F iff X is disposed to produce X-directed response R in all actual and possible subjects S under conditions C',²⁰ more specifically, 'to think that X has some evaluative property P is to think it appropriate to feel F in response to X',²¹ or again, 'X is good/right/beautiful if and only if X is such as to make a certain sentiment of approbation *appropriate*.'²² And indeed, at least at a first glance, it does seem very likely that certain comparisons can increase our understanding of evaluative properties. I am thinking here, amongst other things, of how some properties (i.e. secondary qualities or evaluative properties) supervene on other properties. Nevertheless, the analogy does, as I will show, break down on several points, and its explanatory power is limited. I now proceed to address some of the disanalogies between secondary qualities and aesthetic properties, but postpone a more detailed discussion of the *raison d'être* of these differences until Chapter V, since I take much of the intermediary argumentation to lead up to just such a discussion.

(c). *Advantages and disadvantages.*

In what ways can the analogy between secondary qualities and evaluative properties be helpful? There seem to be two main advantages to endorsing the analogy.²³ First, it seems to allow us to say that evaluative properties are perceptible features of the external world on the basis that colours are generally considered to be such even though they, like evaluative properties, are analysed in terms of psychological responses.²⁴

²⁰ Johnston (1998), p. 9.

²¹ D'Arms & Jacobson (2000a), p. 729.

²² Wiggins (1998c), p. 187.

²³ There are certainly many more advantages that I do not have time to address here.

²⁴ In other words, evaluative predicates can be (correctly or incorrectly) applied to objects in the world although their being so constitutively involves a relation to the responses of the perceivers.

Second, since secondary qualities are thought to be ‘legitimate’ or ‘kosher’ despite not figuring in the explanatory theories of physics, the analogy helps us resist the idea that evaluative properties must be ‘pseudo-properties’ in virtue of not participating in such explanations.²⁵ On a more general level, one might say that the Lockean biconditional, and the idea that aesthetic and moral properties can be accounted for in the same manner as other response-dependent properties, can help us begin to make sense of the ontological status of evaluative properties, doubtlessly more complex than that of most other kinds of properties.²⁶

What are the limitations of the analogy? In this chapter I shall only make explicit mention of two disanalogies between secondary qualities and evaluative properties. The first point is concerned with our epistemic access to evaluative properties. The second focuses on the normativity of value judgements. How, then, does the way in which we come to grasp evaluative properties differ from the way in which we pick out secondary qualities? In a first instance, there seem to be important differences in the respective manners of perception: the perception of the former is more complex in that it involves not just what Malcolm Budd has called ‘the exercise of a particular discriminatory capacity’²⁷ (like the perception of colours or smells), but also a certain kind of evaluative assessment. In other words, the perception of evaluative properties requires the use of special abilities such as aesthetic or moral discernment, the exercise of a certain kind of imagination, and so on. So, perceiving the harmony of one of Modigliani’s works is, then, a process which somehow involves more mental activity than the act of perceiving the pale yellow of a narcissus. As I expand on this point in later chapters, we shall see that here lies the beginning of the answer to the argument from perception raised in Chapter II.

²⁵ See McGinn (1983), pp. 14-16.

²⁶ Here I am thinking of supervenience amongst other things.

²⁷ Budd (1996), p. 22.

The second disanalogy between evaluative properties and secondary qualities has to do with the normativity which the former enjoy, and the demands this normativity makes on the perceivers of those properties. The central thought here is that it is not enough to hold that aesthetic and moral properties are such as to somehow ‘bring about’ or ‘elicit’ a response in us. Instead, they ‘merit’ or ‘deserve’ an appropriate kind of response. Thus, McDowell writes that ‘[t]he disanalogy, now, is that a virtue (say) is conceived to be not merely such as to elicit the appropriate ‘attitude’ (as a colour is merely such as to cause the appropriate experiences), but rather such as to *merit* it.’²⁸ In a similar vein, Wiggins claims that

[a]n object’s or person’s or event’s being ϕ [where ϕ is an evaluative property]... consists in its being such as to evoke in the right way or such as to make appropriate some response, call it A... where A is *our* response, or the response that *we* owe to it if it really is ϕ .²⁹

In other words, aesthetic and moral properties do not simply *cause* us to have a certain response in the way that colours quite straightforwardly cause us to have a certain response. Rather, the former ‘deserves’ or ‘earns’ the appropriate response.³⁰

This last point about the normativity of evaluative properties does, despite what might at this stage seem as elusiveness, run a deep wedge between the two alleged *relata* of the analogy, and especially so in the case of aesthetic properties. This will become clear once we start exploring at least one way of explaining *why* the roots of this normativity distinguishes aesthetic properties from secondary qualities. For now, it suffices to say that the two dissimilarities outlined above do not prove fatal to all aspects of the analogy. As has already been mentioned, there are several ways in which the analogy helps us increase our understanding of evaluative properties. Nevertheless, I contend, the disanalogies that are beginning to emerge do indicate some of the

²⁸ McDowell (1998a), p. 143.

²⁹ Wiggins (1998c), pp. 202-203.

³⁰ That is not to say that all talk of causation in relation to evaluative concepts is unwarranted.

weaknesses inherent in the Lockean biconditional and the ensuing doctrine of response-dependence when applied to the aesthetic case.

4. Explanations and two directions of 'because'.

Whatever the case may be about exactly how far the analogy between secondary qualities and evaluative properties is capable of stretching, one might wonder whether a response-dependent account of such properties might not be incompatible with a certain kind of realist explanation about those very same properties. In developing his investigation into the ramifications of response-dependence, Johnston has repeatedly argued to the effect that certain realist explanations simply 'go missing' under response-dependent theories. The claim is that one cannot maintain the *a priori* truth of biconditionals such as 'something is red if and only if it is disposed to look red to normal observers under normal circumstances' *while* advancing the realist explanation that something looks red to normal observers because it is red. According to Johnston, then, realist explanations are incompatible with response-dependent accounts. Whereas, on the one hand, response-dependent approaches will present it as *a priori* and necessary that a property is F if and only if it is disposed to elicit a suitable F-response in observers (P), realist explanations will, on the other, proceed along the lines of an object O looking red because it is red (P*). Johnston defends his thesis with the help of a substitution principle by which 'substituting a priori equivalents in empirical explanations must preserve their truth as empirical explanations' so that if the principle were sound, the *a priori* connection between P and P* would allow us to substitute P* for P in the explanatory claim, yielding 'P* because P*'. But since 'P* because P*' is not actually explanatory, we should discard either the *a priori* linkage or the explanatory

claim.³¹ If Johnston is right, we should abandon realist explanations for response-dependent properties.

Addressing this concern directly, Philip Pettit and Peter Menzies have replied that response-dependence biconditionals do *not* cause realist explanations to ‘go missing’.

The substitution principle Johnston’s argument relies on, they argue, is not sound.³²

What is needed here, they claim, is a distinction between an *a priori* and an explanatory claim. So,

[t]he equation holds that it is *a priori* that something possesses the disposition to look red to normal observers under normal conditions if and only if it is red. The explanation says that when something manifests the disposition to look red to normal observers in normal conditions, it manifests the disposition – it looks red – because it is red. The first claim says that there is an *a priori* linkage between the possession of the disposition by something and its being red... the second claim says, not that the object possesses the disposition because it is red, but that when the disposition is manifested... it is manifested because it is red.³³

In other words, propositions expressed by sentences like ‘something is disposed to look red to normal observers in normal conditions’ give rise to two different questions:

whereas the first sets out to answer why the object possesses that particular disposition,

the second examines why the disposition is manifested when it is manifested. So,

transposing Menzies and Pettit’s claim to the aesthetic case, one might say that whereas

the *a priori* claim lies in the question, ‘why is X disposed to look graceful?’ and the

corresponding answer, ‘X is disposed to look graceful if and only if it is graceful’, the

realist explanation can be found in the question, ‘why does X look graceful?’ and the

corresponding answer, ‘X looks graceful because it is graceful’.

Clearly, the number of issues that arise in relation to this debate is too great to be tackled in anything but a introductory fashion here. For a more satisfactory general inquiry, some clarification would first be needed as to exactly what is meant by ‘realist

³¹ Menzies & Pettit (1998), p. 101. See Johnston (1989) and (1991).

³² See Menzies & Pettit (1998), p. 101, and Sober (1982).

³³ Menzies & Pettit (1998), p. 105.

explanation'. Then, other, possibly more successful means than the substitution principle to which Johnston appeals, would have to be surveyed in order to ensure that the conclusion reached by Menzies and Pettit is indeed valid. My concern with the compatibility of response-dependence and realist explanations at present is far more limited. What is mainly of interest to my project in this debate is that *Euthyphro's* question re-appears here, and probes us to explore something like Wiggins's discussion of Aristotle's claim in his *Metaphysics* (1072a29), by which we desire an object because it seems good to us, rather than the object's seeming good to us because we desire it. Wiggins suggests that it may be 'the beginning of real wisdom' to see that neither Aristotle's view, *nor* its negation accounts for the point adequately. Why, Wiggins asks, should the *because* not hold both ways round? Thus, '[s]urely it can be true both that we desire *x* because we think *x* good, and that *x* is good because *x* is such that we desire *x*. It does not count against the point that the explanation of the 'because' is different in each direction.'³⁴ Thus,

we may see a pillar-box as red because it is red. But also pillar-boxes, painted as they are, *count* as red only because there actually exists a perceptual apparatus (e.g. our own) that discriminates, and learns on the direct basis of experience to group together, all and only the actually red things... But this in no way impugns the idea that redness is an external, monadic property of a postbox. 'Red postbox' is not short for 'red to human beings postbox'... For the category of colour is an anthropocentric category.³⁵

This suggestion is, I believe, one that deserves to be taken particularly seriously in the aesthetic case. Indeed, a development of the idea that we respond to X in a certain way because it is graceful, *and* that X is graceful because it is such that we respond to it in a certain way might be the beginning of 'real wisdom' about aesthetic judgements. If this is so, then the correct way of positioning oneself with regards to *Euthyphro's* question might be – in a sense to be specified in later chapters – to adopt both suggested

³⁴ Wiggins (1998a), p. 106.

³⁵ Wiggins (1998a), p. 107.

answers. It is possible then that there are at least some kinds of response-dependent properties can position themselves in an alternative relation to the subject(ive)/object(ive) distinction. Perhaps aesthetic properties and the judgements we make about them are particularly prone to the proposal that

we should characterize the subjective (and then perhaps the valuational) positively, in terms of a subjective judgement's being one that is however indirectly answerable for its correctness to the responses of conscious subjects; that we should characterize the objective positively, in terms of an objective judgement's being one that is a candidate for plain truth: and that, having characterized each of these categories of judgement positively and independently, we need to be ready for the possibility that a judgement may fall into both, may both rest upon sentiment and relate to a matter of fact.³⁶

This possibility of developing a third alternative to Socrates's question is an issue I will return to in my discussion of sensibility theories in Chapter V.

In this section, I have considered the notion of response-dependence primarily in relation to the way in which we perceive response-dependent properties. I have indicated how our perception of secondary qualities differs from that of primary qualities in the light of the distinction between phenomenal and natural concepts. This will eventually enable me to set up an argument about the manner in which the acquisition of phenomenal concepts plays a crucial role in aesthetic response-dependence. Also, I have sketched some of the reasons why one might wish to be sceptical about applying the form of the biconditional used for secondary qualities to evaluative properties. In due course, I will develop these points and propose the skeleton of an approach in which the analogy between secondary qualities and aesthetic properties is not as helpful as it has been assumed to be. Finally, I raised a suggestion about how to bypass the bottleneck of *Euthyphro's* question which, I will argue, reveals a further difference between aesthetic properties and secondary qualities. I now turn to an examination of aesthetic response-dependence in relation to judgements. The predominant concern of the next section will be to investigate Hume's attempt to follow

³⁶ Wiggins (1998c), pp. 201-2.

Locke's biconditional model of secondary qualities in his effort to account for the objectivity of aesthetic judgements in terms of responses.

C). Beginning to disentangle the phenomenology – sentiment in Hume’s aesthetic theory.

1. Hume’s target.

The origin of Hume’s aesthetic inquiry is what, in his essay ‘Of the Standard of Taste’, he describes as the tension that arises from the unwillingness to give up either the dictum ‘*de gustibus non est disputandum*’, or the idea that there are cases of ‘glaring, undeniable differences in beauty or artistic worth.’³⁷ So, even though there is a sense in which ‘a thousand different sentiments, excited by the same object, are all right’, it is also the case that ‘[a]mong a thousand different opinions which different men may entertain of the same subject, there is one, and but one, that is just and true’.³⁸ The main aim of Hume’s aesthetic theory is then also to establish a standard of aesthetic taste capable of resolving disputes or disagreements about aesthetic judgements; ‘a *Standard of Taste*... by which the various sentiments of men may be reconciled; at least a decision afforded confirming one sentiment, and condemning the other.’³⁹ The role of the suggested standard is, in a first instance, to enable us to see that at least one of two diverging views must be abandoned, and, in a second, to encourage us, as Anthony Savile writes, to ‘reconcile critical differences by bringing sentiments into accord with a *correct* view of the matter.’⁴⁰ Indeed, what Hume is seeking to show is, to use Jerrold Levinson’s words, ‘a principle to which disputes about taste... can be referred so as to settle such disputes, pronouncing one judgement correct and others incorrect.’⁴¹ In short, what Hume sets out to do in his aesthetic theory is to develop an account of the objectivity of aesthetic judgement in terms of the occurrence of emotional responses,

³⁷ Levinson (2002), p. 227.

³⁸ Hume (1965), p. 6.

³⁹ Hume (1965), p. 5.

⁴⁰ Savile (1993), p. 65.

⁴¹ Levinson (2002), p. 227.

but with the characteristic proviso that the response is that of one who has a true understanding of the thing experienced.

2. An empirical standard of aesthetic correctness.

Hume's standard of aesthetic taste is empirical in that it is based on the experience – or, more precisely, the 'sentiments' – of 'true judges'. It is the joint verdict of these judges that represents the principle capable of 'confirming one sentiment, and condemning another'. As Levinson writes,

[a]nalogizing perception of beauty in works of art to perception of sensory properties, Hume proposes that the true assessment of such beauty is formed by perceivers who are best fitted to receive the beauty sentiment from beautiful works, that is to say, perceivers who have to the greatest extent possible removed obstacles or impediments in themselves to the production of the beauty sentiment, which Hume qualifies as inherently pleasurable or agreeable, by works that, as Hume views it, are naturally fitted to raise this sentiment in human beings.⁴²

For Hume, a 'true judge' is someone who is both well-educated about art and unbiased. To be such a judge, five impediments to optimal aesthetic appreciation must have been overcome: first, insufficient fineness of discrimination; second, insufficient practice with artworks of a given kind; third, insufficient comparative appreciation of artworks; fourth, insufficient application of means-ends reasoning in assessing artworks; and fifth, prejudice.⁴³ The emotion experienced by the 'true judge' must, in other words, be due entirely to the nature of the object of aesthetic appreciation itself, and not to some personal preference or idiosyncrasy. The correctness of individual aesthetic judgements can, then, be assessed by seeing how closely they mirror the joint verdicts of the 'true judges'.⁴⁴ As Noel Carroll points out, '[t]he rest of us should follow the example of

⁴² Levinson (2002), p. 227.

⁴³ Hume (1965), pp. 16-21.

⁴⁴ Levinson (2002), p. 228.

these critics and listen to their observations about how to attend to the artwork if we wish to have the appropriate sentiment raised in us.⁴⁵

The key to understanding Hume's aesthetic theory, and indeed the standard of taste that he posits, is thus to be found in two of his more fundamental philosophical commitments. First, his empiricism and use of the 'experimental method'.⁴⁶ Second, his emphasis on the role of sentiment in the theory of value. As mentioned above, Hume holds that 'when you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing, but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of blame from the contemplation of it.'⁴⁷ Similarly, beauty is 'naturally fitted to excite agreeable sentiments'⁴⁸ and judgements about beauty are incapable of referring to any 'real matter of fact'. For Hume, 'beauty and deformity, more than sweet and bitter, are not qualities in the objects, but belong entirely to the sentiments.'⁴⁹ Aesthetic properties are, then, taken to be something like 'powers to produce various sensation in us'.⁵⁰ Far from abandoning the Lockean structure and 'sentimentalism' about values, Hume thus sets up the framework for a standard of aesthetic taste that is modelled on the biconditional account of secondary qualities and which takes the emotional responses of the 'true judges' to stand in a direct relationship to the content of the ensuing aesthetic judgements.

⁴⁵ Carroll (1984), p. 183.

⁴⁶ See J. Lenz's introduction to Hume (1965), p. xiv: 'Hume thought of [his] theory of knowledge as espousing the experimental method of reasoning used so successfully by physicists such as Boyle and Newton.'

⁴⁷ Hume (1964), Book III, Part I, Section 1, p. 469.

⁴⁸ Hume (1965), p. 9.

⁴⁹ Hume (1965), p. 11.

⁵⁰ Locke (1975), Book II, Chapter VIII, Section 10, p. 135.

3. Difficulties with Hume's account.

(a). The classical difficulties.

Numerous difficulties beset Hume's account of an empirical standard of aesthetic taste. I shall begin this section by simply mentioning a few of the problems that are usually levelled against the theory outlined in 'Of the Standard of Taste'.⁵¹ One issue that has been described both as a minor⁵² and major⁵³ difficulty is Hume's optimism concerning the uniformity of response amongst 'true judges'. This objection is based on the idea that there is no sufficiently convincing reason to believe that someone who satisfies Hume's conditions of a 'true judge' will have the same emotional response as another to the same object of aesthetic appreciation. Although Hume does allow for two sources of variation across his 'true judges', namely (i) humour and temperament, and (ii) age and country,⁵⁴ these factors seem mainly capable of affecting the *degree* of sentiment, rather than its nature. Hume's account has been accused of being unrealistic about convergence even amongst judges of the same culture and humour,⁵⁵ given that there are many more sources of variation in judgements among ideal critics, such as ones rooted in differing sensibilities or tastes. Thus, Levinson writes that '[e]motional receptivity or openness, for example, would seem a plausible addition to the list, as would serenity of mind or capacity for reflection.'⁵⁶ On a more general level, it has been held that Hume's account is just too closely modelled on gustatory taste, and is thus overly passive and mechanistic.⁵⁷ This aspect of the account is important in so far as it seems difficult to envisage just how, on such an account, there can be room for the crucial ingredient of normativity in aesthetic responses.⁵⁸ In addition, there is also a

⁵¹ Some of which are raised by Hume himself.

⁵² Levinson (2002).

⁵³ Budd (1996).

⁵⁴ Levinson describes this element as one of 'cultural outlook'. See Levinson (2002), p. 228.

⁵⁵ See Goldman (1995).

⁵⁶ Levinson (2002), p. 229.

⁵⁷ For an interesting account of how the notion of aesthetic taste has been modelled on gustatory taste, see Korsmeyer (1997).

⁵⁸ See Savile (1993) and Budd (1996).

concern with circularity in so far as some of the marks Hume posits as characteristic of ‘true judges’ presuppose prior identification of what is truly beautiful. Further, Hume provides no adequate explanation of why several ‘true judges’ are required rather than just a single one.⁵⁹

Another related, but perhaps more fundamental, charge against Hume’s account is that his theory provides no satisfactory clarification as to why judges are actually needed for consultation, since anyone could just strive to acquire the characteristics necessary to qualify as a ‘true judge’.⁶⁰ Linked to this concern is a worry that the

suggestion that majority preference is binding on the minority lacks any force, because the response of the majority cannot properly be thought *better* merely in virtue of being experienced by a greater number, and the minority are not *wrong* merely because they are out of step; and so even if there were unanimity amongst the competent judges, their agreement would constitute, not a normative standard, but only a natural or fortuitous coincidence of preferences.⁶¹

What exactly is it, then, about the verdicts of ‘true judges’ that makes it rational to (i) abide by those verdicts and (ii) strive to copy those judges? Why, one may ask, should a person who is not a ‘true judge’ herself seek to exchange her verdict for some other merely because the latter is that of the ‘true judges’? To use Budd’s words here, what Hume’s account seems to lack are ‘the resources to explain how one response [of a ‘true judge’] can justifiably be approved and the other condemned.’⁶² This brings me to another set of difficulties for Hume’s aesthetic theory that is more pressing to my concerns.

(b). ‘Euthyphrian’ difficulties.

Hume’s work on aesthetic judgements is important to this thesis primarily in virtue of the way in which his twofold commitment to the importance of sentiment and the

⁵⁹ Cohen (1994).

⁶⁰ Levinson (2002), p. 229.

⁶¹ Budd (1996), p. 21.

⁶² Budd (1996), p. 20.

analogy with secondary qualities entails something fundamentally problematic in connection with the relation between aesthetic judgements and emotional responses. In this context, what I take to be the most pressing set of difficulties for Hume's suggested resolution to the problem of aesthetic taste circles around the way in which the occurrence and content of an emotional response determines the content of the aesthetic judgement. At times, Hume even seems to run emotional response and aesthetic judgement so closely together as to make it unclear whether they are really distinct (and distinguishable) events.

One way of putting the matter is in terms of the difficulty that biconditional accounts of evaluative properties face with regards to normativity: unlike with colours, say, it is not clear that even if there were considerable uniformity of sentiment among 'true judges' of aesthetic taste, that this convergence alone could have the normative force necessary to get dissenters to concur. This is so because Hume does not (at least explicitly) explain *why* a certain object not only causes a certain emotional response, but rather, to use McDowell's expression, 'merits' it. Indeed, Hume seems to interpret the relation between aesthetic properties and the more or less pleasurable feeling they evoke merely as a causal relation. But what is actually needed here is an account whereby the properties in question can be understood as *appropriate* objects of pleasure, and the enjoyment taken in them as *warranted*.⁶³ So, even though Hume does not take the Lockean thesis to exclude the very possibility of an empirical standard of taste for aesthetic judgements, he nonetheless seems constrained by the *apriority* of the analogy underlying it when it comes to explaining why a certain property elicits a certain sentiment. The main difficulty for Hume's account would therefore seem to lie in the absence of justificatory relationship between sentiment and judgement, where such a justification draws on features external to the subject. And surely, if the objectivity of

⁶³ See Budd (1996), p. 25.

aesthetic judgements is going to be anything over and above a contingent convergence of equally contingent responses, such rational justification must be possible. The matter is perhaps particularly important in so far as on Hume's account,

sentiments, unlike judgements about matters of fact, do not represent the world as being one way rather than another. Accordingly, sentiments cannot be shown to be correct or incorrect by holding them up against the world and examining the world to determine whether it is in conformity with them. Indeed it makes no sense to suppose that the world conforms or conflicts with a sentiment, for there can be conformity and conflict between the world and a mental item (or its expression in language) only if the mental item is a representation of the world, as a sentiment is not.⁶⁴

As has already been mentioned, Hume finds his solution to the problem of aesthetic taste on an alleged affinity between aesthetic appreciation and the perception of a secondary quality. So, despite showing an awareness of the dissimilarities that prevail between the two *relata*, Hume treats the perception and evaluation of them in a strikingly similar way; the occurrence of a sentiment brought about by the character of the object of aesthetic appreciation is conceived of in just the same way as the perception of colour is understood to be an effect (in the subject) of the object's character. In other words, assuming that one is under normal perceptual conditions, an aesthetic property seems to be 'sensed' in a parallel way to that whereby a property such as redness is 'sensed'.⁶⁵ And, indeed, apart from the delicacy of taste Hume has built into the nature of his 'true judges', there is no room in his account for a further discriminatory capacity that might support a judgement which is independent of the occurrence of the emotion. So that the sentiment felt by a 'true judge' does not record the presence of an otherwise undetected feature; it is 'merely an index of the fact that the structure of her 'internal fabric' is pleasantly affected by the features she has

⁶⁴ Budd (1996), pp. 16-17. Continued: 'Although pleasure is an intentional state – pleasure is always *in* or *at* something or *that* something is the case – it is a reaction to how the world is represented to the subject, rather than a representation of a possible state of affairs.'

⁶⁵ This likeness seems particularly surprising in the light of the fact that Hume allows for the additional complication of being a 'true judge' in the aesthetic case when he does not consider such an addition necessary for that of secondary qualities.

detected, so that another true judge... who has a relevantly similar make-up will share her delight.⁶⁶ There seems, then, to be nothing in Hume's account of the convergence of the sentiments of 'true judges' that can show anything about the object rather than the subject.

It is not my aim in this section to determine whether Hume himself is, by some *tour de force*, actually capable of extricating himself from this fundamental difficulty, nor of whether his account can be rescued by intricate contemporary interpretations. Certainly, excellent attempts have been made to that effect.⁶⁷ I devote a part of the beginning of Chapter V to an examination of a neo-Humean approach to evaluative properties. What I wish to claim at this stage is that if Hume's aim in 'Of the Standard of Taste' – that is to say, the aim of establishing aesthetic objectivity – is to succeed, what must be added to his account is the scope to appeal to something beyond sentiments. What is needed, then, is an account capable of avoiding the pitfalls of both unreasonable subjectivisms and imprudent objectivisms.

4. Conflations: emotions and aesthetic judgements.

(a). Main concerns.

Imposing as intimate a connection as Hume does between emotional responses and aesthetic judgements without adding the resources capable of characterising that relation as a justificatory one can lead to serious complications. In this section I will briefly outline what I call 'phenomenological discernment problems'. These problems might, at a first glance, seem rather trivial or obvious. In reality, they are neither. They are not trivial since the confusions on which they rest lie at the heart of long-lasting difficulties particularly pressing for aesthetics not least with regards to the possibility of attaining

⁶⁶ See for example Budd (1996), pp. 21-22.

⁶⁷ Here I think mainly of Savile's commendably clear and thorough argument in Savile (1996).

some form of objectivity. Nor are they especially obvious. If they were, I dare say that they would not be so common.

My aim here is merely to sketch what these problems involve and to draw a distinction between two kinds of emotional responses that will re-appear in Chapter V. This outline might, then, conclude the beginning of the disentangling procedure central to the development of aesthetic psychology in general, and the claim that aesthetic properties are response-dependent in particular. What these problems show is that what is needed here is a considerably more refined account of the distinctions between aesthetic judgements, emotional responses, and aesthetic perception. I propose to sketch the main points of such an account in the next section. In what follows I shall argue that it is important not only to see that emotional responses and judgements do come apart, but that it is also crucial to keep them distinct in thinking about them.⁶⁸ This is not to say that they are always easy to distinguish from one another – phenomenologically speaking, emotional responses and aesthetic judgements can seem too entangled to be differentiated both theoretically and practically. However, to make a judgement is not to *have* a sentiment or emotional response; rather it is, at most, to *endorse* it.

In the following analyses, it should be born in mind that on certain accounts (for example, that of Hume's) these 'phenomenological discernment problems' are not in fact problematic. For an account, in other words, that runs aesthetic judgements very closely together with emotional responses, there will obviously be less danger in mistaking one for the other. Rather, it is on the account towards which this thesis is intended as an argument (namely, that aesthetic judgements can be objective in respect of O1, O2, and O3) that they become problematic, and therefore must be disentangled.

⁶⁸ There *is* a difference, and one that must be accounted for, between for example the case where I see a bear as threatening and feel fear, and where I make the same judgement (i.e. see the bear as threatening) but feel no fear.

(b). *The first ‘phenomenological discernment problem’.*

The conflation at the heart of the first ‘phenomenological discernment problem’ (henceforth PDP I) consists of taking the emotional response that can occur in conjunction with an aesthetic judgement to be nothing less than that judgement itself. The cases that qualify as instances of the PDP I seem, roughly, to fall into two kinds. On the one hand, there are occasions where one takes one’s well-grounded emotional response to be not only the kind of response that other perceivers would (or should) have to a particular object too, but also the aesthetic judgement itself. An example of this would be to take one’s disgust in viewing one of Francis Bacon’s more offensive paintings to be one’s aesthetic judgement, so that the negative emotional response is really a negative judgement about the content of that painting. On the other hand, there are cases where one takes one’s own idiosyncratic emotional response to be the aesthetic judgement. For example, the painting in question may depict a flower which – by virtue of this flower’s featuring prominently in the herbaceous border of my much disliked neighbour – causes me to experience that painting with disgust. Thus, such a situation often goes hand in hand with a thought such as ‘it is *true for me* that X is ugly’. Clearly, the two kinds of cases differ with regards to the reasons that can be adduced in support of the emotion taken to be the judgement. In the first case, we can explain our emotion by adducing reasons that are generally available; in the second, we are able to provide only idiosyncratic reasons.⁶⁹

It is no uncommon occurrence to confound emotional responses, be they grounded on idiosyncratic or non-idiosyncratic reasons, with the very judgement that those responses could (at best) support. In the second kind of PDP I, the mistake is quite crude and involves two steps. The conflation here is founded on, first, mistaking

⁶⁹ A more detailed explanation of what kind of reasons qualify as generally available is given in Chapter V.

reasons available solely to the subject herself (e.g. wearing black in the early summer reminds me of my grandmother's funeral) for good reasons generally available to all rational subjects, and second, taking those good generally available reasons for emotions to also be good generally available reasons for judgements. The main challenge for the first kind of PDP lies with that conflation which is evident in the second step, and is thus based on the assumption that the good and generally available reasons capable of supporting an emotion also function as good and non-idiosyncratic reasons for an aesthetic judgement. An example of such a conflation would be to proclaim some of Bacon's paintings aesthetically bad because of the disgust one experiences in viewing the violent subjects depicted and the poses of the models.

In attempting to guard oneself against both instances of PDP I, it is important to bear in mind the following points. Emotions may be intentional states, that is to say that they are *about* or *directed towards* something, but they are not thereby beliefs. Judgements or similar propositional attitudes may be *involved* in emotions, but that is not to say that emotional responses *are* judgements. There is no doubt that there are several different kinds of legitimate responses to objects of aesthetic appreciation, some of which are going to be more emotional than others. However, to admit this is not to hold that it is appropriate to confuse these responses for one another. Fundamentally, to mistake an emotion for a judgement could be said to be to make a category-mistake.

(c). *The second 'phenomenological discernment problem'.*

The PDP II is, in a sense, the other side of the coin to the PDP I: in this second kind of phenomenological discernment problem, the alleged assimilation is such that the emotional response is seen to be a kind of judgement.⁷⁰ Several contemporary philosophers, perhaps most prominently William Lyons, Jerome Neu, and Robert

⁷⁰ I will not examine the PDP II in the light of the Stoic view that all emotions are irrational (or mistaken) judgements.

Solomon, have indeed argued that emotions are a kind of evaluative judgment.⁷¹ Is this so?

An argument to the effect that emotions are *not* a kind of judgement that is particularly relevant to my present concern, is the one developed by Patricia Greenspan. In short, for Greenspan, ‘judgmentalism’ should be rejected on the grounds that it does not do justice to the diversity of emotional phenomena.⁷² To illustrate her point, she uses the example of sibling rivalry. Could, she asks, two statements ascribing contrary emotions such as ‘I am happy that my brother won’, and ‘I am unhappy that my brother won’, both be true of one and the same subject? Clearly, holding contrary emotions in this way seems to be neither a rare nor an implausible psychological event. The point here is that two claims reporting contrary emotions can both be true of a subject simultaneously, *even* on the assumption that the subject is thinking and reacting reasonably, whereas such is not the case with judgements: two judgements with contrary content cannot both be true of the same rational subject.⁷³ Unlike judgements then, according to Greenspan, contrary emotions need not change, nor is it unreasonable not to alter them, since an emotion ‘seems to be appropriate relative to a particular set of grounds, and not necessarily a unified evaluation of one’s total body of “evidence”’.⁷⁴ So, whilst contrary judgements are judgements that cannot both be fully justified (nor both true), contrary emotions are emotions that can both be appropriate. In contrast to judgements, holding contrary emotions is at times not only not unreasonable, occasionally it might even be the reasonable thing to do (such as with some emotional responses to dilemmas of bio-ethics).

To sum up, what is needed in order to provide an adequate account of aesthetic response-dependence is the development of a theory sophisticated enough to put all the

⁷¹ See de Sousa (1987), p. 42.

⁷² See Greenspan (1980) and (1988).

⁷³ See Greenspan (1980), p. 228.

⁷⁴ Greenspan (1980), p. 234.

elements of aesthetic judgements that have been mentioned so far (i.e. emotional responses, aesthetic perception and estimation) in their right place. Nothing less will be able to open up the possibility of a reasonable objectivism for aesthetic judgements in a serious fashion. I now turn to the first phase of an attempt at such a development.

D). Aesthetic responses and emotional responses.

1. What is an emotional response?

In order to press on with the disentangling of the phenomenology, and to further clarify the distinction between emotional responses and aesthetic judgements, I now propose that we take a closer (even if still comparatively brief) look at what it is to be an emotional response. One of my intentions in this undertaking is to distance my account of the emotions from those which accord to them an absence of cognitive content.⁷⁵

Despite being known to figure in philosophical theories at least ever since the *Rhetoric* where Aristotle defines emotions as ‘those things through which, by undergoing change, people come to differ in their judgments and which are accompanied by pain and pleasure,’⁷⁶ it was not until relatively recently that the question, ‘what exactly is an emotion?’ begun to receive weighty attention in philosophical circles.⁷⁷ By the time of coming under academic scrutiny, the emotions had been relegated to the realm of the irrational ‘passions’ for a period longer than the history of so-called analytic philosophy. Indeed, Descartes conceived emotions simply as a kind of feeling, albeit with important mental and physical effects.⁷⁸ Nonetheless, contemporary philosophical work on the emotions has done much to undermine overly pronounced interpretations of the contrast between reason and the ‘passions’, and several convincing arguments have been developed that provide good reasons for the view that emotions have bases that are, in greater or lesser parts, cognitive.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Obviously, were my understanding of emotions to be such, the work of emphasising the distinction between emotions and judgements would be very different, and possibly superfluous.

⁷⁶ Aristotle (1991), Book II, Chapter 1, p. 121.

⁷⁷ Here it is Anglo-American analytic philosophy that I have in mind. For other references to the emotions in Aristotle’s work, see for example, *De Anima* Book I, Chapter 1.

⁷⁸ Descartes (1989), pp. 40-41: ‘[T]he principal effect of all the passions in men is that they incite and dispose their soul to will the things for which they prepare their body, so that the sensation of fear incites it to will to flee, that of boldness to will to do battle, and so on for the rest.’

⁷⁹ See especially de Sousa (1987) and Goldie (2000).

Rather than asking what an emotional response is, it may be preferable to enquire into what it is *not*. In this vein, Kevin Mulligan urges us to consider the

four-way distinction between (1) drives or instincts such as hunger, (2) sensations or feelings, such as pain in my left foot, (3) moods, such as certain forms of anxiety or jubilation, and (4) emotions. Drives and sensations or feelings require no cognitive bases. Moods may be considered to require no cognitive bases or, alternatively, to require only very indeterminate bases, or indeed to be simply non-localised sensations. Emotions, however, require more or less determinate cognitive bases such as perceptions, memories, anticipations and occurrent beliefs.⁸⁰

To say that emotions must be distinguished from drives such as thirst, sensations such as itches, or moods such as irritability, is not to say that responses towards such things (i.e. thirst, itches, etc.) cannot involve emotions. One can have an emotional response to a certain kind of pain if that pain, say, is ‘filtered through’ the ‘more or less determinate cognitive base’ required for a mental event to qualify as an emotion. Thus, although my urge to scratch my itch may not be an emotional response, I can still have an emotional response to(wards) such an itch (e.g. if the itch happens to make me angry). Importantly, the cognitive base of emotional responses comprises beliefs, desires, perceptions and many other things. To use Peter Goldie’s words,

an emotion – for example, John’s being angry or Jane’s being in love – is typically *complex, episodic, dynamic, and structured*. An emotion is complex in that it will typically involve many different elements: it involves episodes of emotional experience, including perceptions, thoughts, and feelings of various kinds, and bodily changes of various kinds; and it involves dispositions, including dispositions to experience further emotional episodes, to have further thoughts and feelings, and to behave in certain ways.⁸¹

This view, sometimes referred to as the ‘complex’ view on the emotions, is, more or less, the kind of account of emotion that I would like to espouse throughout this thesis.

In what sense, then, can responses to aesthetic properties be said to be emotional? As mentioned above, the idea generally thought to underlie aesthetic response-dependence is something along these lines: for the dramatic intensity of Ingmar

⁸⁰ Mulligan (1998), p. 162.

⁸¹ Goldie (2000), pp. 12-13.

Bergman's *Wild Strawberries*, or the gracefulness of Händel's violin sonatas to be manifested – and thus rendered perceivable – one must have experienced the corresponding appropriate emotions. Clarifying the exact sense in which aesthetic response-dependence relies on the emotions is critical not only to an account of the ontology of aesthetic properties, but also to the more over-riding concern of whether objectivity can be ascribed to aesthetic judgements. One of the main tasks of aesthetic psychology is to bring to light the various ways in which emotions do actually participate in the making of aesthetic judgements. My more restricted concern here is the extent to which the responses central to aesthetic perception are specifically emotional. My claim is, roughly, that emotions are not invariably present directly in aesthetic perception; nor, and this claim should not be taken to be equivalent to the preceding one, are they always active in aesthetic judgements. This view requires some explanation, and the remainder of this chapter will be concerned with its provision.

2. In what sense are aesthetic properties response-dependent?

(a). Responses and the aesthetic.

What exactly does it mean to say that aesthetic properties are response-dependent? As mentioned above, McDowell and Wiggins speak of the way in which we 'owe' a certain kind of response to evaluative properties; how such properties 'merit' a certain response. But what precisely is meant by 'response' in an aesthetic context? Generally, and as we witnessed in Hume's aesthetic theory, it is thought that the kind of response involved in the perception of aesthetic properties is emotional. Thus, it is in virtue of responding with sadness that we grasp the tragic beauty of *Antigone*, or of responding with elation that we perceive the exhilarating optimism of Beethoven's setting of 'An die Freude'. Now, there is no doubt that emotional responses are closely connected to the aesthetic.

At no point do I want to deny that. My aim in this section is, rather, to examine two questions. First, are the responses the occurrences of which are required in order to grasp aesthetic properties *invariably* emotional? Second, if they are not, what role do the emotions play in the making of aesthetic judgements? In addition to the treatment given here, my inquiry into the second concern will be further developed in Chapter V. I begin with an investigation into the nature of the responses involved in aesthetic perception.

(b). Emotional or otherwise?

Despite widespread belief to the contrary, there are numerous occasions on which our perception of an aesthetic property is not directly accompanied by an emotional response. Roughly, there seem to be two kinds of cases where aesthetic properties are not obviously emotionally response-dependent. First, and probably least controversially, there are at least some thick aesthetic properties that do not seem to depend on our emotional responses for their manifestation or for us to perceive them. So, to perceive a painting as gaudy, or a melody as bland does not require that there be an occurrence of any emotional response. We can, so to speak, ‘see’ the gaudiness or ‘hear’ the blandness without experiencing any emotion.⁸² It might be the case, further, that the thicker the aesthetic property, the less apparently response-dependent it is where ‘response’ is, again, emotionally conceived. Second, there can be cases where recognition of a thinner aesthetic property does not depend on our emotional responses either. Thus, if I have seen a particularly beautiful sculpture many times before and am mainly concerned to point out how moving its beauty is to a friend, I may not experience the emotional response it gave rise to in me the first few times I saw it. In

⁸² However, just like an itch can bring about an emotional response under certain circumstance without for that matter *being* an emotion itself, a thick aesthetic property can lead the perceiver to have an emotional response without therefore that response being a necessary condition for the manifestation of the property.

cases such as these, it seems, in other words, perfectly possible to both perceive the beauty of a piano concerto, (and further, to go on to make the *bona fide* judgement that Rachmaninov's third piano concerto is beautiful) without experiencing the appropriate emotional response. Just as most adults can grasp the horror of torture or of an accident's great death-toll without experiencing that horror directly, or perceive an injustice without actually feeling righteous indignation, I can grasp the gracefulness of Händel's violin sonatas non-emotionally too.

Now, there will most probably always be a good reason why, on a certain occasion, I did not have the emotional response that the beauty of Rachmaninov's piano concerto can give rise to. Yet, I believe that events such as these can be explained. Such accounts will draw on ideas like the one developed by Anthony Kenny in the context of Aristotelian theories of pleasure.⁸³ The example Kenny uses is one about fishing: I may, the argument goes, very well be a genuine enthusiast of fishing without experiencing pleasure each and every time I fish. When I don't, that occurrence can quite simply be explained by other, interfering, occurrences; for example, I might be tired, preoccupied about a problem at work, or simply distracted by the weather. Occurrences such as these hardly seem out of the ordinary. However, they indicate that the process of aesthetic perception leading up to aesthetic judgement relies on complicated psychological processes involving patterns of habit, rationality and specialised perceptual sensibilities.

It could, however, be put against the claim that emotions do not invariably directly accompany aesthetic judgements that in cases where such absence occurs, the judgement is not truly aesthetic. In other words, the charge here is that the direct occurrence of emotional responses is a necessary condition for a judgement to qualify as distinctively aesthetic. How should this objection be met? As I shall argue in Chapter

⁸³ Kenny (1984), pp. 145-146.

IV, an accusation such as this can only reap meagre rewards, as it is based on an overly simple view of the way in which emotions are involved in the aesthetic. However, *prima facie* at least, the charge noted here does still present certain difficulties that one might only be able to resolve with the help of a more flexible understanding of the perception of aesthetic properties, whereby the manifestation of these properties is said to occur with varying levels of intensity. We may be talking, in other words, about the same property of gaudiness in two different perceptual situations; in one situation the gaudiness is ‘felt’ strongly, whereas in the other it is apprehended indifferently. This complexity aside, however, were the same charge brought against aesthetic judgements – which, as I have said, are best understood as reports on the presence or not of an aesthetic property – it would be less strong. After all, the judgements we are dealing with here, despite being *about* aesthetic properties, are still judgements. Whilst a judgement does *not* need to be supplemented by the direct occurrence of an emotional response in order to qualify as distinctively aesthetic, it may still be the case that a judgement cannot be such unless emotions are involved in some other, perhaps residual, manner.⁸⁴ For now, it is merely worth noting that the view – whereby the occurrence of an emotional response is understood to be a necessary condition for a judgement to qualify as aesthetic – should not be confused with the thought that aesthetic judgements somehow need be grounded on the subject’s emotional response.

(c). *A non-emotional response in an aesthetic context.*

If the response on which the manifestation (and so perception) of aesthetic properties depends can be non-emotional, what kind of thing is it? Can thoughts, feelings or reflections qualify as responses? In one sense, the fate of aesthetic response-dependence hangs on the outcome of this question: unless one specifies exactly what is

⁸⁴ I return to a discussion of the idea of emotional residue towards the end of this chapter.

meant by 'response', how, one may ask, can one make philosophical progress in aesthetics by appealing to the doctrine of response-dependence?

It is my claim that the kind of response on which aesthetic properties are ontologically dependent is a certain kind of appraisal or estimation. What do I mean by that? The idea is that the way in which aesthetic properties rely on our responses is that for such a manifestation to take place, we must have made some form of estimation of the object or in some sense have assessed whether or not the particular (kind of) property can possibly be ascribed to that given object. We must, in other words, have engaged in some form of reflective process that can lead us to detect the presence (or absence) of the property, a process distinct from its final outcome, the aesthetic judgement itself. The estimation I have in mind here can also be described as some form of appraisal prior to applying a specific aesthetic concept (appropriately or not as the case may be). This reflective process is not paradigmatically one we are consciously aware of as a distinct element of aesthetic perception, but rather, one that is very often phenomenologically so transparent as to be indistinguishable in experience from the resulting overall process of perceiving aesthetic properties.⁸⁵ Such psychological progressions are certainly not uncommon. Yet, however our phenomenology presents the event to us, there must be some more or less furtive appraisal which necessarily precedes the judgement to the effect that a certain aesthetic property is indeed present or absent. Just as in cases where we perceive the cruelty of an act or the generosity of a person, we must at the very least have altered the focus of our attention in such a way that we can become alert to the presence or absence of a certain kind of property.

In the third *Critique*, Kant provides a particularly stimulating discussion of a mental event not all that far removed from what I am currently trying to describe. In Section 9

⁸⁵ Obviously, these processes are, as already mentioned, not ones that we are always (or perhaps even usually) aware or conscious of. There are probably interesting analogies to be drawn here with the moral case, and the psychological processes a virtuous agent undergoes in assessing a situation or event morally.

of the ‘Analytic of the Beautiful’, he addresses the issue of whether in aesthetic judgements it is the feeling of pleasure that precedes the judging of the object of appreciation, or whether it is rather the judging that precedes the feeling. The problem that arises here is, very roughly, that unless a judgement precedes the occurrence of pleasure, it is unclear what, if anything, gives rise to the pleasure in the first place. If, on the other hand, the feeling of pleasure does indeed precede the aesthetic judgement, it becomes in turn difficult to explain how all such judgements can be grounded in the kind of pleasure that can serve as an aesthetic judgement’s ‘determining ground’, since having no basis in a judgement, such ‘pleasure’ becomes indistinguishable from ‘mere agreeableness in sensation’.⁸⁶

The passage Kant himself offers in discussion of this question is rich in content and allows for more than one interpretation. The reading which I take to be not only the most plausible, but also the most philosophically suggestive is the one developed by Paul Guyer in *Kant and The Claims of Taste*. Roughly, his suggestion in relation to the notoriously vacillating tone of the ninth Section is that Kant is actually committed to the view that there are actually two kinds of ‘judgement’ involved in aesthetic judgements.⁸⁷ The first ‘judgement’ is a sort of evaluation of the object of aesthetic appreciation which gives rise to the feeling of pleasure. That pleasure, in turn, serves as a ground for the second judgement – this time the judgement of taste as such. In other words,

what has happened is that Kant has conflated the three phenomena considered in his initial question – estimation, pleasure, and the judgment of taste – into two phenomena, a feeling of pleasure and an undifferentiated exercise of reflection identified with the judgement of taste. Considering only these two factors, Kant then concludes that if pleasure cannot precede judgment, then judgment must precede pleasure; so he ends up with the paradoxical suggestion that pleasure is the consequence of the judgment... even though that judgment must in fact presuppose the feeling of pleasure in order to have any subject at all. This inference, of course, depends upon an equivocation between two concepts of reflection, and the appearance of paradox can be removed as soon as we distinguish the

⁸⁶ See Kant (2000), §9, 5: 217, p. 102.

⁸⁷ Kant (2000), §9, 5: 216, p. 102. Although Kant claims this section to be the ‘key’ to his critique of taste, commentators are more or less unanimous in remarking on the apparent philosophical confusion in this passage.

simple reflection or estimation which leads to the feeling of pleasure from reflection on the communicability of that pleasure.⁸⁸

I propose, then, that it is something like what Guyer describes as the initial appraisal – which is at least theoretically distinct from the judgement as such – is the kind of response on which the manifestation of aesthetic properties depend. It is this estimation, in other words, that constitutes a necessary condition for aesthetic perception, not the emotional response in itself.

3. Perception, appraisal and emotional response: aesthetic perception.

So far I have argued that the response on which the manifestation of aesthetic properties depends is not exclusively emotional; rather, I take it to be a certain kind of estimation. This act of appraisal is not the aesthetic judgement as such, but rather the very first reflective process leading us to view the object from the personal perceptive – the perspective from which aesthetic properties can be perceived. In what follows I will spell out the details of this idea and elaborate further on my understanding of aesthetic perception in general.

Aesthetic perception, viewed as the wider process of grasping the aesthetic property in question, is far from being a unique act of vision or hearing, but is rather a compound of perceptions and estimations. There are, roughly, three possible elements of aesthetic perception: (i) visual, audible or tactile perception (hereafter ‘basic perception’); (ii) an initial appraisal; and (iii) an emotional response. Whereas the first two elements are necessary conditions that must be met if the aesthetic perception is to take place, the third element – the emotional response – is not. This is what I take to follow from the point discussed earlier about how emotional responses do *not* occur each and every time an aesthetic property is grasped. And it is because its occurrence is not necessary in that

⁸⁸ Guyer (1997), p. 140.

way, that it cannot be the response on which the manifestation of aesthetic properties depends. Without the 'basic perception' of the object, the initial appraisal cannot take place, and we can therefore say that the occurrence of the latter is contingent on that of the former. Once the initial appraisal has taken place, one may experience an emotional response, but this is 'optional' in the sense that it is not indispensable to the perception of the aesthetic property. What must have come about, however, is the initial appraisal. The properly *aesthetic* perception is, then, not merely the 'basic perception' of the object in question, since that could still be done from the impersonal stance, but the entire process of perceiving its aesthetic character.

The view I put forward here about aesthetic response-dependence is, I contend, supported by the way in which we learn to apply aesthetic concepts (correctly). As children, we are mainly taught to identify and recognise aesthetic properties by ostension. So, we are taught which, by and large, kind of sculptures are classified as elegant, which sorts of landscapes are thought to be sublime, which kinds of pieces of music qualify as unmelodious. What we learn is not a set of rules, nor a list of which artworks are deemed to have a certain character. Instead, we are acquainted with various instances of a certain kind of property. With time, we might acquire some ideas about which items are considered paradigmatic cases of musical harmony or admirable poetry, and make use of those ideas as helpful guides in our concept-applications. So that once we know of a dozen or so of cases of seventeenth-century Flemish paintings generally considered to be particularly well-balanced and unified, it might enable us to assess which other such paintings can rightly be described as well-balanced and unified too. In other words, the very aim of teaching someone to pick out a certain aesthetic property by ostension is that that person will eventually develop and train her sensibilities further so as to refine the perceptual skills with which she can single out specific aesthetic properties. The aim of our learning about aesthetic concepts is

obviously, as with the acquisition and extension of most other kinds of concepts, to enable one gradually to expand and differentiate our knowledge and eventually gauge properties one has never been exposed to previously.

Evidently, ostension alone cannot turn anyone into a truly ‘ideal’ aesthetic critic. Ostension must be complemented, in a first instance, by explanations and differentiations between justifying and non-justifying reasons. Generally speaking, a deeper awareness of the aesthetic content and its wider significance (at times at least including historical) must supplement the process of pointing out which objects qualify as instantiating a certain kind of aesthetic property. In this sense, the application of aesthetic concepts also requires the training of our aesthetic sensibilities. Yet, in addition to all this, one needs the emotions, and the kind of extra depth of understanding that can only come with experiencing them. As Myles Burnyeat has held in a different context, there are areas of thought where our understanding and grasp ‘comes in a sequence of stages with both cognitive and emotional dimensions.’⁸⁹ Emotions do undoubtedly deepen our awareness and understanding of aesthetic concepts and experience. The negative part of my claim about emotional responses in the aesthetic has merely been that the *manner* in which emotions are involved therein is not the way in which they are generally thought to be so. In the next section I will explain in greater detail what I understand that right manner to be.

4. Emotions and the acquisition of phenomenal concepts.

(a). What Eve couldn’t know without emotions.

The emotions, I have argued so far, are fundamental to the aesthetic but not at the level of ontological response-dependence. The main aim of this section is to argue for the

⁸⁹ Burnyeat (1980), pp. 70-71. The context is that of Aristotle’s ethical theory.

claim that the way in which emotions *are* invariably involved in the aesthetic is the following: in order to have grasped the *phenomenal* concept of an aesthetic property – which is pivotal in the aesthetic case – one must have experienced the relevant emotion at least once. Two separate points need to be spelled out here. The first issue has to do with the importance of phenomenal concepts to the aesthetic. As discussed in Chapter I, our phenomenology is an important source of understanding in the case of the aesthetic. It is partly through our ‘felt’ experience that we can come to learn or understand things about aesthetic properties. And, perhaps more urgently, there is a sense in which the aesthetic as such cannot be grasped from outside the perspective to which the ‘what it is like’ of experiencing the world and its contents belongs. Unless one has the phenomenal aesthetic concept, one cannot therefore, in a sense, be said to have the aesthetic concept at all.

My second, and more controversial, claim in this section relates back to Jackson’s argument against materialism outlined above. The idea, in a nutshell, is that in a similar way in which Mary has not acquired the phenomenal concept of redness until she has experienced the ‘what it is like’ of seeing red, so one cannot be said to have the phenomenal concept of the aesthetic property until one has had the appropriate emotional response. Let us imagine the following scenario. Eve is an art critic who has spent her entire life in libraries, galleries and museums in order to study art theory, art history, and aesthetic appreciation in general. By the time we come to meet her, she has acquired all the information there is to know about all those subjects. In short, we can say that she knows ‘all there is to know’ about aesthetic properties. In spite of this, Eve has never actually experienced the sadness of Verdi’s tragic operas or the pain evoked by First World War poetry – she is what one might want to call a ‘dry eyed’ art *connoisseur* with inclusive theoretical knowledge and understanding. The question of concern to us here is this: despite the fact that Eve can pick out instances of tragedy and moving

beauty perfectly well, can we really say that she understands all there is to understand about those properties? Clearly not. One day, perhaps when she has most of her life behind her, Eve attends a brilliant performance of *La Traviata*. For the very first time, she experiences a lover's grief and dejection. She feels the desperation of Violetta and the devastating despondency of the fate that is beginning to dawn on her. How should one describe what has now happened to Eve? Has she learnt something new, something she could never have understood by spending more time in a library? Yes. She has learnt a new way of thinking about some aesthetic properties that previously she was only capable of thinking about in a not only different, but also poorer way. She has, to use an expression of Goldie's, gained several kinds of 'new powers and potentialities of thought and imagination' such as 'imagining and remembering what it is like' to see the beautiful sadness of tragedy.⁹⁰ In other words, Eve has now acquired the phenomenal concept of the beautiful sadness of tragic opera.

Like the scientist Mary who is unable to understand the 'what it is like' of redness until she actually sees and experiences it, the art critic Eve is incapable of *fully* grasping aesthetic properties such as harmony and ugliness (i.e. acquiring the phenomenal concepts of those properties) until she has had the appropriate emotional responses. The kind of emotion at play will, obviously, differ according to whether the aesthetic properties in question are thicker or thinner. So, for example, the emotion that must be experienced in order to acquire the phenomenal concept of kitsch will probably contain more cognitive content than the emotion that one must have had if one is to acquire the phenomenal concept of tragic beauty. Also, and as will be discussed in Chapter V, which emotions are considered to be appropriate to a certain aesthetic property is something that can quite clearly change over time. So, all in all, to *have had* the appropriate emotional response is fundamental to grasping the phenomenal concept of

⁹⁰ Goldie (2002b), p. 244.

the aesthetic property, and to grasp that property fully is, in turn, of vital importance since aesthetic properties are perceivable only from the personal perspective. In other words, whereas the material concept can be grasped from the impersonal stance, the phenomenal one cannot, and hence, it seems like aesthetic properties might not be perceivable at all unless the phenomenal concept of them has been acquired.

(b). Emotional residue.

Once the emotion necessary for the acquisition of the phenomenal concept of a given aesthetic property has been experienced, there is a sense in which that emotion can – and perhaps should – be consigned to play a residual role in the making of the ensuing aesthetic judgement. How so?

We should note at the outset that there is nothing about Eve that renders it impossible for her to make a correct aesthetic judgement about *La Traviata* before she has experienced it ‘emotionally’. Her doing so, however, is more than likely to be a matter of chance since she will effectively lack any understanding of the relevant phenomenal concept that her judgement is supposed to draw upon.⁹¹ That is to say it is not the fact of having the emotional response that in any way renders the judgement correct. The important point here is twofold. First, it is far more likely that Eve will make a correct judgement once she has acquired the phenomenal concept. Second, it is also the case that we are more likely to believe her judgement (or to take it seriously) once she has acquired it since she now has a deeper understanding of the concept in question, and is thus more likely to pick out the corresponding property correctly.

⁹¹ The reason why I say ‘more than likely’ rather than ‘definitely’ is that it seems possible that with particularly thick aesthetic properties, the phenomenal concept is likely to be less emotionally laden; where a property is thus more easily and reliably picked out with reference to non-aesthetic features, judgements ascribing such a property to an object will be less reliant on the previous acquisition of the phenomenal concept as I have discussed it in this section.

Thus to make a judgement about a property is to engage in argumentative structures and discriminatory methods that are grounded in reason. In the process of making judgements, it is then also particularly important to focus on well-grounded reasons and beliefs. Aesthetic judgements, are also, I will argue, accountable to reason as such and to the salient non-aesthetic properties that act as reasons in support of it. They are *not*, in other words, accountable to emotions.⁹² So, even if one's judgement is about a property that is somehow intimately connected to the emotions, one must distance oneself from those emotions in making a judgement about that property. As a general rule, one is far more likely to make the correct judgement if one *does* consign the emotional response to the background of the judging process, primarily because of the special epistemological difficulties that arise in connection with the emotions.⁹³ Thus, even if the emotional response in question is the appropriate one, and as we will see later, there *is* a sense in which the emotion can help us grasp what is and what is not relevant to our judgement, being in the grip of an emotion is not adequate to the task of making a judgement. This goes some way to explaining why it is imperative to avoid the PDPs discussed in relation to Hume's empirical standard of aesthetic taste, and why those problems can have such devastating effects on the prospects of ascribing objectivity to aesthetic judgements. And this, I contend, is so even on an account of the emotions that emphasises the importance of their cognitive element.

In short, once the phenomenal concept has been grasped, the related emotion(s) can, so to speak, become congealed, or turn into some form of 'emotional residue'. The important point here is that the emotion does not itself need to participate directly in the process of aesthetic perception. As explained above, whereas both the 'basic perception' and the initial appraisal of the object of aesthetic appreciation are necessary elements of aesthetic perception, the occurrence of the appropriate emotional response

⁹² The obvious exception here are judgements about the emotions we experience.

⁹³ For an excellent discussion on this matter, see Goldie (2002c).

is not. Emotions are, to put it slightly bluntly, necessary participants in the aesthetic at the level of phenomenal concept-acquisition, but not at that of judgement.

E). Being response-dependent and being subjective.

The response-dependence of aesthetic properties is not a threat to the pursuit of objectivity (in senses O1, O2, and O3) for aesthetic judgements. The fact of a property's being response-dependent, or ontologically speaking for it to be reliant upon human responses, does not imply that the judgements about those properties need be subjective in all senses of the notion outlined in Chapter I. Rather, in the aesthetic case at least, it is for those judgements to be subjective roughly in the sense of being anthropocentric, or S2. As we saw when the term was introduced, judgements such as 'my neighbour has an ugly house,' and 'the shawl is lilac,' are subjective in the sense of being anthropocentric. It is no coincidence, therefore, that a considerable part of this chapter has been concerned with the analogy between evaluative properties and secondary qualities, and the biconditional structure which, according to dispositionalists and their sympathisers, succeeds in accounting for both kinds of properties.

As mentioned in the first substantial section of this chapter, one of the main advantages of the analogy between secondary qualities and evaluative properties is that the latter seems to gain some ontological 'respectability' from the comparison. Colour properties such as redness are also response-dependent and anthropocentric. But this is not to say that there cannot be impartial, well-grounded and correct judgements about them. If colour judgements, despite being concerned with properties that are response-dependent, are regarded as capable of admitting of objectivity in senses O1, O2 and O3, then perhaps aesthetic judgements too can aspire to being objective in those senses. Especially so since, as I shall argue in greater detail in Chapters IV and V, the disanalogies between aesthetic properties and secondary qualities suggest that there might be even better reasons to take aesthetic judgements to be grounded in generally

available and good reasons (i.e. to be objective in sense O3) than colour or smell judgements.

Despite being concerned with response-dependent properties, the likelihood of aesthetic judgements being objective in senses O2 and O3 is considerably increased once emotional responses and aesthetic judgements have been disentangled from one another. Once it has been established, *contra* Hume, that the relation between the emotional response that an object of aesthetic appreciation gives rise to and the content of the following aesthetic judgement seems unlikely to be a causal one, it will, I shall argue, become possible to develop the view that such judgements can very well be grounded in generally available (and good) reasons. An exploration of this possibility is one of my main concerns in the next chapter. On a more general note, one might say that it is a question worthy of lengthy examination whether ‘relational’ or ‘dispositional’ or ‘non-natural’ (where ‘natural’ is narrowly conceived) properties should always be seen as the ‘poor cousins’ amongst the family of properties. Perhaps, then, there is, as Jerry Fodor has pointed out,

simply nothing wrong with, or ontologically second-rate about, being a property that things have in virtue of their reliable effects on our minds. For we really do have minds, and there really are things whose effects on our minds are reliable.⁹⁴

⁹⁴Fodor (1998), p. 148. Continued: ‘If you doubt that we do, or that there are, then whatever is the source of your scepticism... [p]erhaps it’s that you’re worried about evil demons?’

CHAPTER IV.

(HOW) ARE AESTHETIC CONCEPTS GOVERNED?

TAKING OUR FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCES SERIOUSLY.

A). The epistemological turn.

One of the most important aspects of Hume's rise to the 'challenge of scepticism'¹ in an aesthetic context is that it invites us to revise our understanding of the premises underlying the subjectivity/objectivity dilemma. If, as Hume suggests, it does not necessarily follow from the fact that something is ontologically response-dependent that it cannot have some kind of objective validity (in senses O1 and O3), the tension on which the dilemma rests is weakened. The question that fuels the inquiry of this chapter is one that sets out to answer whether the ontological theory outlined above rules out all epistemological accounts capable of upholding the possibility of aesthetic objectivity (mainly in the sense O3). My conclusion will be that whilst the ontology of aesthetic properties is such that certain kinds of justificatory procedures are excluded, there are other means, available to the aesthetic case, capable of ensuring the rational justification of aesthetic judgements.

In the previous chapter, we saw that failing to disentangle adequately the various aspects of the phenomenology of aesthetic judgements results in an account of response-dependence which rather misleadingly inflates the immediate emotional content of that response. So doing, I argued, leads not only to insuperable difficulties with regards to the pursuit of a standard of correctness, as Hume's essay showed, but

¹ Savile (1993), p. 100.

also ignores the role played by emotions at a more fundamental level of concept acquisition and understanding. Emotional responses frequently do occur in the process of making aesthetic judgements, but are not, I have argued, consistently active in the perception of aesthetic properties. In contrast, the view, according to which the kind of responses on which aesthetic properties depend for their manifestation is understood to be a form of appraisal, isolates and accentuates an element which is invariably indispensable to such perception.

The attempt to combine a certain ontology with a seemingly incongruous epistemology can also be seen to drive Kant's 'deductive' project in the first part of the third *Critique*, the 'Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgement'. Whilst emphasising the subjective nature of the aesthetic judgement's 'determining ground', Kant strives to show that such judgements can have a validity that stretches beyond the scope of the particular subject of experience. This possibility is made to rest on the importance of taking our perceptual experiences – and the interaction of the mental abilities leading to them – seriously, particularly in view of the absence of principles for the application of aesthetic concepts. It is, for Kant, in virtue of our shared psychological skills and the manner in which they are active both in the making of aesthetic and non-aesthetic judgements that the former can aspire to correctness; that aesthetic judgements can be justified despite there being 'no rule according to which any one is to be compelled to recognise anything as beautiful.'²

In this chapter my aim is to explain why and how epistemological accounts of aesthetic judgements must take perceptual experiences seriously in the light of the absence of clear-cut rules for the application of aesthetic concepts. Nevertheless, I will claim that in spite of their weight in such accounts, perceptual experiences do not have justificatory power in the sense regularly ascribed to them with regards to aesthetic

² Kant (2000), §8, 5:216, p. 101.

judgements. As we saw in the previous chapter, Hume's aesthetic theory rests on the view that there is a causal link between the fact that O has elicited the sensation F from the 'true judges', and the correctness of the ensuing judgement (i.e. that O is F). My claim then was that the link between the true judges' emotional experiences and correctness of their ensuing judgements cannot be causal. I now extend that claim to the notion of perceptual experience as such. To put the point bluntly, the perceptual experience we have of an aesthetic property cannot justify the aesthetic judgement we make about it. What Hume's point can be taken to show, however, is that if individuals, be they 'true judges' or not, have a certain kind of experience in perceiving a certain aesthetic property, or even aesthetic properties in general, this adds to the credibility of their status as aesthetic experts. This, in turn, increases the reliability of those experiences in the role of 'indicators' of the presence of an aesthetic property. In other words, the more experienced we are, the more trustworthy our experiences are likely to become.³

I shall begin this chapter by examining Kant's 'Antinomy of Taste' and the role played by concepts in his account of aesthetic judgements. Following on from this, I will look at principles and their power as rules for the application of aesthetic concepts. The over-arching aim of the second section is to show that the application of aesthetic concepts cannot be governed by rules and principles in the same way that the application of most concepts can be. Such a conclusion leads me to an investigation of the view I call 'aesthetic particularism', and of whether that view is not only plausible but also preferable to alternative accounts. In order to establish this, I reject a recurring reductivist objection with the help of the notions of shapelessness and weak supervenience. This brings me to what I call 'the inward turn', which I take to be an epistemological move that participates in the process of justifying aesthetic judgements.

³ Again, it would be interesting to investigate the likenesses this point might afford in the moral sphere.

This aspect of aesthetic justification involves revisiting Kant's theory briefly to discuss his 'deduction' of aesthetic judgement. Throwing but a furtive glance at Kant's own thoughts on this matter, I develop the notion of experiential authentication and the way in which our experiences can and cannot serve as evidence for our aesthetic judgements. I end this chapter by summing up the role of psychological skills and processes in the rational justification of aesthetic judgements.

B). Kant's 'concept-free' thesis and the limited power of principles.

1. The 'Antinomy of Taste'.

Turning from the ontological to the epistemological side of this thesis involves a shift of focus away from the response-dependence of aesthetic concepts and properties towards the decision procedures aesthetic judgements may allow for. Much depends upon the possibility of the justification of aesthetic judgements, since without it, the subjectivity/objectivity dilemma does not actually capture an important philosophical point: if some form of rational justification is not available to aesthetic judgements, all that remains to be done is to cede victory to subjectivism.

In few philosophical texts is the need to resist such an outcome expressed with a greater acuteness than in Kant's final *Critique*. For Kant, the possibility that aesthetic judgements may have a wider validity than a merely personal one is in actual fact a question of the very possibility of aesthetic taste as such. As Anthony Savile writes, Kant's concern arises from a 'desire to allow that taste is possible at all, a thought that brings with it the implication that aesthetic judgements are evaluable as true or false, correct or incorrect.'⁴ Kant himself writes,

[t]he first commonplace of taste is contained in the proposition by means of which everyone who lacks taste thinks to defend himself against criticism: Every one has his own taste. That amounts to saying that the determining ground of this judgment is merely subjective (gratification or pain), and the judgment has no right to the necessary assent of others. Its second commonplace, which is also used even by those who concede to judgments of taste the right to pronounce validly for everyone is: *There is no disputing about taste.* That is as much as to say that the determining ground of a judgment of taste may even be objective, but it cannot be brought to determinate concepts; consequently nothing can be *decided* about the judgment itself by means of proofs, although it is certainly possible and right to *argue* about it.⁵

Kant's point in these opening lines of the 'Antinomy of Taste' is that although it might be possible to effect some form of justification of aesthetic judgements, no such

⁴ Savile (1993), p. 41. For more on how judgements of taste are possible, see Savile (1987), p. 100.

⁵ Kant (2000), §56, 5: 338, p. 214.

judgement can ever be *proved* correct. In contrast to Hume's empirical method, or indeed alternatively any approach set on developing a straightforwardly inductive or deductive method of aesthetic justification, there is, for Kant, no criterion by reference to which any aesthetic judgement can be proved.⁶ The 'Antinomy', faithful to its appellation, thus gives expression to a seemingly rather devastating contradiction.

1. *Thesis*. The judgment of taste is not based on concepts for otherwise it would be possible to dispute about it (decide by means of proofs).

2. *Antithesis*. The judgment of taste is based on concepts, for otherwise, despite its variety, it would not even be possible to argue about it (to lay claim to the necessary assent of others to this judgment).⁷

The tension here arises from the apparent conflict between, on the one hand, the idea that it is reasonable to argue with each other about an aesthetic judgement, and, on the other, that it is not possible to prove or disprove the correctness of one assessment over the other. So, whereas in mathematics or the empirical sciences, it is possible to refute an opponent by means of demonstrations or by invoking determinate rules, no similar appeal can be made in aesthetic disagreements. As Francis Coleman points out, Kant is committed to the view that one 'might prove or disprove the authenticity of a certain painting, but one can never prove its beauty'.⁸ Clearly, the problem raised by the 'Antinomy of Taste' is in many respects founded on the same worry that fuels the argument from rational determinability raised in Chapter II, namely the one founded on the lack of rational procedures by which to resolve aesthetic discord. And indeed, this chapter and the next can be seen as concerned to address this worry. I will argue that we should not adhere to the suggested outcome of that argument; namely, to acknowledge the impossibility of aesthetic objectivity as a result of a lack of rational decision procedures.

⁶ See for example Kant (2000), §33, 5: 284-285, pp. 164-166.

⁷ Kant (2000), §56, 5: 338-339, p. 215.

⁸ Coleman (1974), pp. 136-7.

Kant's antinomy of aesthetic taste hinges on what is meant by 'dispute' and 'argument' respectively. His eventual conclusion is that whereas a *dispute* is meant to refer to a divergence of opinion that can be settled by inductive or deductive proof, an *argument* is actually taken to be such a divergence that, whilst admitting of a correct and incorrect answer, cannot be settled by appeal to determinate rules. The rules in question here are, according to Kant, regulations for the application of concepts. And here lies the difference that the seeming contradiction of the 'Antinomy of Taste' rests upon: whereas the 'thesis' implies that an aesthetic judgement *does not* bring its object of attention under rules for the application of concepts, the 'anti-thesis' *does*.

2. Why can there not be rules of beauty for Kant?

(a). Kant's epistemology – the role of concepts.

Kant's epistemology accords a considerable role to concepts both in aesthetic and non-aesthetic contexts. Thus, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant argues that concepts are rules of synthesis and, as such, the work of the understanding. Concepts are tools for organising our impressions; for classifying them into appropriate categories. It is only through the application of concepts that we can distinguish and understand our mental content. Famously, Kant claims that '[t]houghts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind'.⁹ Judgement, on Kant's account, is a relation between the understanding, which yields concepts, and sense (or sensibility), which acquires (re)presentations (or intuitions). Judging, then, is an activity of applying concepts to (re)presentations. The result is that knowledge consists of the application of concepts to (re)presentations so as to conceptualise our experience of objects and events. For

⁹ Kant (1929), A51, B75, p. 93.

Kant, '[a]ll knowledge demands a concept [where] a concept is always ... something universal which serves as a rule'.¹⁰ Where there are concepts, then, there are rules.

In the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, Kant expands the role of judgement as a mental faculty subsuming particulars under concepts. Here, judgement is accorded two manners of operation: depending on whether a judgement is first furnished with a universal or a particular, a judgement is either 'determinant' or 'reflective'. If 'the universal (the rule, the principle, the law) is given, then the power of judgment, which subsumes the particular under it is... *determining*'.¹¹ If, on the other hand, a particular is given but a universal has to be found for it, the judgement is called 'reflective'. For Kant, aesthetic judgements as we think of them are judgements of reflection and as such, belong 'to the higher faculty of cognition', and hence make a universal claim.¹² In other words, by insisting on the impossibility of aesthetic judgements (i) being grounded on concepts, and (ii) bringing their objects under concepts – by refuting that such judgements are determinant – Kant is denying them to allow of disputes in the sense raised above.

As we saw in Chapter I, the absence of concepts in a judgement's determining ground is that which, according to Kant, distinguishes aesthetic judgements from other judgements. To bring an object under a concept is to ascribe to it 'the sort of quality whose figuring in intuition settles disagreements one way or another'.¹³ It is, so to speak, to enable a judgement to afford knowledge. Yet this cannot be so in the aesthetic case. In contemporary language, one might say that the ontology of aesthetic properties is, as we saw in Chapter III, not like that of most other properties. And it is in virtue of this, and, 'because it provides us with no information of an intuitable sort'¹⁴ that Kant

¹⁰ Kant (1929), A 106, B129, p. 135.

¹¹ Kant (2000), Introduction, IV, 5: 179, pp. 66-67.

¹² Kant (2000), First Introduction, VIII, 20: 225, p. 27. See also VIII, 20: 221-232, pp. 24-33, and Guyer (1997), p. 102.

¹³ Savile (1993), p.43.

¹⁴ Savile (1993), p. 43.

distinguishes aesthetic judgements from ‘logical’ or cognitive judgements.¹⁵ Aesthetic judgements must be grounded not on resources found within empirical concepts but on the perception of the object and the accompanying feeling. This is why

[t]here can be no objective rule of taste that would determine what is beautiful through concepts. For every judgement from this source is aesthetic; i.e. its determining ground is the feeling of the subject and not a concept of an object. To seek a principle of taste that would provide the universal criterion of the beautiful through determinate concepts is a fruitless undertaking, because what is sought is impossible and intrinsically self-contradictory.¹⁶

So, whereas in ‘logical’ judgements, the understanding applies a determinate concept to the representation unified by the imagination to yield such a judgement, in Kant’s aesthetic judgements, the cognitive powers enter into the ‘free play’ referred to at the very beginning of this thesis. This ‘harmony’ of the imagination and the understanding refers to the mental state in which the abilities that usually process information in order to yield knowledge interact in a way that is, to use Christopher Janaway’s words, ‘unconstrained by the rules that subsumption of the data under determinate concepts necessarily brings with it’.¹⁷ This absence of constraint gives rise to a pleasurable feeling – that of experiencing the beautiful. Thus,

[i]f one judges objects merely in accordance with concepts, then all representation of beauty is lost. Thus there can also be no rule in accordance with which someone could be compelled to acknowledge something as beautiful. Whether a garment, a house, a flower is beautiful: no one allows himself to be talked into his judgement about that by means of any grounds or fundamental principles. One wants to submit the object to his own eyes.¹⁸

Unlike Hume, Kant thus denies that the agreed judgement of others can be considered a sufficient basis of justification for an aesthetic judgement – no matter how many individual judgements converge, such a consensus can never be a sufficient basis for one’s own aesthetic judgement.

¹⁵ See Kant (2000), §1, 5: 203-204, p. 89.

¹⁶ Kant (2000), §17, 5: 231, p. 116.

¹⁷ Janaway (1997), p. 469.

¹⁸ Kant (2000), §8, 5: 215-216, p. 101.

At a first glance, then, concepts seem to have no place in Kant's aesthetic judgements: if the presence of concepts entails that of rules of application, and if there can be no rules for beauty, there can be no concepts in aesthetic judgements. Is this so? The question is important to our concerns in so far as it may help us clarify the extent to which there may be some form of rules active in the process of making aesthetic judgements.

(b). *An empty 'cognitive stock'?*¹⁹

When Kant defines the beautiful as that 'which pleases universally without a concept', is it his intention to ban all concepts from the entire process of making aesthetic judgements? Is it the case that, as some philosophers have supposed, 'cognitive vacuity [is] a condition of Kantian judgements of taste?'²⁰

Kant specifically bars concepts from having two roles in aesthetic judgements: first, they cannot constitute the evidential ground for judgements; second, they cannot be that which gives rise to the feeling of pleasure. The first point is implicit in Kant's claim that there are no rules or principles of taste and his view that they cannot be made on the basis of testimony alone. The second underlies his distinction between judging something beautiful and judging it good or perfect. That these two roles are proscribed for concepts in Kant's aesthetic theory does not, by itself at least, entail that they play no role whatsoever in the making of aesthetic judgement. Indeed, the main reason why one must reject the view that Kant's aesthetic judgements 'require a wholly non-conceptual engagement with the object judged',²¹ is that he is committed to the claim that an object must fall under some concept(s) if it is to become an object of experience at all, since 'intuitions without concepts are blind'.²² Hence, Kant is not saying that

¹⁹ Expression first used in Wollheim (1980).

²⁰ Janaway (1997), p. 460. In this passage I draw on Janaway (1997), pp. 464-5.

²¹ Janaway (1997), p. 467.

²² Janaway (1997), p. 472.

when an object is judged beautiful it is not brought under *any* concept. In actual fact, the object is subsumed under the concepts employed to describe the kind of thing it is.

As Savile writes, there

is no reason to suppose that in judging that the rose is beautiful I am not bringing it under the concept *rose*... of course I am. Only that I am doing that is no part of what is conveyed by judging that the rose falls under the predicate ‘... is beautiful’, which is all that Kant is analysing... There is no cause to deny that in the particular case there may be a perfectly good cognitive answer to the question of what it is about the thing that accounts for its beauty. Only that isn’t what we are talking about when we say that it is beautiful. There just is no standing observable feature with which we might identify the aesthetic property or regard as being entailed by its possession.²³

It is perhaps here more than anywhere else that it becomes evident just how Kant’s epistemology of aesthetic judgements is linked to his ontology of aesthetic properties.

For Kant, a beautiful object is one for which we ‘cannot identify a standing feature allowing us to say in advance of experience what it has to be like’,²⁴ and this is one of the main distinguishing factors between aesthetic and ‘logical’ judgements. Aesthetic properties are, as mentioned in Chapter I, relational.²⁵

In what remains of this section I shall look at the role of principles in the aesthetic a little more closely, in order to assess whether they can still be of *some* help in the making of aesthetic judgements or not. I will conclude by outlining some suggestions about the kind of decision procedures that, in the light of the above, I take to be the most appropriate means of justification in an aesthetic context.

²³ Savile (1987), pp. 114-5.

²⁴ Savile (1987), p. 115.

²⁵ There is an issue here, briefly mentioned in Chapter I, that I cannot go into here about a distinction Kant draws between ‘pure’ and ‘impure’ judgements of taste, or judgements of ‘free’ and ‘dependent’ beauty. Free beauty ‘presupposes no concept of what the object ought to be’, whereas dependent beauty ‘does presuppose such a concept and the perfection of the object in accordance with it’. Kant (2000), §16, 5: 229, p. 114. Clearly, the concern here is with whether Kant’s commitment to the view that concepts cannot be the determining grounds of aesthetic judgements actually contradicts his account of judgements of dependent beauty. After all, judgements of dependent beauty ‘presuppose a concept of the end that determines what the thing should be.’ Kant (2000), §16, 5: 230, p. 114. Nevertheless, the seeming incongruity loses much of its force once it is agreed, as it very widely is, that free beauty is the paradigmatic kind of beauty for Kant. Moreover, I take it that Kant’s distinction in no way suggests that in either case we have a concept *for* beauty (in the sense of there being rules of application for that concept). For more on this distinction, see Kant (2000), §16, 5: 229-231, pp. 114-116, Budd (1998a), Janaway (1997), and Savile (1982), Chapter 8.

3. Principles and their power as rules.

(a). Principles – empirical and a priori.

Generally speaking, the distinction between empirical and *a priori* principles is one not only about the way in which such principles can be known, but also about the way in which these principles operate. An empirical principle is a principle that can be ‘discovered’ empirically in virtue of functioning at a level allowing for observation. An *a priori* principle, in contrast, is one that is active amongst concepts, and can thus be known conceptually or logically. How far have we now come, then, with regards to these two kinds of principles? Can either kind play a role in the justification of aesthetic judgements?

In Chapter III, we saw that Hume’s project in aesthetics is fuelled by distinctively empiricist ambitions. As is well known, Hume aimed to achieve in the human sphere the equivalent of what Newton had accomplished in physics, which is why it is not surprising that within this wider context of developing a ‘science of man’, he chose to provide us with an empirical standard of taste. And indeed, the difficulties encountered by the account presented in ‘Of the Standard of Taste’ centre around the rather contingent authority seemingly upholding the equally contingent set of emotional responses. One of the set of questions that press an aesthetic account such as Hume’s urgently are those concerned with *why* one should rely on the judgement of another subject of experience rather than one’s own. In contrast to Hume, Kant rejects the possibility of empirical principles for aesthetic judgements in his third *Critique* on the grounds that the pleasurable experiences of other subjects cannot convince us of some object’s beauty against the weight of our own responses. Indeed, he states quite bluntly

‘that what has pleased others can never serve as the ground of an aesthetic judgement.’²⁶

For Kant, empiricism in aesthetics simply confuses aesthetic pleasure with sensory gratification. However, he also vehemently denies ‘that my judgment should be determined by means of *a priori* grounds of proof’;²⁷ since any ‘*a priori*’ (in the context meaning prescriptive) principles are always liable to be challenged by our actual responses, which are bound to carry the field at the end of the day.²⁸ Thus, Kant writes that

an *a priori* proof in accordance with determinate rules can determine the judgment on beauty even less. If someone reads me his poem or takes me to a play that in the end fails to please my taste, then he can adduce Batteux or Lessing, or even older and more famous critics of taste, and adduce all the rules they established as proofs that his poem is beautiful... I will stop my ears... since it is supposed to be a judgment of taste and not of the understanding or of reason.²⁹

This emphasis on first-hand experience ties in with Kant’s aesthetic account in relation to concepts: if concepts, rather than one’s own experience of pleasure, were that upon which aesthetic judgements are grounded, there would be rules, knowable empirically or *a priori*, for beauty, which is, as is clear from the above, impossible for Kant.³⁰ I will return to this question towards the end of this chapter.³¹

The main sense in which Kant’s account of principles in the process of justifying aesthetic judgements is an improvement on Hume’s theory is that it avoids the pitfalls outlined in the previous chapter resulting from positing one kind of subject’s (emotional) response as the necessary – and sufficient – ground for the correctness of the ensuing judgement. Instead, it encourages us to pursue an account by which

²⁶ Kant (2000), §33, 5: 284, p. 164.

²⁷ Kant (2000), §33, 5: 254, p. 165. This is distinct from his claim that ‘in judging of beauty in general we seek the standard for it in ourselves *a priori*’. See Kant (2000), §58, 5: 350, p. 224. I will return to this point in section D below.

²⁸ Savile (1993), p. 51.

²⁹ Kant (2000), §33, 5: 284-5, p. 165.

³⁰ Clearly, this is one area in which an investigation of Kant’s position with regards to rationalism and empiricism, mentioned in Chapter I, would be particularly interesting.

³¹ I am aware of the fact that there are other ways in which principles, notably the *a priori* principle of aesthetic taste, can participate in the making of aesthetic judgements generally, but do not go into it here because it is really a separate issue.

aesthetic judgements can allow for a wider validity despite the absence of inductive and deductive means of demonstrations by emphasising the importance of the first-hand experiences we have of aesthetic properties. Before turning to an examination of the way in which our particular experience can be the starting-point of an alternative means of aesthetic justification, I suggest that we spend a little more time looking at possible inferences from the non-aesthetic to the aesthetic. I begin by outlining a division set out by Jerrold Levinson between different ways in which aesthetic properties can relate to non-aesthetic properties.

(b). Inferences, conceptual connections and semantics.

Can there be inferential relations between the non-aesthetic and the aesthetic so that we can have aesthetic principles *either* of the kind ‘If “O is N1” and “O is N2”, then “O is A” (where “N1” and “N2” are non-aesthetic – and non-evaluative – properties, and where “A” is an aesthetic property)’, with the conclusion following deductively from the premises; *or* of the form ‘Since all Os observed so far are A, all Os are A’ (i.e. an inductive inference where the conclusion is supported or rendered plausible by the premises)?

According to Levinson, there are four kinds of relation between non-aesthetic and aesthetic properties: ‘definist’, ‘positive condition-governing’, ‘negative condition-governing’, and ‘emergentist’. On the first view, it is possible to outline both necessary and sufficient non-aesthetic conditions for any ascription of an aesthetic property. Moreover, these conditions explicate the meaning of the ascription entirely, so that a term such as ‘graceful’ really just means ‘has thin and smooth lines, etc.’.³²

The second position, most famously defended by Peter Kivy, holds that there are sufficient non-aesthetic conditions for the application of aesthetic predicates even

³² Levinson (1996), p. 138.

though there are not strict and complete definitions of the latter via the former. According to this theory, it is ‘part of the meaning of aesthetic predicates’ that non-aesthetic ‘descriptions are sometimes enough to logically ensure the applicability of an aesthetic description’, or, in other words, that there are ‘semantic rules in virtue of which an aesthetic feature must be said to be present’ if certain non-aesthetic properties are present.³³ The third kind of account is that put forward by Frank Sibley. This has it that there is some kind of semantic link between non-aesthetic and aesthetic properties but merely to the extent that certain non-aesthetic descriptions can ‘logically *preclude* certain aesthetic ones’. Sibley is thus not committed to the claim that non-aesthetic descriptions can be ‘sufficient to logically *ensure* the applicability of an aesthetic one.’³⁴ Finally, there is the position, defended by Beardsley and Levinson, according to which there is *no* conceptual connection between the non-aesthetic and the aesthetic. An emergentist allows that gaudiness, say, seems to require bright colours for its emergence, but takes this to reveal something about nature or psychology rather than the semantics of ‘garish’.³⁵ By postponing my treatment of these views until the next section I hope to bring out the importance of the broader context in which they are embedded. I now proceed to a brief outline of the view I take to be the most plausible on this matter, namely the one that allows for so-called ‘negative condition-governing’, since some aspects of the idea it tries to capture underlies the account I will present in subsequent parts of this chapter.

Similarly to the way in which Kant’s aesthetic theory does not allow rules or principles to determine the relation from non-aesthetic to aesthetic properties, Sibley’s account defends the view that there can be ‘no sufficient conditions, no non-aesthetic features such that the presence of some set or numbers of them will beyond question

³³ Levinson (1996), p. 138.

³⁴ Levinson (1996), pp. 138-139.

³⁵ Levinson (1996), p. 140.

logically justify or warrant the application of an aesthetic term'.³⁶ So, a line may be as thin, smooth and continuously curved as one likes, but that will not 'conclusively mean that it is or must be *graceful*'.³⁷ In an admirably concise paper, Budd disentangles three elements of Sibley's account of the relation between aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties, of which the first two claim:

For any aesthetic property, there is no set of nonaesthetic properties such that it is a conceptual truth that the possession of the set by an item is both logically necessary and logically sufficient for the item's possession of the aesthetic property... [Second,] for any aesthetic property, there is no nonaesthetic property (or set of properties) such that it is a conceptual truth that the possession of the nonaesthetic property by an item is logically sufficient for the item's possession of the aesthetic property.³⁸

For Sibley, then, there are no general rules for the application of aesthetic concepts that can be stated in terms of an object's non-aesthetic properties, because no list of non-aesthetic properties can ever constitute logically sufficient conditions for the application of an aesthetic concept. However, the third aspect of Sibley's account has it that

[f]or some aesthetic properties, there is a nonaesthetic property (or set of properties) such that it is a conceptual truth that the possession of the nonaesthetic property by an item is a logically necessary condition for the item's possession of the aesthetic property.³⁹

So that 'if we specify that a line is thick, short, broken, and rough, then it becomes impossible for it to be graceful... even as a matter of semantics'.⁴⁰ The idea, in a nutshell, is that there are some aesthetic concepts for which there are a number of relevant features such that the presence of some groups or combinations of these features is sufficient for not applying the concept. For Sibley, aesthetic concepts are, then, not governed by conditions at all except negatively.

³⁶ Sibley (2001a), p. 5.

³⁷ Levinson (1996), pp. 138-139.

³⁸ Budd (1999), p. 301.

³⁹ Budd (1999), p. 301. Continued: 'It follows that aesthetic judgements that ascribe aesthetic properties of this kind are susceptible of disproof by reference to an a priori aesthetic principle linking aesthetic and nonaesthetic properties.'

⁴⁰ Sibley (2001a), p. 8.

Sibley's view on these matters is significant in several respects, some of which will be discussed in the course of this chapter. Central to our present concern, however, is the 'weak conceptual connection' that Sibley allows between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic.⁴¹ In the next section I shall show that this view is the one that best accounts for (i) the non-reducibility of aesthetic properties to non-aesthetic ones, and (ii) the way in which there still are generalisations active in the aesthetic.

4. The way forward for aesthetic decision procedures.

Building on the section concerned with Hume's theory of aesthetic objectivity in the previous chapter, my aim in this section has been to outline the beginning of an explanation of why principles – be they empirical or *a priori*; inductive or deductive – cannot be of any direct help in aesthetic justification. From Hume's account of an empirical standard of aesthetic taste we have already seen that the standard of objectivity (mainly in sense O1) for aesthetic judgements, cannot be found in the verdicts of 'true judges'. What is needed here is, at least in a first instance, to secure an explanation of what it is about 'true judges' that makes their emotional responses appropriate and symptomatic of correctness.⁴² In contrast, the main point that Kant's 'Antinomy of Taste' brings to light in relation to our concerns is the claim that although inductive and deductive proofs are inadequate methods for aesthetic justification, the process of seeking an adequate account of aesthetic justification is not thereby definitively defeated. Even though, as Sibley's account emphasised, one might not be able to justify aesthetic judgements by first positing certain plausible premises, subsequently asserting that certain relations invariably hold between concepts, and finally drawing conclusions with

⁴¹ Levinson (1996), p. 139.

⁴² See Savile (1987), p. 101. See also Kant (2000), §58, 5: 350, pp. 224-225 and §33, 5: 284-285, p. 165, for the rejection of the idea that we might look for empirical principles to which taste is subject.

the help of inferential rules, there is something about the way in which aesthetic judgements rest on first-hand experiences that might still render possible their rational justification.

It goes without saying that if aesthetic objectivity is to be attainable, there must be rational decision procedures by which to establish which aesthetic judgements are correct and which ones are not. My aim here is not to take issue with that claim. What I do wish to question, however, is whether only proofs and demonstrations fitting for 'logical' or non-evaluative judgements can qualify as distinctively *rational* decision procedures. Sibley's goal in this context is not to cast doubt on the possibility of there being aesthetic decision procedures as such, but, he asks, need these

be tests that would settle, even in principle, all individual cases beyond doubt, or even a *high* rather than *some* proportion of cases? The existence of a procedure might suffice for objectivity even though (a) it was complex and hard to apply, (b) it was seldom pursued and applied, and (c) it would settle only *some* proportion of cases conclusively. Then disagreement might conceivably abound, some genuinely irresolvable, many others *in fact* often unresolved; but a realm of objectivity might be made possible by some *limited* (not widespread) actual agreement including some settled and virtually indisputable cases, together with a perhaps elaborate and hard to describe procedure that offers the possibility, by envisageable ways, of attaining wider agreement.⁴³

What Sibley encourages us to do here is to revise our conception of the decision procedures traditionally associated with objectivity. In other words, he urges us to consider whether the methods for settling aesthetic disagreements we have unsuccessfully sought to establish are of an appropriate kind. What one might have to seek here instead are rational decision procedures suitable for the subject-matter of the impersonal stance, but not for the personal perspective.

What I will explore in the remainder of this chapter and the next is whether there can be rational means available to aesthetic justification other than the traditional demonstrative means. I hope to show that whilst aesthetic disagreements may not be resolved by means of inductive or deductive proofs, there may still be a truth of the

⁴³ Sibley (2001c), pp. 73-4.

matter to be not only agreed upon, but also justified, albeit by means other than induction and deduction. What needs to be done, I shall argue, is simultaneously to stress the importance of (i) the individual perceptual experiences, and (ii) the features of particular cases. I now leave the largely negative part of my task behind, and turn to an examination of the approach called 'particularism', and to the question of whether upholding such a view in aesthetics is (i) possible, and (ii) plausible.

C). Aesthetic Particularism.

1. The main tenets.

At a first glance, aesthetic judgements might seem an easy target for the argument from rational determinability. This argument, as we saw in Chapter II, has it that if a subject-matter lacks principles, rules or proofs capable of establishing with certainty whether a given judgement is correct or not, then no correctness can be ascribed to judgements concerned with that subject-matter. The view underlying this line of reasoning is usually referred to as the ‘generalist’ (or ‘universalist’) position, and states that rules or principles are not only the sole means by which individual judgements can be determined as correct, but also that which enable the very possibility of correctness. Accordingly, in the sphere of value, generalists hold that if there are no principles or rule-like generalisations between properties, there can be no correct value judgements.⁴⁴ One of the main charges brought by generalists against their opponents – particularists – is thus that since particularism ignores the role played by principles in deliberations about value, it cannot resolve disagreements.

The particularism I want to address in this chapter is primarily epistemological. By this I mean that my main concern here will be with a particularist understanding of principles and rules, and, more broadly, of the possibility of justification.⁴⁵ As should be clear from the above, the main epistemological problem for particularism is how to ascertain a judgement’s correctness or incorrectness in the absence of inferential rules. This worry is a direct result of the particularist’s emphasis on variability, or more precisely, the idea that properties have variable relevance. This is, then, also one of the points anticipated by Kant and Sibley, namely that the fact that a property counts, say, in

⁴⁴ There are stronger and weaker versions of this view.

⁴⁵ I do not hereby wish to commit myself exclusively to particularism in the epistemological domain, as I see the two kinds of particularism (i.e. epistemological and ontological) as closely linked.

favour of an object of aesthetic appreciation in one case need not imply that it does so in all cases. As we have seen, there is, on Kant's account, no exhaustive set of inferential principles capable of establishing the correctness of particular aesthetic judgements. Similarly, for Sibley there can be no principles linking non-aesthetic to aesthetic properties that can play this role. On both Kant's and Sibley's accounts, first-hand experience thereby comes to be the key to the epistemology of aesthetic judgements.

Aesthetic particularism thus claims that there are no principles linking non-aesthetic properties to aesthetic ones in such a way that it is possible to infer from the presence of (a set of) non-aesthetic properties that there is or will be (a set of) aesthetic properties. Similarly with the relation between 'thick' and 'thin' aesthetic properties – there can, for the aesthetic particularist, be no principles whereby the presence of a thick aesthetic property ensures the presence of a thin aesthetic property. That particularists usually emphasise the heterogeneity of the class of aesthetic concepts is not surprising, since it is mainly this heterogeneity that renders it so problematic to find rules that can be imposed across it (or indeed even a section of it). Intense colours, say, may at times be partly responsible for the successful expressiveness of a work aiming to convey a sense of dynamic unity, but can lead to an impression of chaotic desolation in another. Further, this heterogeneity of the aesthetic might very well be such that there is not one particularist position which is viable throughout the aesthetic, so that, say, the 'thinner' the concept is, the more appropriate a certain kind of particularist position becomes, and vice-versa in the case of 'thicker' aesthetic concepts.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ It might, of course, also be the case that the 'thicker' an aesthetic concept is, the more appropriate a particularist interpretation of it and the properties it picks out becomes. Some particularists emphasise the 'thickness' of relevant descriptions, claiming that their 'saturation with cultural and social meanings' render them 'non-transportable from context to context', and further, that a thick description 'cannot be cashed out in culture- or context-neutral terms.' Garfield (2000), p. 180.

It is important to note that none of the above should be taken to imply that all particularists are ‘rule-nihilists’.⁴⁷ In actual fact, most defenders of particularism refuse to deny that there are some kinds of generalisations involved in our evaluative reasoning. What is distinctive, however, is that they defend a particularist understanding of them. The controversy is, then, rather about the exact role and importance of such generalisations. As Jay Garfield writes in the collection *Moral Particularism*,

everything hangs on whether what it is to follow a rule and what it is to know a rule are understood as the grasp of a universal generalization from which knowledge of particular instances is derived, or as the knowledge of how to respond to paradigm instances, with an appropriate but perhaps inarticulate ability to generalize.⁴⁸

Most particularists in the domain of moral epistemology can thus be seen to hold that ‘moral knowledge does consist in the grasp of rules, but that that grasp must be understood in particularist terms.’⁴⁹ Evidently, one may still wonder whether these generalisations do not in actual fact represent a greater threat to particularism than some of its defenders would like to admit. And, if it can be shown that such is *not* the case, what role do particular experiences play in shaping the setting in which we lead what at least occasionally seem to be our rather rule-governed lives? I shall address the second question towards the end of this section. For now, I turn to the first question, namely whether some form of rule-like relation between non-aesthetic and aesthetic properties constitutes a menace to aesthetic particularism. I shall argue that despite admitting to a (very limited) presence of generalisations, aesthetic particularism can still hold that the outcomes of aesthetic deliberations can resist being captured by general formulae.

Transposing the words of Margaret Little from a moral to an aesthetic context, one can say that despite the fact that the ‘situations we confront are often saturated with unique

⁴⁷ Jonathan Dancy has been described as a ‘rule-nihilist’. See Garfield (2000), p. 181.

⁴⁸ Garfield (2000), p. 178.

⁴⁹ Garfield (2000), p. 181.

combinations of... salient features... no principles, however subtle or complicated, provide an adequate guide or model of how we should navigate through them.⁵⁰

I shall begin by looking at how it is possible, if at all, to avert an alleged threat to particularism stemming from a commitment to supervenience. In a first instance, this threat targets the coherence of particularism as a philosophical approach desirous of adhering to the doctrine of supervenience. In a second, it addresses the possibility of uniting particularism and non-reductivism. This will lead me to outline a distinction between different kinds of supervening relations, and to return to Levinson's division between distinct ways of viewing the relation between non-aesthetic and aesthetic properties. Having thus addressed the main worries that might arise for a particularist epistemology from a certain ontology or metaphysics about aesthetic properties, I turn my attention to what might be a more properly epistemological – and I believe more important – danger for aesthetic particularism, namely the manner in which we acquire semantic competence with aesthetic concepts and how we make use of it.

2. Supervenience and reductivism revisited.

(a). The possibility of particularism in the light of supervenience.

As discussed in Chapter II, it is generally agreed that aesthetic properties supervene on non-aesthetic ones, even though they may not always do so in a direct manner (some aesthetic properties depend in a first instance on other aesthetic or moral properties which in turn depend on non-evaluative ones). There is, one could say, no such thing as an aesthetic property that does not ultimately depend on a non-evaluative one.⁵¹ This metaphysical point about how some properties depend on others links up with the

⁵⁰ Little (2000), p. 276.

⁵¹ In other words, there is no such thing as an aesthetic property that does not relate to a material object, regardless of whether this 'object' is taken to be 'material' in the traditional sense of the term, or whether it refers to a particular chemical brain-state.

epistemological concern of aesthetic particularists principally in the following concern: to what extent can the relation between subvening and supervening properties be codified? The worry here is that once we accept that there are regular relations of dependence between two kinds of properties, such as non-aesthetic and aesthetic ones, we seem to recognise the existence of some form of law-like rules, and thereby perhaps reject the main tenet of particularism.

A similar concern is brought to light by Simon Blackburn with regards to moral properties. For Blackburn, the main philosophical challenge that arises from a commitment to supervenience between moral and non-moral properties is this: how, if we accept that moral properties supervene on non-moral ones, can the former be said to be autonomous of the latter in a way that enables at least some moral judgements to be correct where that correctness is not simply *entailed* by non-moral facts?⁵² It seems, Blackburn argues, that whatever might be able to account for the autonomy of moral properties counts against the truth of supervenience. The central difficulty for adherents of particularism here is, then, that a rejection of principles going from the non-evaluative to the evaluative seems to turn supervenience into ‘an opaque, isolated, logical fact, for which no explanation can be proffered.’⁵³

Now, one of the assumptions that a charge like Blackburn’s rests on is, roughly, the idea that if the relation of supervenience holds, then any non-evaluative property that has once given rise to an evaluative property must always do so (i.e. in all possible worlds). This is the major reason why Blackburn takes a commitment to supervenience to be incompatible with a rejection of reductivism. But supervenience need not be viewed like that. In actual fact, supervenience is a dependence-relation that admits of several degrees according to the context in which it is applied. There are two generic kinds of supervenience, namely ‘weak’ and ‘strong’. Generally, whereas ‘weak’

⁵² Blackburn (1993a).

⁵³ Blackburn (1993a), p. 119. See also Shafer-Landau (1994) and Bovens & Draai (1999), p. 242.

supervenience only requires that two items do not differ at the evaluative level when they have the same non-evaluative properties, ‘strong’ supervenience requires that having a non-evaluative property necessarily requires having an evaluative one (in all possible worlds). My point here is that it is the latter kind of supervenience that represents a threat to non-reductivism, and *not* the former. So, as Sibley’s account encourages us to believe, aesthetic properties can still supervene on non-aesthetic ones along some form of weak supervenience relation even though there seem to be no (sets of) non-aesthetic properties that can serve as logically *sufficient* conditions for ascribing an aesthetic property to an item.⁵⁴ I therefore conclude that a commitment to supervenience of the weak kind, is not incompatible with an adherence to particularism.⁵⁵

This leaves me to make two final, and closely connected, points. First, I want to draw attention to the fact that there is an important distinction between the possibility of there being, on the one hand, law-like relations in metaphysics, and, on the other, law-like relations in epistemology. And there is, quite clearly, a sense in which our commitments in metaphysics and/or ontology are independent of our epistemological standpoints and vice-versa. I would not want to be taken to conflate these two subject-matters. However, and this brings me to my second point, there does, and perhaps particularly so in the aesthetic case, seem to be a special kind of connection between the epistemology and ontology or metaphysics in view of the response-dependent or relational character of the properties in question. As we have already seen, the fact that aesthetic properties are ontologically unlike most other properties does have important consequences for the possibility of justifying the judgements we make about them. Let me then address one further way in which the ontology or metaphysics of aesthetic properties may be seen to affect the epistemology of aesthetic judgements.

⁵⁴ For a helpful summary of Sibley’s view on aesthetic supervenience, see Lamarque (2001), pp. 103-5.

⁵⁵ For an argument to the effect that weak supervenience is trivial, see Currie (1990a).

(b). *Reductivism and the notion of shapelessness.*

The directly related worry that a commitment to both particularism and supervenience may give rise to in an aesthetic context has to do with the question of whether, by allowing that aesthetic properties supervene on non-aesthetic ones, one does not also commit oneself to some form of reductivism about aesthetic properties. Does, in other words, a commitment to supervenience undermine the possibility of a non-reductivist account of aesthetic properties?⁵⁶ In the context of the wider class of mental properties, the concern underlying this question has perhaps been discussed most prominently by Jaegwon Kim with regards to the compatibility of the doctrine of supervenience and the principle of the anomalism of the mental. Is there not, Kim asks in his *Supervenience and the Mind*, a sense in which supervenience claims yield psycho-physical laws linking mental and physical properties, and thus admit of some sort of reduction?⁵⁷

In the philosophy of mind, one of the main issues that counts against the plausibility of reducing mental to non-mental properties is the *variable realisability* of mental properties: if a mental property is multiply realised by a variety of material properties in diverse species and structures, it can, the argument goes, not be reducible to any single non-mental or material property. The idea underlying the claim from variable realisability in aesthetics is then also that there cannot be one non-aesthetic property (or a set of non-aesthetic properties) that is invariably co-extensive with a specific aesthetic property. However, in aesthetics, as in the philosophy of mind, simply pointing to variable realisation does not suffice to reject reductionism: since it may be possible to

⁵⁶ It will be remembered that this point was briefly raised in Chapter II. For a clear account of what David Charles and Kathleen Lennon describe as the five classical conditions for scientific reduction, see Charles & Lennon (1992), p. 5. The conditions are: (i) the derivation of higher-level laws; (ii) the discovery of nomological biconditionals linking the terms of each theory; (iii) the presence of genuine properties at the reducing level; (iv) the causal explanation in terms of the reducing theory of the phenomena explained by the reduced theory; (v) a reason for giving privileged status to the reducing descriptions.

⁵⁷ Kim (1993).

form a disjunction of the various subvening properties on which the supervening property may rest, such a disjunction might still form the basis for the reducing property. In resisting this suggestion, philosophers have denied that *any* disjunction can generate a reducing property because for the reason that a decision about what should be included in that set would still require using the higher-level predicate. In this sense, the disjunction would be ‘shapeless’ (in the aesthetic case from the impersonal stance), in that the only way of making organisational sense of it would be by seeing it in terms of the predicate it purports to clarify.⁵⁸ So, on the scientific view, one would not see objects as funny, but rather as ‘something-described-as-funny’, enabling us perhaps to predict when we will laugh, but not giving us any complete understanding and/or explanation of why we actually laugh. Applied to the aesthetic case, then, the notion of shapelessness can be used to show that any disjunctive set of non-aesthetic descriptions that refer to distinct graceful lines, say, will simply be shapeless unless we apply the predicate ‘graceful’ to them. And if there is such shapelessness, the disjunction is to be rejected as the ground for a genuine property because it displays no explanatory unity. What non-reductivists insist upon then is, in other words, that at least some aesthetic properties will not be identifiable with properties discernible from a perspective that cannot include the values in question – the impersonal stance. As Wiggins writes, the ‘groupings’ that arise about evaluative features ‘have no purely naturalistic rationale... *That, in a way, is the point of supervenience.*’⁵⁹ There is no pattern or ‘shape’ to be perceived in the classes of aesthetic properties from outside the personal perspective; it is impossible, so to speak, to grasp what it is they have in common from outside it.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ For more on shapelessness, see Blackburn (1981), p. 167, McDowell (1998c), pp. 144ff, Charles & Lennon (1992), pp. 7-8.

⁵⁹ Wiggins (1998c), p. 193 (my italics).

⁶⁰ I do not wish to suggest that all threats to non-reductivism about aesthetic properties are hereby averted. Yet, I do take shapelessness to make an important point which is related to Moore’s ‘open question’ argument outlined in Chapter II.

The point made with the help of the notion of shapelessness also takes us a good way towards an explanation of why both the first and second position outlined by Levinson with regards to the relation between aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties should be rejected. The definitist and positive condition-governing approach are at heart reductivist about aesthetic properties and so cannot accommodate for the question raised by that notion. It is, however, worth noting too that Levinson's own rebuttal of the first three views is just a little too quick in so far as it seems to conflate two positions previously clearly differentiated, namely those allowing for positive and negative condition-governing respectively.⁶¹ The difference that prevails between the two positions is important and deserves to be made explicit: whilst the former has it that there are sufficient non-aesthetic conditions for the ascription of aesthetic properties, and so that there are rules of semantics in virtue of which an aesthetic property must be present if certain non-aesthetic properties are present, Sibley's admitting to a semantic link between aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties rules out the possibility that the presence of non-aesthetic properties can be sufficient to logically ensure the presence of an aesthetic one.⁶² In short, then, one could say that whereas the view that allows for positive condition-governing seems incapable of taking into account the shapelessness of non-aesthetic descriptions, Sibley's non-reductivist theory does allow of this: for Sibley, any set of non-aesthetic descriptions will be shapeless unless we apply the aesthetic predicate to them.

All in all, the notion of shapelessness is one of the best tools with which to avert reductivism in aesthetics. Indeed, even if it were feasible that there might be highly complex sentences, say, capable of specifying the aesthetic as a function of the non-aesthetic, particularists would not necessarily have to abandon their view since, as Little argues, 'such functions are not equivalent to the generalities she [the particularist]

⁶¹ See Levinson (1996), p. 152.

⁶² Levinson (1996), pp. 138-139.

rejects. They are, to put it bluntly, the wrong type of generality, unable to serve the theoretic function that the notion of shapelessness concerns.’ Instead, the ‘particularist’s claim is that the *good-making* relation cannot be cashed out in propositional form’.⁶³ Indeed moral particularists like John McDowell suggest not that there are no moral rules, but rather, that ‘no conception of virtue could be reduced to any such set of rules, and that moral knowledge cannot consist in the mechanical application of a set of criterial rules.’⁶⁴

On a final note, in *Philosophical Naturalism*, David Papineau writes that if one wants to deny a physicalistic (i.e. in this context reductionist) kind of naturalism in aesthetics, one must deny that there are any law-like relations linking non-aesthetic (or subvening) properties and aesthetic (or supervening) properties.⁶⁵ However, as Papineau writes, the fact that

you cannot have physicalism without reducibility only applies to special categories that enter into lawlike generalisations. It probably doesn’t apply to aesthetic categories... It seems plausible that aesthetic categories supervene on physical categories: two situations can scarcely differ aesthetically if they are physically identical. But since it also seems likely that aesthetic categories such as ‘beautiful’ or ‘tragic’ don’t enter into any serious lawlike generalisations, there need be nothing puzzling about the failure of aesthetic categories to reduce to the physical. If there are no generalisations framed in aesthetic categories in the first place, then there is no need for physical reductions of those aesthetic categories to explain those generalisations. However, you can only resist reductionism in this way if your denial of special laws is whole-hearted.⁶⁶

The question now, then, is whether the aesthetic particularist’s denial of generalisations is all that whole-hearted.

⁶³ Little (2000), p. 285.

⁶⁴ Garfield (2000), p. 186.

⁶⁵ Papineau (1993), p. 45.

⁶⁶ Papineau (1993), pp. 49-50.

3. Semantic competence with aesthetic concepts and the epistemological role of the emotions.

An alternative challenge to aesthetic particularism involves drawing attention to the way in which aesthetic concepts are acquired and eventually applied. The idea, in a nutshell, is that when we learn about aesthetic concepts and properties we do so mainly by examples, and the generalisations and rules we draw from them, and that since particularism undermines the role played by rules and principles, it cannot incorporate this manner of acquiring and learning to apply concepts.⁶⁷ In a paper contained in the collection cited above, Frank Jackson, Philip Pettit and Michael Smith develop a semantic argument against particularism in ethics. They argue that

[w]hile particularism is compatible with the doctrine of moral supervenience... it must reject the idea that there are *patterned* nonmoral differences underlying attributions of moral properties. Yet this second claim... is essential to making sense of semantic competence with ethical concepts. The explanation of the consistency in our use of our evaluative concepts has to find pattern in the natural. By abandoning the commitment to pattern at the natural level, the particularist renders mysterious how we could learn or justify our use of moral concepts and terms.⁶⁸

Does this challenge bite in aesthetics?

As I mentioned above, a commitment to particularism does not necessarily entail a denial of the claim that rules have some role to play in the sphere of value, for example, in pedagogical contexts and criticism. Most particularists do in fact agree that rules about aesthetic matters do have heuristic functions in this sense. Rather, the particularist's claim about the absence of rules is, be it in aesthetics or ethics, mainly concerned with the impossibility of there being strict principles going from the non-evaluative to the evaluative. This idea is not far removed from Aristotle's point about the impossibility of there being moral prodigies as opposed to mathematical prodigies.⁶⁹ That this is so, the thought goes, is because moral understanding and knowledge

⁶⁷ By 'semantic competence' I shall merely mean the ability and skill with which we come to understand a concept and learn to apply it (correctly).

⁶⁸ Hooker & Little (2000), p. viii.

⁶⁹ Aristotle (1980), Book 6, Chap. 8, 1142a11ff, pp. 148-149.

requires considerable experience of individual cases, and not simply conceptual knowledge that can be relatively swiftly and unproblematically acquired. Thus the particularist does not deny all involvement of rules in aesthetic concept acquisition and application, but welcomes the rules of thumb that can be distilled from particular cases. In other words, the particularist derives the content of generalisations from individual instances. In this context, the usefulness of paradigm cases is evident – paradigmatic cases must not only, to use Garfield’s words, ‘be picked out and characterized as satisfying relevant... descriptions’,⁷⁰ but if they are to operate as instances of aesthetically relevant types, one must also be committed to generalisations that ascribe similar aesthetic properties to relevantly similar conditions. This I take to be one of the main reasons why one of the two remaining non-reductivist accounts of the relation between non-aesthetic and aesthetic properties is preferable to the other; the reason why I think Sibley’s view to be more viable than Beardsley and Levinson’s ‘emergentism’, is that it makes better sense of the way in which rules *are* still present in the aesthetic. Non-aesthetic descriptions can, then, never be ‘sufficient to logically *ensure* the applicability of an aesthetic one’,⁷¹ but there can still be some semantic connection between them to the extent that certain non-aesthetic descriptions can logically *preclude* some aesthetic ones.

The psychological goings-on described above can be illustrated by both non-aesthetic and aesthetic examples. One such illustration is the one used by Garfield about Australian rules football. In this game, the job of the umpire requires the use of judgement, and clearly, there are rules concerning scoring that guide umpires in making their rulings. Yet, Garfield argues, such rules are learned differently and guide action in a dissimilar fashion from the way in which rules concerning goals are learned and guide actions. The former cannot be fully acquired without any experience of its instances.

⁷⁰ Garfield (2000), p. 200.

⁷¹ Levinson (1996), pp. 138-139.

So that obvious ‘instances of marks, non-marks, and of borderline cases, together with a commentary on each explaining why each counts as a clear case either way or a borderline case would be necessary in teaching that rule, and what is learned is a discrimination based on similarity relations to paradigm cases.’⁷² What distinguishes particularism in such a context is that there is no individual descriptive property that can be characterised independently of all instances in virtue of which they are what they are. In other words, one cannot learn a formula in order to learn what the concept stands for and recognise each instance of it.⁷³

Similarly, in learning how to paint serene aquarelles, say, there are certain rules that ought to be acquired, such as the extent to which the various degrees of the wetness of the brush can have different effects on the paper, how certain colours contrast with each other, and so on. These are the kinds of rules of thumb that one can learn in an art school, or during evening classes, and are important devices in so far as they are helpful tools in achieving a certain aim, such as painting a serene aquarelle. Nevertheless, and this is the issue relevant to our concerns, to acknowledge the existence of such rules is by no means to commit oneself to the view that there are rules for creating a *serene* aquarelle. In actual fact, even Kant – despite his commitment to the absence of rules for beauty – makes exception for this kind of rule in the aesthetic.⁷⁴ In aesthetic criticism, generalisations are used mainly to draw attention to relevant features of the object of appreciation and highlight any pertinent similarities with other cases. As Budd has pointed out, art criticism could be called ‘the rational appreciation of works of art.’ As such, it ‘seeks to establish the correct understanding of a work, to

⁷² Garfield (2000), p. 188.

⁷³ A similar case might be the correction of philosophy exams: the person correcting essays must have learnt the established rules about various grading-categories, what counts as plagiarism, and so on. Yet in marking the essay, one applies rules differently to the way in which one would were one correcting a paper on spelling.

⁷⁴ See, for example, Kant (2000), §46, pp. 186-7.

articulate its distinctive merits and defects'.⁷⁵ And here the emotions can help us considerably.

In the moral case, one can say that one teaches children to be morally good not solely, as Garfield writes, by 'lecturing on an axiomatized moral theory set out in a set of moral principles', but also by arousing the appropriate emotions (such as initiating compassion for the suffering or admiration for the generous, and so on). We do this by 'offering instances of moral goodness and evil for consideration and by praising and condemning instances of the child's behaviour... We do often teach children moral principles... but we do so as summaries, codifications of and as stimuli of moral responses we expect and engender, rather than as moral verities in their own right.'⁷⁶ Now, like in the moral case, the emotions can, at least occasionally, guide our attention to detect those features that are salient to our judgement in assessing objects of aesthetic appreciation. Emotions can direct our minds, so to speak, by highlighting certain relevant features. So that when I hear a certain softness in a piece of music, perceiving that softness can serve as a clue for which aesthetic properties might be ascribable to this particular piece. Similarly, when one gets a person (adult or child) to perceive the aesthetic property in question for him- or herself, one can make use of the emotional responses he or she might experience in order to enable them to grasp the property in question. Towards the end of the next section, and in my final chapter, I will argue that the main way in which emotions can participate in the process of justifying aesthetic judgements is in virtue of their ability to help us locate the features that are relevant to the aesthetic judgement in question.

⁷⁵ Budd (1996), pp. 40-41.

⁷⁶ Garfield (2000), p. 195.

D). The ‘inward turn’.⁷⁷

1. Psychology and epistemology.

Although the epistemology of aesthetic judgements need not rest on strict inferential rules or principles, it does, I have argued throughout this thesis, rely (at least in a first instance) on a clarificatory account of the psychological processes involved in aesthetic perception and assessment. Now, from the discussion of aesthetic particularism, we saw that the mental operations and reflective procedures⁷⁸ we engage in when we acquire semantic competence of an aesthetic concept, or when we learn to pick out an aesthetic property, is neither entirely sporadic nor completely principle-governed. Instead, we make use of generalisations conceived as rules of thumb and distilled from particular cases, and reason our way forward, sometimes with the help of our emotional responses, and at other times not. Clearly, such an account of aesthetic epistemology rests on a methodological model that emphasises the role of our first-hand perceptual experiences and how we draw on them in virtue of their ability to compensate, so to speak, for the lack of inductive and deductive inferences that can be made from the non-aesthetic to the aesthetic.

It is most probably the case that the first systematic aesthetic theory made to rest on an elaborate model of the mind and its workings is that put forward in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*. Without relinquishing the role played by first-hand experience, or falling back upon any possible inferential ‘rules for beauty’, Kant steers his account of aesthetic justification in the direction of our cognitive abilities and their (inter)actions. The psychological explanation Kant offers of our experience of the beautiful is then also, to use Guyer’s words, developed ‘precisely in order to fulfil the demands imposed by his analysis of the presuppositions of aesthetic judgment as a form of public

⁷⁷ An expression also used in this context by Paul Guyer. See Guyer (1997).

⁷⁸ Again, those reflective processes can be more or less conscious according to each case.

discourse'.⁷⁹ And this, I suggest, is a lesson we can learn from both Kant's and Sibley's aesthetic theories: one of the concerns that unite these in many respects so different accounts is the way in which they urge us to seek the means of securing the possibility of aesthetic justification within us rather than in any set of rules. This I take to be the 'inward turn' so crucial to the pursuit of aesthetic objectivity.

2. Kant's 'deduction' of aesthetic judgements.

(a). The concern.

As explained in the first substantial section of this chapter, to supply an explanation of the possibility of aesthetic judgements is, for Kant, to provide an account of how the 'claim to universal validity' implicit in aesthetic responses can be justified. As Guyer writes,

[f]aced with the question of... whether the pleasure occasioned by a given object can rationally be imputed to others, one considers whether this pleasure has been felt apart from any reflection on an interest its object might serve or an end it might represent. If one does conclude that one's feeling is disinterested and linked to the mere form of finality in the object, one may also conclude that it has been occasioned by an estimation of the object which has led to a harmonious accord between imagination and understanding. On the basis of this conclusion, one may then impute the pleasure to other disinterested observers of the object.⁸⁰

How, having both rejected the possibility of inferential principles *and* denied that the 'universal validity of our response to a beautiful object can be... grounded on any information about the actual feelings of others',⁸¹ is Kant to proceed with his 'deduction'?

The question is of interest to us here because it explicitly raises the following concern: to what extent can our mental events, and the mental operations that lead to

⁷⁹ Guyer (1997), p. 9.

⁸⁰ Guyer (1997), p. 228.

⁸¹ Guyer (1997), p. 1.

them, actually justify our aesthetic judgements? In the very brief exposition and discussion of Kant's 'deduction' that follows, my aim will be limited to highlighting the importance of a certain kind of approach to aesthetic justification. Nevertheless, and without going into a lengthy explanation of why this is so,⁸² I shall hold that my account significantly differs from Kant's in so far as what on his view seems to represent the completion of the 'deduction' of aesthetic judgements, is, on mine, taken to be but a first step in the right direction. In other words, the 'inward turn' is the very beginning of the process of aesthetic justification, rather than the philosophical move that embodies the entire process.

(b). A common sense – the subjective conditions of knowledge.

There are many reservations to be had about Kant's 'deduction'. Questions concerning its aim and success therein range from whether the investigation can really be thought of as some form of justification, to uncertainties about the argument's most fundamental premises. My concern here is, as mentioned above, not the 'deduction' as a whole, but, rather, the approach underlying it, and the extent to which it can, if at all, enable us to justify aesthetic judgements.⁸³

In contrast to Hume and his (rather elitist) reliance on the verdicts of 'true judges', Kant holds that the ability to make (correct) aesthetic judgements is contained in the 'very fabric of human mentality'.⁸⁴ The challenge here for Kant is to show how any subject satisfying the conditions necessary to make a correct aesthetic judgement ought to experience the same response to a particular object as any other subject also satisfying those conditions, thereby legitimising the claim to universality. As Budd points out,

⁸² Several excellent explanations of why Kant's 'deduction' is so problematic have been published in recent years, and I feel it would be unwise to compete with them. See, for example, Guyer (1997), esp. pp. 231ff, and Savile (1987), pp. 109-122.

⁸³ It is generally agreed that there are two parts to Kant's 'deduction'. Whereas the first is to be found in §21 and, to a certain extent, in §9, the second is developed from §30 to §39.

⁸⁴ Janaway (1997), p. 461.

whatever the merit of this suggestion is, it ‘is a major advance from Hume, who merely helped himself to the conclusion’.⁸⁵

To understand the general line of thought put forward in these crucial passages of the third *Critique*, it is important to bear in mind the point made in the beginning of this thesis about how, according to Kant, our mental abilities interact ‘as if’ for cognition in making aesthetic judgements since there is no one perceivable property common (and peculiar) to beautiful forms enabling aesthetic taste to be a kind of knowledge itself.

Kant’s argument in the ‘deduction’ thus rests on the idea that all that is needed to impute one’s aesthetic response to everyone else is that

[i]n all human beings, the subjective conditions of this [aesthetic power of judgment], as far as the relation of the cognitive powers therein set into action to a cognition in general is concerned, are the same, which must be true, since otherwise human beings could not communicate their representations and even cognition itself.⁸⁶

What is suggested here is, in short, an *a priori* claim about the similarity of all subjects of experience which rests on the general conditions of the possibility of experience. From the claim that both our cognitive and aesthetic experiences are rooted in the harmonious interaction of our cognitive powers, Kant concludes that this is something we may rely on to secure communicability in the aesthetic case.⁸⁷ As Carolyn Korsmeyer writes, ‘[w]hile aesthetic judgments do not... directly call into operation the empirical application of the organizing categories of the understanding, the very presence of rational frameworks makes possible aesthetic pleasure that is universal and necessary.’⁸⁸

One of the most critical problems that arises for Kant’s ‘deduction’ centres on the claim that we use the same mental abilities and processes that are at work in the making of cognitive judgements as we do in making aesthetic judgements. The question that

⁸⁵ Budd (1996), p. 26.

⁸⁶ Kant (2000), §38, 5: 290, Remark, p. 170.

⁸⁷ See Savile (1987), p. 144.

⁸⁸ Korsmeyer (1997), p. 214.

arises here is how this analogy can carry the kind of explanatory and justificatory force Kant needs it to.⁸⁹ How, in other words, can the claim to universal validity be explained (in Kant's sense) merely in virtue of there being a 'common sense',⁹⁰ or a basic shared mental apparatus that also supports the making of 'logical' judgements? The tension is revealing of just how deeply entrenched the dual character (i.e., as explained in Chapter I, the undeniable subjectivity and the aspiration to objectivity) of the aesthetic seems to be on Kant's account, for the reason that what the 'deduction' tries to achieve is nothing less than to provide a rational justification for the claim to universal validity allegedly implicit in a kind of response that can never, as he sees it, go beyond the domain of the 'inner'. Since the main point of Kant's exercise is to show that our aesthetic responses can be universally shared, it is therefore not surprising that he seizes that aspect of our minds that is, on his view, *a priori* common to all of us. Yet, as Savile has pointed out, this move in Kant's argument simply cannot achieve the aim he sets it.

What really goes wrong with the argument is that under cover of his talk about harmony of the faculties Kant wants to assimilate the cognitive and aesthetic cases, which he is in general at pains to keep apart... However the fact that we have a common sense operating to account for the same cognitive representations of the world when we are guided by an interest in truth is insufficient basis for the claim that when I achieve a pleasing aesthetic representation in which my faculties are harmoniously operating, that same common sense will ensure that others will share my pleasure in the representation should they come to have it.⁹¹

Moreover, even if it had been less contentious to hold, as Kant does, that this 'common sense' has explanatory power not only in relation to our 'cognitive', but our 'aesthetic representations', and that some of the most important aspects of our aesthetic pleasure can be explained by this similarity, it seems to be a different claim again to hold that

⁸⁹ Amongst other things, Kant's account contains several problematic assumptions about the workings of our mind and the way in which we can impute similar operations to the minds of others. See, for example, Guyer (1997), p. 283: 'First, it assumes that one can rationally attribute to others cognitive faculties like one's own as well as the general capability of possessing knowledge by means of those faculties... Then... it supposes that one can rationally attribute to others the ability to experience this state... Finally... it claims a propensity to experience this state with respect to the very same objects that occasion it in oneself.'

⁹⁰ See, principally, Kant (2000), §20, §21, §40.

⁹¹ Savile (1987), p. 145.

aesthetic judgements can be explained and justified by appealing to this idea. Clearly, the two areas of investigation are closely linked – if I can secure the means by which to impute my aesthetic response to everyone else, I also seem to be embarking on an explanation of how and why my aesthetic judgements can lay claim to a universal validity. But whereas the former seems to be a point about our minds, the second is one concerned with the epistemology of a certain kind of judgement. And although, as I have argued throughout this thesis, the various events and operations that feature in our aesthetic psychology must be carefully scrutinised if we are to be able to account for the epistemology of aesthetic judgements adequately, these two issues do not coincide in all respects.

Let us, then, return to the very reason behind Kant’s distinction between aesthetic and ‘logical’ judgements, and the claim that an aesthetic judgement is ‘one whose determining ground cannot be other than subjective.’⁹² What this idea amounts to is that only first-hand experience can count as the determining ground of aesthetic judgements. As Kant writes, ‘it is required... that the subject judge for himself, without having to grope about by means of experience among the judgments of others... and thus that he should pronounce his judgment not as imitation.’⁹³ What, then, of these first-hand perceptual experiences – are they capable of justifying aesthetic judgements?

3. Experiential authentication and Sibley’s ‘perceptual proof’.

(a). Aesthetic judgements as a special kind of perceptual judgement.

Having, like Kant, both rejected the possibility of inferential rules going from the non-aesthetic to the aesthetic, and emphasised the importance of first-hand experiences in aesthetic judgement generally, I now turn to an examination of the exact role played by

⁹² Kant (2000), §1, 5: 203, p. 89.

⁹³ Kant (2000), §32, 5: 282, p. 163.

the perceptual experiences we have of aesthetic properties in the process of justifying our judgements about them. How much justificatory support can, in other words, our perceptual experiences lead to our aesthetic judgements? I will begin by examining the importance of first-hand experience to the aesthetic and aesthetic judgements in general in order to be in a better position to assess the extent to which such experience can participate in the justification of aesthetic judgements. In so doing I will look briefly at Sibley's account, and, eventually, put forward an alternative understanding of the way in which our perceptual experiences can contribute to, if not the justification then at least the 'authentication' of aesthetic judgements.

One of the main threads running through this thesis is the idea that aesthetics 'deals with a certain kind of perception'.⁹⁴ As Sibley writes, individuals have to '*see* the grace or unity of a work, *hear* the plaintiveness or frenzy in the music, *notice* the gaudiness of a colour scheme, *feel* the power of a novel, its mood, or its certainty of tone'. Indeed, to think that 'one can make aesthetic judgements without aesthetic perception, say, by following rules of some kind, is to misunderstand aesthetic judgement.'⁹⁵ But to this, Sibley adds a more contentious claim, encapsulated in his notion of 'perceptual proof'. In what remains of this chapter, I shall argue that even though it is essential that we take first-hand perceptual experiences very seriously in aesthetics generally, and in aesthetic justification in particular, such experiences cannot successfully achieve such justification single-handedly any more than Kant's account of 'common sense' can.

(b). The importance of first-hand experience in the aesthetic – some distinctions.

There are several senses in which there can be no such thing as the distinctively aesthetic without first-hand perceptual experience. Let me qualify this claim by drawing some distinctions. First, it is important to distinguish between, on the one hand, (i)

⁹⁴ Sibley (2001a), p. 35.

⁹⁵ Sibley (2001a), p. 34.

first-hand experience as such and (i') one's own personal first-hand experience, and, on the other, between (ii) the aesthetic as such, and (ii') the aesthetic as predicated of a judgement. The sense in which there can be no (ii), no aesthetic as such, if there is no (i) or first-hand perceptual experience as such, has to do with the aesthetic being an anthropocentric category. This is connected to aesthetic response-dependence, and the manner in which the aesthetic in general depends on our perceptual experiences: without human perceptual experience, aesthetic properties are not manifested, and if they are not manifested, there is a sense in which they do not exist.

This view about the relation between (i) and (ii) is distinct from the idea that a similar relation holds between (i') and (ii'), or the claim that a particular judgement can only be aesthetic if one has had the particular perceptual experience of the property in question oneself. This thought captures Kant's point, raised above, that testimony can never be a sufficient ground for a genuine aesthetic judgement; a view that in the third *Critique* is closely linked to the way in which empirical concepts are banned at the level of determining grounds for such judgements. The question about testimony does, as is clear from Kant's distinction between 'logical' and aesthetic judgements, capture one of the most important differences between aesthetic and non-aesthetic judgements: whereas, as I have mentioned before, I can make a genuine judgement such as 'Addis Ababa is the capital of Ethiopia' without having been there myself, this is not so for aesthetic judgements. To make a judgement based on someone's else perceptual experience is, then, not really to make a genuine aesthetic judgement.⁹⁶ This is not to

⁹⁶ It is interesting to note that in this respect, the way in which we think of the justification of aesthetic judgements seems to differ from the manner in which we tend to think about the justification of a judgement about colour; how a judgement such as 'that painting is serene' differs from that of a judgement such as 'yesterday's sunset was deep pink'. Unless the other subject has a perceptual deficiency (e.g. colour-blindness), it is generally assumed that one can take another subject's experience to be similar enough to the experience one would have had oneself that it can be taken to be entirely reliable. No further evidence is required, so to speak, but the testimony of another reliable subject to convince one of the correctness of that judgement. I shall return to this difference in the beginning of Chapter V.

say that all judgements that are ‘second-hand’ are without use. As Peter Goldie has recently written,

[w]e can continue to go along with the spirit of the experiential requirements, agreeing that there is nothing like first-hand experience of an artwork. However, we should not conclude from this that all second-hand experiences are on a par. Between, at one extreme, first-hand experience, perhaps in the company of a perceptive critic, and, at the other extreme, dry propositional knowledge, there is a considerable space for a reader of a narrative or the audience of a piece of testimony to use their imagination to a greater or lesser degree to gain an understanding of ‘aspects of reality’, and to gain an appreciation of the aesthetic properties of an artwork that they are not experiencing first-hand.⁹⁷

Indeed, there is an important sense in which hearing or reading about someone else’s aesthetic judgements can contribute to our own aesthetic awareness and understanding.

I shall return to this issue at the very end of this section.

(c). Perceptual experience as evidence for aesthetic judgements?

(i). What is at stake?

In Chapter III, I suggested that since emotional responses cannot have any justifying power with regards to aesthetic judgements, we should look at the broader notion of perceptual experiences instead and see if it fares any better in this enterprise. And so far in this chapter, I have held that first-hand experiences lie at the heart of aesthetic judgements, and that more generally the ‘inward turn’ is of invaluable help in the process of aesthetic justification. So, what justificatory power can first-hand experiences really afford?

There are many things at stake in answering this question. Perhaps most importantly, its outcome can have serious consequences for the fate of dispositional accounts of aesthetic properties based on the biconditional model. The main gist of such accounts is, as will be remembered, that for an object to be F is for it to be such as to produce the experience of F-ness in normal perceivers under normal conditions.

⁹⁷ Goldie (2003e), p. 9.

Now, as I will discuss in Chapter V, there is a certain circularity in appealing to the experience of a property in attempting to elucidate it, *if that property is response-dependent*. However, as we shall see, accounts of secondary qualities such as colour or smells do not seem to suffer from this circularity in the way that aesthetic properties do. If, then, the answer to the question is negative, and first-hand perceptual experiences cannot justify aesthetic judgements, this might be the beginning of an explanation as to why the biconditional is unable to account for aesthetic properties as well as it does for secondary qualities.

(ii). ‘Perceptual proof’ or ‘experiential test’?

On Sibley’s account, the standard method of establishing that an item possesses a certain aesthetic property is by so-called ‘perceptual proof’. Thus in ‘Aesthetic and Non-Aesthetic’, amongst other papers, Sibley portrays the main role of the art critic as getting other perceivers to ‘see that these shapes and colours unbalance the picture, or that exactly this word order makes the poem moving’.⁹⁸ There is then a kind of critical activity that consists in assisting people to perceive and grasp *for themselves* that an object has a particular quality. For Sibley, the activity of

getting people to see – is the only way of supporting an aesthetic judgement, even perhaps the only point of critical activity... I see no reason why it should not be called *a* way of supporting or justifying, even of proving, an aesthetic judgement... *One might refer to this activity therefore, as perceptual proof*.⁹⁹

The suggestion is supported by an analogy with colours. In what sense, Sibley asks, are traditional proofs possible for colours? And why is it that some of us are sceptical about the possibility of aesthetic objectivity but not of the objectivity of colour judgements when the latter seems equally difficult to ‘prove’? In neither case, he continues, can there be proofs requiring us to cite truths about the object’s properties

⁹⁸ Sibley (2001b), pp. 37-38.

⁹⁹ Sibley (2001b), p. 39 (my italics).

from which our judgement logically follows. Ultimately, the only kind of decision procedure there can be, on Sibley's account, is an appeal to agreement in reaction or discrimination.¹⁰⁰

Although I shall return to discuss this kind of 'experiential test' in my final chapter, I raise it here simply in order to bring to our attention the importance of distinguishing between, on the one hand, the process of justifying an aesthetic judgement as such and, on the other, the end-result of a successful justification of that kind. I shall hereafter refer to Sibley's notion of 'perceptual proof' as an 'experiential test' for two main reasons. First, a terminological reason: not only is the term 'experience' more suitable than 'perception' in view of the great diversity of responses and the heterogeneity of the aesthetic as class, but also, the word 'proof' seems particularly inadequate in the light of Sibley's commitment to an absence of inferential rules in the aesthetic. Second, and as will become clear from the argument that begins below and leads up to the reasonable objectivism I discuss in the next chapter, I will hold that the activity called 'perceptual proof' by its author is better thought of as an affirmation of something that has been (or might be) justified, rather than a justification as such. In other words, the notion effectively captures the idea that having a certain kind of experience in response to a particular object of aesthetic appreciation can confirm the justification that is distinct from it.

(iii). Authentication – judgement or judge?

It is a common assumption to hold that first-hand experience is the most reliable kind of evidence one can possibly have for an aesthetic judgement. Surely, it is often held, the manner in which something looks, the way it makes one feel to look at it, and so on, is what constitutes the primary evidential basis for our judgements? This idea, I have

¹⁰⁰ Sibley (2001c), p. 75: 'The ultimate proof that something is of a given colour is tied to an overlap of agreement in sorting out, distinguishing, and much else which links people present and past.'

argued, is a perfectly good place to start in attempting to understand aesthetic justification. In the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, Kant's strategy is then also, as Savile points out, 'to show that on the securest grounds we take ourselves to have for judging something beautiful, on our paradigmatic grounds that is, we are in fact warranted in claiming it to be so, and that the content of our aesthetic thought is therefore adequately underpinned by what we take to be our best evidence for it.'¹⁰¹

Now, the fact that I perceive or experience O as F might be an *explanation* for my belief that F can be ascribed to O. But that, I contend, is not to say that my judgement 'O is F' is *justified* by that perceptual experience. Only that which my experience is 'of', so to speak, can do that: only that which my experience is concerned with can carry that kind of justificatory weight. In this respect, our perceptual experiences are not all that different to emotional responses, in that a judgement such as 'I was moved by O' or 'O seemed to be F to me' are both very different *kinds* of judgements to a judgement such as 'O is F'. The former is a statement about how the object actually fulfils certain criteria which lead you to have a certain experience of it; it is not a statement about the object of aesthetic appreciation as such. First-hand experiences may, then, be necessary for judgements to be aesthetic, but they cannot be the founding stone of the justification of aesthetic judgements.

What having first-hand perceptual experiences does do, however, is to increase the credibility of the subject making the aesthetic judgement. In other words, first-hand experience makes an aesthetic judgement 'believable'; it adds credibility to a subject of experience as an arbiter of aesthetic matters. And this is what seems right about Hume's account of the 'true judges'. There is, after all, something about the experiences of experts and *connoisseurs* that makes it reasonable for us to take them seriously, and in some cases, even more seriously than our own judgements. Thus, to say that one's own

¹⁰¹ Savile (1987), p. 109.

perceptual experience is important to aesthetic justification is not necessarily to defend a view according to which the subject in question is always the sole arbiter of the judgement's correctness. Rather, it is that the more experiences one has, the more trustworthy one's experiences become. What one acquires through being exposed to objects of aesthetic appreciation is a heightened attention and more developed skills in discovering aesthetic qualities so as to make finer discriminations. Here the emotions can, as mentioned above, be of considerable help, in that having the emotional response that can be a part of the experience as a whole can add credibility not only to the judgement, but also to the judge. One could say, then, that our experiences are evidence that we are a certain kind of subject (at the simplest level, one capable of having aesthetic experiences at all), and can suggest that we have a certain degree of competence with aesthetic concepts. Nonetheless, expertise and familiarity can still not render experience sufficient for justifying an aesthetic judgement. Indeed, reporting on having or having had an experience does not entitle one to report that 'O is F' (at least not if one takes that to mean anything more than 'S felt like F'). There is a sense, then, to be explored in the next chapter, in which semantic competence is not sufficient for the application of aesthetic concepts to be correct: the application of such concepts is, so to speak, not only accountable to the subject herself.

In short, I shall argue in the next chapter that aesthetic judgements can be correct or incorrect, but that this correctness is not determined by the perceptual experiences of the person issuing them. However, since their correctness is difficult to determine partly as a result of there being no inferential rules from the non-aesthetic to aesthetic, the supporting role of the subject's credibility is enormously increased. In this way, first-hand perceptual experiences are rendered pretty much indispensable. And this is why we need to take our perceptual experiences seriously. The mistake, however, lies in taking them so seriously as to hold that they can justify our aesthetic judgements.

E). Aesthetic psychology and aesthetic justification.

If we recall our discussion in Chapter I, aesthetic psychology was held to be centrally concerned with the workings of the mind in an aesthetic context. More specifically, one of its main tasks was said to be that of shedding light on the various psychological operations that underlie our aesthetic perceptions and assessments in order to establish whether the roles we tend to allocate to those operations really do fall within their remit. For example, as in the case of Hume's aesthetic theory discussed in Chapter III, the emotional response was understood to be insufficient in respect of its assumed (*pace* Hume) role as causally linked to the content of a judgement. As we saw, no progress towards the ascription of objectivity to aesthetic judgements can be made unless these elements are adequately disentangled. Aesthetic psychology thus takes on an epistemological dimension primarily in two instances. It does so in the first instance when it becomes evident that at least some of the reluctance to ascribe objectivity (in any sense) to aesthetic judgements rests on what at least at the phenomenological level can only be described as the relative disarray amongst emotional responses, first-hand perceptual experiences, estimations, judgements, perceptions and their interactions. In the second and more important instance, it does so when it is made clear that there are no inferential principles that can be appealed to in the justification of aesthetic judgements; no rules for the correct application of aesthetic concepts. To use Maria Golazewska's words,

[t]here are no rules according to which aesthetic notions can be used... there are no non-ambiguous sufficient conditions for defining individual qualities. The use of aesthetic notions is non-mechanical and individual.¹⁰²

The absence of rules capable of establishing secure and invariant relations between non-aesthetic and aesthetic properties led us to the theory of particularism and a workable

¹⁰² Golazewska (1988), pp. 79-80.

epistemological environment in which the role played by the acquisition of aesthetic concepts and, in particular, our competence in applying them must be emphasised. An understanding of semantic competence in which the function of rules of thumb, examples and other heuristic ‘principles’ is clearly required before any hope of objectivity for aesthetic judgements (here mainly in senses O1 and O3) can either be realised or refuted. The ability to perceive aesthetic qualities, as Golazewska continues, is not accessible for a few only; if someone does not perceive these qualities himself, he can be shown them, or he can be taught to distinguish them by means of experience and knowledge.¹⁰³

And as explained above, the emotions will not be without a purpose here. Emotions help us ‘guide our minds’ towards features salient to our aesthetic judgements; they are, as we saw, more often than not indispensable to the phenomenal concept of an aesthetic property.

The epistemological turn thus seems to call for an ‘inward turn’ in so far as the absence of aesthetic principles leaves us with little option other than to take our perceptual experiences particularly seriously in the attempt to justify our aesthetic judgements. But ‘turning inward’ may be a necessary step in the process of aesthetic justification without therefore being the only resource available to us. As I argued above, first-hand perceptual experiences are in actual fact more likely to give weight to the subject of experience as a good and reliable judge than justify our aesthetic judgements. So, even though our perceptual experiences carry considerable weight in the pursuit of aesthetic objectivity (mainly in the senses O1 and O3), perceptual experience by itself is simply not capable of achieving that task.

¹⁰³ Golazewska (1988), pp. 79-80.

CHAPTER V.

AXIOLOGICAL OBJECTIVITY AND HOW AESTHETIC JUDGEMENTS ARE GROUNDED IN REASONS.

A). From particularism to objectivism?

The main strength of aesthetic particularism, which is committed to the view that there can be no strict principles from the non-aesthetic to the aesthetic by which to infer the correctness of aesthetic judgements, lies in the new possibilities it opens up for the epistemology of value judgements. Aesthetic judgements cannot, as Kant pointed out in his ‘Antinomy of Taste’, allow for the more traditional means of justification. Thus, by infusing authority into non-inferential methods of grasping evaluative properties, the prospect particularism affords for aesthetic judgements in particular and value judgements in general is far from being a gloomy one. As Little points out with regards to the moral case, ‘[to] say that the moral landscape cannot be *codified* is not to say that it is *chaotic*.’¹ Much can still be done for the case of defending the rational justification of value judgements, and thus also for that of axiological objectivity.

In this final chapter, my aim is to develop the principal tenets of such a case in aesthetics. By emphasising (i) the importance of the role played by our semantic competence with aesthetic concepts (and of its continuous refinement), (ii) the separation of justifying from non-justifying reasons, and (iii) the revision of the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity in an axiological context, we can, I argue, have a ‘reasonable objectivism’ for aesthetic judgements. In advancing that argument, I

¹ Little (2000), p. 298.

adhere to certain aspects of the outlook promoted by the sensibility theories put forward most famously by John McDowell and David Wiggins, and benefit especially from the discussion of the evolution of so-called ‘< property, response > pairs’. However, I eventually take distance from those accounts, and interpret what I take to be their main weakness as the final part of my attack against theories that run emotional responses and value judgements too closely together to uphold the possibility of objectivity.

I shall begin this Chapter with an overview of what I will call ‘sibling sensibility theories’, and the nature, advantages and disadvantages of the notion they put forward as a measure of correctness for value judgements, namely ‘appropriateness’. Subsequently, I examine the possibility of the rational assessment of aesthetic judgements, and focus my attention on the kind of reasoning processes that should be involved in justifying aesthetic judgements. Following this account of aesthetic justification, I sketch an outline of the main characteristics of axiological objectivity in general, and of aesthetic objectivity in particular. Finally, I conclude by committing myself to a reasonable objectivism for aesthetic judgements which is compatible with the idea of ‘viewing the world from somewhere’, or, in other words, from the perspective of humanity.

B). Sensibility theories and appropriateness as standard of correctness.

1. Preliminaries.

(a). Main concerns.

The philosophical approach promoted by sensibility theories is one more finely tuned to the complexities involved in questions about value than most other approaches. In particular, it is anxious not to dismiss those complexities rashly for the sake of ontological tidiness. Indeed, one of the main aims of sensibility theories is to formulate accounts that make a point of respecting the characteristics peculiar to value judgements and evaluative properties in a distinctively non-reductivist and ‘anti-non-cognitivist’² fashion. Thus, McDowell denounces the harm done to our conception of matters pertaining to value by methodologies steeped in scientific ‘bald naturalisms’, and Wiggins discusses and propounds the possibility of a ‘sensible subjectivism’.³

Sensibility theories earn their name by the emphasis they place on the special kind of sensitivity involved in the process of perceiving and grasping value and evaluative properties; the importance put on the distinctive delicacy of perception and estimation that results from their commitment to particularism. In a rather Kantian spirit, it is argued that the sensibility (or, to use the vernacular of the third *Critique*, the ‘faculty of taste’) exercised in an evaluative context lies at the heart not only of the ontology of aesthetic properties but also of the epistemology of value judgements. One of the main claims of my thesis is that increasing our understanding of the epistemology of aesthetic judgements requires that we further the outlook initiated by Kant, reformulated by Sibley, and refined and translated into contemporary language by McDowell and Wiggins. In virtue of their united aim, in a first instance, to reject traditional epistemological methods, and, in a second, to stress the importance of the exercise of

² See Wiggins (1991) and (1998b).

³ McDowell (1998e) and Wiggins (1998c).

certain perceptual abilities in moral and aesthetic contexts, the term ‘sensitivity theory’ rightly applies to all four views. For this reason I shall hereafter take the expression ‘sensitivity theories’ to refer mainly to the philosophical systems formulated by these thinkers and those working in their tradition.⁴ In order to respect the differences that nonetheless prevail between the more recent work on the one hand, and its predecessors on the other, I shall label McDowell’s and Wiggins’s accounts more specifically ‘sibling sensitivity theories’ (hereafter SSTs).

Despite the great advances due to such theories, even the most prominent and elaborate versions of SSTs are not devoid of difficulties. In the following two sections I shall point to how such theories inherit certain problematic features from the dispositional theories on which they have partly modelled themselves. The overall aim of this section will be twofold. First, to point to the complications that arise for SSTs both with regards to value in general and to the aesthetic case in particular, and, thereby, to highlight why contemporary sensitivity theories are not yet as helpful as they could be. Second, to show that the notion of appropriateness cannot serve as a standard of correctness for aesthetic judgements.

(b). Appropriateness – what is it?

Even though the possibility of justifying value judgements does not require that the standard of correctness applicable to judgements concerned with the empirical sciences be valid for the evaluative case too, it does, nonetheless, need *some* such measure if that possibility is even to stand a chance of ever being realised.⁵ The propounders of SSTs are aware of this need, and therefore set out to provide a measure of correctness workable for value judgements. The notion they put forward in that capacity is

⁴ Perhaps most notably Sabina Lovibond, Kevin Mulligan and Mark Platts.

⁵ See de Sousa (1978) and (1987).

‘appropriateness’: according to SSTs, an object O has an evaluative property F if and only if it is *appropriate* to feel an associated response R to O.

Several important questions arise in connection with the notion of appropriateness in an evaluative context. The issue that will concern me most circles around whether it can be the kind of correctness that aesthetic judgements are able to allow for. I shall argue that appropriateness cannot play that role, principally because it is moulded to suit the kind of correctness that can be ascribed to some emotional responses. Indeed, according to SSTs, that which can be said to be appropriate or inappropriate is precisely emotional responses.⁶ For an object to have an evaluative property is, then, to be ‘such as to make a certain sentiment of approbation *appropriate*’,⁷ or ‘just for certain emotional responses to be appropriate’.⁸ Of course a judgement, like an emotion, can be ‘appropriate’ or ‘inappropriate’. But those predicates cannot, I contend, capture the correctness or incorrectness that an aesthetic judgement can and should stand in relation to in respect of an object of aesthetic appreciation.

Staying within the sphere of sentiment, it is interesting to note that, on Aristotle’s view, the appropriateness or inappropriateness of an emotional response is determined partly on the basis of whether that response is socially acceptable or not (e.g. it is inappropriate to get angry with a baby for crying), and, to a certain extent, by the perceptions, beliefs and desires of the individual having that particular response.⁹ To act virtuously (or perhaps ‘appropriately’) is to act in a mean relative to us. Such a view does not, however, commit the Aristotelian to the claim that appropriateness is entirely restricted to the correlation between the subject’s emotional response and the same subject’s personal perception and understanding of the object which the emotion arises

⁶ I leave it to others to examine whether, as de Sousa perhaps most famously claims, appropriateness is indeed to emotions what truth is to belief, and simply assume that appropriateness is adequate for the epistemological purposes of emotional responses.

⁷ Wiggins (1998c), p. 187.

⁸ Mulligan (1998), p. 162.

⁹ Aristotle (1980), 1108a8-1109b18, p. 42-47, and 1129a-1131a6, pp. 106-112.

in response to. Appropriateness, if it is to carry any force at all, must be capable of capturing some form of relation between the emotional response in question and the object to which it is a response.¹⁰ As some SSTs making use of this idea have claimed, to *think* that an object O has some evaluative property F is to *think* it appropriate to feel an associated emotional response toward O (e.g. to think that an angry bear is fearful is to think it appropriate to feel fear toward that bear).¹¹ But this emotional response will only be appropriate ‘in actual fact’ if the beliefs and perceptions that form the cognitive basis of the emotion are true. Nevertheless, there is still a sense, to be developed later on, in which appropriateness in general, and the use SSTs make of it in particular, is not only limited to our perceptual experiences, but also determined by the community in which the individual subject of experience belongs.

Two main points can be extracted from the above. First, the question of appropriateness in general seems to be a particularly anthropocentric one in view of the fact that theories appealing to it allow the social community in question to have a considerable say in what actually counts as appropriate or not. Second, despite the fact that appropriateness is a normative notion – and that when we deem an emotional response to be appropriate, we are judging it to be the response that the situation requires from us independently of our own preferences or desires – we still face what seems to be insuperable epistemological difficulties closely related to the kind of epistemological problems that can be seen to render emotions unreliable as evidence for judgements.¹² Let us now turn to a closer look at the claims made by SSTs.

¹⁰ Our perceptions are, then, only derivatively one of the *relata* of appropriateness.

¹¹ See D’Arms & Jacobson (2000a), p. 729.

¹² So that if my perception of the object to which my emotion is a response is distorted by bias, say, my emotional response may very well be inappropriate despite it *appearing* appropriate to me.

2. *Sibling sensibility theories and the dispositional legacy.*

(a). *The general view.*

The main thought underpinning SSTs is the conviction that moral and aesthetic value, and the questions that arise in relation to it, are philosophically problematic or ‘queer’ only if judged against certain (narrow) conceptions of rationality and justification.

Against common assumption, these notions are, it is argued, actually rich enough to accommodate the features of matters pertaining to value. According to SSTs, then, concepts and properties with an evaluative character are *different* rather than *deficient*. In this sense, such theories aim to discard – and supersede – simple forms of subjectivism, expressivism or sentimentalism.

As a consequence of the particularism on which they rely, SSTs hold that true moral and aesthetic beliefs are not acquired with the help of principles. Rather, we come to perceive the moral or aesthetic character of an object, action or individual by attending to the complexities of each case, discerning what is salient, and making appropriate discriminations. In other words, we ‘look and see’.¹³ Much of the epistemology of evaluative properties is made to rely on an analogy with secondary qualities. And so, just as one needs a certain sensory apparatus to see red things, one needs a certain emotional ‘apparatus’ to perceive cruel or graceful things.¹⁴ Evaluative properties and evaluative responses are ‘conceptually interwoven’ on a dispositional model; an object is understood as instantiating an evaluative property in virtue of its disposition to yield and ‘make appropriate’ a given response in persons with our sensibility.¹⁵ It follows from

¹³ Platts (1979), p. 247.

¹⁴ McDowell (1998f), p. 199: ‘We can learn to make colour classifications only because our sensory equipment happens to be such as to give us the right sort of visual experience. Somewhat similarly, we can learn to see the world in terms of some specific set of evaluative classifications, aesthetic or moral, only because our affective and attitudinative propensities are such that we can be brought to care in appropriate ways about the things we learn to see as collected together by the classifications.’

¹⁵ The sensibility in question is not understood as some technical disposition to react – it is a practice of responding partly constituted by judgements of appropriateness; a system of ‘essentially contested’ normative criteria. As Wiggins explains in his genealogical account of evaluative concepts, this system of practices carries within itself the material for its own evolution.

this, as discussed in Chapter II, that neither evaluative nor secondary qualities feature in the ‘absolute conception’ of the world. Yet, for McDowell, as we shall soon see, this is not to say that there are no red, elegant or cruel things; what our colour, aesthetic and moral sensitivities reveal is, in a sense to be specified, independently there anyway.¹⁶

Notwithstanding frequent – yet I believe unfounded – accusations of omitting any mention of them, McDowell does indicate some of the limitations of the analogy between secondary qualities and evaluative properties. The disanalogy he most prominently points to is the one briefly touched upon in Chapter III, namely that ‘seeing’ or grasping aesthetic or moral value has a normative element that the perception of secondary qualities lacks: if object O has aesthetic property A, O *merits* a certain response – we ‘owe’ that response to O in virtue of A.

The analogy between secondary qualities and evaluative properties – and the dispositional legacy in general – has far-reaching ramifications for the way in which moral and aesthetic properties are conceived. In what follows I shall address two aspects of SSTs that in the first instance point to how aesthetic properties can be misconceived as a result of that analogy, and, in a second instance, call attention to what are perhaps the most important difficulties such theories encounter in an aesthetic context.

(b). The biconditional and the primary quality model of perceptual awareness.

The first point I want to make about SSTs has to do with the metaphysical prejudices they make it their self-avowed aim to supersede. I shall try to indicate how McDowell fails to spell fully out all the consequences that follow from an important point he raises about the way in which we think of secondary qualities. In so doing I will refer to some

¹⁶ i.e. independent of anyone’s *particular* experience.

of the claims I made in Chapter II about the distinction between the impersonal stance and the personal perspective.

One of McDowell's main aims in his 'Values and Secondary Qualities' is to highlight the way in which the Lockean view that the paradigm of perceptual awareness is of *primary* qualities has formed our conception of secondary qualities.¹⁷ McDowell ably argues that the projection which Locke, and followers of his such as Mackie, ascribe to the awareness of secondary qualities in actual fact simply results from the inadequate application of a so-called 'primary-quality model of perceptual awareness' to secondary qualities. McDowell's point here is to warn his readers against such an application: to conceive of secondary quality experience in a way that in reality is only suitable for primary quality experience is, he argues, to commit a mistake with serious ramifications. Principally, to do so can be to blur a distinction between, on the one hand, not figuring in the causal explanations of the physical workings of the universe, and, on the other, not being genuine aspects of reality at all (a description which seems to fit secondary qualities on the primary quality model of perceptual awareness). What is at stake here, McDowell argues, is the question of whether secondary qualities – and the evaluative properties fashioned on them – are thought of as mere projections onto the world as the result of good reasons, or, as the argument suggests, of a misapplication of this perceptual model of awareness.

If what we are engaged in, McDowell continues, is an 'attempt to understand ourselves', what is needed are not explanations in causal terms, but, rather, a kind of explanation that 'makes sense' of what is explained. Using the example of something's being fearful, and having stated rather vaguely that it shares with value the 'crucial feature', McDowell writes that we 'make sense of fear by seeing it as a response to objects that *merit* such a response. For an object to merit fear is just for it to be fearful'.

¹⁷ McDowell (1998c), p. 132.

To drop the primary-quality model in this case [the case of fear] is to give up the idea that fearfulness itself, were it real, would need to be intelligible from a standpoint independent of the propensity to fear... Explanations of fear of the sort I envisaged would not only establish, from a different standpoint, that some of its objects are really fearful, but also make plain, case by case, what it is about them that makes them so; this should leave it quite unmysterious how a fear response rationally grounded in awareness... of these 'fearful-making characteristics' can be counted as being, or yielding, knowledge that one is confronted by an instance of real fearfulness.¹⁸

In addition to the damage done to our conception of secondary qualities, resulting in the view that they are not genuine aspects of reality at all, the application of the 'primary quality model of perceptual awareness' is said to have had a similar effect on our conception of evaluative properties in virtue of the aforementioned analogy. In other words, in virtue of being like secondary qualities in several respects, and because of the distorting effect of this model of perceptual awareness on such qualities, moral and aesthetic properties are also said to be thus distorted by this perceptual model. And it is here that McDowell moves just a little too quickly. Rather than simply taking this breakthrough to account for our conception of evaluative properties too on the grounds of the analogy, is it not possible that the analogy is itself the outcome of an inadequate use of the 'primary-quality model of perceptual awareness'? What I suggest is that the very idea that two kinds of properties as different as colours and smells on the one hand, and cruelty and elegance on the other, are to be analysed in the same way (i.e. by the biconditional conceived of in dispositional terms) itself seems to rely on the assumption that all properties that are not primary qualities, and so do not fit the primary-quality model of perceptual awareness, can be accounted for in the same way merely in virtue of not fitting that model.

In short, for McDowell, secondary qualities – and evaluative properties by extension – seem philosophically suspect mainly because we wrongly apply a model of primary

¹⁸ McDowell (1998c), p. 146.

quality perceptual awareness to them. It is, so to speak, only in contrast to the (ontologically) relatively 'straightforward' character of primary qualities that secondary ones seem 'mysterious', and it is this mistaken use of a model of perceptual awareness that makes projectivism seem inevitable. So far so good. The question I raise, however, is concerned with the way in which evaluative properties are uncautiously grouped together with secondary qualities. What I argue is that the analogy itself seems steeped in the use of the very model of perceptual awareness the deceptive nature of which McDowell brings to light – evaluative properties seem problematic because 'non-primary qualities' such as secondary ones are said to be so, and because evaluative properties are said to be on a par with secondary ones. One might say that the inadequate use of the paradigmatic perceptual model McDowell describes, is *prior* to the analogy, and yet, when this misapplication is revealed, evaluative properties are 'cleared' only in so far as their secondary cousins are. My thought here is, then, that the way in which the primary quality model of perceptual awareness is inadequately applied to secondary qualities lies at the root not only of the *allure* of projectivism about secondary qualities and evaluative properties, but perhaps also of the analogy itself. I rather suspect, in fact, that it is precisely because evaluative concepts are generally so rich in cognitive content (if this content is often rather imprecise) that it is in some respects preferable to retain the 'primary quality model of perceptual awareness' for evaluative properties.

(c). The < property, response > pairs and the proposed escape from the 'open question' argument.

The starting-point of Wiggins's inquiry into value, and of his ensuing SST, is Hume's subjectivism. For Hume, the statement 'X is F' (where F is taken to be an evaluative property such as 'good', 'right' or 'beautiful') means that X is the kind of thing to arouse a certain sentiment of approbation associated with F. This subjectivism, Wiggins writes,

nearly escapes Moore's 'open question' argument outlined in Chapter II, in that 'if X is such as to merit a certain feeling of approbation' the question 'is not *wide* open whether or not X is good.' However, one could escape it altogether, he continues, if one were to say 'X is good/right/beautiful if and only if X is such as to make a certain sentiment of approbation *appropriate*.'¹⁹

Wiggins sees two ways of developing 'the subjectivist claim that X is good if and only if X is such as to arouse/such as to make appropriate the sentiment of approbation'.²⁰ The first consists in closely following Hume by holding that value is merely a phantasm of the feelings or a 'gilding or staining' of 'natural objects with the colours borrowed from internal sentiment'.²¹ The second is to adopt what is referred to as the 'genealogical account'. Wiggins asks us to '[s]uppose that objects that regularly please or help or amuse us... in various ways come to be grouped together by us under various categories or classifications to which we give various avowedly anthropocentric names.'²² The main idea here is that our primitive responses to objects lead us to classify together the objects that elicit those responses. With time, the criteria for belonging to a category evolve from the original criterion that had elicited the 'proto-response', and eventually, we begin to understand the response as something made appropriate by something's having a certain property. If the < property, response > pair takes hold, we reach a point where the appropriateness of finding that something has the property and the appropriateness of having the relevant response are each held answerable to the other. This is, then, a 'subjectivism of subjects and properties *mutually* adjusted'.²³ For Wiggins, the pursuit of some form of correctness – or appropriateness – is not ruled out by his 'sensible subjectivism'. The responses he is concerned with 'are

¹⁹ Wiggins, (1998c), p. 187.

²⁰ Wiggins (1998c), p. 190.

²¹ Hume (1946), Appendix I, p. 294.

²² Wiggins, (1998c), p. 195.

²³ Wiggins, (1998c), p. 199.

correct when and only when they are occasioned by what has the corresponding property ϕ and are occasioned by it because it *is* ϕ '.²⁴ Nevertheless,

the sort of agreement that is in question here is only agreement in *susceptibility* to respond thus and so to ϕ things. It is agreement at most... in what property/response associations we are able to catch onto and work up into a shared way of talking, acting, and reacting... there is no question of the agreement in the belief that X is ϕ being the *criterion* for X's really being ϕ . X is only really ϕ if it is such as to evoke and make appropriate the response A among those who are sensitive to ϕ -ness.²⁵

Indeed, the subjectivism envisaged

does not treat the response as a criterion, or even as an indicator... it counts as nothing less than an act of judging a content; it is a judgement indispensably sustained by the perceptions and feelings and thoughts that are open to criticism that is based on norms that are open to criticism. It is not that *by which we tell*. It is part of the telling itself.²⁶

In the light of these commitments, together with his adherence to the view that when we consider whether or not something is good or beautiful there is no appeal to anything more fundamental than sentiment, it is difficult to see how Wiggins's account really can escape the 'open question argument' altogether. How, if all the above is defended and made to rest on a rather contingent conjunction of properties and responses, can the question 'X is such as to make a certain sentiment of approbation appropriate, but is it really good or beautiful?' be entirely closed? In other words, since Wiggins provides an evolutionary rather than a rationally grounded basis for < property, response > pairs, it still seems to be an 'open question' whether the good, say, really is exhausted by what has *come to be held* as good.

It is here that what is perhaps the most important difference between secondary qualities and aesthetic properties, left unaddressed in Chapter III, begins to become apparent. Interestingly, this difference homes in on us from two sides simultaneously. On the one hand, there is the point, discussed in Chapter III, about running emotional responses and aesthetic judgements too closely together. And, there is a way in which

²⁴ Wiggins (1998c), pp. 204-205.

²⁵ Wiggins (1998c), p. 205.

²⁶ Wiggins (1998c), p. 208.

SSTs continue the Humean tradition of doing exactly that, albeit in a more sophisticated fashion. On the other hand, there is the epistemology of aesthetic judgements and the manner in which dispositional accounts are too intimately bound up with our perceptual experiences (broadly conceived) to stretch aesthetic justification as ‘far out’, to use an expression of Chapter I, as it can go.

I now turn to what I take to be the main problems facing SSTs in aesthetic contexts. Whereas the first problem is concerned with the application of the biconditional and the manner in which aesthetic judgements are grounded, the second focuses on the notion of appropriateness in an aesthetic context.²⁷

3. Difficulties.

(a). Perceptual experiences and the biconditional revisited.

Can McDowell’s suggestion with regards to modelling the epistemology of evaluative properties on that of emotional ones, Wiggins’s recommended *tour de force* in relation to the ‘open question’ argument, and the notion of appropriateness itself, manage to provide a satisfactory account of the epistemology of aesthetic judgements? Are, so to speak, SSTs capable of settling the justification of aesthetic judgements?

One of the most important aspects of the disanalogy between secondary qualities and aesthetic properties that I have gestured at several times (if not explicated fully) is concerned with the kind of thing that can manage to justify judgements about those two kinds of properties respectively. In the case of colours or smells, there is no doubt that first-hand perceptual experiences carry considerable weight in the justification of a judgement. This is obvious from the dispositional account of secondary qualities, and is, to a great extent, precisely why such an account captures the very essence of these

²⁷ For more on other difficulties for appropriateness, see Carroll (1997), Currie (1990b), Livingston & Mele (1997).

qualities. So, for example, my judgement 'O is red' is grounded in my perceptual experience of the redness in question, and if I am asked why I make that judgement, what I do is appeal to the fact that O looks red (to me) and that there is nothing wrong with my eyesight. There is, in a sense, not much more I can do. One can say, then, that in the case of secondary qualities, my first-hand experience is my primary source in the process of justifying my judgement. But such is not the case with aesthetic properties. As I discussed towards the end of Chapter IV, first-hand perceptual experiences only have limited justificatory power with regards to aesthetic judgements. When I make a judgement such as 'O is elegant', it is simply not enough to say something like 'O is elegant because it looks elegant (to me)' in order to justify my judgement, even if I were somehow to qualify as a 'true judge' or an ideal critic. Whilst our perceptual experiences can serve as evidence that we have a certain degree of competence with aesthetic concepts, such expertise is still unable to render perceptual experience sufficient for justifying an aesthetic judgement. In justifying my aesthetic judgement I thus can – and must – appeal to elements beyond my first-hand experience, and point to other features of the object of aesthetic appreciation, such as the properties on which the aesthetic one supervenes. One could say that reporting on having or having had a certain perceptual experience does not entitle one to report that 'O is F', at least not, as I mentioned earlier, if one takes 'O is F' to mean anything over and above 'O is such as to give rise to the response related to F' – which is of course exactly what SSTs do. In a nutshell, my claim is, then, that despite widespread belief to the contrary, there is a sense in which aesthetic judgements are generally more firmly grounded in reasons than judgements about colour or smell, where those reasons relate to features of the world external to our own minds. Correct judgements recording the presence or absence of aesthetic properties are, then, well grounded in reasons that are not perceptual experiences. Here lies the beginning of a reason-based objectivism for aesthetic judgements.

A smaller but far from insignificant issue that is brought back to our attention at this point is the ‘missing explanation’ argument first raised in the first substantial section of Chapter III. There I argued that whilst there is a sense in which, as Mark Johnston points out, the *a priori* nature of biconditionals such as ‘X is F if and only if X looks or has the disposition to look F’ renders such explanations circular, it is *not* the case that realist explanations along the lines of ‘X is F because X is F’ automatically goes missing since these are two different kinds of explanatory exercises. What we now see is that although secondary qualities do seem capable of escaping Johnston’s accusation, aesthetic properties run even less risk of having their realist explanations robbed from them since accounts of such properties are not limited to perceptual experiences in that way, and therefore do not admit of quite as much circularity as secondary qualities. In other words, on my suggestion, the analysand does not contain the analysandum in that way; and so the ‘missing explanation’ argument has less bite in relation to aesthetic properties.

We are now but a short step away from seeing why Wiggins’s genealogical account is incapable of silencing the ‘open question’ argument completely, at least in relation to the aesthetic case: biconditional accounts of aesthetic properties simply do not provide good enough – or at least complete enough – accounts of what it is to be an aesthetic property. An object is not graceful merely *because* a certain sentiment is appropriate. Instead, an object is graceful in virtue of the other properties it has (non-aesthetic and aesthetic), and the ways in which those properties interact and support the aesthetic property in question. One of the main problems of Wiggins’s theory is, then, that the epistemology of value judgements amounts to little more than the genealogy of < property, response > pairs.

(b). *Appropriateness in aesthetic judgements.*

(i). Ambiguities about the notion of appropriateness.

There are two main ambiguities that beset the notion of appropriateness: whereas one is concerned with the term itself, the other has to do with the notion's scope. The first ambiguity thus centres around the question of what we actually mean when we use the term, both in aesthetic and general contexts. What, one may ask, does calling a response 'appropriate' really amount to? Have SSTs specified the notion's content sufficiently for it to be able to do the work they require it to do?

When we call a response, reaction or judgement 'appropriate', we can have one of several things in mind – we can mean that it is suitable, fitting, apt, right, correct or proper. Whilst the different *nuances* of these terms might seem unimportant in everyday language, they can play a decisive role in a philosophical context. Indeed, within a philosophical investigation, much can hang on whether 'appropriate' is used to refer to 'suitable' or, alternatively, 'right'. So too in the present case – if 'appropriate' is supposed to signify 'suitable' or 'fitting' rather than 'right' or 'correct', the explanatory force of appropriateness differs considerably. My worry is echoed by Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobson in their joint paper 'The Moralistic Fallacy: On the "Appropriateness" of Emotions'. The charge they bring against SSTs is that such accounts do not take into account the 'crucial distinction between the question of whether some emotion is the right way to feel, and whether that feeling gets it right'.²⁸ The conflation that may occur is, then, one that confuses propriety and correctness. The general point is one that has already made several minor appearances in this thesis, namely that it is not because a response, be it emotional or otherwise, is *fitting* that it is *correct*. A response can be appropriate in the first sense but not in the second; an emotional response can be 'suitable' despite being 'wrong'. Throwing my partner and

²⁸ D'Arms & Jacobson (2000b), p. 66.

his belongings out of our house when I falsely believe, albeit on very good evidence, that he is having an affair, may thus be appropriate in one sense yet inappropriate in another.

As mentioned above, Wiggins fleshes out the notion of appropriateness by appealing to the idea that properties and their associated responses are ‘made for each other’. However, as D’Arms and Jacobson point out, what we need to know here is how fixing on a given (more or less emotional) response helps us to decide what things are P? What guides us in deciding whether a(n) (emotional) response is appropriate or not? In other words, until one has circumscribed the sense of ‘appropriate’ such that the dictum ‘to think X is P is to think F an appropriate response to X’ is true, how can talk of the correctness or truth of value judgements be properly earned? What needs to be determined here is the relevant class of reasons for thinking X to be P. SSTs have, one might say, not yet worked sufficiently on developing the aspect of their account which might possibly enable them to avoid conflating good and bad, or justifying and non-justifying reasons for emotional responses. Until this has been done, ‘to call a response “appropriate” is vague praise’, and there will be ‘nothing to stop sentimentalism from yielding systematically wrong answers to evaluative questions.’²⁹ I shall return to the distinction between justifying and non-justifying reasons in the next section.

The second main ambiguity that the notion of appropriateness brings with it is concerned with its scope: when we proclaim an emotional response, say, to be appropriate, are we saying that it is appropriate merely for the individual having that response, or for all subjects with our sensibilities?³⁰ It is, moreover, easy to slip from the first usage of appropriateness to the second. To illustrate the point, let us return briefly to our question about arachnophobia. What should we think of a person who

²⁹ D’Arms & Jacobson (2000a), pp. 731-2.

³⁰ A related question of considerable importance is how much must we share with others to be included in the same ‘sensibility class’?

suffers from that condition and responds to seeing a small spider with intense fear? If, on the one hand, one says that the response is entirely inappropriate, one seems to assume that appropriateness can be of the first-person *plural* form only. That is to say, that appropriateness is always to be ascribed to all subjects of experience that share roughly similar sensibilities. If, on the other hand, one claims that the reaction is entirely appropriate, one seems to be attaching too much weight to appropriateness of the first-person *singular* form, and thereby encouraging the thought that each individual subject is, in a sense, her own measure of appropriateness. Fundamentally, the most reasonable view to hold on these matters is probably something along the following lines: whilst the intensely fearful response is appropriate *in relation to the person making the claim*, it is, nevertheless, inappropriate *in relation to the wider community one is a part of*. A response might then be appropriate in the first sense, yet inappropriate in the second.

Might it, on a final note, be the case that the first form of appropriateness (first-person singular form) mirrors the kind of appropriateness that refers to suitability, whereas the second (first-person plural form) describes that of correctness? I think not. If we take the distinction between ‘appropriate’ as ‘suitable’ and ‘appropriate’ as ‘correct’ to parallel the distinction between purely personal and general validity, we seem to turn a blind eye to the possibility that the response of a community might be ‘suitable’ or ‘fitting’ yet incorrect. In other words, one runs the risk to commit oneself to the view that the ‘suitable’ responses of a community alone set the norms of correctness and incorrectness. A correct response or judgement is nearly always also an appropriate one. Yet an appropriate response or judgement is not necessarily a correct one.³¹

³¹ See Jacobson (1997), p. 162, for a related point about offensive jokes. Such jokes, Jacobson argues, can be funny; ‘and when they are, what is funny about them is often just what makes them offensive.’

(ii). Appropriateness and emotional responses.

The suggestion that appropriateness can serve as a standard of correctness for value judgements is chiefly due to the idea that an intimate connection obtains between the emotional response to which an evaluative property can give rise, and the value judgement about that property. As we saw, on Wiggins's subjectivist account the response 'counts as nothing less than an act of judging a content' and as such it 'is not that *by which we tell*', but 'is part of the telling itself.'³² Now, although the notion of appropriateness may be an adequate standard of correctness for emotions, it cannot serve that role for judgements (even judgements that are conceptually closely linked to the emotions), because judgements deal solely with beliefs, and beliefs call for something less anthropocentric than appropriateness. That is to say, the correctness of aesthetic judgements is not simply determined by the contingent standards of the community in which that judgement happens to be made.³³ The kind of correctness true beliefs allow for must be of a kind that fulfils a 'tighter' relation with the object of awareness and its features, one less dependent on the responses of the subjects of experience in question. And since aesthetic judgements deal with beliefs about aesthetic properties, appropriateness can simply not be the kind of correctness that applies to them.

4. Conclusions.

In this section I have tried to achieve two things. First, I have been concerned to show why, even on the basis of a contemporary sensibility theory, the biconditional analysis of aesthetic properties is incapable of accounting adequately for the epistemology of

³² Wiggins (1998c), p. 208.

³³ This point bears reference to what is taken to be a relatively uncontroversial claim in ethics, namely that just because an isolated cannibalistic culture approves of cannibalistic practices, it doesn't therefore follow that cannibalism can be called good, regardless of whether one is 'inside' or 'outside' that community.

aesthetic judgements. Second, I have tried to demonstrate why appropriateness cannot be the measure of correctness for aesthetic judgements. I hope to have indicated that the main weaknesses of SSTs lie in (i) its relying too heavily on the dispositional biconditional account and the aforementioned analogy, and (ii) its putting too much weight on the emotional responses evaluative properties can give rise to. Moreover, I have discussed how aesthetic judgements can be grounded in all sorts of reasons that are not limited to the content of our perceptual experiences. In the case of colour, say, the mere experience of perceiving the table-cloth as blue is a good (i.e. justifying) reason to state that that table-cloth is blue. However, to perceive the sculpture as graceful is simply not adequate to the task of justifying the judgement that the sculpture is graceful. In conclusion, I hold that while SSTs, and the notion of appropriateness on which they rely, may put us on the road towards a more focused pursuit of correctness and objectivity for value judgements, they do not manage to take us all the way there.

C). The rational assessment of aesthetic judgements.

1. Reasons for aesthetic judgements.

(a). Aesthetic judgements – being ‘rationally grounded’.

Under what conditions is an aesthetic judgement rationally grounded? In this section I shall argue that an aesthetic judgement is well-grounded only if the reasons supporting it are good and salient. In addition, only features available to all rational agents with our sensibilities can qualify as good reasons for aesthetic judgements. To make correct aesthetic judgements thus requires being able to recognise pertinent features for what they are in a particular context and to respond to them appropriately; this, in turn, involves a certain kind of competence which we exercise in using the aesthetic concept in question. The semantic competence we have of aesthetic concepts, and the manner in which we develop and refine them is particularly important in the process of picking out relevant from irrelevant features. As we shall see towards the end of this section, developing one’s semantic competence in using an aesthetic concept crucially implies increasing one’s understanding of the various relations the property picked out by the concept stands in to other properties.

What, one may begin by asking, is a reason? A reason is something that stands in a particular kind of explanatory and/or justifying relation to a belief or judgement. In his *What We Owe To Each Other*, Thomas Scanlon argues that the ‘question “What is a reason?” is misleading insofar as it suggests that reasons are a special ontological class.’ Rather, what ‘is special about reasons’, he claims, ‘is not the ontological category of things that can be “reasons” but the status of being a reason’,³⁴ that is to say, of being a consideration that counts in favour of some belief or judgement. In the remainder of this chapter I shall make use of two distinctions between kinds of reasons. First, there

³⁴ Scanlon (1998), p. 56.

is a distinction between (i) reasons that are valid only for the individual subject in question, and (ii) reasons that are such for all rational agents endowed with similar mental abilities and sensibilities. I shall call the former ‘idiosyncratic reasons’, and the latter ‘non-idiosyncratic’ or ‘generally available reasons’.³⁵ So, for example, if I am scared of an elevator because I am claustrophobic, my (diagnosis of) claustrophobia provides me with an idiosyncratic reason for my fear in so far as it identifies my claustrophobic disposition. If, on the other hand, I am scared of the elevator because I know it to be very unsafe, that is a non-idiosyncratic or generally available reason for my fear.³⁶ Second, there is a division between kinds of reasons, of which I will only be concerned with two, namely (i) justifying reasons and (ii) explaining reasons. Now, the former are the kind of reasons I also refer to as ‘good’ reasons. I shall claim that only this kind of reason – ‘good’ reasons – can justify aesthetic judgements.³⁷ For Scanlon, these are ‘reasons in the standard normative sense’; they are the kind of things that are the contents of beliefs. So that if, as Scanlon writes, I ask ‘why do *you think* that the volcano is going to erupt?’ there are (at least) two questions I might be asking. First, ‘I might be taken to be asking you to give a justification for this belief. “Why should one think that the volcano will erupt? What reason is there to think this?”.’ Yet, in ‘offering a justification for the belief that the volcano will erupt you may also be explaining how you came to have that belief.’ As Scanlon correctly points out, despite the fact that ‘it is a characteristic of attitudes like belief that there is a close tie between justification and this kind of explanation’, the two ‘can come apart.’³⁸

³⁵ I will use the term ‘idiosyncratic’ to refer to individuality or personality.

³⁶ There is a third category here, namely the class of reasons that are valid only for some elements of the community of rational agents mentioned here. So, to use one of Peter Goldie’s examples, the judgement ‘don’t accept sweets from strangers’ is true only of children. I shall return to this category, but will generally consider it as a sub-class of the second category since it includes only a part of the broader community of rational and normally endowed agents.

³⁷ Also known as ‘normative’ reasons. See Scanlon (1998), pp. 18-21.

³⁸ See Scanlon (1998), pp. 18-19. Continued: ‘There is a difference between asking what reason there is for believing that P and asking what a given person’s reason for believing it was.’

The things we can refer to as good reasons in an aesthetic context (i.e. capable of justifying aesthetic judgements) are, similarly, generally epistemically accessible features of objects that acquire the status of a justifying reason in virtue of being not only relevant to, but also in favour of a particular judgement. In other words, one might say that by being salient to, and of counting in favour of a particular judgement, a feature may, in addition to what it already is, acquire the status of a reason too. This is also, as discussed in Chapters III and IV, one of the ways in which the emotions can be active in the making of aesthetic judgements: not only is it the case that the practice of picking out salient features is partly determined by how competent semantically we are with a particular aesthetic concept, which in turn, depends on how rich our grasp of it is, but our emotions can also ‘guide our minds’ towards the features that are salient in that way.

(b). Critical activities based on adducing reasons.

(i). Experiential test – experiential confirmation.

In the previous Chapter, I (briefly) outlined Sibley’s notion of ‘perceptual proof’ in the context of whether first-hand perceptual experiences are capable of justifying aesthetic judgements. This possibility seemed to follow from the importance of taking our perceptual experiences seriously. I argued, albeit in other terms, that such experiences have no justificatory power for aesthetic judgements mainly because they cannot count as generally available reasons. Even though our perceptual experiences may, to a certain extent, be able to *explain* why we make the aesthetic judgements we do, they are that through which our understanding of the world is *mediated*, not *justified*.

For Sibley, the notion of ‘perceptual proof’ is a matter of first-hand demonstration with explanation being the first stage, that is to say, one in which the art critic or *connoisseur* points out why an object of aesthetic appreciation has the aesthetic properties it does. Here, the critic selects ‘from a work those features which are *notably* or *especially*

responsible for its character'.³⁹ Nevertheless, the 'perceptual proof' is still, for Sibley, 'the only way of supporting an aesthetic judgement, even perhaps the only point of critical activity'. All in all, the critic's aim is to 'bring his audience to agree with him because they perceived for themselves what he perceived'.⁴⁰

It should, at this point, be clearer why the perceptual process Sibley describes as that of 'getting people to see for themselves' the elegance of a sculpture or the harmony of a painting, can serve not so much as a justification of one's aesthetic judgement, as a *confirmation* of it. When one eventually 'gets to see' for oneself what the art critic might have gone through great pains to point out, what one gets is a confirmation rather than a proof of a judgement. A first-hand perceptual experience thus validates an aesthetic judgement in the sense that the former corroborates the latter, and the more so the more of an expert the subject of the experience is.

(ii). Two uses of 'reason'.

One of the main grounds for Sibley's 'perceptual proof' has to do with some of the conclusions reached in the first section of Chapter IV, namely the absence of inductive or deductive justificatory procedures for aesthetic judgements. What Sibley is worried about in this context is that emphasising the practice of adducing reasons at the expense of perception might result in a commitment to a view whereby such a set of reasons can provide a basis from which inferences from the non-aesthetic to the aesthetic can be drawn. But for Sibley, 'one could not... be brought to make an aesthetic judgement simply as the outcome of considering reasons, however good.' Although I may 'have reasons for *thinking* that something is graceful, but not reasons for *seeing* it is'.⁴¹

³⁹ Sibley (2001b), p. 36.

⁴⁰ Sibley (2001b), p. 40.

⁴¹ Sibley (2001b), p. 40 (my italics).

The question an account like mine has to bear in mind, then, is whether there is not a sense in which relying on adducing reasons for justifying judgements does indeed imply that aesthetic judgements can be seen as the outcome of some process of inferential reasoning, in which case, one would have to abandon aesthetic particularism. Now, although I shall return to this worry directly below, it may be the case that the apparent tension here may at least partly be dissipated by a distinction Sibley himself draws between two ways of using the term ‘reason’. The difference is that of using the term to ask, on the one hand, for the reason on which someone’s *inference* is based and, on the other, for the reason *why something* has a certain quality. In the first sense, ‘reason’ is meant, roughly, as ‘a true statement or a fact such that, on the basis of knowing it, it would be reasonable, right, or plausible to infer, suppose, or believe that something is so’.⁴² In the second sense, however, are the ‘reasons’ that, for Sibley,

a critic should be able to give [in support of] his judgement... To have reasons for his judgement he must have attended carefully enough, while seeing, hearing, or reading the work, to have noticed in some measure the features of the work that make it moving or unbalanced or ungraceful, and his judgement must have resulted from that... [M]y suggestion is that two things are often confused; people insist that these aesthetic judgements should be based on, in the sense of rationally derived or derivable from, supporting reasons; but all they can sensibly insist is that the critic, having realised that the thing is or is not graceful, should be able to say what, in his opinion, makes it so.⁴³

What I take Sibley’s claim to highlight here is that aesthetic justification only works in one direction, so to speak: whereas one can move from beliefs and judgements to the reasons that we take to support them, one cannot necessarily move from these reasons back to beliefs and judgements. So, for example, I may believe that O is elegant, for reasons (X, Y, Z), but X, Y, and Z are not in themselves sufficient conditions for inferring O to be elegant in the sense of providing me with an inductive or deductive ‘proof’ for that judgement.⁴⁴ Aesthetic judgements can, then, be justified by appealing

⁴² Sibley (2001b), pp. 42-3.

⁴³ Sibley (2001b), pp. 42-3.

⁴⁴ Nor is it the case that the presence of O can guarantee the presence of X, Y, and Z.

to supporting good reasons, but that is not to say that the mere presence of those reasons justifies inferring that very same judgement in other cases. Once the justifying reasons for a particular aesthetic judgement have been isolated, there is no exhaustive list of features or set of necessary conditions that can be formulated so as to be put to future prescriptive purposes. That is the main point of the particularism I committed myself to in Chapter IV. As Little writes with regards to the moral domain, particularists ‘have famously emphasized the importance of attending to detail’. Yet ‘more importantly, they have emphasized the possibility of coming to moral knowledge, not by invoking generalizations that allow us to *infer* moral conclusions from such details, but by *seeing* what moral properties such details together ground.’⁴⁵ To recognise a feature as salient and as counting in favour of a particular judgement is to assess that that feature is one in virtue of which the situation or action has the evaluative character it has; it is ‘to make a judgement about what would be explanatory of that [particular evaluative] status.’⁴⁶

(c). Being aesthetically discerning.

The process of acquiring and developing the semantic competence necessary for the making of correct aesthetic judgements is a case of how a mental ability can be learnt, cultivated, and, eventually, lead to an understanding of the world. One could say, then, that being an aesthetically discerning subject is not so much a matter of being born as a certain kind of person, but, rather, of being willing to make the numerous efforts involved in becoming one. This aspect of aesthetic concept acquisition is revealing of the depth that most evaluative concepts have – the semantic competence of them is an endless process of education and improvement. Nevertheless, as we saw in Chapter IV, the more experiences one has, the more trustworthy one’s experiences generally become

⁴⁵ Little (2000), p. 292.

⁴⁶ Little (2002), p. 285. (Little’s original term here is ‘moral’ rather than ‘particular evaluative’.)

in virtue of learning how to make finer and finer discriminations. And the finer discriminations one can make, the more likely it is that one's aesthetic judgements will be correct.

Being capable of having the appropriate emotional response to an aesthetic property is a sign of being aesthetically discerning: to have had the appropriate emotion with regards to a particular aesthetic feature at least once, is, as discussed in Chapter III, a prerequisite for acquiring the phenomenal concept of the aesthetic property. There are, to be sure, some respects in which the aesthetic case parallels an Aristotelian suggestion in the moral sphere, whereby the virtuous person, in order to be such, will be capable of having certain kinds of emotions.⁴⁷ To use Myles Burnyeat's words, '[w]hat is exemplary in Aristotle is his grasp of the truth that morality comes in a sequence of stages with both cognitive and emotional dimensions.'⁴⁸ As Aristotle himself tells us in the *Nicomachean Ethics*,

[t]he man, then, who faces and who fears the right things and from the right motive, in the right way and at the right time, and who feels confident under the corresponding conditions, is brave; for the brave man feels and acts according to the merits of the case.⁴⁹

Being able to discern the features relevant to our aesthetic judgements will at times at least involve drawing on our emotional experiences, both past and present. And as mentioned above, having, or being able to have, the appropriate emotional response can also add credibility to both the aesthetic judgement and the judge *qua* aesthetic assessor. Our emotions can, thus, serve as evidence that we have more or less adequate semantic competence of the aesthetic concept in question.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Blackburn (2002), Morton, (2002), Stocker (2002).

⁴⁸ Burnyeat (1980), pp. 70-71.

⁴⁹ Aristotle (1980), 1115b13-18, p. 65.

2. Reasoning in aesthetic judgements.

(a). Main concerns.

How, then, does aesthetic justification work? In what remains of this section, I shall outline a sketch of the main workings of the reasoning processes that support aesthetic judgements. I will illustrate some of my claims by diagrams. The first diagram describes what Goldie has called ‘the normative triangle’. It is concerned with both the justifying relations and so-called ‘possible epistemological routes’ between value judgements, responses and reasons. In the second, I look at the kind of reasons that ground the two principal kinds of emotional responses that can accompany the making of an aesthetic judgement. I do this so as to put myself in a position from which I can examine three different relations between aesthetic judgements and both kinds of emotional responses described in the second diagram: (i) possible epistemological route; (ii) explaining relation; and (iii) justifying relation. This will occupy most of Figure 3. The last diagram represents what the adequate reasoning processes leading to an aesthetic judgement should look like on my account. On a final note, I discuss the dangers of conflating kinds of reasons. As I have indicated many times already, the root of several of the difficulties for the possibility of aesthetic objectivity discussed in this thesis lies in the various confluences (such as the two PDPs) that ensue from mistaking reasons for one thing to be reasons for another kind of thing.⁵⁰

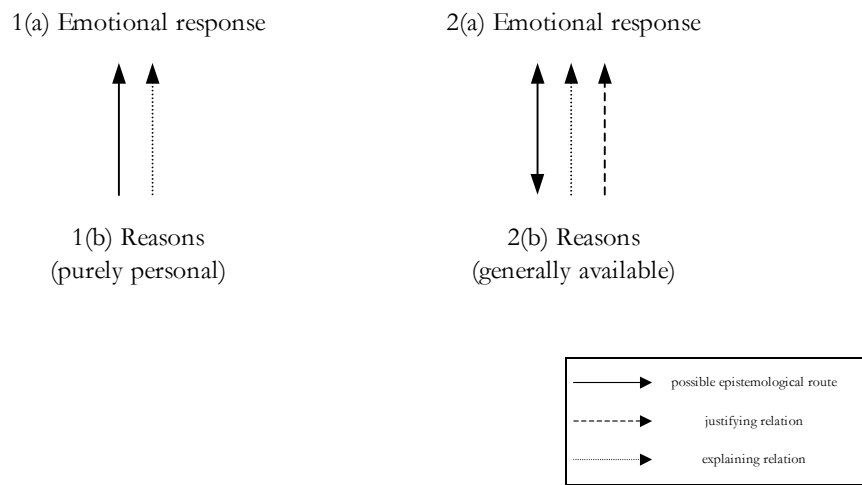
(b). Aesthetic justification.

Goldie’s ‘normative triangle’ (See Figure 1) makes two main points: (i) all relations between judgements, responses and reasons are possible epistemological routes; (ii)

⁵⁰ Due to the great heterogeneity of aesthetic properties, there are surely several variations in these justificatory accounts from one kind of property to another that I will not be able to discuss here. It is, for example, likely that the justification of most aesthetic judgements concerned with thick aesthetic properties is different to that of aesthetic judgements about thin aesthetic properties. Probably, then, properties such as ‘garish’, ‘bland’, or ‘vivacious’ do, to use Mulligan’s expression, ‘link up’ more directly with non-evaluative properties. See Mulligan (1998).

Variations immensely. April's emotion is one that can be said to arise in response to the music itself, that is to say, its movements, modulations, and so on. In contrast to her sister, May has little interest in music generally. She only really enjoys listening to the *Variations* because they remind her of her mother who used to play it to her every Christmas Eve.

Figure 2.



What is the difference between the two sisters' emotional responses to the movements and progressions of the music?⁵³ In the first case, April's attention is genuinely focused on the music's properties, and her emotional response to the aesthetic properties in question relates to features of the music itself, and are, as such, available to all (normally endowed) rational agents that share our sensibility. May's response, however, is a reaction based on idiosyncratic reasons that are not related to features of the object of aesthetic appreciation that could count as reasons available to all rational agents. So, April's emotional response exemplifies 2(a), and May's response is an instance of 1(a). It is, moreover, worth noting that whereas the possible

⁵³ I am perfectly willing to admit that there are more than two kinds of reasons (and thus two corresponding kinds of emotional responses) here. These two kinds of reasons are meant to be suggestive of two poles. It might be helpful to think about the third category that I mentioned earlier, which targets a limited part of a wider community, such as children for example.

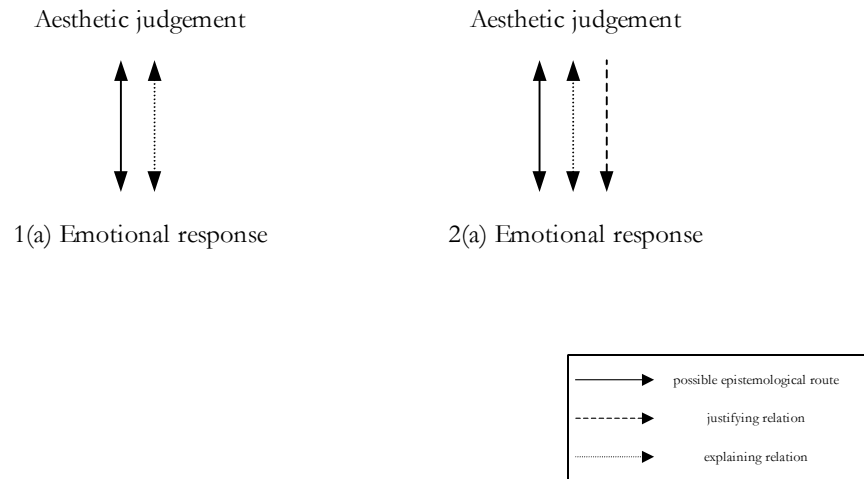
epistemological route goes in ‘both directions’, so to speak, in the case of the relation between emotional responses and generally available reasons (2(b)), that is not the case with regards to the relation between emotional responses and purely personal reasons (1(b)). Even though reasons of kind 1(b) may be able to give us some form of indication about the kind of emotional response they themselves may give rise to, the emotional responses themselves cannot give us any significant clues as to which purely personal reasons they are based on. This is so because the facts or features that count as purely personal reasons are not ascribable to the object of aesthetic appreciation itself, but rather, to the appreciating subject. My main concern, however, with the elements that figure in this diagram is not the possible justificatory relations that might prevail between them. I leave that for others to explore. Rather, the most interesting aspect of this diagram in the light of my project is that it manages to draw out the category of emotional responses that seem the most likely to be capable of justifying aesthetic judgements.⁵⁴ And this brings me to my most pressing point.

The question that concerns my third diagram (See Figure 3) is how the two kinds of emotional responses outlined above relate to aesthetic judgements, and, more specifically, whether any of the two, both, or neither, can justify aesthetic judgements. Building on the scenario outlined above, let us imagine that April and May now make the judgement, ‘the first movement of the *Goldberg Variations* is harmonious’. In the light of the above, we can now say that emotional responses of kind 1(a) can, at least to a certain extent, explain the aesthetic judgement, and vice-versa: May’s response can explain her aesthetic judgement and her aesthetic judgement can, in turn, explain her emotion. But what May’s emotional response cannot do – nor indeed could anyone else’s – is justify the judgement. Justification, I take it, is, roughly, a relation between a belief and that (fact or feature) which renders that belief a true belief. And for a fact or

⁵⁴ My concern in this thesis is not the justification of emotions but that of aesthetic judgements.

feature to be capable of rendering a belief true (*as a belief* rather than merely *of* someone, say), it cannot be such as to be accessible to one individual subject alone, in the way that May’s association involving Christmas Eve, her mother, and the *Goldberg Variations* is.

Figure 3.



Does her sister’s emotional response fare any better? April’s emotional response – grounded in generally available reasons – can both explain, and be explained by, the judgement, and could to a limited extent even be said to be justified by that judgement in the sense that the very same reasons that justify the aesthetic judgement also justify the emotional response. (See Figure 1).⁵⁵ So, if April, who is relatively knowledgeable about music, has an emotional response that is grounded in generally available reasons, that response can be seen to be justified in the light of the related aesthetic judgement (that is to say, by the reasons that justify the judgement). However, and it is this question that we are really after here, that response *cannot itself justify* the aesthetic judgement.

To illustrate this claim, let us look at another scenario. Let us suppose that June is an architect who has been asked to redesign a restaurant. Having accepted the assignment,

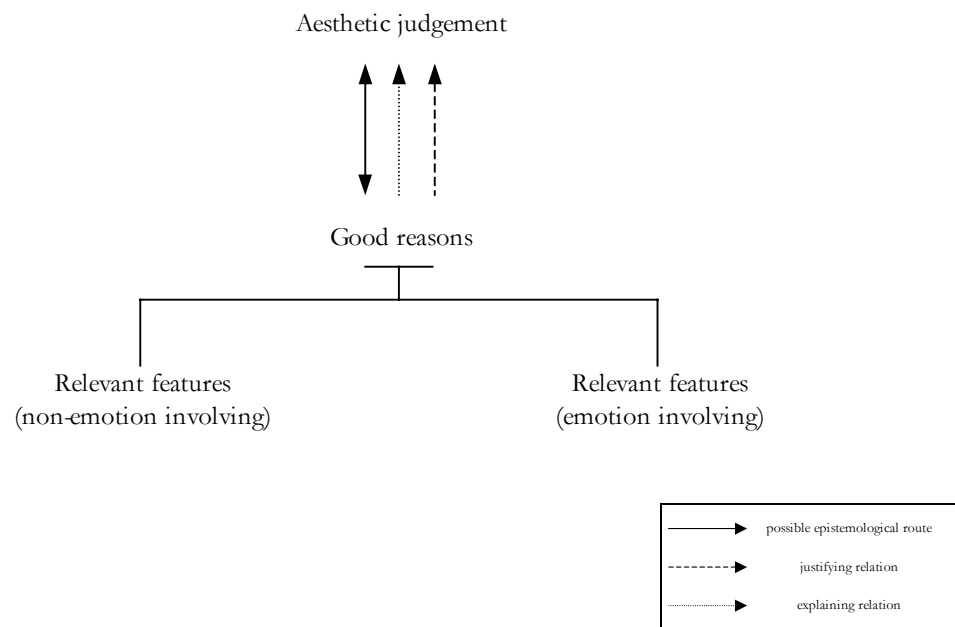
⁵⁵ It is, in other words, not the case that the aesthetic judgement justifies the emotional response directly. Rather, and as mentioned above, only generally available reasons can serve that justificatory role.

June sets out to visit the restaurant in order to determine what elements of the interior need to be changed. On entering the restaurant, June is overwhelmed by a negative emotional response – she finds the atmosphere in the restaurant oppressive and unpleasant. June is subsequently asked by the restaurant’s owner to write a report so as to justify the changes she wants to make to the restaurant’s interior. In so doing, she will clearly have to appeal to generally available reasons (2b) supporting – but not identical to – her emotional response (2a), such as ‘the lights are very bright’, ‘the lay-out of the dining area is impractically designed’, ‘the smells of the kitchen come through to the dining area’, etc. In other words, she will appeal to 2(b), and not 2(a). Simply stating that the restaurant gave her a bad feeling upon entering it cannot justify her judgement – only reasons available to not only her but also the restaurant’s owner will be able to do that. None of this is to say, of course, that in virtue of being an architectural *connoisseur*, she cannot or will not also mention her emotional impression, and that this will carry some weight. But – and this is the point here – whatever weight that emotional response might have, it will still not have any justificatory power in relation to her judgement.

My last diagram (Figure 4) sketches an outline of what I argue aesthetic justification should look like. The only kind of thing that can justify an aesthetic judgement is, then, a ‘good’ reason (or set of reasons), where such reasons are taken to be reasons that are generally available to all rational agents with our sensibility. There are, roughly, two kinds of reasons that can serve that purpose. The first kind of reason appeals to relevant features that do not involve emotions, in the sense that picking them out as salient to the judgement in question does not require that one makes use of the emotions in the manner described in Chapter III and the previous section. An example of such a feature might be the garish colours of an object about which one makes the

judgement, ‘that garden gnome is kitsch’.⁵⁶ So, picking out the garish colours which constitute a good reason for the judgement will generally not involve emotions in that way, and thus the garish colours will constitute a relevant feature that is non-emotion-involving in the manner specified. The second kind of reason here involves relevant features that are recognised as such with the help of a certain emotional residue – the emotions the experience of which is a prerequisite for the acquisition of the phenomenal concept of the aesthetic property in question.

Figure 4.



Here the *Goldberg Variations* might serve as a helpful example: to detect at least some of the features relevant to our aesthetic judgement, it might be the case that one must have recourse to the appropriate emotion (e.g. being moved in a particular way) which one experienced the first time one grasped what it is for a piece of music to be harmonious, and which was thus necessary for the acquisition of the aesthetic concept.

⁵⁶ It will be recalled that in Chapter III, I argued that, generally speaking, thick aesthetic properties are grounded mainly on features that are non-emotion-involving. Similarly, thin aesthetic properties are mainly the kind of aesthetic properties that are grounded on relevant features that are emotion-involving. Also, thick aesthetic properties may figure amongst both kinds of relevant features.

The common practice of conflating distinct kinds of reasons and responses lies at the heart of several of the difficulties that arise for the possibility of ascribing objectivity to aesthetic judgements. Taking the reasons that underlie an aesthetic judgement to be of kind 2(b) when in reality they are of kind 1(b) can indeed contribute to making the first horn of the subjectivity/objectivity dilemma impossible to escape. If, let us say, one were to hold that the only kind of reason upon which aesthetic judgements can be grounded are purely personal rather than generally available, then the pursuit of objectivity would be in vain. If one's aesthetic reasoning processes do not step outside the purely personal sphere (first-person singular), and aim for the personal perspective as such (or the first-person plural personal), there is no substantial correctness to be had. The pursuit of aesthetic objectivity can, then, not really get off the ground unless the reasons that support our aesthetic judgements are generally available to all rational agents with our sensibilities. And it is on this relation between generally available reasons and aesthetic judgements that the possibility of a reasonable objectivism in aesthetics rests.

D). Axiological objectivity.

1. Euthyphro's question again.

How, then, shall we position ourselves with respect to Socrates' query in the *Euthyphro*?

In this final section I set out to explain more directly and in greater detail what the reasonable objectivism I take to be within reach for aesthetic judgements amounts to.

As we shall see, while the aesthetic properties we apprehend present us with certain normative requirements the authority of which is not merely optional, it is not the case that they count as requirements for all possible rational agents, at all possible times, in all possible worlds or parts of a world. An adequate axiological objectivity in aesthetics is one that takes into account the particular way in which aesthetic concepts and properties are rooted in subjects. And indeed, as I argued in Chapter II, one of the ways in which the need for an objectivity of this kind makes itself felt is by the untenability of the view that objectivity in general is monopolised by the subject-matters of the empirical sciences, and is thus applicable only to non-evaluative matters. One of the main aims of this thesis has been to show how a revisionary approach to Socrates' query has had to wait for a more sophisticated account of some key issues in the philosophy of mind and psychology, such as the relation between mental and material properties and the emotions.

This section has two main aims: first, to outline the main difficulties that the account presented in this thesis might have been unable to avert as yet for the possibility of ascribing objectivity to aesthetic judgements; and second, to complete the sketch outlined in Chapter I about the character of aesthetic objectivity.

2. *Difficulties.*

(a). *Over-intellectualisation?*

Any attempt to disentangle aesthetic judgements from emotional responses, and, albeit gently, remove the latter from playing a direct role in aesthetic justification, is likely to be accused of ‘over-intellectualising’ the process of making and justifying aesthetic judgements. One might consider it crucially important to reject any approach that

takes refuge in the thinnest and driest of intellectual ‘emotions’. Such a response is almost purely intellectual or cognitive and is the preserve of the dry critic, sated and blunted by overfamiliarity with great works of art... what is condemned here is the substitution of an intellectual judgment, no matter how clever and informed, for an aesthetic feeling.⁵⁷

Does my suggested account attempt to remove all traces of emotions from aesthetic judgement in this manner? Far from it. One of the main claims of this thesis has been that in the process of both making and justifying aesthetic judgements, we do draw on our emotional experiences. Emotions, I have held, can help us ‘guide our minds’ in detecting features salient to our judgements. Without having had the appropriate emotions, I have argued, we cannot acquire the phenomenal concept of the aesthetic property in question, and thus, cannot really be said to grasp it as distinctively aesthetic.

Regardless of my account of the participation of the emotions in the making and justifying of aesthetic judgements, it is, in this context, important to be aware of the gradual dismantling of the view that emotion and reason are in stark opposition. As a result of inquiries in the philosophy of mind and psychology, what has indeed begun to emerge is that emotions are, as explained in the beginning of Chapter III, no longer thought of as mere feelings unable to be brought under rational control. Emotions, many philosophers have come to hold, can be rationally assessed and even altered in

⁵⁷ Lyons (1997), p. 141. Lyons is here describing the position of William James in the latter’s *The Principles of Psychology* (1890).

accordance with our reasoning processes.⁵⁸ In fact, contemporary psychology and analytic philosophy, perhaps inspired by Hume's defence of the crucial motivational role of emotions, tend to reject the presupposition that the emotions are at loggerheads with reason. Thus, de Sousa, for example, writes that '[d]espite a common prejudice, reason and emotion are not natural antagonists... What remains of the old opposition between reason and emotion is only this: emotions are not reducible to beliefs or to wants'.⁵⁹ Taken together, the role my account gives to the emotions – albeit not in the 'limelight' of aesthetic justification – and the widely accepted view that emotions are not necessarily *a-* or *irrational*, join forces to combat accusations of 'over-intellectualisation'. Whereas the former shows that emotions are, perhaps despite appearances, not to be ascribed a merely accessory role, the latter undermines a conception of the emotions in aesthetic judgements whereby they are not amenable to rational evaluation and in several respects similar to headaches, twitches, scratches, and the like.

(b). Bootstrapping?

How, critics of my account may ask, can a notion such as objectivity be appealed to when all that has actually been described are the ways in which our judgements pull themselves up by their own bootstraps so as to appear as undistorted reflections of reality? Is there, in short, any risk of my account involving an element of bootstrapping? Yes and no; but not, I argue, in a way that rules out the possibility of objectivity for aesthetic judgements.

As we saw in the first substantial part of this chapter, on Wiggins's genealogical account, < property, response > pairs evolve, and with the passing of time they come to be thought of as 'made for each other'. There is, on such SSTs, nothing 'set in stone', so to speak, about which responses are or will become appropriate for certain evaluative

⁵⁸ See, for example, de Sousa (1987) and Greenspan (1988).

⁵⁹ de Sousa (1987), pp. xv-xvi.

properties. Instead, this ‘partnership’ is largely a matter of cultural and other contingencies. Relating this back to a weakness of SSTs discussed above, it is no coincidence, then, that one of its main weaknesses is a lack of satisfactory explanations of why one particular response is ‘made’ for one particular property.⁶⁰ If, as according to SSTs, the responses in question are cashed out in more or less emotional terms, accusations of bootstrapping do indeed seem to bite. There is, after all, hardly a *necessary* relation between a certain emotional response and the particular feature to which it is considered appropriate. And to the extent that my account does require the participation of the emotions, and the idea that certain emotions are appropriate for certain features, it might also be vulnerable to charges of bootstrapping.

However, and this is where I am committed to a negative answer to the charge, the main concern of my account is with judgements, and not emotions. Aesthetic judgements, on the theory presented here, report the absence or presence of aesthetic properties, and as I have argued, therefore stand in a less liberal relation to the non-aesthetic features of the object of aesthetic appreciation. One might, of course, be persistent and ask whether those features taken to be relevant and count in favour or disfavour of a given aesthetic judgement cannot in the event be seen to be a matter of social convention too. But, in reply to this, I claim that for something like an aesthetic concept to have developed in a cultural setting is not for it – and for its correct application – to be a purely cultural invention like chess. Aesthetic judgements, once their complex relation to emotions have been disentangled, and the way in which they can be grounded in justifying reasons has been established, are not as fickle as that.

⁶⁰ Applied to the aesthetic case, there might need to be some further commitment to a realist view about aesthetic properties.

(c). *Neo-Intuitionism?*

The aspect that, probably more than any other, might seem to commit me to some form of neo-intuitionism in aesthetics is my adherence to aesthetic particularism, and the way in which aesthetic judgements are made by reference to a non-inferential awareness of aesthetic properties. So, as Budd writes in relation to Kant's and Sibley's aesthetic theories,

[g]iven the lack of aesthetic principles, capable of being known *a priori*,... and given that any *a posteriori* principles would have to be founded on aesthetic judgements, it follows that the canonical method of establishing the truth of an attribution of an aesthetic property or an aesthetic evaluation... is the exercise of the aesthetic sensitivity... the reliability of aesthetic judgements will be a function of the qualifications of the person who makes them: the better-qualified someone is – the more finely-honed and better-trained their aesthetic sensitivity – the more reliable will be their aesthetic judgements in which this sensitivity is well-exercised.⁶¹

What does aesthetic particularism bind us to in this respect? As we saw in the previous Chapter, one of the main particularist tenets is that, generally, non-evaluative or material properties do not carry their reason-giving force 'atomistically' and so do not always ground the same evaluative properties. We can, then, come to discern the aesthetic character of an object by exercising a sensitivity analogous to a perceptual capacity. But this ability, far from being mystifying or inexplicable, is simply one side of the capacity to apply concepts correctly. The way in which we make aesthetic judgements on the particularist account thus also involves, just as it does in cases when we make other judgements, 'consulting our experience of patterns and our sense of current conditions, and then invoking our competency with the relevant epistemological concepts such as *relevance, robustness, similarity*.'⁶² Explaining our ability to apprehend that something is elegant is, on the particularist view presented here, not a matter of appealing to any special sense organ, as the argument from perception discussed in

⁶¹ Budd (1999), p. 304.

⁶² Little (2000), pp. 297-98.

Chapter II would have us believe, but rather of drawing on the ability to apply concepts correctly. In other words, one can apprehend that an object can be classified as ‘elegant’ by attending to the particular features of the case at hand, picking out the relevant properties *as* relevant, and make use of ‘a matured understanding of the concept.’⁶³ Of course, in practice, such apprehensions are not always easy – becoming aware of what is salient, drawing relevant discriminations, and remaining undistracted by irrelevant properties is not always an easy task.

The emphasis my account places on expertise and the continual refinement of our competence with aesthetic concepts becomes more important still when brought into relation with the accusation of neo-intuitionism. This charge is, in effect, to a considerable extent based on a prevailing lack of knowledge and understanding of the way in which certain features of the world can be perceived. If it could be rendered entirely transparent exactly what happens when, say, an experienced psychiatrist ‘sees’ that a particular person is depressed, or when a ballet teacher ‘sees’ the gracefulness of a certain pupil’s performance, or again, when a golf player ‘sees’ which number iron she needs to get the ball as close to her target as possible, there would be no need to refer to such abilities by the rather pejorative term ‘intuitionism’. As things stand, increasing our insight into these kind of perceptual ‘goings-on’ represents an important step away from the idea that non-traditional means of acquiring knowledge and understanding must be qualified as uncanny, and towards a serious investigation of non-inferential epistemological methods.

Gaining a better understanding of the workings and nature of the aesthetic ability that we are not only endowed with, but are also capable of educating and refining, should therefore be a central concern to aesthetic psychology.⁶⁴ We must carefully

⁶³ Little (2000), p. 292.

⁶⁴ Korsmeyer points out that many kinds of aesthetic discrimination have, throughout the last few centuries, been lumped together under the term ‘taste’. It is, she argues, partly because aesthetic taste has been modelled on gustatory taste that the link with sentiments and pleasure has been viewed as so

examine this ability and explore ideas such as Levinson's whereby there might be different kinds of aesthetic sensibility.⁶⁵ Such examinations and explorations will clear the way, still ridden with obstacles, for taking seriously the idea that the deliverances of special kinds of perceptual abilities can count as cases of knowledge. According to Levinson, we should

recognize the possibility not only of a diversity of *sensibilities*, but of a diversity of *kinds* of sensibility. There may, I suspect, very well be two basic kinds of sensibility at play here, which we can label *perceptual* sensibility and *attitudinal* sensibility... A *perceptual* sensibility would be a disposition to register phenomenal impressions of certain sorts from various constellations of perceivable non-aesthetic features, while an *attitudinal* sensibility would be a disposition to react to phenomenal impressions of certain sorts with attitudes of favour or disfavour, approval or disapproval. There is also no need to assume that an attitudinal sensibility is necessarily a fixed or inborn matter; it might indeed generally have a strong culturally shaped component.⁶⁶

Aesthetic sensibility is far from being a mysterious mental faculty or sense organ. Rather, it is an ability that all of us potentially have, and a great majority of us regularly use, to perceive aesthetic properties and make judgements about them by applying aesthetic concepts. Aesthetic sensibility is that through which, as Sibley holds, we perceive and appreciate for ourselves that 'the music is serene, the play moving, or the picture unbalanced'; it is that through which we 'see, hear, or feel'.⁶⁷ If this everyday activity should be thought to commit us to some form of 'neo-intuitionism', so be it.

intimate. See Korsmeyer (1997), p. 205.

⁶⁵ Levinson (2001), p. 76.

⁶⁶ See Levinson (2001), p. 77.

⁶⁷ Sibley (2001b), p. 34.

3. Aesthetic objectivity.

(a). Dichotomies and 'false friends'.

One of the most important lessons to be drawn from an examination of the psychological, epistemological and ontological underpinnings of aesthetic judgements is that the subjectivity/objectivity distinction in general need not, and indeed often cannot (as the aesthetic case shows), be conceived as a dichotomy. Whilst aesthetic judgements may not admit of objectivity in the senses of being non-perspectival or non-anthropocentric, it is no more the case that they can accurately be described as subjective in the sense of being necessarily biased, incapable of being grounded in generally available reasons, or not evaluable for correctness. As I pointed out in Chapter I, each sense of objectivity and subjectivity is to a certain extent autonomous of the other, even though some uses may be more closely related than others (e.g. being well-grounded in generally available reasons and being truth-evaluable are more intimately linked than being well-grounded in such reasons and being non-anthropocentric). The two traditional conceptions of the subjectivity/objectivity distinction outlined at the beginning of this thesis can, then, not account adequately for aesthetic judgements because of the 'monolithic' understanding of the two notions as mutually exclusive in every way.

In abandoning this dichotomy-model, the increased fluidity of our understanding of objectivity and subjectivity gives rise to a greater need to address other often unquestioned assumptions about the kinds of thing that subjectivity and objectivity are compared to and contrasted with. For example, one may ask how the relation between objectivity and reality – conceived by many to be almost equivalent – is to be understood; is the considerable conceptual overlap between the two notions tantamount to equivalence, albeit a conditional one, or is the case here more one of 'false friends'? The question, though too rich in implication to be dealt with in detail here, is one which

imports on the present discussion about aesthetic judgements. After all, it is an assumption such as this one that underlies Mackie's argument from 'queerness' outlined in Chapter II. The main idea of that argument was, it will be recalled, that since 'value facts' cannot be objective, they cannot be part of the 'fabric of the world', and thus, cannot be real. And, as McDowell has pointed out, this line of thought simply takes it for granted that there is an 'innocuous variation in terminology' between 'objective' and 'in the world'.⁶⁸ But if we are working with the traditional conceptions of the subjectivity/objectivity distinction, then one of the consequences of taking the objective to be that which is real is, correspondingly, that that which is said to be 'subjective' is automatically held to be 'not real'. If we accept that that which is subjective cannot be real, we are but a short step from the view, described as inadequate in Chapter II, of the world as 'fully describable in terms of properties that can be understood without essential reference to their effects on sentient beings.'⁶⁹ Running objectivity and reality so closely together thus seems to amount to something like the claim that being objective is to be impersonal.⁷⁰ What is at stake here is, clearly, the question of whether that which can only be grasped for what it is from within the personal perspective cannot admit of any objectivity. From the impersonal stance, we lose sight not only of the aesthetic as such, but also of the evaluative and normative schemes with which we operate, and without which we cannot hope to understand ourselves and others better. Obviously, then, it is crucial that the less monolithic notions of subjectivity and objectivity that I have been concerned to elaborate during the course of this thesis are maintained; many of the pitfalls created by the over-estimation of the dichotomy, or of the level of equivalence with related notions, can thereby be avoided.

⁶⁸ McDowell (1998b), p. 113.

⁶⁹ McDowell (1998b), p. 114.

⁷⁰ For more on this point, see Goldie (2000), p. 4.

(b). *Aesthetic objectivity and the view from somewhere.*

If, as I explained above, objectivity were invariably associated with the impersonal stance alone, there could for obvious reasons be no such thing as aesthetic objectivity. In Chapter II, I argued that objectivity, if it is to be possible to ascribe it to aesthetic judgements in any sense whatsoever, must be pursued from within the personal perspective, since from outside that perspective, the aesthetic loses its distinctive character. Even though aesthetic judgements can be well-grounded in generally available reasons (O3), impartial (O2) and correct (O1), they are always perspectival (S1) in this way. It would be a further issue, and one very interesting indeed to explore, how the notions of objectivity differ from one context to the next. One suggestion along these lines rests on a distinction outlined by Thomas Nagel between so-called ‘physical’ objectivity and ‘mental’ objectivity.⁷¹ Whereas the former, Nagel argues, involves those aspects of human inquiry concerned with ‘arriving at a truer understanding of the physical world’,⁷² the latter requires that we set out to understand things from the ‘inside’, thereby going ‘beyond the distinction between appearance and reality by including the existence of appearances in an elaborated reality.’⁷³ In other words, our experience, aesthetic or otherwise, *really* is a part of reality.

Another aspect of Nagel’s theory that can be instructive in understanding the way in which there can be no entirely perspective-less point from which to strive for aesthetic objectivity, is his expression ‘the view from nowhere’. In his book of that name, Nagel sets out to investigate how, if at all, it is possible to combine the fact that human beings have the ability to view the world in a detached way and consider it from ‘nowhere in particular’ with the fact that we all have our own particular view of the world. What I have suggested could, then, be characterised as the idea that there can be no such thing

⁷¹ Nagel (1986), pp. 13-19.

⁷² Nagel (1986), p. 14.

⁷³ Nagel (1986), p. 18.

as aesthetic objectivity from something like the view from nowhere. The objectivity of aesthetic judgements is always from some perspective, or from ‘somewhere’.

As I argued in Chapter II, pursuing objectivity for aesthetic judgements, *qua* judgements that can only be made from within the personal perspective, so to speak, involves stepping outside ourselves – our individual personal perspective – yet remaining within the personal perspective as such. The abstraction involved here is one which relies on a detachment from one’s own idiosyncratic perspective (including one’s memories, preferences, etc.), but which rests on viewing the world from the standpoint of humanity, so to speak. One could say that pursuing objectivity for one’s aesthetic judgements must involve something like the following process: when I make a judgement such as, ‘the first movement of the *Goldberg Variations* is gentle’, I must check first whether the reasons for my judgement are purely personal or not. If they are, or if I suspect that they might be, I must, with the help of reasoning, identify which reasons truly are relevant, try to distance myself from the irrelevant ones, and set out to make a new judgement based on generally available relevant reasons. What we try to do is, then, something like what Nagel describes when he urges us to ‘seek a detached point of view from which it would be possible to correct inclination and to discern what we really should do.’⁷⁴ What we should be striving to attain, then, is a detachment from our own personal perspective, but not from the personal perspective as such. We should, so to speak, transcend the dimension of first person singular reports in order to reach the level of first person plural reports. It is through some process of abstraction such as this, that an axiological form of objectivity is available to aesthetic judgements. The pursuit of objectivity, be it axiological or otherwise, implies a search for accuracy in the process of describing the world. The defence of the possibility of axiological objectivity in an aesthetic context must thus, in a similar spirit, aim for a correct rendition of how

⁷⁴ Nagel (1986), p. 40.

the world presents itself to us. This description will not be one that is independent of subjects *per se*, but rather one that can be unconstrained by particular experiences of subjects where those are either emotional or grounded in purely personal reasons (or both).

4. Summing up.

Perhaps the most important point about the *Euthyphro* question in an aesthetic context is that it admits of no singular simple answer. It is certainly not the case that an object of aesthetic appreciation is graceful or gaudy just because we have a favourable or unfavourable (emotional) response to it. Nor is it that our (emotional) response is merely a reaction to a non-relational property. The absence of a clear-cut solution in this respect mirrors the lesson that we can draw from the subjectivity/objectivity dilemma which seemed so damaging to aesthetic inquiry at a first glance: namely, that aesthetic judgements are not going to lie neatly at either pole so long as the distinction between these two notions is conceived as one between opposites in all respects.

The subjectivity of aesthetic judgements is primarily to be understood in terms of its being rooted in subjects. That is to say, there can be no aesthetic judgements without subjects for the simple reason that the aesthetic is, as explained in Chapter I, a certain kind of relation between the world and the mind. Yet, one should note that this claim is, by itself, silent on the matter of whether this subjectivity of aesthetic judgements is necessarily to be restricted only to one subject of aesthetic awareness; conceding that aesthetic judgements are inevitably subjective in this rather limited sense, is not to imply that the subject in this case is singular. The way forward here must be to develop a view that is founded on what it is to be 'rooted in a subject', yet which is also revisionary enough to pursue an inquiry unrestricted by what has traditionally been seen to be

constraints imposed by such subject-dependence. What is needed here, I take it, is a continued exploration of the idea that, as Wiggins writes, to

characterize the subjective... positively, in terms of a subjective judgement's being one that is however indirectly answerable for its correctness to the responses of conscious subjects; that we should characterize the objective positively, in terms of an objective judgement's being one that is a candidate for plain truth: and that, having characterized each of these categories of judgement positively and independently, we need to be ready for the possibility that a judgement may fall into both, may both rest upon sentiment and relate to a matter of fact.⁷⁵

Objectivity and subjectivity are not mutually exclusive in all respects. Aesthetic judgements do not aim for a generic kind of objectivity available to all judgements made from within the personal perspective, but a distinctively aesthetic kind of axiological objectivity. Hence, to say that aesthetic judgements can be objective and that correctness can be ascribed to them is by no means to commit oneself to purging from such judgements any trace of subjectivity. It is, instead, to give that subjectivity its rightful place.

The objectivism I have argued for in relation to aesthetic judgements is 'reasonable' in two ways. First, it is a fair and equitable account, based on valid premises and sound argumentation. Second, it is grounded in justifying reasons, and is thus 'reason-able' in the sense that it is founded on the very process of adducing reasons. All in all, one can say that this objectivism is also reasonable in the sense of its being able to incorporate the features distinctive of aesthetic judgements, and thus present us with a viable way out of the apparent subjectivity/objectivity dilemma, once those features have been adequately clarified.

⁷⁵ Wiggins (1998c), pp. 201-2.

CONCLUSION.

The main aim of this thesis has been to investigate some of the most problematic aspects of the epistemology of aesthetic judgements in order to establish whether a reasonable objectivism is within reach for such judgements or not. My conclusion is that aesthetic judgements can be objective in the following senses: they can be impartial; well-grounded in generally available reasons; and correct. The main strength of the objectivist account I have begun to develop is that it is capable of overcoming the ‘either/or’ structure of what I have referred to as the ‘subjectivity/objectivity dilemma’. In other words, the reasonable objectivism outlined here – by not only resting on but actually promoting the relational approach to the aesthetic – is able to dissolve the dilemma rather than being impaled on either of its putative horns.

How has my thesis advanced our understanding of the dialectic, sketched in Chapter I, between the notions of subjectivity and objectivity and the way they are related in the context of aesthetic judgements? Chapter II outlined the subjectivity/objectivity dilemma and examined the contrast between, on the one hand, the impersonal stance from which we can acquire knowledge and understanding of the subject matter proper to the empirical sciences, and, on the other hand, the personal perspective from which evaluative properties can be grasped as such. The first hurdle tackled by this thesis in relation to ascribing objectivity to aesthetic judgements was, thus, to denounce the predominant metaphysical framework as one fundamentally committed to an exclusively physical conception of objectivity, and to the epistemological methods applicable in the empirical sciences. It was subsequently explained why the pursuit of objectivity for aesthetic judgements must be located within the distinctively personal perspective, and, further, how such a pursuit can be put into practice. There is, it was argued, nothing

about the personal perspective *per se* that renders it impossible to make impartial judgements about the properties that figure in it. Chapter III examined one aspect of the aesthetic which has generally been considered a great obstacle for the possibility of aesthetic objectivity, namely the way in which aesthetic properties depend on our responses for their manifestation. By showing that the degree to which aesthetic properties have been seen to rest on our emotions for their realisation has been over-estimated, one of the main worries about the reliability of our responses as ‘detectors’ of such properties was side-stepped. And, for reasons further elaborated in Chapter V, we saw that even on a rather cognitive account of the emotions, emotional responses need not – and indeed do not – stand in as close a relationship to aesthetic judgements as is often assumed.¹ Chapter IV continued this argument in two ways: firstly, by pointing to the way in which the absence of inferential rules from non-aesthetic to aesthetic properties does not in fact imply an end to the possibility of rational justification for aesthetic judgements; secondly, that this possibility remains in place even when the appeal to first-hand perceptual experiences, conceived as an alternative ‘justifying’ factor, have been ruled out in that capacity. Evaluative thought, it was held, does involve the genuine application of aesthetic concepts despite the absence of strict rules. Finally, Chapter V drafted the principal stages of the process of aesthetic justification as envisaged by my reasonable objectivism, and returned to a discussion of some of the issues raised in the beginning of the thesis, such as the question of whether subjectivity and objectivity are opposite notions, and of how objectivity and perspectivity might be compatible.

No aspect of my argument should be seen to weaken, at least purposefully, the notion of objectivity as such. I do not, for example, wish to deny that objectivity is intimately linked to reality. The only substantial claim this thesis has made on the

¹ Such as Wiggins’s ‘sensible subjectivism’, for example, assumes.

subject is that objectivity need not be ascribed exclusively to judgements about ‘how things really are’, where reality is understood as ‘how things are in themselves – that is, independently of how they strike the occupants of this or that particular point of view.’² Indeed, one of the main aims of this thesis has been to show that whilst there are certain judgements or aspects of the world for which this physical conception of objectivity is adequate, there are others for which it is not so. And indeed, I believe that although I have limited my discussion to judgements recording the presence or absence of aesthetic properties, much of it may also find some application in philosophical investigations about norms, emotions, and so on.

It should be clear by now that value judgements in general, and aesthetic judgements in particular, can under no circumstances be objective if objectivity has already been posited as something exclusively available to judgements supported by strict principles. Obviously, when dealing with properties that only figure in relation to the personal perspective on the world, judgements cannot be objective in the senses of being non-anthropocentric and non-perspectival. But, as my thesis has attempted to show, this is *not* to say that aesthetic judgements cannot be objective in the three senses outlined above (that is to say, O1, O2, O3). Of these three senses, my thesis has given most attention to O2 and, particularly, O3. It may seem presumptuous, then, to affirm that O1 (objectivity in the sense of correctness) is also applicable to aesthetic judgements without treating the questions it raises in equal depth. I am not unaware of the fact that there are difficulties involved in this affirmation that are both complex and pressing. However, the relatively sparse discussion here of the issues raised by the idea of the correctness-evaluability of aesthetic judgements stems from two main reasons. Firstly, I have considered that the question would have been impossible to confront without a prior analysis of O2 and O3 (and thus my thesis should be seen here too as being

² McDowell (1998f), p. 198.

towards an ongoing project). Secondly and more importantly, there is a sense, which I discussed briefly in Chapter I, that our very notion of correctness is itself dependent on those of impartiality and reasoning processes well-grounded in good reasons. In most contexts, the notion of correctness implies the presence of relevant principles stemming from non-evaluative properties, whether these principles be *a priori* or empirical. What is often forgotten, however, is that these principles are ‘correct-making’ because they are themselves grounded on generally available and impartial reasoning processes, or at least grounded on other principles which are in turn grounded thus.³ What I have tried to show is that in the aesthetic case, the only thing missing, so to speak, is the principles themselves, and that thus, in the absence of these principles, the actual ‘correct-making’ features become more prominent in the process of justification. Everything else – including the impartiality of judgements and their foundation in generally available reasons – remains. It therefore seems both reasonable and profitable to preserve the notion of correctness in the context of aesthetic judgements, since the fundamental ‘correct-making’ factors are still in place.

Consequently, the relation in which correctness stands to justifying reasons touches directly upon one of the concerns that needs to be further explored if the reasonable objectivism I have defended in this thesis is to become established as a serious contender for the epistemology of aesthetic judgements. More broadly speaking, a development of the epistemological procedures open to an account of the making of aesthetic judgements along these non-inferential lines would be particularly welcome. As is clear from my account, and perhaps especially from my discussion in Chapter II, I believe there to be more reason to be hopeful about progress being made in this area by

³ For example, in cases where there are reliable principles of this kind, such as, say, Boyle’s Law, this process of reasoning is eclipsed, and the correctness or incorrectness of a judgement is simply inferred by reference to the original principle. However, it is still the case that original principle is ‘correct-making’ because it is grounded in reasons that are both generally available and impartial (and of course, with reference to other principles which are themselves subject in this manner).

non-naturalistic (at least in the ‘narrow’ sense) attempts to increase our understanding of the relation between the mind and the world.

Another side of aesthetic epistemology that clearly requires more examination is that which is centred around our ability to pick out certain features as salient in relation to a particular judgement, and to apply aesthetic concepts correctly. An investigation of this ‘aesthetic sensibility’, for lack of a better expression, would fill a need felt probably more and more acutely since Kant’s usage of the notion of the ‘faculty of taste’ in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*. It would, moreover, almost certainly benefit other areas of philosophy too, such as the epistemology of the emotions, by furthering our understanding of what Hilary Putnam, as mentioned in Chapter II, has described as the (broadly perceptual) ability by which we can ‘tell that other people are elated’, or ‘see that someone is friendly.’⁴

A worry that also plagues many fields of investigation related to the present concern is how to circumscribe the particular community to which one belongs in a given respect. This thesis has operated with a relatively indistinct notion of community to which rational agents endowed with normal perceptual abilities belong. Nonetheless, it goes without saying that the situation is not always as clear-cut as all that. As I suggested in Chapter V, there is at least the further possibility of the category one might belong to in virtue of being a certain kind of normally endowed rational agent, such as the ‘sub-class’ one can belong to in virtue of being a tourist, a woman between the ages of 25 and 35, or an unemployed person. The exact constitution of a community and its precise conditions of membership presents social philosophy (and, by extension, any field of philosophy that has to appeal to it) with what is perhaps one of its stickiest problems.

⁴ Putnam, H. (2002), p. 102.

Endeavours such as the ones listed above are not, I believe, as likely to succeed in their aims if they do not also continue to take into account the mental processes that constitute the subject-matter of aesthetic psychology, and thereby also develop aesthetic psychology as an important part of philosophical aesthetics. Expanding our lines of investigation into this area is, moreover, also helpful in continuing the dismantling of a philosophy of mind whereby strict dichotomies – such as the ones between subjectivity and objectivity, emotion and reason, value and fact – still linger. One of the main driving forces of this thesis has been that if we are to increase our understanding not only of ourselves, but also of the relation in which we stand to the world in which we live, we must be concerned to advance our insight into what it is to be a human being in two ways: firstly, in the way in which we figure in the explanations of the empirical sciences; secondly and perhaps more importantly to our individual concerns, non-scientifically or from the personal perspective. In addition, we must work to improve our understanding of the relation between these two points of view. It is in this sense, then, that one of the more general aims of this thesis has been to show that the aesthetic case has a particularly interesting contribution to make to the philosophical debate about the relation between mind and world.

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