

UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA
FACULDADE DE LETRAS
PROGRAMA EM TEORIA DA LITERATURA



AESTHETIC REALISM

Inês de Oliveira Baptista de Morais

DOUTORAMENTO EM ESTUDOS DE LITERATURA E DE CULTURA

TEORIA DA LITERATURA

2009

UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA
FACULDADE DE LETRAS
PROGRAMA EM TEORIA DA LITERATURA



AESTHETIC REALISM

Inês de Oliveira Baptista de Morais

Dissertação orientada por:

PROFESSORA DOUTORA MARIA DE LOURDES A. FERRAZ

PROFESSOR DOUTOR MIGUEL TAMEN

DOUTORAMENTO EM ESTUDOS DE LITERATURA E DE CULTURA

TEORIA DA LITERATURA

2009

Resumo: A dissertação defende o realismo em estética—em particular, no que diz respeito às propriedades estéticas das obras de arte (incluindo obras literárias). O capítulo 1 caracteriza o debate geral sobre realismo acerca do mundo exterior, e de seguida o debate na estética e na filosofia da arte respeitante ao realismo estético. Os capítulos 2 e 3 consideram dois desafios proeminentes ao realismo estético. O capítulo 2 examina um ataque geral à objectividade dos valores. O capítulo 3 examina uma tese que alegadamente inviabiliza o realismo estético: a chamada ‘tese da *autonomia*’. Ambas as formas de oposição ao realismo são rejeitadas. O capítulo 4 é sobre o ensaio de Hume ‘Sobre o Padrão do Gosto’. Será sugerido que o sentimentalismo de Hume é compatível com, e talvez sustenta um realismo estético moderado. Os capítulos 5 e 6 fazem uma defesa positiva do realismo estético. O capítulo 5 invoca alguns argumentos principais a favor do realismo estético. O capítulo 6 oferece uma análise realista das propriedades estéticas.

Palavras-chave: *Teoria da literatura – estética – filosofia da arte – realismo estético – propriedades estéticas*

Abstract: The dissertation defends realism concerning the aesthetic—in particular, concerning the aesthetic properties of works of art (including works of literature). Chapter 1 characterizes the general debate over realism about the external world, and then the specific debate in aesthetics and the philosophy of art concerning aesthetic realism. Chapters 2 and 3 consider two prominent challenges to aesthetic realism. Chapter 2 examines a general attack on the objectivity of values. Chapter 3 examines a thesis that purports to block aesthetic realism: the so-called ‘*autonomy* thesis’. Both forms of opposition to realism are rejected. Chapter 4 focuses on Hume’s essay ‘Of the Standard of Taste’. It will be suggested that Hume’s sentimentalism is compatible with, and perhaps gives support to, a moderate aesthetic realism. Chapters 5 and 6 provide a positive defence of aesthetic realism. Chapter 5 invokes some main arguments for aesthetic realism. Chapter 6 gives a realist account of aesthetic properties.

Keywords: *Theory of literature – aesthetics – philosophy of art – aesthetic realism – aesthetic properties*

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	4
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	9
1 Realism	13
2 Error Theory	43
3 Aesthetic Autonomy	69
4 Hume's Standard of Taste	98
5 Arguments for Aesthetic Realism	123
6 The Nature of Aesthetic Reality	149
<i>References</i>	193

Preface

This dissertation defends aesthetic realism: the view that there is a (non-mental) aesthetic reality, which our aesthetic beliefs and assertions can be reckoned to represent more or less adequately. The focus is restricted to contemporary discussion conducted in the analytic tradition (including some arguments by Hume and Kant that analytic philosophers have addressed, and which will be considered more or less on their own). The project has three main steps. Firstly, I consider and defuse scepticism concerning the significance of the ontological debate about aesthetic reality. Secondly, I discuss two powerful attacks on realism and I defend realism against them. Thirdly, I attempt to provide a positive defence of aesthetic realism.

Chapter 1 describes the realism/anti-realism debate, first in general (concerning realism about the external world), then more specifically, concerning aesthetics and the philosophy of art (including the philosophy of literature). My aims are twofold. Firstly, I aim to introduce the discussion of aesthetic realism. Secondly, I aim to counteract scepticism about the very significance of the ontological debate by doing what the sceptic claims to be impossible, namely providing a description of the issue which is acceptable to

both realists and anti-realists about the aesthetic. Aesthetic realism and anti-realism are briefly characterized.

Chapter 2 considers a sceptical challenge to realism which claims that commitment to the objectivity of values is a mistake ingrained in common-sense moral (and generally evaluative) thought and discourse. The sceptic claims that the mistake calls for correction, by means of an 'error theory'. My reply is that common-sense is *not* committed to the sort of objectivist view correctly seen by the error-theorist as implausible. Therefore, I claim, the error theorist's charge is not decisive against realism.

Chapter 3 concerns the claim, commonly invoked against realism, that since aesthetic judgements must be made based on first-hand acquaintance with the object judged, the properties attributed in aesthetic judgements cannot be construed in a realist manner since, if they were real, their content could be transmitted via testimony. Some realists respond to this challenge by denying that aesthetic judgements require first-hand acquaintance. I defend the other option, claiming that the requirement of first-hand acquaintance is compatible with realism. My first argument for this view is empirical and involves an analogy with colours. I note that in the case of colours, just as in the aesthetic case, judgement exhibits 'autonomy'. That is, we would not typically change our judgement based only on the opinions of others: imagine ten friends trying to deceive you and claiming that a clearly red cube is brown. So I claim that 'autonomy' is not peculiar to the aesthetic case: the colour case and the aesthetic

case run parallel in this respect: your ten friends' deceiving plan would typically not succeed. The upshot is this: autonomy concerning colour (per se) does not block realism about colour. Just because I need to rely on my own judgement to grasp a property, that does not entail that the property in question is not an objective (genuine) property of the object. Likewise, aesthetic autonomy, by itself, cannot be invoked as a claim against aesthetic realism. My second argument is as follows. I argue that an epistemological thesis need not directly threaten ontological claims and, in particular, I claim that the epistemological thesis of aesthetic autonomy is not decisive against aesthetic realism.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to Hume's most significant contribution to aesthetics and the theory of literature, his essay 'Of the Standard of Taste' (1757). I suggest that Hume's exploration of the notion of a standard of taste is part of a programme akin to realism. This suggestion is based on a close reading of Hume's essay and on argument advanced by other commentators which emphasizes that for Hume the standard of taste is *discovered* (as opposed to being constituted) by the 'true judges'. Such a programme is, indeed, at odds with some of Hume's earlier writings, but it is not incompatible with Hume's general sentimentalism which is an *epistemological* doctrine concerning how (aesthetic) truths are known. My claim is that Hume's epistemology of beauty leaves room for, and perhaps lends support to, a moderate aesthetic realism. I focus on the purported 'wide' distinction between 'judgement' and 'sentiment' (and the possibility of an ironic reading of the 'species of philosophy' which

proposes such wide distinction); on the status of the standard of taste (as discovered by the true judges); and on the role and import of the story of Sancho's kinsmen.

Chapter 5 introduces the doctrine of aesthetic realism more directly, by reviewing some of the strongest arguments for the view. At bottom, the positive defence of realism is based on explanatory considerations. Aesthetic realism is defended via an inference to the best explanation of the normativity of aesthetic discourse. In particular, the patent limitations on the applicability of aesthetic terms (including the most general aesthetic terms) seem to be best explained by realism.

In Chapter 6, I provide an account of aesthetic reality: more precisely, I say how aesthetic reality is to be like, if we accept that it exists. I focus on the merits of some of the main realist theories of aesthetic properties. In particular, I address Sibley's epistemic notion of taste, and then go on to invoke three realist views of aesthetic properties, which I take to be compatible and complementary: as value-grounding properties (Beardsley), as higher-order ways of appearing (Levinson), and as desire-mediated properties (Zemach). I explain why, contrary to claims by Levinson and Moore, beauty should be included among the aesthetic properties.

Finally, I point to two important aspects of this unified account of aesthetic properties for the philosophy of art. The first is that it explains the

normativity of even the most general aesthetic judgements. The second is that it leaves room for an *aesthetic* theory of art.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank Professor Maria de Lourdes A. Ferraz and Professor Miguel Tamen for having accepted supervising this study and, especially, for their guidance, encouragement, and immense generosity. I would not have been able to complete this project without their help, and in more than one way I owe this thesis to them.

I would like to thank also Professor António M. Feijó for valuable reading advice in the early stages of this project and, also, for seminars which have called my attention to many valuable works of art (including, prominently, works of poetry).

Special thanks are due also to Pedro Santos, from the University of the Algarve, who encouraged me to study philosophy and with whom I have maintained beneficial correspondence throughout these years. I must thank, again, Professor Ferraz and Professor Tamen for their generous support and encouragement concerning my decision to study philosophy abroad, and for very helpful discussions every time I was back in Lisbon.

In 2003-2004 I had the occasion to teach an introductory course on literature, after I had become interested in analytic aesthetics, and I gave my

students a few articles to read that were then new also to me (namely on the concept of literature, and recent work on the role of authorial intentions in literary interpretation). My own learning certainly benefited from discussion in those lectures.

In September 2004, I had the opportunity to work with Professor Jerrold Levinson at the University of Maryland, USA, on the topic of intention and interpretation. I thank Professor Levinson for his advice. I am indebted also to Fundação Luso-Americana para o Desenvolvimento for a travel grant that enabled me to go to Maryland. (A short article issued from this.)

In 2004-2005 I was a visiting student at King's College London, with the intention to learn about aesthetics in preparation for my doctorate in literary theory, but I ended up doing an M.A. in philosophy. I thank Professor Anthony Savile, with whom I was to work, for having supported my decision to apply for the M.A. During that year I worked with, and would like very much to thank, Dr. David Galloway, Dr. Mark Textor and, especially, Dr. Elisabeth Schellekens who supervised my dissertation in aesthetics.

From Birkbeck College, where I worked on the year 2005-2006, I thank Dr. Fraser MacBride and Dr. Stacey Friend. Dr. Friend has taught me, among other things, something very important: that before criticizing an author we must see him at his best.

In 2006-2007, I worked at Manchester University with Professor Julian Dodd and Professor Peter Goldie and I would like to thank both for their

generous and patient teaching. I wrote during this year earlier versions of sections now included in Chapters 1, 2 and 4. For a couple of very helpful discussions I would like to thank also Dr. Chris Daly.

That year was followed by illness, and I had to interrupt my work for several, long, months, before being able to continue with my project, which I decided to do back in Lisbon. I must thank my doctors who helped me recover, and my teachers (here and abroad) for their support.

My work benefited greatly also from readings and discussion in Professor Peter Lamarque's seminar on the philosophy of literature, in the Programme in Literary Theory, in the Spring of 2009. I thank Professor Lamarque also for a few very helpful bibliographic suggestions.

Various people, throughout these years, have helped me clarify my views on the issues that I discuss in this dissertation, and some have read (and commented on) earlier versions of parts of it. I would like to thank, in particular, Maria P. Amorim, Thomas Connor, Ângela Fernandes, António Lopes, Stephen McLeod, Pedro Madeira, Timothy Pritchard, Elisabete Sousa and Célia Teixeira.

Without the financial support given by Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia I would not have had the opportunity to conduct this project. I greatly appreciate the support of FCT.

Finalmente, agradeço, por tudo o que me têm ensinado, aos meus dois irmãos e aos meus pais.



União Europeia – Fundos Estruturais

Ciência.Inovação
2010

Programa Operacional Ciência e Inovação 2010

MINISTÉRIO DA CIÊNCIA, TECNOLOGIA E ENSINO SUPERIOR



Governo da República Portuguesa

Chapter One

Realism

1.1 What is realism?

This dissertation is about aesthetic realism. Realism, as I shall understand it, is a thesis about (some portion of) the world and our sensitivity to it, as opposed to a thesis about language and our use of it.¹ In general, realism about x is the claim that x exists objectively, that is, independently of human minds. Anti-realism about an alleged entity, x , is the rejection of realism about x . Anti-realism either denies that x exists or else it denies that x 's existence is independent of human minds.

Given that the realism/anti-realism debate has been understood in a variety of ways, it is important to first clarify, as far as possible, what will be at issue here. My aim in this chapter is to arrive at a characterization of the debate that both realists and their opponents can accept. By doing so I also aim to defuse scepticism concerning the very significance (or worth) of the debate

¹ As Alston ([1979] 1999, 628) notes in this respect, 'Sometimes we are talking about language, but most of the time we are not.'

between aesthetic realists and aesthetic anti-realists.² I shall begin by briefly characterizing the general debate concerning common-sense realism about the external world, in order to see what light this can throw on the local debate in aesthetics and the philosophy of art (including the philosophy of literature) with which this study is concerned.

Realism is, under one traditional conception, contrasted with idealism, the doctrine that reality is fundamentally mental.³ According to realism, the world is fundamentally non-mental and mind-independent. My aim in this dissertation is to defend the view that aesthetic reality is objective (and non-mental) in the sense that it is independent of what particular minds think. But first consider what philosophers have said about general realism:⁴

Realism [is] a claim about what entities exist and a claim about their independent nature. (Devitt 1984, 14)

The leading idea is that the world consists of objects whose existence, nature, and relations are fixed independently of what we happen to think, feel, or desire. (Loux 2002, 252)

² Brock & Mares (2007, 34-36) make the claim that scepticism ('quietism') is defused if we do what the sceptic says cannot be done.

³ I rely heavily on van Inwagen's (1993) and Loux's (2002) description of realism(s).

⁴ The following passages by Devitt (1984) and Miller (2002) are quoted in Brock & Mares (2007, 3-4).

There are two general aspects of realism [...]. First, there is a claim about *existence*. Tables, rocks, the moon, and so on, all exist, as do the following facts: the table's being square, the rock's being made of granite, and the moon's being spherical and yellow. The second aspect of realism about the everyday world of macroscopic objects and their properties concerns *independence*. The fact that the moon exists and is spherical is independent of anything anyone happens to say or think about the matter. (Miller 2002, 1)

These passages claim, then, that realism is the thesis that a certain disputed portion of reality is objective, that is, it exists and its existence is independent of what we might think or feel or be able to grasp, or desire. No amount of thought or feeling (let alone desire) on the part of a subject will make or change the way such reality is; and reality most probably transcends our knowledge: it is likely that we do not know everything about it.⁵ The interest of this general debate for aesthetics (and for the philosophy of art) should be clear: whether or not we take the world to contain, say, aesthetic properties or values will have a bearing on (e.g.) what works of art are. For instance, a work of art may not simply be identified with a physical object, but with an object with aesthetic properties and

⁵ The claim sometimes made in this respect is that realism has a 'modest' and a 'presumptuous' component. Wright (1987, 1): 'Realism is a mixture of modesty and presumption. It modestly allows that humankind confronts an objective world, something almost entirely not of our making, possessing a host of occasional features which may pass altogether unnoticed by human consciousness and whose innermost nomological secrets may remain forever hidden for us. However, it presumes that we are, by and large and in favourable circumstances, capable of acquiring knowledge of the world and of understanding it.' See also Wright (1992, 2).

aesthetic value as well (perhaps intrinsic value) from which it cannot be separated. If the properties and value an object is said to possess exist objectively, then any description of the object in question which does not consider these properties and this value will be inappropriate or at least incomplete.

Under another (not obviously incompatible) traditional conception, which Loux discusses (2002, 252), realism is a claim about objective truth.⁶ As van Inwagen also notes (1993, 56), an area of thought and discourse is objective in this sense when the truth of our beliefs and assertions depend not on our thoughts and feelings and desires but on their objects, on the things our beliefs and assertions are about or represent.⁷ One image sometimes invoked to pick out this relation between our beliefs and assertions and what they are about is that of a map.⁸ A map is supposed to 'get the territory right'⁹ (in other words, it is to *represent* the territory), and so, the realist claims, are our beliefs and assertions. Realism thus is the claim that an area of thought and discourse is representational in this sense: it aims to be an accurate and reliable map of an area of reality.

⁶ van Inwagen (1993, 59-60).

⁷ van Inwagen (1993, 60) proposes that we distinguish the traditional opposition between realism and idealism, from the opposition between Realism (with a capital R), the view that 'there is an objective truth' (ibid.), and anti-Realism, which denies this. Later on (1993, 68-69) van Inwagen rejects that anti-Realism is a metaphysic: 'It is [...] misleading to think of anti-Realism as a metaphysic, in the sense in which idealism or lowercase-r realism is a metaphysic. Anti-Realism, rather, is a denial of the possibility of metaphysics, since the very enterprise of metaphysics is the attempt to discover the nature of ultimate reality.'

⁸ See, for instance, Wright (1992, 2).

⁹ van Inwagen (1993, 56).

Loux (2002, 251, 253) also notes that realism not only claims that the world is independent of the human mind, but it also takes the world to function as a *standard* for the truth of our beliefs and assertions. Furthermore, realism claims that reality (or the world) might transcend, and that it plausibly sometimes does transcend, our 'best efforts' to know it (Loux 2002, 253). For the realist truth is 'epistemically unconstrained correspondence' (Loux 2002, 258), a conception which implies not only that truth is a matter of fit (2002, 252) with respect to reality, but also that reality is independent of our best tools for knowing and of our best knowledge (2002, 253). Even if we know very little, or nothing, about an area of reality, that has no bearing on the objective existence and independence of that area.

In twentieth-century philosophy, metaphysical realism has been challenged in a novel way via a debate in the philosophy of language in which Dummett's work has played a prominent role.¹⁰ For Dummett metaphysical questions are, at bottom, semantic questions, that is, questions about language and meaning.¹¹ As Loux (2002, 258) explains, Dummett rejects the claim that meaning concerns a relation of *correspondence* 'between statements and mind-independent states of affairs', and claims instead that meaning is best conceived of as an epistemic notion: the meaning of a statement depends on what counts as

¹⁰ See especially 'Realism' [1963] in Dummett (1978). Another philosopher who treats the issue of realism as an issue belonging to the philosophy of language is Putnam—cf. Loux (2002, 257).

¹¹ This anti-metaphysical attitude is visible in Putnam. See, e.g., Putnam (1990, 39): 'what I think we have learned since Newton is that metaphysics is not a possible subject'.

evidence for that statement. Therefore, according to this view, truth cannot, contrary to what the realist maintains, be independent of, and plausibly sometimes transcend, the possibility of knowing it. As Loux (2002, 259) notes, for Dummett truth is 'warranted or justified assertability' (i.e., what can warrantably be said), not correspondence with a mind-independent reality. By contrast, as we saw, for the realist statements can be true even when it is impossible to know whether they are true. Whether or not the ancient Greek playwright Aeschylus was killed by a tortoise dropped on his head by an eagle is, for the realist, true or false independently of the evidence or justification we might have, or forever lack, concerning the matter. In other words, a statement is true (or false) independently of verification.

Whether or not the realism/anti-realism debate can adequately be approached via a debate in the philosophy of language will not concern me here. I will also try to remain neutral on whether the realism debate can be reduced to a debate about objective truth.¹² My interest is not in any question which is, at least strictly speaking, semantic, such as the question of whether a disputed class of statements is genuinely assertoric.¹³ Rather, my interest is in an ontological question:¹⁴ whether a certain area of thought and discourse relates to

¹² For a defence of the thesis that the realism/anti-realism debate is *not* about objective truth, see Devitt (1984).

¹³ For a defence of the possibility of aesthetic realism based on the claim that aesthetic judgements are genuinely assertoric, see Pettit ([1983] 2004).

¹⁴ This strictly ontological approach to the question of realism (as opposed to the semantic approach) is taken, for instance, by Tappolet (2000, 39), concerning values in particular:

a domain that exists objectively, that is, independently (in a sense to be explained) of the human mind. (Another way of putting the question is by asking whether realism is true about 'a domain of properties'¹⁵). Before addressing the ontological question, however, we should consider and evaluate one specific semantic approach to the debate concerning realism and anti-realism which has brought a new focus to the ontological debate (§1.2). And we should contemplate also another option, which consists in the very rejection of the ontological debate: 'quietism' (§1.3).

1.2 Redirecting the debate: minimalism, pluralism and 'cognitive command'

Wright (1992, 1996a, 1996b) has proposed that the realism/anti-realism debate be construed, and conducted, in a new way. In particular, Wright has proposed a minimalist ('non-metaphysically committed') conception of truth-aptness and of truth, coupled with a pluralistic account of the concept of truth, so that the realism/anti-realism debate be carried out 'by examining the substance', or 'metaphysical weight', of the truth-predicate in each disputed area of discourse. Truth-aptness or the possibility of truth in a discourse, Wright's proposal goes, is not sufficient to 'secure' realism. Other 'realism-relevant cruxes' in each area

'Contrairement à nombre de contemporains, j'adopterai une conception strictement ontologique de la notion de réalisme.'

¹⁵ The phrase is used by Yates (2008, 348).

must be considered and the realism/anti-realism debate is significant only beyond discussions about truth.

This proposal has an important consequence for realism in the aesthetic realm, namely that aesthetic realism is not secured by truth-aptitude or truth alone. That is, even if aesthetic statements are shown to be genuinely assertoric, and even if some of them are shown to be true, that is not sufficient to secure aesthetic realism.¹⁶ So it is important to give some attention to Wright's proposal. I shall summarize Wright's project and address, in particular, the realism-relevant constraint of 'cognitive command', and consider its relevance to the defence of aesthetic realism in particular.¹⁷

Wright's main motivation for proposing a 'shift' in the realism/anti-realism debate is dissatisfaction with the available anti-realisms, in particular *expressivism* and *error theory*.¹⁸ Two theses are central to the approach Wright recommends. One is *minimalism* about truth and truth-aptitude. As Wright explains the thesis,

it is necessary and sufficient, in order for a predicate to qualify as a truth-predicate, that it satisfy each of a basic set of platitudes about truth: the

¹⁶ So, for instance, Pettit's claim that aesthetic attributions are 'genuinely assertoric' is not sufficient, according to Wright, to establish aesthetic realism (see Pettit [1983] 2004).

¹⁷ In this section I try to summarize Wright's view. When helpful, I use (or else refer to) Wright's own phrases. It should remain clear that the ideas are all *his*.

¹⁸ Expressivism is the view that the statements of a discourse are not truth-apt (because they concern the expression of feelings or attitudes); error theory is the thesis that the statements of a discourse are all systematically false (because they refer to entities which are believed not to exist).

platitudes, for instance, that to assert a statement is to present it as true; that 'S' is true if and only if S (the Disquotational Scheme); that statements which are apt for truth have negations which are likewise; that truth is one thing, justification is another; that to be true is to correspond to the facts; and so on. (Wright 1996a, 864)

But these minimal 'platitudes', Wright claims, are satisfied (met) in all truth-apt discourses. And, for Wright, this does not entail that the truth-predicate and, accordingly, the 'phraseology of correspondence' used (1992, 143), have genuine representational function (i.e. refer to self-standing states of affairs) and can thereby be given a realist construal. In other words, satisfying the minimal platitudes of truth-aptitude is not, for Wright, sufficient for realism to be in place about that discourse:

acknowledging that a discourse is possessed of assertoric content, and indeed that its practitioners frequently hit the truth, when truth is so ['minimally'] conceived, is to be something which is neutral on the preferability of a broadly realist or anti-realist view of the discourse in question. (Wright 1992, 33)

In short, for Wright the realism/anti-realism debate is *not* about whether the statements in a discourse are truth-apt, or whether any of them are true. The realism/anti-realism debate comes *after* those findings, Wright thinks, when we examine the ontological weight to give to the truth predicate in each area. The

realism/anti-realism debate should not focus on truth and truth-aptness generally conceived.

The other key thesis Wright defends is *pluralism* about truth. Pluralism is the view that the 'ontological nature' (or 'weight') of the truth-predicate may be different in different discourses: 'There are a *variety* of features that may be possessed by minimally truth-apt discourses, any of which may contribute in some measure towards clarifying and substantiating realist preconceptions about it' (1992, 141).

As Wright (1996b, 923) remarks in a reply to Sainsbury (1996), pluralism is not incompatible with a uniform characterisation of the concept of truth: 'the concept [of truth] admits of a uniform characterisation wherever it is applied—the characterisation given by the minimal platitudes, which determine everything that is *essential* to truth' (ibid.). What the thesis of pluralism is sensitive to is the phenomenon of '*variable realisation*' (1996b, 924): discourses which are truth-apt may possess very different features, which may deserve different ontological status (1992, 141). The realism/anti-realism debate must thereby focus on the 'weight' or 'metaphysical substance' to give to the truth-predicate in each particular truth-apt discourse, not on truth generally. Again, the point is that the possibility of truth-aptness, or of truth, in a discourse is not sufficient to secure realism. Wright's proposal is, then, that the surface grammar of the sentences in a discourse does not tell us anything decisive about the 'metaphysical substance' of the truth predicate in the discourse.

Another claim vital to Wright's account is that in some minimally truth-apt areas of judgement and discourse at least some disputes may *not* involve a cognitive failure. By contrast, in other areas all disputes must concern—'where not within the tolerances permitted by various relevant kinds of vagueness'—some form of cognitive error 'on the part of at least one of the disputants' (1996a, 866). Areas in which all disputes concern a cognitive shortcoming are said to exhibit 'Cognitive Command':

When a discourse exhibits Cognitive Command, any difference of opinion will be such that there are considerations quite independent of the conflict which, if known about, would mandate withdrawal of one (or both) of the conflicting views. (Wright 1992, 103)

The cognitive command constraint is said to provide a test for the applicability of realism. In particular, as Wright notes, it is a crucial tool for the anti-realist because, according to Wright, if a disputed subject matter can be shown *not* to meet the cognitive command constraint, then realism about that subject matter is shown to be impossible.¹⁹ As Wright puts it: 'show that a discourse lacks [cognitive command] and you will blow away with one stroke all conceivable forms of realist resistance' (1992, 148).

¹⁹ Wright (1992, 148) also 'suspects' that 'all roads to realism have to go through Cognitive Command', but he claims that he lacks arguments that could motivate such claim.

The notion of cognitive command is thus introduced to provide a 'test' for the applicability of realism. According to Wright the realism/anti-realism debate must redirect its focus: its interest bears on (and its focus should be on) the ontological interpretation of the 'correspondence relation' apparently invoked in each truth-apt discourse (1992, 143). A discourse which does not meet the condition is to be considered only minimally truth-apt, and minimal truth-aptitude, thinks Wright, is not sufficient for a discourse to be considered representational. Realists and anti-realists can, then, 'substantially disagree' concerning whether a discourse exerts (or not) cognitive command. Once the realism/anti-realism debate does take place, quietism, that is, scepticism about the significance (meaningfulness) of the debate, is eliminated. Wright characterizes the cognitive command condition as follows:

It is a priori that differences of opinion formulated within the discourse, unless excusable as a result of vagueness in a disputed statement, or in the standards of acceptability, or variation in personal evidence thresholds, so to speak, will involve something which may properly be regarded as a cognitive shortcoming. (Wright 1992, 144)

it must be true a priori for us, in any region of thought where our beliefs are the products of genuinely representational cognitive function, that differences of opinion—where not within the tolerances permitted by various kinds of

vagueness—have to involve some form of cognitive shortcoming. (Wright 1996a, 866)

It is important to stress that Wright thinks that cognitive command 'is a significant additional constraint on minimally truth-apt discourses' (1992, 94), that is, not all truth-apt discourses meet it. This means that some truth-apt discourses allow for a scenario in which differences of view may not involve a cognitive shortcoming on any side (*ibid.*), that is, the disagreements involve no fault.²⁰

Wright also thinks that the formulation of the constraint must be spelled out as an a priori condition. That is, the objectivity of a discourse cannot depend on the empirical discovery even that *every* disagreement in that discourse involves a cognitive shortcoming (*ibid.*). The cognitive command constraint is thought to encompass the idea that a discourse, '*by virtue of its very content*' (*ibid.*) is 'seriously representational' (*ibid.*) and thereby identifies an objective domain of reality.

What matters for the realism/anti-realism debate is that the notion of cognitive command can provide a significant test for the applicability of realism, in the sense that a discourse's failing to meet the constraint blocks the possibility of a realist construal of that discourse. Therefore, the appeal to cognitive command answers, at least, the quietist's sceptical challenge by rendering the

²⁰ The example that Wright gives is that of comic discourse.

debate possible and significant. Wright's minimalist thinks that in different areas of discourse, truth predicates can have different weight: the phrases 'is true' and 'corresponds to the facts', may not always, despite appearances, require or even allow for a 'substantial interpretation'. Since Wright's 'neutral' stance is that the burden of proof is on the realist, it is not surprising that Wright's discussion of comic discourse has focused on attempting to undermine the possibility of comic discourse's exerting cognitive command: that alone, thinks Wright, would eliminate realism about the comic.

Wright's proposal, we have seen, has brought new focus to the ontological debate over realism. If we apply it to the realism/anti-realism debate in aesthetics, we are then invited to look at the local truth predicate, beyond the possibility of truth-aptness and of truth. Preliminary work involves considering whether aesthetic statements can be true or false, that is, whether there can be genuine assertions in the discourse, and whether some at least can be true. A negative answer to this question would settle the debate: it would settle it in favour of anti-realism. But Wright's point is that a positive answer to this question does not yet settle the debate about aesthetic realism. True aesthetic statements may or may not correspond to (or identify) an objective reality. But the cognitive command constraint provides a useful test for the applicability of realism: if aesthetic discourse is not to be prevented from being genuinely representational, then all aesthetic disagreements must involve (vagueness apart) some mistake 'on the part of at least one of the disputants'.

It may seem that Wright's approach leaves anti-realism as the most plausible option concerning aesthetics, for at least two reasons. First, for Wright the burden of proof is on realism: the 'default position' is to hold that a discourse that is only minimally truth-apt is non-representational. Second, disagreements concerning the aesthetic merits of works of art often seem to involve merely differences in tastes or preference. It is not evident that such disagreements always rest on a mistake, on the part of at least one party to the disagreement, concerning the features the works have. In later chapters I shall defend aesthetic realism more specifically, but for now it is important to note at least that Wright's account of realism/anti-realism debates does not undermine the aesthetic realist's project. My first claim, in reply to such preliminary worries, is that we need good reasons to adopt the view that the 'default position', or the starting point, is anti-realist. My second claim is that it is not clear either that aesthetic disagreements are, at bottom, about preference or 'tastes'.²¹ Aesthetic disagreements appear to concern self-standing states of affairs, since they appear to consist in claims which clash (or cohere) with other claims, and about which disputants sometimes are (and therefore *can be*) mistaken. Aesthetic discussions

²¹ As I shall claim later in the main text (p. 40; see also note 35), it is usually (or often) possible to distinguish, in aesthetic discourse, personal aesthetic-preference claims from objective (universal) aesthetic claims. For instance, someone might claim that he prefers Ovid's *Tristia* to the *Metamorphoses* whilst recognizing that, objectively, *Metamorphoses* is aesthetically (and artistically) superior to the *Tristia*. Realism/anti-realism about the aesthetic concerns the treatment to give to the objective claims (whether they are genuinely representational, whether the disagreements are genuine), not to the aesthetic-preference claims. If someone claims that aesthetic disagreements are only apparent disagreements, then he prevents the realism/anti-realism debate to arise (so it is important to show that such move is not successful).

seem to be about what is and what is not in place in a work, about what is and is not a mistake, and disagreements, if they are genuine, will involve at least one cognitive shortcoming (or misapprehension) on the part of at least one of the disputants. Works cannot be (say) simultaneously beautiful and ugly with respect to the same aspect, even though they can, of course, contain both beautiful and ugly aspects. *De gustibus non disputandum* can be disambiguated for our purposes here: what the Latin adagio means is that concerning mere tastes or preferences we can only express personal attitudes concerning subjective experience, which will not bring about a dispute about the world. By contrast, which properties and values a work can be said to possess is, at least apparently, a genuine question, not a matter of personal taste which would not yield any substantive disagreement. It is the latter sort of disagreement which is relevant to the question of whether aesthetic discourse exhibits cognitive command and, in turn, to realism and anti-realism about the aesthetic.

1.3 Quietism

Blackburn (1984, 146) writes that:

there can be the attitude which I christen *quietism* or *dismissive neutralism*, which urges that at some particular point the debate is not a real one, and that we are

only offered, for instance, metaphors and images from which we can profit as we please. Quietism is a relative newcomer to the philosophical world, owing much of its inspiration to the positivist mistrust of metaphysics, and to the belief of the later Wittgenstein that such problems required therapy rather than solution.

Quietism is the view that substantial metaphysical discussion is impossible, meaningless, or worthless.²² For the quietist there is no reason to take part in the realism/anti-realism debate, since metaphysical discussion provides us only with illusion, not with progress. The reason for this is that the alleged problems of metaphysics are pseudo-problems, stemming from a confused use of language. They need to be uncovered and dissolved, rather than solved. If quietism is true, then the realism/anti-realism debate should come to an end, but not via a solution. The debate, the quietist claims, should be simply dismissed. Given my intention to defend aesthetic realism, it is appropriate for me to attempt to answer the quietist challenge.

A reply to quietism will involve, at bottom, a defence of the possibility and significance of metaphysical discussion. This defence need not be direct, however. It can be indirect, for instance by engaging in a debate that the quietist

²² On quietism see also, for instance, Wright (1992, 202-230).

says is impossible.^{23,24} Even though I shall be content with that, I will also identify, and try to respond to, some of the motivations for preferring quietism.²⁵

One motivation for quietism is the thought that the realism/anti-realism debate (and perhaps philosophical debates generally) could be dissolved via clarification. This means, the thesis goes, that disagreement between realists and anti-realists is simply a result of lack of clarity, not of substantial difference in opinion. But we can oppose that thought if realists and anti-realists can arrive at a common understanding of what is the issue and still disagree about whether the disputed discourse should be given a realist construal. If the disagreement survives this clarification, then something substantial, beyond a misunderstanding over language, is being discussed. In the next section (§1.4) we shall see that at least the debate in aesthetics can be described in a way that is acceptable to both realists and anti-realists. So, plausibly, the debate is not meaningless.

Another, related, motivation for quietism is the thought that there is nothing substantial to be said about, say, values *in general*. For the quietist it makes no sense to say that there are values, independently of our affective responses, that we could be talking about. General talk of values is

²³ Brock & Mares (2007, 36) make this claim: that the quietist is silenced if we can have a debate that the quietist says is impossible, or unintelligible.

²⁴ I should perhaps distinguish between global quietism (the view that metaphysical discussion is impossible, meaningless or worthless) and local quietism (the view that such discussion is impossible about some specific realm). I am here considering the motivations for, and some objections to, global quietism, but I hope that they apply to the aesthetic case.

²⁵ For other reasons motivating quietism, see Brock & Mares (2007, 35-36).

meaningless.²⁶ Again, in the next section, and in subsequent chapters, we will engage in such discussion. The burden of proof will then be on the quietist to show that such discussion is without meaning.

Another possible motivation for quietism is the disbelief in the possibility of a 'God's-eye view'. As Blackburn (1984, 147) puts it: 'Quietism is currently expressed by denials that there is a "god's-eye view" or an "external" or "Archimedean" point from which we can discover whether some commitment is, as it were, describing the undraped figure of nature'. However, as we shall see in more detail in the next chapter, realism (at least aesthetic realism) does not require a 'God's-eye view'. More precisely, and as I shall be claiming, following McDowell, the possibility of aesthetic realism being true is not undermined by the requirement of a human point of view. To the contrary, the apprehension of aesthetic objects and their properties plausibly requires a human point of view. I shall be claiming (following McDowell) that this need not count against their objective reality as aesthetic objects.

So, if we are allowed to exclude quietism, the realism/anti-realism debate can come to an end only after a satisfactory realist defence, or else after anti-realism is established. Realists must engage in meeting the anti-realist challenge, either by giving positive argument for realism, or at least by showing the shortcomings of anti-realism. The mind-independence of the world, and its

²⁶ For a view germane to this one, with an anti-essentialist concern in particular, and applied to aesthetics, see Weitz ([1956] 2004).

nature, is, in the end, the content of the general realism/anti-realism debate, and it is also the content of the more specific debate in aesthetics and the philosophy of art (including the philosophy of literature) on which I shall from now on focus.

1.4 Realism in aesthetics: creativity and the world

In aesthetics and, especially, in the philosophy of art, the realism/anti-realism debate can be characterized as follows. Some philosophers, based on persistent disagreements, even among well-trained critics, concerning for the most part the evaluation of specific works, conclude that the judgements critics make are subjective, affective, or the expression of non-propositional attitudes towards the works. Characterizations of a work as '[being] balanced', '[being] delicate', '[being] elegant', etc, must be taken as projections of feelings and emotions, not as factual claims about the work in question. Preference and differences in sentiment—affective differences—are what ultimately explain why even the best critics who agree on the formal characterizations of works might disagree about their value (Goldman 1993, 1995). At least concerning persistent disagreements, there are no facts of the matter there to be discovered (Bender 1996, 2003). Aesthetic properties are not real properties, that is, we should not include aesthetic properties in our ontology (Matravers 2005).

Other philosophers, animated by 'realist' concerns, claim that the characterizations critics make of works must be conceived as referring to properties of the works. Those philosophers think that, to make sense of critics' discourse, there must be a common, 'objective', base. The critics' object of discussion is the work (not merely their aesthetic experience), and disagreements among critics must be conceived to concern which properties works have (or do not have). Whether or not a work is balanced or delicate or elegant depends upon 'objective' properties of the work, allowing that a person (any person, in principle) might recognize that the work is, as a matter of *fact*, balanced or delicate or elegant. Even when a general sensibility is needed, or a specific form of education, so that the presence of a certain quality is detected, that does not make the quality's presence in the work dependent upon any particular discernment. No effort of perception or imagination will make the work balanced or delicate or elegant if those properties are not, in the relevant sense, properties of the work. In sum, either the property is present and can thereby be discerned in the work; or it is not present, and thus it cannot be discerned. We can be mistaken and say, falsely, that a work possesses a certain quality. Accordingly, art criticism is about works of art and the aesthetic experiences they can afford in virtue of their aesthetic properties, not simply about actual aesthetic experiences. (For positions compatible with the doctrine

that I am here unifying under the label 'realism', see Sibley²⁷ 1959, 1965; Beardsley 1973; Levinson 1994, 2001, 2005.)

The question of realism in the philosophy of art concerns whether aesthetic properties should be taken as real, thereby constituting a portion of reality which we should recognize as genuine and to which our beliefs and characterizations are to be reckoned more or less adequate; or whether the apparent attributions of properties are best construed as merely subjective evaluations (as opposed to objective attributions), reflecting attitudes and feelings towards the works in question.

We have seen that ontological debates can be substantial and meaningful, in general, and one sign of this is that both realists and anti-realists can agree concerning the *content* of the debate. They can agree on what the debate is about, and then disagree about whether some area of thought and discourse really is best construed as corresponding to genuine reality. In particular, a description of the debate made by an anti-realist that could be accepted by a realist must be evidence that both sides agree concerning the substance of the debate, and this must be evidence that the ontological debate is substantial and meaningful. An anti-realist's description of the realism/anti-realism debate, and in particular of the debate concerning the reality of artistic beauty, can be found in these passages by Goldman (1995):

²⁷ Sibley is not obviously a realist, but I hope to be able to suggest that his position is in the main akin to realism.

it is the best explanation for actual disagreements that is crucial for the issue of realism.

for realists the explanation why virtually every music lover agrees that the opening phrases of Mozart's Fortieth Symphony and Beethoven's Sixth Symphony are beautiful is that these opening bars *are* beautiful and that experienced listeners can perceive their beauty. There is a property of beauty independent of judgments ascribing it that grounds and explains those judgments. [...] Nonrealists will explain the agreements on Mozart's Fortieth and Beethoven's Sixth symphonies in terms of common musical tastes or sensibilities developed from similar training or musical upbringing without appealing to an independent property of beauty perceived in these cases. [...] a real property of beauty would be perceived with far more regularity than we find in ascriptions of this property. (Goldman 1995, 29-30)

The above description of the debate, made by an anti-realist, is especially interesting for our purposes here because the very same description of realism could be made by a *realist*: Goldman aptly identifies the realist's view concerning whether aesthetic properties should be reckoned as real. Anti-realists explain agreement by reference to 'common musical tastes or sensibilities developed from similar training or musical upbringing', appealing also, sometimes, to lack of convergence of opinion as a reason to prefer anti-realism.

Realists, by contrast, tend to explain agreement by appealing to the presence of a property, which is understood as being *detected* (as opposed to being conferred) by those with sufficient training (when training is necessary). So we can dismiss the thought that the ontological debate must be based on a mistaken or unclear use of language: here realists and anti-realists seem to be speaking clearly, and they seem also to understand what is at issue in each other's positions. So, it seems, what there is to deal with and debate is, in the end, the clear contents of each side's reasons.

Both realists and anti-realists seem to agree that one aspect crucial for the realism/anti-realism debate concerns the question of which view best explains aesthetic agreements and disagreements. Goldman puts the realist claim in these terms: for the realist, agreement can be explained by the *fact* that works possess certain qualities, whereas the anti-realist explains agreement by reference to common education or similarly developed sensibility. The property Goldman mentions is the most general aesthetic property: beauty. Beauty is, for the realist, there to be detected, as opposed to being a projection, as it is for the anti-realist.²⁸ The realist would agree with Goldman's characterization realism concerning beauty: the realist takes beauty to exist independently of particular judgements

²⁸ Perhaps surprisingly, as we shall see in Chapter 6, not all realists about aesthetic properties are realists about beauty, since some take the 'evaluative component' of aesthetic properties (as opposed to the 'descriptive component') to be unreal, and they take beauty to include only an evaluative component.

of beauty.²⁹ What Goldman says the realist holds coincides with what a realist would say a realist holds. So it seems that we have an ontological problem to be (hopefully) solved, not a linguistic misunderstanding to be identified and dissolved.

The anti-realist believes that there is no quality of beauty in the world to be detected: lack of convergence is, for the anti-realist, a sign that there is no mind-independent property of beauty. As Goldman puts it, a genuine property would be perceived with far more regularity. So, realists seem to have to explain lack of convergence, or the 'elusive' nature of aesthetic properties. I shall address this in Chapters 5 and 6.³⁰

One notable and important aspect of the realism/anti-realism debate in the philosophy of art, in particular, is that the objects under discussion were created by man. So it may seem that their properties are, in an important sense, mind-dependent: works have, at least in part (and in the successful cases), the properties that their authors intended them to have.³¹ But such objects and their properties are mind-independent in the same way that, say, artifacts (like

²⁹ The (realist) claim is that an object can be beautiful even if no one judges that it is so, that is, *unjudged* objects can be beautiful nevertheless. Consider an analogy with the moral case: you might do something for me without feeling (realizing) that you are being generous. But your action (judged or unjudged), for the realist, can nevertheless be generous. Similarly, I might not notice that I am being given something (such as help or advice) and thereby not feel grateful, even though gratitude would be appropriate (and even *morally* required). The realist claims, accordingly, that unjudged objects possess their aesthetic properties independently of particular judgements.

³⁰ For the claim that aesthetic qualities are elusive and yet real, see Pettit ([1983] 2004).

³¹ The controversial issue of the role of intentions in (literary) interpretation is addressed by Livingston (2005).

hammers) are mind-independent: a hammer is a hammer after having successfully been produced; and a *yellow* hammer is yellow even if no one ever knows that it is yellow (for instance, if it is buried and is not to be found again). Its colour is independent of any particular judgement of colour, and of any manifestation of colour.³² Unperceived yellow objects are still yellow. Accordingly, for the realist a work can be beautiful even if no one happens to perceive or grasp the work's beauty.

A methodological question now arises as to what our default position ought to be. Ought we to be realists unless the power of argument against realism convinces us, or, on the contrary, should we remain anti-realists unless the power of realist argument wins us? Bender (2003, 80) asks, of aesthetic properties, 'What *worse* candidate could there be for a "real" property?'. If we begin, however, by looking at the surface grammar of aesthetic attributions, the default position to recommend seems to be (*pace* Wright) realist. Compare the following predicates: 'is square', 'is blue', 'is elegant' and 'is beautiful'. If we are to accept realism about properties (in general) and yet to reject realism about aesthetic properties, then it seems that we have to explain the differences

³² It might be claimed that a 'response-dependence' account of colour agrees with this, but is a variant of *anti-realism* about colour. Cf. the following account of a response-dependent property (Stecker 2005, 64): 'a property is response dependent if its instantiation in an object consists in the object having a steady disposition to bring about a certain reaction in human beings.' A realist, by contrast, will claim that the propensity of an object to elicit a certain aesthetic response is not sufficient for the object to possess an aesthetic property. See also Chapter 4, p. 115, note 21.

between these (apparent) property predicates.³³ One feature common to all of them is that they do not apply to everything. For example, just as not everything satisfies the predicate 'is square', so not everything satisfies the predicate 'is beautiful'. Each of these predicates is, it seems, true of some things and false of others. But what differences, if any, are there between these apparent property predicates, and, if there are any, how should we go about explaining them?

If we consider the practice of art criticism, two opposed intuitions may leave us again divided concerning the place to start. On the one hand, it seems that disagreements concern genuine aspects of the works (and it appears also that they will involve some misapprehension of those aspects on the part of at least one of the disputants). On the other hand, disputes seem also to involve affective differences, or preferences which may not involve a critical mistake.

Concerning the first, and as Hume well noted in his essay 'On the Standard of Taste',³⁴ critical judgements are not all upon an equal footing, and this seems to point towards realism. The normative aspect of critical judgements implies that disagreements are, at least sometimes, based on critical mistakes (such mistakes are the issue in discussion). Critics are looking for the most adequate (perhaps also the most enlightening) descriptions and evaluations of works of art. Accordingly, critical progress is possible. It is based on knowledge

³³ Cf. Meskin (2004, 88): 'although claims of beauty have the surface form of claims about objective features of the world, the folk view is that in truth they amount to little more than declarations of how objects seem to us, or how we experience them.'

³⁴ Hume ([1757] 1985). I discuss Hume's essay in Chapter 4.

gained via the detection of critical errors and the replacement of less adequate descriptions (or even mistaken descriptions, or at least partially mistaken descriptions) with more adequate descriptions.

Competent critics will be able to distinguish that which concerns their personal preference from that which is intrinsically valuable. A critic might say, without contradiction, that he prefers work *x*, whilst recognizing that work *y* is aesthetically or, more broadly, artistically superior to *x*.³⁵ Such a critic may avow that he prefers (the experience of reading) Dante's *Vita Nuova* to *Commedia*, Tolstoy's *Resurrection* to *Anna Karenina*, T. S. Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' to *The Waste Land*, whilst recognizing that, objectively, *Commedia* is superior to *Vita Nuova*, *Anna Karenina* is superior to *Resurrection*, and *The Waste Land* is (perhaps) superior to 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'. Accordingly, differences in preference between critics do not need to involve mistakes, but only differences in sensibility, faultless personal preferences for certain themes, genres, etc., which can in principle be separated from universal claims about works and their (I wish to say *objective*) aesthetic differences.

³⁵ Cf. Lamarque (2009, 273): 'It is not uncommon for one and the same person to make an objective (i.e., impartial) judgment that goes one way, and a subjective judgment (i.e., based on personal preference) that goes the other, over a single work. Such a person might acknowledge that a work is "great" or "important" or "significant" while offering a negative personal view: "a good work but it doesn't appeal to me." Or the other way round: "I like it but I agree it is not a great work."' See also Budd (1995, 21, note 25): 'what pleases you more may not be what you credit with the higher artistic value: you can derive more pleasure from a work that you do not judge to be better than another [...]; moreover, you can be emotionally dead to an over-familiar work of high quality'.

But on the other hand, as Goldman (1995) stresses, the cases in which the discussion is focused on the affective dimension of judgements seem to be the norm, not the exception: aesthetic disagreements seem to concern, for the most part, evaluation. And these faultless disagreements suggest that anti-realism ought to be the default position, for they concern the critics' differences in sensibility, not (ultimately) the works' properties.

We have reached, it seems, an impasse. The sceptic will take the opportunity to say that both realists and anti-realists seem too attached to their personal inclinations, and that the arguments adduced are not conclusive so as to alter each other's views. Where we decide to start the debate will determine where we will end up, with no progress. Anti-realists emphasize disagreements based on differences in sensibility. Discussions amongst ideal critics are about their differences in attitudes, they claim, more than about the properties of the objects in question or about interpretive (and evaluative) *mistakes*. Realists, by contrast, emphasize the predominance of agreement that would exist amongst ideal critics, and they claim that agreement is best explained by the fact that the works do possess the qualities agreed upon. Realists will perhaps add that (real) critics tend to agree also concerning which works are superior, even when their personal preferences diverge from those verdicts. In the optimistic words of one realist,

Even if irresolvable disagreements among appreciatively ideal observers, stemming from differences of attitudinal or perceptual sensibility, persist in a fair number of cases, precluding realist interpretation of aesthetic attributions, nothing precludes realist interpretation of aesthetic attributions, interpretation of them as assertibly true or false, in the majority of cases. An aesthetic realist, it seems, can rest reasonably content with that. (Levinson 2001, 80)

According to the realist, then, widespread agreement suggests that aesthetic discourse is genuinely representational: it constitutes a reliable map of aesthetic reality. Irresolvable disagreements (the difficult cases for the realist) which remain are an exception. The vast majority of aesthetic disputes can be settled via argument.

In the following chapters I will address the realism/anti-realism debate in aesthetics. We have seen that ontological questions can be genuine questions and that we can make progress in the way of answering them. My aim now is to defend the ontological doctrine of aesthetic realism, first by invoking some of anti-realism's important shortcomings and then by offering positive arguments for realism. In Chapters 2 and 3, I shall be concerned with two very powerful (as we shall see basically *epistemic*) challenges to aesthetic realism.

Chapter Two

Error Theory

2.1 Mackie's error theory of values

The error theory of Mackie (1977) holds that moral claims (and evaluative claims generally) are systematically false. More precisely, the core thesis of error theory (1977, 18) holds that moral claims are all false because they refer to entities which are thought not to exist (values).¹ In this chapter I address this influential anti-realist view.

Mackie's theory is an *error* theory because it aims at exposing and countering an alleged mistake in common-sense views of morality (and of

¹ Mackie says explicitly that his view about values encompasses aesthetic values. See, for instance (1977, 15): 'It also includes non-moral values, notably aesthetic ones, beauty and various kinds of artistic merit. I shall not discuss these explicitly, but clearly much the same considerations apply to aesthetic and to moral values, and there would be at least some initial implausibility in a view that gave the one a different status from the other.' For Mackie, however, the temptation to objectify values is weaker in the aesthetic case: 'Aesthetic values are logically in the same position as moral ones; much the same metaphysical and epistemological considerations apply to them. But aesthetic values are less strongly objectified than moral ones; their subjective status, and an "error theory" with regard to such claims to objectivity as are incorporated in aesthetic judgements, will be more readily accepted, just because the motives for their objectification are less compelling' (1977, 43).

values generally). The mistake is to see moral language as language to be taken at face value, as if there really were values. According to Mackie this alleged mistake needs correction and, in particular, it prompts a sceptical² look into thought and discourse about value.

The thesis that there are no objective values is supposed to be an ontological claim, as opposed to a merely linguistic or conceptual claim. So it addresses exactly the concerns I am interested in examining. Mackie's topic and concern is not only *semantic* realism, but also (and ultimately) *ontological* realism about values. This last concern is explicitly mentioned in the following formulation (1977, 17) of his main thesis: '[the thesis] says that there do not exist entities or relations of a certain kind, objective values or requirements, which many people have believed to exist.' Another aspect common to Mackie's project and my own is that Mackie's error theory takes the question of realism to be a genuine question, requiring 'factual analysis' (1977, 19), as opposed to merely linguistic or conceptual analysis. But the error theory is against common-sense, and it is also against what the surface of evaluative discourse suggests. As Mackie admits, discourse about value invites an objective reading. So, as he also claims, we need good reasons before we adopt the error theory of values.³

² Mackie names his view both 'moral scepticism' and 'subjectivism', adding however that both phrases can be misleading. See Mackie (1977, 15-17).

³ Mackie himself (1977, 35) admits that we need to be *convinced* to adopt the error theory: 'But since this is an error theory, since it goes against assumptions ingrained in our thought and built into some of the ways in which language is used, since it conflicts with what is

According to Mackie, philosophers have tended to see values as real or factual rather than illusory because moral philosophy, ordinary thought and even the meanings of moral terms have, in the western tradition going back to Plato, invited that thought. When someone reads or hears the sentence 'Aristotle was a good man' (or 'Alcibiades was a beautiful man'), he is led to think that this sentence could actually be true in the same way that the sentence 'Aristotle was a Greek philosopher' can be true. But for the error theorist this assimilation is a mistake, resulting from an inappropriate objectification of a value, goodness (or beauty), and this mistake must be corrected.

The 'objectification' calls for explanation, and to argue for his error theory Mackie explains it in two ways. First, the notion of an objective value is for Mackie created by the widespread belief that desires must depend upon values instead of the converse: 'We get the notion of something's being objectively good, or having intrinsic value, [...] by making the desire depend upon the goodness, instead of the goodness on the desire' (1977, 43).

The objectification of values is also triggered by something akin to religious belief, Mackie thinks, which brings about the desire to attribute to moral judgements a 'fictitious external authority' (1977, 34). According to Mackie, western moral philosophy has been misled by this tendency towards objectification, and so have ordinary thought and language. This is the reason

sometimes called common sense, it needs very solid support. [...] If we are to adopt this view, we must argue explicitly for it.'

why linguistic and conceptual analysis are not good guides for investigating the reality of values, for they incorporate the tendency to see values as real, thus replicating the mistake and providing us only with (systematic) error. If we are adequately to differentiate between reality and appearances, we must begin by seeing the mistake, so as to correct it. Exposing the purported mistake is the error theorist's project.

To argue for the error theory Mackie cites two 'traditional' arguments against the existence of values: the 'argument from relativity' (1977, 36-38) and the 'argument from queerness' (1977, 38-42). The argument from relativity is an empirical argument which claims that since judgements of value vary so much across cultures, and even within the same culture, it is implausible that these beliefs could be about anything other than appearances. Perhaps they concern, as Mackie suggests, only 'different ways of life' (1977, 36).⁴ I will focus on the argument 'from queerness' only, however, which Mackie himself takes to be the more important and the more 'generally applicable' (1977, 38) of the two arguments.

The argument from queerness has, Mackie claims, two parts, one metaphysical and another epistemological. Mackie gives two versions of the

⁴ As Mackie notes (1977, 36), it might be replied that also in science there are irresolvable disagreements. Mackie suggests that in matters of values, as contrasted with scientific matters, disagreements may not involve a fault on the part of any of the disputants: 'Disagreement on questions in history or biology or cosmology does not show that there are no objective issues in these fields for investigators to disagree about. But such scientific disagreement results from speculative inferences or explanatory hypotheses based on inadequate evidence, and it is hardly plausible to interpret moral disagreement in the same way.'

argument from queerness. The first is directed generally against the existence of values, whereas the second is directed in particular against Plato's Form of the Good.

The metaphysical part of the first version of the argument says that if values were real, they would be entities or relations unlike anything else in the universe. They would be 'queer' for being intrinsically motivating, or 'objectively prescriptive' (1977, 24). So, there are no values.

But invoking 'queerness' is not decisive against realism:⁵ even if something is queer, if it is really out there, what can we do but recognize its presence?⁶ Queerness, per se, gives no reason to eschew the objects and properties of a disputed region of reality. Regions of reality can be odd, and in effect any area of reality can be reckoned different from other areas. So the opponent of realism should say more than merely that the disputed entities would be utterly different from anything else in the universe. Queerness is not enough.

We can find the same difficulty in another formulation of the thesis that there are no values. Earlier on in the chapter, building on Kant's distinction between categorical and hypothetical imperatives, Mackie had described his thesis thus:

⁵ It is fair to note that it is the *way* in which the moral is 'queer' that Mackie takes to provide a case for error theory. It is not just the bare fact that the moral is different from other realms, even though he does begin by invoking that fact.

⁶ McGinn (2000, 108) makes a similar point about truth (which he takes to be a 'queer' property): 'It is "queer". But [...] sometimes we just have to learn to live with the "queer": denial or denigration are not sensible responses.'

my thesis that there are no objective values is specifically the denial that any such categorically imperative element is objectively valid. The objective values which I am denying would be action-directing absolutely, not contingently [...] upon the agent's desires and inclinations. (1977, 29)

What error theory denies is that values could *of necessity* (categorically) direct action, independently of the agent's desires and inclinations. Something forcing action in this way is indeed strange to conceive. But the strangeness can only be invoked if values must be conceived as objectively prescriptive entities in the first place. The relevant question to ask is whether western moral tradition endorses this radical conception of values.

Mackie adds that in respect to thought and reasoning about morality, error theory says that moral arguments are not 'objectively valid' because somewhere in the reasoning 'there will be something which cannot be objectively validated' but is 'constituted by our choosing or deciding to think in a certain way' (1977, 30). That is, some premise will not be 'simply true', or else some form of argument will not be 'valid as a matter of general logic', but will depend on a personal decision to see things in a certain way. So it seems that our evaluations depend more on (blameless) choices than on findings. Hence they should not be construed in a realist manner. But it might be said in reply that even choices can be compared and found superior or inferior to other

choices. And this is *prima facie* based on the comparison between different values. The error theorist must tell us that such objective comparisons cannot be made, or that they are *not* based on something alleged belonging to the external world.

The epistemological part of the argument says that if values were real, we would need a special faculty of perception or intuition to grasp them, which makes such knowledge seem mysterious:

none of our ordinary accounts of sensory perception or introspection or the framing and confirming of explanatory hypotheses or inference or logical construction or conceptual analysis, or any combination of these, will provide a satisfactory answer; a 'special sort of intuition' is a lame answer, but it is the one to which the clearheaded objectivist is compelled to resort. (1977, 39)

The epistemological part of the argument is more plausible than the ontological part because instead of aiming to make an ontological claim, it passes the burden of proof to the realist. To show that values exist, the realist can choose to provide an epistemology that makes more plausible the idea that knowledge of value is genuine knowledge, or else, Mackie suggests, he can try and find other cases of knowledge for which empiricism alone cannot account. If we could find other cases of areas of knowledge where non-(strictly)-empiricist theories of

knowledge are not available, knowledge of values would not look 'queer': knowledge of values would be like knowledge of those other areas.

Mackie's realist has a considerable list: 'our ideas of essence, number, identity, diversity, solidity, inertia, substance, the necessary existence and infinite extension of time and space, necessity and possibility in general, power, and causation' (1977, 39). All of them are more or less classical notions from metaphysics. Mackie responds to this list as follows:

I can only state my belief that satisfactory accounts of most of these can be given in empirical terms. If some supposed metaphysical necessities or essences resist such treatment, then they too should be included, along with objective values, among the targets of the argument from queerness. (1977, 39)

What can now be said is that the argument for the claim that knowledge of values is strange has now by Mackie's own words encompassed not just values, but, if they resist an empirical treatment, also necessities or essences, dubbed 'metaphysical'. Values might be 'queer', but they are not, perhaps, alone in their queerness.

Mackie anticipates the objection that error theory might be targeting value statements only because of their 'unverifiability' (1977, 39). The epistemological aspect of the argument for error theory could be stemming from ideas akin to those of the logical positivists, serving a more general anti-

metaphysical project. But Mackie anticipates this objection and replies to it by saying that, contrary to the view of the logical positivists, his account does not take moral judgements to be meaningless. Rather, it declares them all to be false. Accordingly, the question of ontological realism about values is not, for him, a pseudo-question as the logical positivists would have supposed. On the contrary, it is a genuine question, to be answered negatively: there are no values (1977, 40).

This reply is not entirely satisfactory, however, for although it accounts for the falsity of moral judgements, it seems that it will not yet explain how it is that they are *systematically* false, which is the error theorist's specific claim. And if the reply to the objection is not entirely satisfactory, then we can still say, following Mackie's own advice, that we need more solid argument before we adopt an error theory of values.

It seems, indeed, that the 'metaphysical' notions that the error theorist is suspicious of are difficult to dispense with. The option, open to the realist, of finding 'companions in guilt' (1977, 39) seems to be advantageous for realism, for they are not difficult to find. Nevertheless, the explanation of how extra-natural qualities or relations could be known is still a difficult task for the realist to accomplish, if that is what values must be.

Let us see whether the second version of the argument that values are 'queer' has different results. It consists in Mackie's presentation of Plato's Form of the Good. Mackie (1977, 40) suggests that Plato's theory of Forms could

provide a model for the kind of realism about values that he wants to criticize and reject: 'Plato's Forms give a dramatic picture of what values would have to be.'

The two aspects of the Form of the Good that Mackie finds especially problematic are the same that appear in the first version of the argument. One is its being intrinsically motivating: the Form of the Good has 'to-be-pursuedness somehow built into it' (1977, 40), that is, 'it provides the knower with both a direction and an overriding motive' (ibid.). So it contrasts with the contingency upon desires of our ordinary decisions to act in a certain way. Since the Form of the Good would be necessarily motivating for any knower, it would be different from anything else in the universe that we know of: it would be 'queer'. (So we can engage with this argument as we did with its first version).

Another problematic aspect identified by Mackie is the way in which the Form of the Good would have to be linked to natural features. '[E]ntailment', or a 'logical or semantic necessity' (1977, 41), as Mackie puts it, is insufficient to explain the connection between the 'natural fact that an action is a piece of cruelty [...] and the moral fact that it is wrong'. However, the wrongness is somehow a 'consequence' of the cruelty: it seems (ibid.) that the action is 'wrong because it is a piece of deliberate cruelty.' 'But', Mackie (ibid.) asks, 'just what *in the world* is signified by this 'because'?. This question is a salient one. The Form of the Good as Mackie presents it is supposed to be something that makes good actions good. But the difficulty is that Plato's Forms are not in

nature (they are famously outside space and time). So it is unclear how the Form of the Good could make actions good (beautiful, etc).

The alternative picture to the Form of the Good is, Mackie claims, 'some sort of subjective response' (1977, 41) which could 'replace the moral quality' (ibid.) and explain how we detect the natural features which ground the supposed quality (ibid.). Leaving aside the question of whether such subjectivist explanation is more illuminating than Plato's dramatic picture, it might be noted that, although Mackie distances himself from the general anti-metaphysical project of logical positivism, he has now a larger list of 'metaphysical' notions judged 'queer'.

As Mackie says, Plato's Form of the Good can only be a dramatic picture of how values really could be. What seems plain is that it is some form of this picture that Mackie's error theory aims at countering. It is perhaps no coincidence that he claims to be opposing an entire philosophical tradition (ingrained in common-sense) going back to Plato. What we need to see is whether the western moral tradition, and common-sense in particular, endorses this odd theory of values.

2.2 McDowell's reply

Mackie's error theory rejects the claim that thought and discourse about value could appropriately be taken at face value. An error theorist would claim that the appearance that aesthetic value is present in some (but not all) objects is an illusion that we should dismiss.

McDowell (1983) has considered Mackie's error theory when applied, in particular, to the case of aesthetic value (1983, 1). As McDowell also notes (*ibid.*), Mackie had examined morality specifically, but he had claimed that 'the same considerations apply to aesthetic and to moral values' and that a view giving different status to the two areas would be, at least *prima facie*, implausible (1977, 15).

As we saw, Mackie's error theory aims to call attention to the (supposedly) misguided conception of values that tradition, going back to Plato, has engendered. After showing what specific mistake McDowell finds in Mackie's account, my aim will be to see what alternative conception McDowell could be proposing that could meet the error theorist's legitimate concern that values should not look 'queer' (even if queerness, *per se*, is not decisive against realism).

As he himself admits, McDowell does not wish to respond directly to Mackie's arguments, but only to question 'whether those arguments attack the right target' (1983, 4). This is my concern as well. McDowell agrees with Mackie that the objectivity of value is not merely a *semantic* issue, that is, an issue about the meaning of language (aesthetic or, more generally, evaluative). But he

claims that Mackie's rejection of objectivity for values rests on an inadequate notion of objectivity. In particular, McDowell points to an alleged contradiction in Mackie's conception of objectivity, to then suggest that a different interpretation of objectivity should replace it, one that would not make values look 'queer'. In other words, McDowell's point is not to directly defend a position in the debate on realism about values, or to speculate about the nature of values, but, he claims, to leave room for a defence of them.

McDowell disputes specifically Mackie's conception of objectivity. He focuses on Mackie's implied view that whatever is part of the world must be objective, and objective in a particular sense. 'Objective' in this context is to be contrasted with 'subjective' (1983, 2), where subjective properties (for instance) are those which must be conceived 'in terms of how the thing would, in suitable circumstances, affect a subject—a sentient being' (1983, 2). As McDowell (*ibid.*) explains (and I paraphrase), a subjective property in this sense would be, for example, a colour property, such as *redness*.⁷ Redness concerns the possibility of something, *x*, *looking* red under certain circumstances (namely with appropriate light and at a certain distance). The predicate 'is red' applies only to things which can look red to human beings in certain circumstances. According to this way of differentiating between objective and subjective, aesthetic values (and values generally) qualify clearly as subjective, given their essential connection with possible effects on (and responses by) human beings. The question is, then,

⁷ This is McDowell's example.

whether subjective properties such as, for example, colours (but also aesthetic properties and values) can, too, qualify as objective in the ontological sense, that is, whether they can be reckoned as part of the external world.

What McDowell wants to avoid is that, by restricting the world to what is objective in Mackie's sense, we preclude 'subjective' properties such as the property of being red from being part of reality, even though their categorial bases undoubtedly qualify as real. McDowell (1983, 2) writes: 'Categorical grounds for affective or secondary qualities can be part of the fabric of the world, on [Mackie's] view, even though the subjective properties they sustain cannot.' Nothing in this result is absurd, but the decision to restrict the world to primary qualities (the qualities cited in scientific theories)⁸ may require explanation, since the world as we experience it—the 'manifest'⁹ world—includes, or seems to include, more than that. So, again, the question ends up being whether the *best* conception of the world should include or exclude colours or aesthetic values, not whether any conception of the world *must* include them.

So McDowell does not deny that aesthetic values, together with colours and other secondary qualities, cannot be conceived to be independent of human

⁸ McDowell (1983, 2) mentions one unwelcome consequence of Mackie's notion of objectivity: 'Mackie's implied doctrine that whatever is part of the fabric of the world is objective, if ['objective'] is interpreted in this way, amounts to the doctrine that the world is fully describable in terms of properties that can be understood without essential reference to their effects on sentient beings.'

⁹ For the contrast between the 'scientific' and the 'manifest' image, see Sellars (1963, Chapter 1).

experience. His attitude is rather to ask whether, granting that aesthetic value must be conceived in connection with a subjective experience, we are 'thereby debarred from supposing that we find aesthetic value [...] in the world' (1983, 5).¹⁰ In other words, should reality be limited to what is independent of human experience?

McDowell attempts to answer these questions by scrutinizing the notion of objectivity (the 'absolute conception') that, according to Bernard Williams (1978) underwrites Descartes' (and modern science's) 'project of pure enquiry'. Under this notion of objectivity, 'objective' means 'independent of any special point of view' (1983, 12). McDowell (buiding on Williams's account) sets up the following dilemma for this conception. Either an absolute conception of objectivity transcends all particular points of view, or else it assumes a particular point of view. If an absolute conception of objectivity transcends all particular points of view, it cannot capture any particular points of view. But in that case it is an 'empty' conception. On the other hand, if the absolute conception is to assume a determinate, independent point of view (such as the point of view of science), it will still be *one* point of view, so it is not an absolute conception. So an absolute conception of objectivity is incoherent. McDowell sees no way out of this dilemma and holds that the idea of objectivity based on

¹⁰ McDowell (1983, 5) also suggests that '[t]he phenomenology of value experience in general suggests a visual model for our dealings with value. In the moral case we are prone to be tempted away from that model by the distracting influence of the concept of choice or decision; whereas in the aesthetic case [...] that temptation is not operative.'

this absolute conception of reality does not make sense. In his words: 'the idea of a view from nowhere is incoherent' (1983, 6).

As McDowell notes, Williams, however, is not a sceptic about the absolute conception. For Williams the second horn of the dilemma can be avoided because, he believes, scientific methods provide universal (objective) standards. As Williams sees it, science is not simply one point of view amongst others, but, as McDowell puts it, it is an especially 'transparent mode of access to reality' (1983, 7). So, for Williams, the idea of an absolute conception of reality is not incoherent since science provides an independent standard against which all other views must be measured. It is not an empty conception either, because it is not a conception independent of thought in general, but only (as McDowell quotes from Williams) 'independent [...] of all that is arbitrary and individual in thought' (1983, 6).

McDowell, however, finds two, related, reasons to doubt the plausibility of an absolute conception of reality, and in particular to doubt that the scientific view could be the one adopted as the 'measure of all things'. (Aesthetic properties and values are of course putative aspects of the world to which a purely scientific view would be blind.)

One reason McDowell gives is that the absolute conception, the defenders of which seek to justify for explanatory reasons, fails to be genuinely explanatory. The absolute conception aims at surpassing ('transcending')

particular views and at explaining them.¹¹ But this project is, according to McDowell, 'self-defeating', because the attempt to go beyond particular explanations brings about a 'regress'. Take his example, the case of colour. An explanation of colour apprehension requires reference to those who are located in the point of view in question: those who have colour vision.¹² The content of the appearances can only be understood with reference to those occupying the relevant point of view (1983, 10). (That is, to explain what it is to be red we need to invoke the phenomenon of looking red to (most) humans under certain light conditions, at a certain distance, etc). McDowell's suggestion is that the absolute conception, and in particular the scientific view he considers, might be adequate to account for scientific phenomena, but it is not adequate to account for every phenomenon. For the scientific view considers the subjective¹³ properties (such as colours) that figure in common-sense views of the world to be merely subjective responses to what it takes to be objectively real, thereby leaving them unexplained, even though experience seems to reveal them as genuine. So, at least in the case of colour, the absolute (scientific) conception fails to be explanatory.

McDowell's objection to the absolute conception is not decisive. There is nothing forcing us to include secondary qualities (let alone aesthetic qualities and values) in our picture of the world. Nevertheless, since the absolute

¹¹ See Williams (1978, 245-246).

¹² McDowell (1983, 10).

¹³ 'Subjective' in the sense mentioned above: requiring a particular point of view.

conception sets as its goal the explanation of all phenomena, we can reply that at least the phenomenon of colour experience, which is natural not to take as illusory, and which seems to be a source of genuine knowledge, remains unexplained by that view. So, the absolute conception does not achieve its goal. Plausibly, and as McDowell's view implies, this is because the scope of science is not absolute, but only scientific. Science may be appropriate to explain scientific phenomena, but it is not appropriate to capture every phenomenon. What matters for McDowell's purposes and ours here is that the thought that a scientific view could be 'the measure of all things' seems at least under-motivated.

McDowell's aim in the essay, and his point in separating his view of objectivity from an absolute conception, is not to establish realism about aesthetic values. As he claims, all he wishes is to leave scope for a different interpretation of 'objectivity', so that the *possibility* of real aesthetic values could remain open, a possibility which 'the phenomenology of value experience has made attractive to philosophers and ordinary people' (1983, 16).

McDowell neither provides an alternative conception of objectivity nor argues for realism about values. His position, as he admits, just leaves room for the question of the reality of values to be asked. Because if we give up the thought that all explanations that merit the name must be scientific, we are free to consider the plausibility of alternative explanations, that could perhaps make

sense of aspects of our experience that we may find important to include in our general picture of the world.

A relevant question, given Mackie's attack on Platonism, is whether McDowell's alternative to Mackie's view is Platonistic. McDowell (1996) explicitly recommends a form of Platonism with respect to meaning, which he calls 'naturalized platonism' to distinguish it from the Platonism that error theory about values opposes, which he calls 'rampant platonism'. McDowell's claim is that Platonism need not be rampant. He distinguishes between the two forms thus:

In rampant platonism, [...] the structure in which we place things when we find meaning in them, is simply extra-natural. Our capacity to resonate to that capacity has to be mysterious [...] But thanks to the notion of second nature, there is no whiff of that here. Our *Bildung* actualizes some of the potentialities we are born with; we do not have to suppose it introduces a non-animal ingredient into our constitution. [...] Meaning is not a mysterious gift from outside nature. (1996, 88)

This Platonism is introduced as an Aristotelian reading of naturalism. By relying on the notion of 'second nature', this qualified form of Platonism brings in the option of potential or possibilities being in nature. According to this naturalism moral (and aesthetic) knowledge can be reckoned natural because it

concerns a sophistication of our natural capacities. 'Sensibility', claims McDowell (1996, 87), 'is one of our natural powers'. Moral and aesthetic knowledge can be understood, according to this account, as resulting from a natural use and development of our natural powers.

The account is basically realist because these powers are considered to be forms of world-sensitivity. The view is that 'the dictates of reason are there anyway, whether or not one's eyes are open to them' (1996, 91). So an appropriate upbringing will include the opening of one's eyes to the dictates of reason.¹⁴ In contrast, rampant Platonism, in relying on 'supernaturalism' (1996, 78) to explain knowledge, leaves knowledge of values unexplained. For our purposes, one thing is clear: if Platonism can be thus naturalized, then there is room for defending (a modest) realism about values.

In summary, we can say that Mackie had seen the moral philosophical tradition going back to Plato, including common-sense, as unified. According to Mackie all that tradition was mistaken in objectifying values and argument was needed to oppose the learned tendency to objectification. But we have also seen that Platonism can perhaps be given a more sensible reading, such as the one McDowell recommends concerning meaning. If this reading can meet the difficulties Mackie correctly finds in rampant Platonism, we require further argument from the error theorist before agreeing with him that the western

¹⁴ McDowell makes reference to morality, but the same considerations can, *mutatis mutandis*, be applied to the aesthetic case, in particular to aesthetic learning.

philosophical tradition going back to Plato and ingrained in common-sense is systematically mistaken in taking values to be real.

2.3 'Common-sense' realism

The error theorist's main claim was that value-laden discourse is misleading, in that it embodies the thought that there are such things as values, and that this mistake requires correction. The error theorist also claims, however, that to accept his counterintuitive view 'solid argument' is required. How solid, then, is Mackie's case for his brand of evaluative anti-realism?

The considerations Mackie adduces in favour of his view are, in summary, the following.¹⁵ First, he invokes the variability of opinion in moral thinking. This variability, he suggests, is not (unlike the case of scientific disagreement) necessarily based on mistakes in at least one side but appears to concern only *different*, perhaps sometimes incommensurable, ways of life. Second, he calls attention to the strangeness of the supposed objective values, especially in respect of their being intrinsically motivating. Third, he mentions the problematic relation such values would bear with natural features. Fourth, he refers to the difficulty of accounting for our knowledge of such objective

¹⁵ I paraphrase Mackie's own summary of his case for 'moral scepticism', in (1977, 49).

values. Fifth, he explains the common-sense tendency to objectify values (see the discussion above in §2.1).

If the case against the objectivity of values is not entirely successful, then, following Mackie's own advice, we have no reason to change our ways and adopt an error theory. As Mackie writes,

Moral scepticism must take the form of an error theory, admitting that a belief in objective values is built into ordinary moral thought and language, but holding that this ingrained belief is false. As such, it needs arguments to support it against 'common sense'. (1977, 48-49)

In the remainder of this chapter, I shall agree with Mackie that the most natural position to have concerning values is realist, but I shall claim, *contra* Mackie, that there is not, in general, a mistake in that position. So, there is no need for an error theory, opposed to 'common-sense'.

My contention is that 'common-sense' realism about values is not as Mackie says it is. Common-sense views of values are not Platonistic.¹⁶ Ordinary moral (and, generally, evaluative) thought and discourse do not presuppose that there are the extra-natural properties that Mackie presumes objective values, if they existed, would be. Nor are the values that ordinary moral (and

¹⁶ Rather, I claim, common-sense views of values are 'naturalized platonisms', as McDowell calls them with respect to meaning. The label is not important, but only the notion that values need not be identified with extra-natural properties.

aesthetic) thought and discourse presuppose the intrinsically motivating properties that Mackie (understandably) finds queer. So, in ordinary moral and evaluative thought there is no ingrained 'rampant' Platonism calling for correction. Therefore, a case against Platonism need not be a case against ordinary moral and evaluative thought. If ordinary moral and evaluative thought does not embody the Platonism which Mackie associates with it, and if it is this Platonism which Mackie takes to be the erroneous component of ordinary moral and evaluative thought, there is no need for an error theory of ordinary moral and evaluative thought and discourse.

What, then, is 'common-sense' realism about value? The modest realism inherent in 'common-sense' views of values begins, it seems to me, with an epistemological thesis, namely that genuine knowledge of values is possible. It seems evident that it is possible to make a mistake concerning value.¹⁷ Think, for example, of someone insisting that Euripides' tragedies, or Homer's two epic poems, are worthless aesthetically. Instances of error (or certainty) acknowledged by a majority¹⁸ must count as reasons for the claim that there is something there to know.

¹⁷ This can be, however, accommodated by the subjectivist, who also accepts standards of evaluation. See Mackie (1977, 26): 'The subjectivist about values, then, is not denying that there can be objective evaluations relative to standards.' The subjectivist and the objectivist disagree, however, on the *grounds* for those standards: for the realist the grounds are in external reality.

¹⁸ However, we must accept that some aesthetic knowledge is possessed only by a minority of experts (and this need not count against this knowledge being genuine).

About what there is to know (about what values are), common-sense is unspecific. It does not specify what kind of reality evaluative discourse is about. So, *a fortiori* it does not claim that discourse about values is about extra-natural, Platonistic, entities.¹⁹ So one way to reply to the error theorist and defend realism is by saying that the realist need not make the implausible claims that the error theorist attributes to him.

Common-sense realism, then, is conspicuously silent. However, when the error theorist claims that real values would be 'objectively prescriptive', and that this makes them implausible or queer, the realist should say what he himself takes values to be. An appropriate positive response is, I admit, not easy to give. One way of leaving open the possibility of values and aesthetic properties (my main concern) being objective,²⁰ without denying their subjective nature,²¹ is by saying that values and aesthetic properties (such as, for instance, beauty, but also elegance, delicacy, balance, etc.) are known through desire.²² As we have seen, colours require perception to be discerned and this need not count against their being objective. So perhaps (e.g.) elegance, delicacy or even beauty may require a cognitive desire (and imagination) in order to be

¹⁹ For the suggestion of a realist alternative to Platonism, see the next paragraphs.

²⁰ 'Objective' in the sense of being part of the world.

²¹ In the sense that they require human 'subjectivity' (participation) to be grasped.

²² This is the view of Zemach (1997). E.g.: 'We see things aesthetically because we see things as effecting the satisfaction of our wants' (1997, 95); 'Aesthetic properties appear only to those whose seeing is modulated by desire' (1997, 103).

captured^{23,24} and yet be taken as genuine values or, more precisely, as evaluative properties of objects.

Mirroring the claim that colours may be reckoned real even though they require human perceivers to be detected, we could perhaps say that aesthetic properties require imaginative (and perhaps desiring) perceptions, in order to be detected. We could say that they cannot be understood independently from that perception, but that this need not count against their objectivity. Statements attributing such properties to objects are to be judged against reality, not against mental projections, so the account falls still clearly on the realist side. The objects have or fail to have those properties, the thought goes, and the corresponding judgements are true or false depending entirely on the objects, not at all on the viewer's (or reader's) feelings or attitudes. This is true even though 'subjective' experience is necessary in order to ascertain whether the objects have or fail to have the properties in question. Note that the realist's claim is, so far, only conditional, and tentative. The claim is the following: if essential reference to subjectivity, in the case of colour, does not (per se) block

²³ Another (related) explanation consists in saying that aesthetic properties and values require a form of *love* in order to be discerned. For a development of this thesis (in particular, of the thesis that what makes interpretable objects valuable and interpretable is the 'friendship' of a society) see Tamen (2001).

²⁴ In the radio programme 'Discovering Music' (BBC Radio 3, 19th October 2008), Charles Hazlewood, speaking of Tchaikovsky's 18th century-inspired works, *Rococo Variations* and the orchestral suite *Mozartiana*, used a happy phrase to express this idea: 'through loving spectacles', to refer to the way Tchaikovsky approached the work of Mozart. Hazlewood said: 'How wonderful, now, to see the classical age *through the loving spectacles* [...] of this great 19th century Russian Romantic master' (emphasis added). Arguably, aesthetic properties require 'loving spectacles' to be appropriately discerned, and my contention will be that this need not count against aesthetic realism.

realism, then perhaps the requirement of an imaginative (and desiring) *sensibility* is not incompatible with aesthetic realism. To argue from one example: even if to attribute beauty to some of Van Gogh's sunflowers paintings subjective participation is required, that does not, per se, entail that beauty is not a property that the works do possess (or fail to possess): so far nothing precludes the supposed property from being real.

There is another apparent difficulty for the realist account, however. It is a difficulty famously noted by Kant. Judgements of aesthetic value seem to require personal acquaintance with the object being judged. They seem, then, not to possess genuine epistemic content which would be transmissible via testimony. So, it seems that they do not concern genuine knowledge. If this is so, *a fortiori* there is no external reality that aesthetic judgements would refer to. It is to this supposed difficulty for aesthetic realism that I now turn.

Chapter Three

Aesthetic Autonomy

3.1 The autonomy thesis

I will now consider perhaps the strongest objection to realism. In essence, it consists in the claim that the phrase 'aesthetic realism' is an oxymoron. This is because 'realism' makes a claim to objectivity, whereas 'aesthetic' seems to indicate that 'the object of aesthetic judgment is something subjective, rather than objective—a feeling rather than any specific property of the object'.¹ Given the irreducible subjectivity (in this sense) of aesthetic judgements, realism concerning the aesthetic realm seems impossible.

In particular, I wish to consider the claim, commonly invoked against realism, that since aesthetic judgements must be made based on first-hand acquaintance with the object judged, the properties in question cannot be construed in a realist manner. This is because if they were real, then their content would be preserved via testimony. The 'autonomy thesis' claims that an

¹ Guyer (1997, 119).

aesthetic judgement must be made based on acquaintance with the object being judged, and one apparent consequence of this thesis is that an aesthetic judgement cannot be made based on someone else's testimony alone.^{2,3,4}

This is a well-known Kantian thesis.^{5,6} Kant holds that I cannot warrantably judge that an object is beautiful unless I have personal acquaintance with it; and my judgement refers, ineliminably, to that personal encounter, not simply to the object judged. Accordingly, knowing that a certain object is beautiful for someone else tells me nothing about that object. I will not be able to claim, warrantably, that the object is beautiful until I have experience of that apparent fact. (In effect, anti-realists claim that to state that an object is beautiful is not to state a fact, and that we do not really *know* that the object is beautiful. It merely *seems to us* that it is so. Indeed, Kant's thesis is part of his

² For a recent brief explanation (and rejection) of aesthetic autonomy, see Levinson (2005, 213). Levinson refers to two other rejections of aesthetic autonomy: Budd's (1999) and Meskin's (2004). As champions of the autonomy thesis, Levinson includes, among others, Isenberg (presumably his [1949]), Pettit (presumably his [1983]) and Mothersill (presumably her 1984). Pettit's project is specific in that it aims to integrate the autonomy of aesthetic judgements in a realist view.

³ Meskin (2004, 75) notes that acquaintance with the work (say, with a painting) is possible also through photographs, so that judgements made based on acquaintance with photographs can qualify as aesthetic. He also notes, however, that even though 'perceptual experience is present in such cases', '[p]hotographs fail to provide viewers with the kind of first-person information that seeing typically does.'

⁴ Following Wollheim ([1968] 1980), some authors make reference to the 'Acquaintance principle': 'judgements of aesthetic value, unlike judgements of moral knowledge, must be based on first-hand experience of their objects and are not, except within very narrow limits, transmissible from one person to another' (1980, 233).

⁵ For a specific discussion of the phenomenon of 'autonomy', see Hopkins (2001). Apparently it was Hopkins (2001, 167) who coined the phrase that refers to the phenomenon (and to the correspondent thesis): 'I draw on Kant to describe a specific phenomenon, what I call the *autonomy* of aesthetic judgement.'

⁶ I follow Hopkins's referencing conventions (CPJ §n).

more general project according to which matters of taste are not cognitive.⁷ That is, they are not a matter of knowing that a certain item is beautiful, but of *feeling* it to be so).

The so-called autonomy thesis is originally put forward by Kant in his *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, and is more directly suggested in passages like the following:

it is required [...] that the subject judge for himself. (§32)

Taste makes claim merely to autonomy. To make the judgements of others into the determining ground of one's own would be heteronomy. (§32)

If someone does not find a building, a view, or a poem beautiful, then [...] he does not allow approval to be internally imposed upon himself by a hundred voices who all praise it highly. (§33)

The judgement of others, when it is unfavourable to our own, can of course rightly give us reservations about our own, but can never convince us of its incorrectness. (§33)

⁷ See *CPJ* §1: 'The judgement of taste is [...] not a cognitive judgement, hence not a logical one, but is rather aesthetic, by which is understood one whose determining ground cannot be other than subjective.' Cf. *CPJ* §32: 'the judgement of taste, however, is not grounded on concepts at all, and is above all no cognition, but only an aesthetic judgement.'

Kant's view concerns, in short, the requirement that an aesthetic judgement be based on a felt, personal, response. My aim in this chapter is to consider that supposed requirement, and to consider, in particular, its bearing on the question of aesthetic realism.

In reply to the anti-realist charge that aesthetic autonomy is incompatible with aesthetic realism,⁸ some realists have attempted to meet the challenge by rejecting aesthetic autonomy, or the claim that aesthetic judgements require first-hand acquaintance. But this is a little unnatural, and has unwelcome implications. If we reject autonomy, or the acquaintance principle,⁹ it seems that we have to countenance the scenario in which critics could write art criticism without having had any contact with the works of which they speak. In this chapter I will attempt to defend another realist alternative and claim that the requirement of first-hand acquaintance is not incompatible with aesthetic realism. I shall offer two arguments for my view. The first is an empirical argument. I will make an analogy with colours, mainly by criticizing a disanalogy offered by Hopkins. I will note that, just as in the aesthetic case, in the case of colours we would not change our judgement based only on the opinions of others. So I will be saying that 'autonomy' is not peculiar to the aesthetic case. The result for the realism/anti-realism debate is this: just because I need to rely on my own judgement to grasp a property, that does not entail

⁸ The charge is made by Matravers (2005, 196 and 199-200).

⁹ See note 4 above.

that the property in question is not an objective property of the object. If autonomy concerning colour judgements does not block realism, then aesthetic autonomy cannot be invoked, per se, as a claim against aesthetic realism.

My second argument for the view that the thesis of aesthetic autonomy, if true, is perfectly compatible with aesthetic realism is, in a nutshell, that an epistemological thesis, such as the thesis of aesthetic autonomy, cannot decisively threaten an ontological thesis, such as the thesis of aesthetic realism.

I wish to say, then, why I think that the thesis of aesthetic autonomy is true and compatible with realism.¹⁰ I wish to claim, first, that aesthetic autonomy is a genuine phenomenon, one that any aesthetic theory must be able to accommodate. (So, if aesthetic realism cannot accommodate the autonomy of aesthetic judgement, then we should dispense with aesthetic realism.) But first consider what philosophers have to say on aesthetic autonomy.

3.2 Philosophers on aesthetic autonomy

Some philosophers have been led to reject the Kantian thesis of aesthetic autonomy. Levinson (2005) has claimed, in response to the challenge that

¹⁰ Of course, the question of whether the autonomy thesis is true is independent of the question of whether it is compatible with realism. Compatibility just means that autonomy and realism *could be* jointly true. It does not require that either is true. They could both be false, and yet be compatible. But in this chapter I wish to claim that they are both true, and compatible.

realism would undermine the doctrine of aesthetic autonomy (Matravers 2005), that the doctrine has not yet been established (2005, 213), and that if realism undermines aesthetic autonomy, 'that is all to the good' (2005, 214). To argue against aesthetic autonomy, Levinson invokes the *ambiguity* of the word 'judgement'. Under one interpretation, he claims, one cannot make an aesthetic judgement unless the judgement is based on direct acquaintance with the object being judged. Levinson admits that our aesthetic 'involvement' (2005, 213) with 'aesthetically notable objects such as artworks' (ibid.) concerns mainly this first interpretation of 'judgement'. However, under another acceptable interpretation, Levinson claims, one can 'judge' that (say) a work of art has certain qualities, including aesthetic ones, based on judgements of reliable others, that is, without 'perceptually experiencing' (2005, 213) the work in question. One of Levinson's examples is from music: 'I judge the *Adagio* of Beethoven's Third Symphony, on the basis of centuries of testimony as to its expressiveness, to be an extremely sad piece of music' (2005, 213). This interpretation, Levinson explains, is similar to the interpretation of 'judgement' with respect to non-aesthetic matters, as in (again I cite his example): 'I judge the candidate, from the dossier in front of me, to have insufficient qualifications for the post' (ibid.).¹¹

¹¹ Livingston (2003, 277) makes a similar distinction, between 'knowing' and 'gauging': 'someone's descriptions can inform one perfectly well about how the work is surprising, but only through a first, description-free experience can one fully gauge the work's surprise value.'

What Levinson is suggesting is that judgements of taste are cognitive, and that their cognitive aspect can be conveyed in testimony. For this sort of knowledge to be transmitted, certainly someone has to have been acquainted with the object being judged, in order to gain such knowledge. However, claims Levinson (2005, 214), it does not have to be oneself: 'Nor should the fact, if it is a fact, that no one could know how an object was aesthetically unless *someone*, somewhere and sometime, has had direct experience of it induce one to think that that someone must be *you*.' According to Levinson, then, we can gain knowledge about the aesthetic properties of objects (such as works of art) even before we are personally acquainted with those objects.

Meskin (2004) has claimed that aesthetic autonomy would leave us 'hopelessly imprisoned in an impoverished set of aesthetic beliefs' (2004, 67), and that this is a reason to reject the autonomy thesis, if it is the case that matters of beauty and art admit of testimony. Meskin claims that the testimony of others seems to give us at least some degree of aesthetic knowledge, and one symptom of this, he claims, is that we sometimes act and decide, with respect to aesthetic matters, based on what we seem to have learned from others. For instance: 'knowledge of the beauty of a distant and unseen island may aid me in travel planning' (ibid.). According to Meskin, '[i]f aesthetic testimony has any [...] epistemic value', then the Kantian thesis is mistaken (2004, 75). Meskin concedes that the main (and proper) point of our engagement with art is direct and personal, focused on '*appreciation*' (2004, 76), but that does not mean that we

cannot learn anything, and anything aesthetic in particular, from the testimony of reliable others.¹² And if we do learn from others on beauty and art, then (*contra* Kant) there is something there that we know. (Meskin's principal aim in the article is to argue against the autonomy thesis in order to preserve aesthetic cognitivism.)

Budd (1999; 2003) also addresses the Kantian thesis, as it is related, in particular, to the view that '[a] judgement that predicates beauty of an item does not characterise the intrinsic nature of the item (the item's form) in any way at all' (1999, 296). Budd's account accepts that an aesthetic *judgement* must be based on a subjective experience, but claims that it is possible for one to come to *believe* that a certain judgement is true (or not) based on testimony:¹³

this is not enough to show that, say, a consensus of judgements about an item's beauty cannot be a sufficient basis for a belief *with the same content* as the assertoric content of an aesthetic judgement, so that, for example, someone who is not in a position to judge that an item is beautiful might nevertheless have compelling reason to believe that it is. (1999, 297)

¹² Meskin (2004, 76) even rejects the claim that an aesthetic judgement must be based on personal experience: 'It is eminently plausible that the *appreciation* of a work of art requires experiencing it. So there are things that testimony may never provide—aesthetic experiences and artistic appreciation. But it does not follow from this that aesthetic judgement is essentially linked to experience.'

¹³ See also Budd (2003, 392). Against the 'Acquaintance Principle', Budd claims that 'judgements of aesthetic properties are as transmissible from one person to another as are other kinds of judgement'.

All three authors agree that there is a sense in which our proper engagement with works of art is, primarily, personal. Accordingly, art criticism is to be understood as an activity which aims at directing (and thereby enhancing) aesthetic experience—certainly not at replacing it—and this seems to be a sign that there is some knowledge that only aesthetic experience can give. All three authors emphasize that there is at least some genuine aesthetic *knowledge* that is conveyed in aesthetic characterisations, particularly in judgements of beauty or aesthetic value.

Let me give a few examples of ways in which aesthetic knowledge is typically conveyed. When a critic whose aesthetic knowledge a person trusts (and whose aesthetic sensibility she shares in some sense) tells her that Giovanni Bellini's *St. Francis in the Desert*¹⁴ is one of his favourite paintings, she may have good reason to believe the painting to be beautiful, or in some sense aesthetically rewarding, even before she sees it. The strength of her belief can be seen in her decision to go to the Frick Collection in New York, when she visits the city, to see this painting. The subscriber to aesthetic autonomy will add that only after seeing the painting (or a photograph of it, perhaps, if we accept the transparency of this medium)¹⁵ can she *judge* the painting to be beautiful, as Budd suggests. But her reliable critic's testimony might lead her to *believe* that it

¹⁴ C. 1480. Tempera and oil on panel, 124.4 x 141.9 cm, Frick Collection, New York. I thank Professor António M. Feijó for having called my attention to this painting.

¹⁵ Meskin (2004, 74): 'The transparency theory holds that photographs actually allow us to see the objects that are represented in them'.

is beautiful and, to a certain degree, to guess or imagine how it is beautiful, even before she can fully appreciate that it is so.¹⁶

What Levinson, Meskin and Budd reject in the Kantian thesis is its apparent commitment to non-cognitivism: the view that aesthetic judgements are not a matter of knowledge. For these three authors, aesthetic judgements are cognitive, conveying genuine knowledge. Knowledge by testimony is not meant to be a substitute for aesthetic experience, however. In claiming aesthetic judgement to be cognitive, these authors commit themselves to the claim that aesthetic assertions *describe* or refer to the object in question and, indirectly, to the sort of experience that the object might afford. Accordingly, the content of aesthetic description can be, at least in part, transmitted via testimony. My task now is to see whether we indeed have to reject aesthetic autonomy if we wish to preserve the view that aesthetic judgements are cognitive,¹⁷ or if we want to develop a realist view of aesthetic attributions.¹⁸

Some philosophers (Pettit 1983; Hopkins 2000 and 2001; McGonigal 2006) have begun with the assumption that the thesis of aesthetic autonomy is

¹⁶ Livingston (2003) has claimed that it is the 'difficulty of describing the most elusive qualities of great works of art' (p. 278) that has led philosophers to think that personal acquaintance is required for an aesthetic judgement. Livingston is another author who rejects aesthetic autonomy.

¹⁷ For the claim that aesthetic autonomy is compatible with cognitivism, see McGonigal (2006).

¹⁸ Note that Wollheim ([1968] 1980, 233) introduces the 'Acquaintance principle' as belonging to the realist project: 'Realism is highly likely to insist upon some such experience as an epistemic condition of aesthetic evaluations. In doing so Realism acknowledges a well-entrenched principle in aesthetics, which may be called the Acquaintance principle.'

correct,¹⁹ and have attempted (in different ways, and with different aims) to see which theory can best explain aesthetic autonomy, or at least which possibilities are still open after we recognize its truth. Pettit has understood aesthetic autonomy in terms of the essentially perceptual nature of aesthetic characterisations:

We may assume [...] that aesthetic characterisations are all essentially perceptual. [...] What I seem to know when, having seen a painting, I describe it as graceful or awkward, tightly or loosely organised, dreamy or erotic, inviting or distancing, is not something which you can know, or at least not something which you can know in the same sense, just through relying on my testimony. (Pettit [1983] 2004, 162)

Pettit begins with the assumption that aesthetic characterisations are peculiar in the sense that they refer to an experience that cannot be described in its entirety. Aesthetic characterisations may point to features of a work, but the meaning of such characterisations is not completely understood until the property in question is found (experienced) in the work. (Pettit's aim is congenial to mine here: to account for the phenomenon of aesthetic autonomy within a realist construal of aesthetic characterisations). Let us now see why the thesis of aesthetic autonomy is true.

¹⁹ Hopkins (2006), however, has more recently discussed the plausibility of the thesis of aesthetic autonomy, or the 'Acquaintance Principle'.

3.3 Why the autonomy thesis is true

Because philosophers have questioned the autonomy thesis, we should give reasons for thinking the autonomy thesis to be true, instead of assuming that it is true. The autonomy thesis consists, as we have seen, in the claim that aesthetic judgements must be made based on a personal experience. So, for instance, even if someone has read all that was written on (e.g.) the painting *Mona Lisa*, by Leonardo da Vinci, if he has never seen the actual painting (or a photograph of it, if we accept the transparency of photographs), then he cannot judge the painting to be beautiful (graceful, delicate, elegant, etc), even though he might have been led to believe, or perhaps to trust, that it is so. The same happens, *mutatis mutandis*, with literary works. If someone has read numerous detailed summaries of (e.g.) Virgil's *Eneid*, together with every piece of literary criticism on the work, perhaps he can, through such testimony, come to know many facts about the *Eneid*: what is the main plot, who is the protagonist, who is Dido, what happened to each of them, etc. Still, he cannot make an evaluative (literary) judgement about the work until he has read it himself. (And in this sense it is true that we are confined, in terms of aesthetic knowledge, to what we have experienced!) In fact, some would claim that even a translation of a work such as the *Eneid* is not sufficient for someone to make a literary

judgement about the work, for a great deal that is arguably relevant for literary judgement of the work (rhythm, alliteration, etc.) is lost in the translation. So it seems that we have to accept that autonomy comes in degrees: ideally, to judge a work I should be able to have access to it in its original form. At least, I should read the work in a translation, or see a good reproduction, in the case of painting. In any case, what matters for my purpose here is that an *aesthetic* (or literary) judgement seems to require acquaintance with *some acceptable version of* the work.²⁰

The autonomy thesis claims that, at bottom, aesthetic knowledge, if it is knowledge at all, is, at least in part, knowledge by acquaintance, and this is what testimony cannot give. My aim, now, is to suggest that this fact, if it is a fact, does not make realism about the aesthetic any less plausible.

Let us first look at some reasons for accepting the thesis of aesthetic autonomy. One is given by Arnold Isenberg ([1949] 1973). Isenberg attempted to support the thesis of aesthetic autonomy when he emphasized that when critics make aesthetic characterisations they are making very partial and *sui generis* descriptions. Speaking of a passage by Ludwig Goldscheider on El Greco's painting *The Burial of Count Orgaz*, Isenberg ([1949] 1973, 162) notes that:

²⁰ Livingston (2003) has put pressure on the Acquaintance Principle by saying that surrogates (etc.) can convey aesthetic knowledge. I am not interested in discussing what counts as a version of the work to which one has to be acquainted with in order to make an aesthetic judgement. An intuitive notion of what counts as a version of the work is sufficient for my purposes. For the claim that acquaintance is a matter of degree, see Mothersill (1984, 331 and 363).

there is a quality in the picture which agrees with the quality which we 'have in mind'—which we have been led to think of by the critic's language. But the same quality ('a steeply rising and falling curve,' and so on) would be found in any of a hundred lines one could draw on the board in three minutes. It could not be the critic's purpose to inform us of the presence of a quality as banal and obvious as this. It seems reasonable to suppose that the critic is thinking of another quality, no idea of which is transmitted to us by his language, which he *sees* and which [...] he *gets us to see*.

For Isenberg the property the critic refers to has a unique instance in that work, so the reader cannot know exactly what the critic means until he 'finds' the quality in the work. Someone could draw a curved line (corresponding to the description) on a board which would not lead to an equally favourable judgement, so the critic could not just mean to inform the reader of that which he is literally asserting. Accordingly, testimony gives only very general, qualitative, directions which point the reader to aspects of the work so that he (aided by his own sensitivity) may end up finding the property to which the critic's description was pointing. By the lights of the autonomy thesis, properly aesthetic knowledge happens only in that finding: aesthetic knowledge requires acquaintance.

Another way of motivating the thesis of aesthetic autonomy is by showing that its denial leads to absurd consequences. If aesthetic knowledge

did *not* require acquaintance with the objects of such knowledge, then we could have critics, even brilliant critics, who had not read any of the poems, or seen any of the paintings or sculptures, or listened to any of the pieces of music of which they speak. Their knowledge, and their claims, would be based only on art criticism (or literary criticism), that is, on the testimony of others. No matter how reliable such informants were, and how accurate, detailed and suggestive such testimony was, it seems appropriate to say that such critics would not really *know* what they were talking about.²¹ (I should add that this is not specific to the aesthetic case: it is similar to the case in which someone would say that he knows a person even though he did not know him personally, and knew only facts about that person. There is a sense in which to know a person does require that one is, in some way, *personally* acquainted with that person).²² Accordingly, if we reject aesthetic autonomy we cannot explain the apparent epistemic (and aesthetic) difference between the case in which subject *S* knows everything about work *W* but has not been acquainted (in the relevant sense) with work *W* and the case in which subject *S* knows that much and is also acquainted with work *W*. We would think that subject *S* learns something, of an aesthetic sort,

²¹ It could turn out that such critics were sufficiently imaginative so as to produce criticism which was superior to criticism by critics who were acquainted with the work(s) in question. What we need to compare is pieces of criticism written by the *same* critic before and after acquaintance with the works.

²² Again, I am not interested in contemplating difficulties concerning what counts as 'personally'. For instance, to be acquainted with a series of filmed images of the life of a person may convey knowledge that could count (or not) as conveying 'personal' information.

when he becomes acquainted with work *W*. What he learns is what testimony cannot teach; so aesthetic autonomy seems to hold.^{23,24}

The opponent of aesthetic autonomy may, at this point, invoke the case of conceptual art, or of (e.g.) Marcel Duchamp's 'readymades'. Arguably, to judge Duchamp's *Fountain* I do not need to be in any way acquainted with the physical object that embodies the work. Acquaintance with a description of it is perfectly sufficient for me to judge the work. So it seems that aesthetic autonomy does not apply to these kinds of works. My reply is to accept that claim, and to suggest that it is a symptom that the work in question is to be distinguished from the physical object that embodies it. Clearly, criticism of the work *Fountain* (if we are to take it seriously as art) does not consist (at least, not ultimately) in pointing to features of the physical object: shape, size, texture, colour, etc. On the contrary, to invoke such features would be, for the most part, absurd as art criticism. This tells us that the work, arguably, is the idea, or the possibility explored, of turning an ordinary (arguably also ugly) object, a urinal,

²³ For a now classical account (meant to be a rejection of physicalism) concerning the epistemic difference between a subject who knows all the facts about colour but has never lived in a coloured world and a subject who (knowing all those facts) becomes acquainted with a coloured world, see Jackson (1982). Jackson's analysis proceeds by putting forward a thought experiment involving Mary, a scientist who has learned absolutely everything that there is to know about colour, but who is confined to a room in which everything is in black and white and she investigates the world through a black and white television monitor. Jackson's claim is that Mary learns something new about colour when she has her first colour experience.

²⁴ This might seem an over-statement: someone could reject autonomy *without* rejecting the idea that acquaintance with a work of art gives aesthetic knowledge of it. This is what Levinson, for instance, does. What I am trying to emphasize is that *aesthetic* knowledge requires acquaintance, with a work, with some acceptable version of a work, with aesthetic features, etc.

into a work of art. The relevant properties to be invoked by critics are the properties of that act or performance understood, I would say, as an aesthetic action or performance, not (or not finally) of the physical object that happens to embody the idea. So in the case in hand a description of the work does give access to the work, and of course this might be a reason for some people to reject the view that it is art, or any good as art, on account of its lack of complexity. But what matters is that acquaintance (with whatever constitutes the work) is, still, necessary.

I should also say that the thesis of aesthetic autonomy does not undermine aesthetic education. In effect, aesthetic education can be understood as directing aesthetic acquaintance. Let me illustrate with a few examples from Portuguese literature.

If someone tells me that Júlio Dinis' poetry is of little literary value because it is 'sentimental and naïve', he is conveying to me distinctively *aesthetic* information about the poetry, hopefully made based on acquaintance with the work of Júlio Dinis. I may, perhaps, based on this information, decide to spend time reading poetry by some other author instead. My learning is, it seems, based on my judgement of those general qualities invoked, with which I am acquainted, even though I am not acquainted with the particular instances of those qualities. I know that the properties cited are cited as grounds for a negative judgement, and I can understand this based only on previous acquaintance with what could count as an instance of sentimentality and

naivety. Similarly, a teacher's or a critic's literary suggestions may allow me to learn about works and authors worth reading, and to learn also about specific aesthetic (literary) characteristics worth noting in those works and authors. By pointing to those characteristics, my attention is guided so as to help me find in the works and authors the features indicated. So it is not true that we cannot learn from others on aesthetic matters (that is, to learn specifically about the *aesthetic* qualities of works). Anyone can understand, and learn about, what it means for a work to be sentimental and naïve, even if these aesthetic characteristics are exemplified in very different ways in different works.

Similarly, if I tell you that Cesário Verde's poetry is 'visual', whereas Camilo Pessanha's is 'musical', I am invoking distinctively *aesthetic* (or, more specifically, literary) properties of the works, taken globally, of these two poets.²⁵ And any person can in principle understand what I mean by this qualitative contrast, even if he has not read any poems by these poets. Such a person would have to be acquainted with what could count as instances of visuality and musicality, ideally from poetry. In any case it seems that we learn, and that we learn about works, and that we learn aesthetically, even before we are directly acquainted with the work. We are perhaps aided by our own imagining and by recalling previous experiences of what could count as similar (identifiable) qualities. Such learning is also about how to engage with the

²⁵ Someone might say that these are not distinctively aesthetic properties (just like sadness is not always an aesthetic property). But in the context of an aesthetic (literary) evaluation, those properties qualify as aesthetic.

works and authors in question. What matters in the process is not only the learning of facts about the work, but its proper tone, and the general attitude it requires or indicates. Such learning, therefore, does not aim to replace, and is compatible with, aesthetic autonomy. Indeed, that another subject becomes capable of making *autonomous* aesthetic judgements is the goal of aesthetic education.

3.4 The supposed contrast with colour judgements

We have seen that the autonomy thesis is generally correct, and that the acquaintance principle holds for the aesthetic case. Now the would-be realist must explain how the requirement of first-hand acquaintance (and of autonomy) can be accommodated by his realism. I will attempt to give such an explanation in this section. In particular, I will draw an analogy with the case of colours, mainly by criticizing a disanalogy offered by Hopkins (2001). I will note that, just like in the aesthetic case, in the case of colour we would typically not change our judgement based only on the opinion of others. So 'autonomy' is not peculiar to aesthetic judgement. Hence, unless autonomy, per se, can block realism in the case of colour, aesthetic autonomy cannot be invoked as a decisive objection to aesthetic realism.

The (aesthetic) autonomy thesis has been put forward in this passage by Hopkins (2001):

In many non-aesthetic matters the disagreement of others alone can indeed justify a change of mind. If on looking at something I judge it red, but everyone else I ask to look at it judges it brown, this can be reason enough for me to think my view wrong, and to adopt that of my informants. In an aesthetic case, in contrast, I am never justified in going that far. Suppose I think a new film beautiful, but all my cinema-going friends find it very ordinary. This should give me pause for thought. I should check that my impression wasn't superficial, or based on my idiosyncracies. But I can't reasonably adopt their view, not simply on the basis of noting their disagreement and reflecting on what it might mean. A justifiable change of mind requires me to respond to the film differently, either by watching it again, or by seeing for myself its defects as I reflect on it in memory. (Hopkins 2001, 168-169)

What I wish to emphasize is that the contrast Hopkins makes, in the passage above, with colour judgements is not entirely happy. The case of colour is, with respect to autonomy, similar to the aesthetic case (in the relevant respect), unless the person judging is colour blind and knows he is colour blind. But in that case he knows that his colour judgements are sometimes (or always)

incorrect, so that he has become used to relying on and following (blindly!) the judgements of reliable others.²⁶

An imaginary case can help to illustrate the difficulty with the disanalogy proposed by Hopkins. Imagine that ten of your friends decide to deceive you and that they all begin to claim that a certain cube is brown, even though it is (quite clearly) red. You are not colour blind, and you have generally good reasons to trust your perceptual capacities, including your capacity to discern colour. You also (equally) have reason to trust your friends' perceptual capacities, including their capacity to discern colour. According to Hopkins (in the passage quoted above), the convergent judgement of your usually reliable ten friends *can* be a reason for you to adopt their view,²⁷ even though you continue to see the cube as being red. By their testimony alone you could be led to *believe* that the cube was brown, even though you see it as red; whereas in the aesthetic case a judgement made by a number of usually reliable informants could only make you reconsider your own judgement (just as Kant suggests), but it would never be sufficient for you to change your view and adopt their view, unless your own response—your evaluation—had itself changed.

²⁶ One would be led to follow the judgements of others also in the case of an object with a dubious colour (so Hopkins' analysis is correct concerning the case of an object with a difficult-to-discern colour).

²⁷ It is fair to note that Hopkins' claim is only that the fact that your friends judge differently (in the colour case) *can* be a reason for you to change your view and adopt their view, whereas in the aesthetic case other people's verdicts are never grounds for you to adopt someone else's view. My claim is that in a clear case (concerning colour) a different judgement made by my friends *cannot* be a reason for me to change my view and adopt their view.

My claim is that Hopkins' view is correct concerning aesthetic autonomy: in aesthetic matters, one would not, typically, change one's judgement unless one's own response to the work had changed. But the contrast with colour judgements is not happy.²⁸ Even if you take your ten friends to be reliable informants concerning colour, if they all claim that a certain cube is brown, when you clearly perceive it as being red, you have—just as in the aesthetic case—good reason to reconsider your own judgement, and to try and look at the object more carefully, but unless you do see it as brown, your own perception is (again, typically) above other people's colour judgement. So you would not typically adopt their view, even if they were a hundred voices trying to deceive you, instead of ten. Just as Hopkins claims about the aesthetic case, unless you are able to see that it is brown you will not simply adopt your friends' view, because it appears to you that it *is* red. Granted, you might be puzzled by the situation: 'I can usually discern colours appropriately!'; 'My friends too!'; 'This cube is *clearly* red!' However, it is unlikely that you would be led to *believe* that the cube is brown on the basis of their judgement alone. A change in response would be required in the case of colour as well, unless, again, you knew that you were colour blind, or that you were in any way

²⁸ Hopkins (2000, 227) is right, however, in making the contrast with colour with respect to the *reliability* of testimony: concerning colour, there is, generally, agreement. In his words: 'beliefs about, say, colour can be acquired by transmission testimony, as beliefs about beauty cannot, because people disagree over the beauty of things, as they do not over their colour.' All I dispute in Hopkins' view is his claim that we would typically change our judgement, concerning colour, on the basis of other people's judgements even if our experience would tell us otherwise.

permanently or temporarily defective in colour discrimination, or unless the case (the colour of the cube) was not evident. To see that the contrast Hopkins makes with colours, with respect to autonomy of judgement, is not correct, all that is needed is that your ten friends' deceiving plan does not typically succeed—and it typically does not.

This means, then, that the aesthetic case is not too peculiar: aesthetic judgements are no different from colour judgements concerning autonomy. The question for us here is whether autonomy will prevent the aesthetic domain from being construed in a realist manner. Colours, even when seen with the eyes of the realist, still need to be defined with reference to viewing subjects. So, similarly, we should not perhaps think that aesthetic autonomy will make realism impossible.

3.5 Why autonomy is compatible with realism

The Kantian thesis is sometimes considered to be at odds with aesthetic realism and this may be for various reasons. Firstly, the autonomy thesis is put forward as part of Kant's non-cognitivist (*a fortiori* non-realist) aesthetic theory.^{29,30} This theory emphasizes that 'the word "aesthetic" connotes the subjective

²⁹ See note 7 above.

³⁰ For the claim that aesthetic autonomy is consistent with both cognitivism and non-cognitivism, see McGonigal (2006).

contribution of a form of sensibility to a representation',³¹ and claims that the beauty apparently ascribed to objects in aesthetic judgements is not, despite appearances, a property.³² But the thesis of aesthetic autonomy concerns only *how* we come to know. It does not concern that which we know, or with which we are acquainted. Think again of the case of colour. Even if the notion of colour requires reference to viewing subjects, that does not, by itself, preclude realism about colour. Similarly, perhaps we can say that even if the notion of an aesthetic property requires reference to a perceiving subject (perhaps even to a sympathetic, or desiring, perceiving subject), that, by itself, does not seem to rule out realism. Even if Kant runs together the view about autonomy and the view about non-cognitivism, that should not compel us to follow him in that.

There is another reason, beyond habit, for thinking that aesthetic autonomy is at odds with realism. Aesthetic realism is the claim that there are aesthetic properties, which are independent of, and may transcend, what particular minds think. For the realist it is with respect to such independent properties that aesthetic judgements are to be reckoned adequate (or not). And for the realist there are, possibly, and probably, aesthetic properties that remain unapprehended—think of a beautiful, forever unknown, island, or the myriads

³¹ Guyer (1997, 63).

³² Cf. *CPJ* §6: 'he will speak of the beautiful as if beauty were a property of the object and the judgement logical (constituting a cognition of the object through concepts of it), although it is only aesthetic and contains merely a relation of the representation of the object to the subject.'

of aesthetic qualities of *The Return of the Prodigal Son* by Rembrandt³³ that (as it happens) no one will ever notice. But if the Kantian thesis is correct, the judgement that an object is beautiful must be made based on the evidence provided by personal acquaintance. According to Kant, beauty just consists in that encounter (even though it appears to us as a property of objects, as Kant admits).³⁴ If this is so, then aesthetic reality cannot transcend available evidence and available knowledge, as the realist wants. For aesthetic reality is, according to the anti-realist,³⁵ confined to what is (or could be) given in experience. (In fact, it *consists* merely in that experience, with no need for an independent reality). So, if the autonomy thesis is true, all aesthetic 'facts' must be known facts, and known through a personal experience. If so, then aesthetic reality does not transcend what is in fact experienced and realism (which claims the opposite) is false.

In reply to this second challenge the realist could perhaps say the following. Aesthetic autonomy is an epistemic claim (a claim about how we come to know something), whereas aesthetic realism, as we have been understanding it, is an ontological claim (a claim about what there is). To say

³³ I am here giving an example of a work by Rembrandt with which I am acquainted only through photographs.

³⁴ See *CPJ* §6 and note 32 above.

³⁵ The sort of anti-realism that appeals to our epistemic capacities having a constraining effect is Dummettian anti-realism. By the lights of the discussion in Chapter 1, it is not the sort of anti-realism with which I need to engage. The anti-realism that concerns me (anti-realism about aesthetic properties) does not claim that what there is, aesthetically, is limited to what we know. It claims that there is no aesthetic reality (no distinctively aesthetic properties). Still, in this paragraph I address the Dummettian objection to realism, only to suggest that an epistemological objection (*per se*) is not decisive against ontological realism.

that what there is is constrained, in some way, by our epistemic limits is a very controversial thesis, requiring solid argument.

Let me elaborate by considering a painting such as J. M. W. Turner's *Dawn after the Wreck*,³⁶ or the epic poem *Os Lusíadas* by Luís de Camões. I have chosen the first of these two great works because my reader may not have seen the painting, and the second because my reader may not have read it at all, or may not have had the privilege to read it in the original Portuguese. Here is what matters for our purposes. The aesthetic autonomy-theorist claims that an aesthetic judgement will require acquaintance with some acceptable version of the work. The aesthetic realist claims that the aesthetic properties of the works in question can be present whether or not they are discerned in the works by viewers and readers. All I claim is that these claims are independent. So, for instance, the features of *Os Lusíadas* that a foreign reader fails to find in a translation still belong, according to the realist, to the work, independently of that (or any) finding. That some of those features are apprehended whereas others are not in a translation does not change, for the realist, the features (aesthetic and otherwise) that the work possesses. We can say the same concerning Turner's painting. If you have seen the actual painting, whereas I have only seen a very small black-and-white reproduction, the aesthetic judgements we are able to make, even granting that we have similar

³⁶ C. 1841. Graphite, watercolour, body colour, scraping, chalk (red) on paper, 25.1 x 36.8 cm, The Courtauld Gallery, London.

sensibilities and background knowledge, are still bound to be of a different degree of refinement. The aesthetic realist claims only that the work (with all its properties) is independent of, and is not altered by, those particular judgements, so our differences in apprehension have no implications concerning the properties the work *has*. The realist need not deny aesthetic autonomy, or the claim that only direct-acquaintance judgements qualify as aesthetic.

Here is Wollheim connecting realism with the acquaintance principle ([1968] 1980, 233):³⁷

Realism is highly likely to insist upon some such experience as an epistemic condition of aesthetic evaluations. In doing so Realism acknowledges a well-entrenched principle in aesthetics, which may be called the Acquaintance principle, and which insists that judgments of aesthetic value, unlike judgments of moral knowledge, must be based on first-hand experience of their objects and are not, except within very narrow limits, transmissible from one person to another. The Realist, then, will take an interest in the correlated experience, but only as part of the epistemology of aesthetic value.

We may still wish to reject the acquaintance principle, for instance by explaining, as Livingston (2003) does, the apparent requirement for acquaintance by reference to the limitations of our theoretical and descriptive

³⁷ Essay VI ('Art and Evaluation') appended to ([1968] 1980). It was Wollheim, in this passage, who coined the phrase 'Acquaintance principle'. Realism for Wollheim is the claim that aesthetic properties have the status of primary qualities (see [1968] 1980, 231-232).

capacities. For Livingston, we need to see for ourselves because in most cases what we observe is more refined than what our descriptive resources allow us to identify. Livingston's explanation of putative 'aesthetic autonomy' is that we lack words for some nuances that we are able to notice in works, so our verbal descriptions can only be approximate. Livingston is committed to the idea that matters aesthetic are not different from, for instance, the case in which a dermatologist discerns that a certain spot is a sign of a certain disease. (In both there are 'facts of the matter' which are hard to describe precisely, often to the majority of people). Livingston's view is that, if we had enough vocabulary, and also enough sight, such knowledge could be transmitted. So the apparent peculiarity of such matters is that they involve characteristics which are far more refined than the vocabulary and vision that most of us have. The thought is that, given the appropriate vocabulary, and having the appropriate vision, anyone would, in principle, be able to transmit (and acquire) aesthetic knowledge.

Livingston's view cannot explain, however, the putative *aesthetic* difference, mentioned earlier, between knowing all the facts about work *W* whilst not being acquainted with *W*, and knowing all such facts whilst being acquainted with *W*. Livingston's account does not contemplate what we learn in the acquaintance. This seems to me a high price to pay to maintain realism. My preference was rather to preserve the intuition behind the idea of aesthetic autonomy, and see whether realism can accommodate it. Aesthetic autonomy

involves an epistemic requirement: that we have to be acquainted with an object, in order to judge it 'aesthetically'. To my mind, such an epistemic requirement can do no decisive harm to the ontological doctrine which says that there is something there that we know or ignore. So nothing, so far, seems to preclude our realist starting point.

Chapter Four

Hume's Standard of Taste

4.1 Introducing the standard of taste

Hume can perhaps be construed (generally) as a sentimentalist in epistemology, and an anti-realist in ontology. Moreover, Hume *has been* construed by the logical positivists and their followers as an anti-metaphysician.¹ But the essay on taste, which is Hume's last word on aesthetics, seems to point to the possibility of beauty being, in some sense, objective, without giving up the epistemological doctrine that beauty is to be perceived with 'sentiment'. The essay titled 'Of the Standard of Taste' was published in 1757. Various commentators have emphasized inconsistencies and ambiguities in the essay, in particular in Hume's very notion of a standard of taste.² My aim in this chapter is not to address those issues, but only to examine the evidence that Hume's

¹ For the claim that Hume's project was *not* per se anti-metaphysical, see McLeod (2001, 1-7).

² For a brief survey of previous discussions of Hume's essay in the analytic tradition, see Levinson (2002, 228-229).

well-known scepticism may have been targetting some of his own previously held views.^{3,4}

Let me first summarise Hume's project in the essay. The search for a standard of taste is introduced as a natural and commonsensical pursuit. Hume acknowledges the extreme diversity of preference and opinion concerning works of art, but also the fact that some differences of aesthetic merit are so obvious (or objective!) that denying them would be absurd:

'[w]hoever would assert an equality of genius and elegance between OGILBY and MILTON, or BUNYAN and ADDISON, would be thought to defend no less an extravagance, than if he had maintained a mole-hill to be as high as TENERIFFE, or a pond as extensive as the ocean.' (par. 8)

The standard of taste is a rule, or at least a decision (Hume allows himself a candid hesitation on this), which confirms or condemns the various sentiments towards the world:

³ MacLachlan (1986, 18) has emphasized that irony permeates the essay, making it difficult to discern Hume's ultimate view: 'perhaps the greatest difficulty facing interpretation of this essay is the irony which Hume seems to use, for this raises the question of just how seriously we are to take some of the more conventional views contained in "Of the Standard of Taste".'

⁴ Mothersill (1989, 271) refers to a 'paradox of taste' in Hume's aesthetics, 'generated for Hume by conjoining his general theory with his own critical convictions.' See also p. 274: 'What "cuts off all hope of success" [...] and "represents the impossibility of ever attaining any Standard of Taste" is the skeptical philosophy, i.e., Hume's own theory.'

It is natural for us to seek a *Standard of Taste*; a rule, by which the various sentiments of men may be reconciled; at least, a decision, afforded, confirming one sentiment, and condemning another. (par. 6)

For Hume 'sentiment' is what grounds value judgements (that is, value judgements are made based on sentiments).⁵ Disagreements can be explained as resulting from a malfunction of the natural capacity humans have to judge beauty: 'where men vary in their judgements, some defect or perversion in the faculties may commonly be remarked; proceeding either from prejudice, from want of practice, or want of delicacy' (par. 28).

Hume also recognizes that there are sentiments that are not to be judged by any standard. As he points out, the sentiments stemming from natural propensities are diverse but not subject to dispute, and thus they do not need to be reconciled. Such sentiments concern personal preferences, which are blameless:

it is almost impossible not to feel a predilection for that which suits our particular turn or disposition. Such preferences are innocent and unavoidable, and can never be the object of dispute, because there is no standard, by which they can be decided. (par. 30)

⁵ What precludes the rule from being a mere convention is that a mere convention can be arbitrarily decided, whereas a standard of taste, as Hume conceives it, is not arbitrarily decided. My aim is to claim that the standard of taste as Hume conceives it *reflects* what has value.

Hume is clear about this: differences based on personal preference are not amenable to dispute. Accordingly, aesthetic disputes are not about such differences, since such differences are not universal claims, but only expressions of preference.

The possibility of a norm or standard of taste is questioned especially by 'a species of philosophy, which cuts off all hopes of success in such an attempt' (par. 7). Whilst Hume is traditionally viewed as endorsing this sceptical thesis, I should like to say that it is equally possible to see in his own words in the essay some distance (and perhaps even scepticism) with respect to that thesis. It is worth quoting the relevant passage:

The difference, *it is said*, is very wide between judgement and sentiment. All sentiment is right; because sentiment has a reference to nothing beyond itself, and is always real, wherever a man is conscious of it. But all determinations of the understanding are not right; because they have a reference to something beyond themselves, to wit, real matter of fact; and are not always conformable to that standard. Among a thousand different opinions which different men may entertain of the same subject, there is one, and but one, that is just and true; and the only difficulty is to fix and ascertain it. On the contrary, a thousand different sentiments, excited by the same object, are all right: Because no sentiment represents what is really in the object. It only marks a certain conformity or relation between the object and the organs or faculties of the

mind; and if that conformity did not really exist, the sentiment could never possibly have being. Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty. [...] To seek the real beauty, or real deformity, is as fruitless an enquiry, as to pretend to ascertain the real sweet or real bitter. (par. 7, emphasis added)

Taken non-ironically (or non-sceptically), the passage above acknowledges a wide difference between sentiment and judgement. It reads that seeking real beauty or deformity is fruitless because 'each mind perceives a different beauty', and beauty does not exist independently from that perception. Furthermore, whereas not all judgements can be correct, because they refer to real matters of fact, a sentiment is always correct, Hume claims, because it refers to 'nothing beyond itself'.

This sceptical reading is the reading attributed to Hume's earlier writings on beauty.^{6,7} But in the passage quoted above Hume seems to be distancing himself from the view he is enunciating: 'The difference, *it is said*, is very wide between judgement and sentiment' (emphasis added). And if this is a sign that Hume is distancing himself from the view of that 'species of philosophy', it seems that we have to re-read the whole passage, not obviously

⁶ Both Savile (1996) and Kivy (2003, 252) emphasize the discrepancy between Hume's views in earlier writings and in the essay on taste.

⁷ Cf. Hume in 'The Sceptic' ([1742] 1985, 165): '[Beauty] is only the effect, which that figure produces upon a mind'. P. 166: 'the beauty, properly speaking, lies not in the poem, but in the sentiment or taste of the reader.'

as Hume's view, but perhaps as the view from which he is (or may be) distancing himself. So, the claims that all sentiments are right, that sentiments are not representational, that beauty is 'no quality in things themselves', that seeking the real beauty is a fruitless enquiry—all these claims are now to be seen from the same distance: 'it is said'. It thus becomes far from clear that Hume is endorsing the sceptical philosophy that he had held in the past (and that many still attribute to him), and all those claims must now be at least suspended and in question.

The sceptical species of philosophy is opposed, or at least it is modified and restrained, by a 'species of common sense' (par. 8). Common sense is associated by Hume with the attempt to defend the standard of taste, and the standard of taste is now related to the capacity to aptly *judge* (not just to feel) beauty:

Those finer emotions of the mind are of a very tender and delicate nature [...]. A perfect serenity of mind, a recollection of thought, a due attention to the object; if any of these circumstances be wanting, [...] we shall be unable to judge of the catholic and universal beauty. (par. 10)

Besides saying that beauty is 'judged'—thereby blurring the difference previously mentioned between (representational) judgement and (non-representational) 'sentiment'—, Hume also compares the discernment of beauty

to the discernment of colour. Just like common-sense denominates the colour of objects when perceived under certain conditions as being 'their true and real colour', we can derive the 'idea of the perfect beauty' when there is 'a considerable uniformity of sentiment':

If, in the sound state of the organ, there be an entire or a considerable uniformity of sentiment among men, we may thence derive an idea of the perfect beauty; in like manner as the appearance of objects in day-light, to the eye of a man in health, is denominated their true and real colour, even while colour is allowed to be merely a phantasm of the senses. (par. 12)

The account is still anti-realist: beauty is an idea derived from uniformity of sentiment. But it seems that, contrarily to what the sceptical species of philosophy says, the difference between matters of sentiment and matters of fact may be smaller than it first seems, if the discernment of beauty is compared with discernment of colour.⁸ Sentiments may be more like judgements in what concerns appropriateness to an object, that is, they may possess capacity to represent.

⁸ Kivy (2003) takes the assimilation of matters of sentiment to matters of fact to be one of Hume's aims in the essay, which would support the thought that Hume may not be endorsing the sceptical view: 'In questions concerning beauty and deformity, Hume is arguing, we can "translate" (so to say) matters of sentiment into matters of fact' (2003, 252). If this thought is plausible, then Hume should perhaps not be identified with the species of philosophy objecting to the standard of taste, and the objection against the standard should be seen ironically.

Common sense has us inclined to search for a standard of taste, Hume claims. What is now open to dispute is the status of the standard: is it constituted by the joint verdict of the 'true judges', or is the standard a discovery that reflects what is the case?

4.2 Standard of taste: discovered or constituted?

One aspect left clear in the essay is that the standard would be arrived at by the joint verdict of the true judges. It would be 'a collection of empirical verdicts on certain objects by the best and the brightest of the species, against whose backdrop our individual judgments could and should play'.⁹ The true judges would be those having a 'strong sense, united with delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison, and cleared of all prejudice. [...] the joint verdict of such, wherever they are to be found, is the true standard of taste and beauty.' (par. 23). What is less clear, or open to dispute amongst commentators, is whether the standard is 'constituted' or 'discovered' by the true critics. That is, it is uncertain whether the joint verdict of the true critics determines what is to count as the norm of taste, or whether it reflects that

⁹ Tamen (2005, 211). Tamen remains neutral concerning the nature of the standard, but the contrast he makes between Kant's project and Hume's seems to suggest the view that matters of beauty are matters for discovery. See (2005, 219): 'Where Hume says "imitate the experts," Kant says "consult your conscience."'

existing norm. Deciding between the two readings is important because the normativity implied in the notion of a standard of taste seems incompatible with the reading that the standard is constituted, rather than found.^{10, 11} However, the former is indeed the view attributed to Hume's earlier writings on beauty. This view is not so obvious in the essay on taste as it is in Hume's earlier writings on beauty,¹² but some¹³ see Hume defending such a view in the essay on taste as well.

The difficulty is that if we interpret the standard as being constituted by the joint verdict of the true critics, the norm of taste and aesthetic value becomes an incoherent notion: how could a stipulation motivate others to follow it?¹⁴ But if we interpret the standard as being found by the 'true judges' we need to

¹⁰ So if the standard of taste is constituted by the 'true judges', Hume's project might be (as some have claimed) incoherent.

¹¹ Someone might say that (e.g.) laws are constituted, but normative; so why shouldn't the standard of taste be both constituted and normative? In reply, we can say that the normativity arrived at via a constitution (such as the case of law) is not yet like the normativity of aesthetic judgements, which seem to be based on what is the case (aesthetically). A law may or may not be based on what is fair: some laws are simply arbitrary (think of the case of right- and left-hand traffic). A standard of taste should to the contrary reflect what has aesthetic value in the first place.

¹² Both Savile (1996) and Kivy (2003, 252) emphasize the discrepancy between Hume's views in earlier writings and in the essay on taste.

¹³ For instance, Budd (1995).

¹⁴ Someone might say that (e.g.) the commands and laws that govern a state, an army, etc., are both stipulated and motivating; there does not seem to be any philosophical difficulty, *per se*, in the idea that a stipulation can motivate. But we can reply by saying that the standard of taste is meant to accommodate the apparent fact that some claims (judgements) are correct or incorrect in virtue of the nature of the objects they are about, not in virtue of arbitrary stipulations. So yes, stipulations can motivate; but the motivations we are looking for (based on the aesthetic nature of certain objects) cannot be based on mere (arbitrary) stipulations. See also note 11 above. Cf. Budd (1995, 17): 'for [a standard of taste] to be possible, the authority of such a court of appeal must be justified, not arbitrary.'

explain its nature: what is it that critics find? It is important to see which question is more appropriate to consider, and to answer.

The doubt concerning the status of the standard of taste is introduced in the passage where the notion of the standard is first formulated: 'a *rule*, by which the various sentiments of men may be reconciled; at least, a *decision*' (par. 6, emphasis added). There seem to be two ways of interpreting the standard: the joint verdict of the true judges aims at identifying something in reality, against which aesthetic judgements are to be measured; or the standard is constituted (made) by the true judges, and determines what is to be approved by everyone else. We should consider, and evaluate, both options.

The norm is constituted by the true judges. Defending the constitutive reading of the standard is in conformity with Hume's sentimentalism, the view that aesthetic truths are known through 'sentiment'. But it then requires an answer to the objections mentioned earlier (how could a stipulated standard be normative, and motivate others to follow its recommendations?¹⁵). Or else it requires a rejection of the project of a standard of taste as incoherent. Budd (1995) has defended the constitutive reading of the standard.¹⁶

¹⁵ This is what Levinson (2002) claims to be the 'real problem' in Hume's essay.

¹⁶ Budd (1995, 21): 'the standard is set by the preferences of individuals who satisfy a certain condition'; '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.'

As Budd notes, the interpretation which regards the standard as constituted is suggested by assimilating delicacy of taste with the imagination: 'The high degree of the discriminatory capacity is described by Hume as delicacy of taste or imagination' (Budd 1995, 19. See also p. 22).¹⁷ This assimilation of delicacy of taste and imagination is interesting, first, because it is not present, or at least not obviously, in Hume's own words in the essay, but also because it points to a crucial issue in discussion: is a fine perception sufficient for good criticism, or is a fine imagination also required? Budd, by conflating the two, seems to be suggesting that imagination is required for aesthetic judgements, or that imagination is included in aesthetic experience. The imaginative capacity would be what allows for the evaluative component of the judgement to be made. This assimilation is Kantian.¹⁸ The question is whether this element can be read into Hume's essay, and if so whether it requires that the standard be constituted, rather than found, by the true judges.

Budd's way of arguing for the constitutive reading is by taking Hume's analogy between aesthetic value and secondary qualities such as colour to be mistaken. This disagreement is important, because the analogy is crucial for Hume's solution to the problem of taste, as Budd admits: 'Whereas the perception of a secondary quality is solely a matter of the exercise of a

¹⁷ That Budd construes Hume as an anti-realist is clear in this passage (1995, 17): '[For Hume aesthetic pleasure] is a reaction to how the world is represented to the subject, rather than a representation of a possible state of affairs.'

¹⁸ See Budd (2001).

particular discriminatory capacity, the appreciation of literary merit involves also an evaluation.’ (1995, 21) Budd explains that Hume tries to assimilate colour perception with literary (artistic) appreciation, both involving a sentiment, which must be seen as produced or influenced by the nature of the object. But for Budd the identification with colour is a mistake. Whereas colour-blindness concerns an incapacity to discriminate (objective) differences in colour that are discriminated by ‘those with normal sight’,

the sentiment felt by one of Hume’s true judges 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 detected [...]. The supposed community of sentiment of the true judges could show only that their affective constitution is at bottom the same, not that the deliverances of this common nature are the reflection of a feature hidden from those who are unlike the true judges. (1995, 22)

What Budd claims, then, is that community of sentiment is sufficient only for community of ‘affective constitution’. In a note (n. 28), Budd adds that this supports the conclusion that aesthetic value is not (like) a secondary quality. Granted, the ascription of aesthetic value must be understood in terms of subjective states (sentiments), just like the ascription of secondary qualities is understood. However, for Budd, contrarily to the case of secondary qualities the

ascription of aesthetic value does not involve an experience with representational content.

Budd gives the example of the story of Sancho's kinsmen¹⁹ as evidence that aesthetic value is *not* a secondary quality, and that Hume's conception of delicacy of taste or imagination is ambiguous (1995, 22). The ambiguity is between the capacity to detect qualities in objects, and the capacity to respond appropriately, emotionally, to those qualities. Budd claims that whereas Sancho's kinsmen's judgements are *correct* in finely discriminating qualities of the wine, 'nothing immediately follows about the status of their verdicts that the taste is good.' (1995, 23). Judges who agree in the qualities they find may respond, emotionally, in a different way to those qualities and thus make different judgements about their value. So, a finely discriminating taste, though necessary for good taste or evaluation, Budd concludes, is not sufficient for good taste or evaluation. More importantly, if it is possible for the best judges to agree concerning the qualities detected and to disagree on their value, then one cannot say that one sentiment or evaluation is preferable to the other. Accordingly, 'even if there is uniformity of response, this uniformity cannot provide a normative standard of taste' (ibid.).

¹⁹ In the story as Hume tells it, two of Sancho's relatives had tasted a wine and had expressed different verdicts about the wine. One had said the wine was good, 'were it not for a small taste of leather he perceived in it'. The other also said it was good, but noticed 'a taste of iron.' When the hogshead was emptied, an old key with a leathern thong tied to it was found and all acknowledged they were both (partially) right in their judgement.

This is in contrast with the case of colour, where agreement counts generally as evidence for a colour judgement. The main contrast is that colour perception is seen as a form of world sensitivity, whereas evaluation is not, because only the latter, Budd claims, 'enables us to detect differences between objects in situations where, lacking colour perception, we would be unable to distinguish them—we discriminate objects *on the basis* of the colour appearances they present' (1995, 21-22).

Budd thus interprets the standard as being constituted (as opposed to being discovered), on the grounds that the sentiment of the true judges is non-representational, proceeding to claim that the project of providing a (normative) standard of taste fails. But if the standard could be discovered, then Hume's project would not be incoherent.

The assimilation between taste and the imagination can be made in a different way, which would leave room for the interpretation that the standard is discovered by the true judges. In fact Hume seems to suggest in the essay that value is perceived, even if it is not a specific or formal feature of objects:

When objects of any kind are first presented to the eye or imagination, the sentiment, which attends them, is obscure and confused; and the mind is, in a great measure, incapable of pronouncing concerning their merits or defects. The taste cannot perceive the several excellencies of the performance. [...] But allow

him to acquire experience in those objects, his feeling becomes more exact and nice. (par. 18)

The suggestion is that the imagination and the eye are both required for the sentiment of beauty to be 'exact'. It seems, then, that the sentiment of beauty also involves *sight*. So, contrary to what Budd claims, Hume seems to be saying that aesthetic judgements, despite requiring 'sentiment', can be representational: they concern seeing. Thus when critics agree about the formal features of a work of art and yet disagree about its overall value as a work of art they are still disputing something (objective), and not simply showing a subjective preference.

The standard is discovered by the true judges. One factor in favour of the standard's being something discovered by the 'true judges' is the crucial role Hume gives to the absence of prejudice, which reinforces the connection between good taste and sound judgement. Just as judgements can be distorted by extraneous considerations such as prejudice, as well as by emotions, so aesthetic sentiments are susceptible of similar alteration. Hence, just as judgements are about the world, so are aesthetic sentiments *towards* the world.²⁰ In fact Hume calls aesthetic sentiments the 'finer emotions of the mind', neatly

²⁰ The idea that sentiments can be understood as 'towards the world' is developed in Goldie (2002, Chapter 3).

stressing the analogy, rather than the difference, between sentiment and judgement:

The least exterior hindrance to such small springs, or the least internal disorder, disturbs their motion, and confounds the operation of the whole machine. [...]

A perfect serenity of mind, a recollection of thought, a due attention to the object; if any of these circumstances be wanting, [...] we shall be unable to judge of the catholic and universal beauty. (par. 10)

Furthermore, the analogy with a machine, together with the emphasis on the proper functioning of mental capacities, suggest that the norm in question relates to features in the world, to which the critics must conform themselves, and which are objects of judgement and not only of sentiment. Beauty, in this sense, seems to be a feature of reality.

Savile (1996) gives support to the claim that the standard of taste is discovered, rather than constituted, by the true judges. One reason Savile invokes for his view is the importance Hume gives to the delicacy of taste, understood as an aesthetic sensitivity. The analogy with the taste of iron and leather in the episode from *Quixote* is an example of a 'world-sensitive delicacy' (1996, 140), Savile claims, that Hume points out as an important characteristic of the true judges. That Hume refers to the delicacy of taste, 'whether their taste be taken literally or metaphorically', suggests that the standard is arrived at by

finding: it is a matter of discovery. As Savile notes (*ibid.*), delicacy of taste, a central characteristic of the true judges, is for Hume a 'world-sensitive' delicacy: 'the organs [are] so fine, as to allow nothing to escape them, and at the same time so exact as to perceive every ingredient in the composition' (par. 16). So it seems that, according to Hume in the essay, the truth of critical judgements is not constituted by the critics' verdicts, but it reflects the true critics' judgement of the features in the work. Their truth depends on reality, not merely on subjective experience.

Another aspect that Savile notes (and that we can see as realist) is Hume's claim that the truth of the judgements does not depend on verification. In the story, the judgements of Sancho's kinsmen are seen to be true when the hogshead is emptied and the iron key with the leathern thong are found, but Hume's view (as Savile notes) is that their judgements would be true even if that verification had not been possible: aesthetic truths are independent from verification:

Though the hogshead had never been emptied, the taste of the one [the two experts] was still equally delicate, and that of the other [the onlookers] equally dull and languid: but it would have been more difficult to have proved the superiority of the former to the conviction of every bye-stander. (par. 16)

So the episode from *Quixote* helps explain, against the constitutive reading, that one crucial element in true aesthetic judgements concerns the discrimination or finding of real qualities of objects that can elicit an aesthetic experience. The presence of those qualities is a necessary condition for the response. As Savile puts it,

the sentiments of true judges only enter the picture if they are responses to what is present in the object [and this] is not discernibly different from saying that beauty (for example) is a property that objects have in virtue of being thus and so conformed, to wit, the property of being liable to elicit such and such responses in sensitive and practiced judges. (1996, 141)²¹

It seems, then, that according to Hume's account taste and aesthetic value being normative means that the truth of judgements must be independent from the

²¹ Someone might say that this passage does *not* favour realism over response-dependence. But the crucial aspect (which I think is at least compatible with realism) that Savile notes is that the sentiments of the true judges are responses to 'what is present in the object'. So even if a response is involved, the presence of the property is not *dependent* on the response. (I am not saying, however, that I agree with Savile's account of beauty). I should also mention that it is not clear that response-dependence is incompatible with realism. Levinson (2001), for instance, takes some aesthetic properties to be response-dependent, and his account is meant to remain realist. For the claim that realism (in general) is compatible with response-dependence (concerning *concepts*), see Pettit (1991). For a recent survey of the debate over response-dependence, making also the claim that response-dependence is not compatible with realism, see Yates (2008). It is important to note that Yates (2008, 344) claims that response-dependence is to be seen as a thesis about properties, not concepts: 'Response-dependence is best conceived as a thesis concerning the *properties* of a particular domain—specifically, that they are anthropocentric dispositions. [...] That response-dependence is a thesis about properties is obscured by the fact that most theorists formulate it in terms of *concepts*. It is important to bear in mind that the distinction thereby aimed at is typically ontological, not conceptual.'

critics' verdicts at least in the sense that we need to admit the possibility of critics being mistaken. Verdicts are to be measured against the world. Accordingly, the standard is not constituted by them but found (when their judgements are correct).

Savile also notes that for the verdicts of the true judges to compell a person to follow them, it must be the case that 'good judges speak true and we have an interest in truth' (1996, 137). For one to change one's own judgements for the judgements of good critics, Savile argues, it must be the case that critics judge not only differently, but that they judge *better* than oneself. And this must mean that their judgements accord to some standard external to them. As Savile also notes, if the standard of taste is constituted by the aesthetic judgements of the true judges then it does not account for the norm that the true judges seem to follow (and that we are encouraged to follow after them).

Levinson makes a similar claim: we can only have reasons to follow true critics' advice if the true critics are 'detectors' of beauty.²² If critics determine what is to be beautiful, we are left with no aesthetic reasons for following their determinations.

Which reading should be preferred? As we have just seen, the only reading that allows for a genuine norm of aesthetic value, that everyone might

²² Cf. Levinson (2002, 228): 'The [more reasonable interpretation of Hume's discourse is that] true judges are consistently described as reliable detectors of the beautiful, in virtue of their alleged superior capacities of discrimination and response, and not as constituters of the beautiful.'

be motivated to follow, is the one claiming that the standard is in some sense discovered by the true critics. This view amounts to saying, contrarily to the sceptical view that Hume is often associated with, that the difference may not be wide between sentiment and judgement, between matters of value and matters of fact (Kivy 2003). Hume's position may not be clear for us to discern, but it should be clear that it is only if the standard is the result of a well-grounded response of the true critics that the normative project Hume embraces in the essay can make sense (Savile 1996). In effect, Hume ends up admitting that concerning aesthetic matters, and concerning who the 'true judges' are, the discussion is possible because these are, in the end, matters of fact, not of sentiment:

But if we consider the matter aright, these [matters of taste] are questions of fact, not of sentiment. Whether any particular person be endowed with good sense and a delicate imagination, free from prejudice, may often be the subject of dispute, and be liable to great discussion and enquiry [...]. Where these doubts occur, men can do no more than in other disputable questions [...]: They must produce the best arguments [...]; they must acknowledge a true and decisive standard to exist somewhere, to wit, real existence and matter of fact [...]. It is sufficient for our present purpose, if we have proved, that the taste of all individuals is not upon an equal footing. (par. 25)

4.3 Sentimentalism and realism

Hume's last word concerning the standard of taste consists in a modest claim: that the tastes of different people are not upon an equal footing. The reason for his claim was, in short, that not all sentiments towards works of art are equally appropriate, and that not all aesthetic claims are true.²³ So we can see that Hume's sentimentalism is not incompatible with the project of defending the claim that there is a standard of taste (and Hume's general project seems coherent). Rather, feeling is what guides critics in the discovery of the standard.²⁴ The task now is to give reasons for the claim that Hume's sentimentalist epistemology leaves room for, and perhaps gives support to, aesthetic realism.

The first reason, and the simplest, is the general, primitive, claim that any epistemology (per se) will leave an ontology unharmed: a thesis about how we come to know something has, in practice, no *direct* implications concerning what there is to know. So, Hume's thesis that we know aesthetic truths through aesthetic feeling—through 'sentiment'—has no final bearing concerning what

²³ That not all sentiments towards works are equally appropriate is consistent with projectivism, which is an anti-realist view. But Hume's claim is that some but not all aesthetic claims are true. (Recall the contrast made by Hume between the merits of Ogilby and Milton).

²⁴ I am now assuming that the standard, as Hume proposes it, is to be discovered by the true judges.

aesthetic reality and aesthetic truth are. Sentimentalism does not block aesthetic realism.

To the contrary, we may perhaps say that the essay suggests that sentimentalism is Hume's epistemology for realism. (And this is the second reason for the claim that Hume's sentimentalist epistemology perhaps gives support to aesthetic realism). The quest for a standard of taste, if we can read the standard as discovered by the true judges, is largely a realist project, at least in the modest sense that it claims that in our engagement with works of art we *apprehend* features whose existence and nature are independent from our apprehensions, rather than it being the case that our judgements constitute those features. Aesthetic experience is largely an experience of *discovery*. Think again of the story of Sancho's kinsmen: the taste of leather and the taste of iron detected in the wine were 'present' independently of the fact that they were detected, and showing this was Hume's main point in presenting the story. Hume readily admits that the story can be applied to 'mental taste': 'a quick and acute perception of beauty and deformity must be the perfection of our mental taste' (par. 17). So, as other commentators have noted, we can see the episode from *Quixote* as a *mise-en-abîme* of Hume's main view in the essay. The project of viewing sentiment as a world-sensitivity, as Savile noted, and as being more or less appropriate to the object, was presented in the essay, also through this story. The converse approximation, of reason to sentiment, was, as Kivy noted, also attempted. To discern beauty, not only sentiment is needed but also reason,

Hume claims: 'reason, if not an essential part of taste, is at least requisite to the operations of this latter faculty' (par. 21). So we have a largely realist project in the essay: at bottom, Hume's essay proposes that aesthetic reality is out there to be *discovered*. The main difficulty for the realist, and Hume's main endeavour, is to offer an epistemology for aesthetic realism.

Hume's epistemology is simple enough. As Tamen puts it: 'imitate the experts' (2005, 219). The aim of this imitation is to feel towards the world as the experts feel, as Levinson suggests, based on the thought that the experts feel more appropriately than the rest of us. The crucial aspect is that there is something special (often elusive) to apprehend or *discover*, that is worth the effort. Such a thing, about which Hume never speaks directly, is grasped through apt sentiment, and we know which sentiments are apt by listening to the true judges, who (we trust) know better.²⁵ The claim, in the end, that not all tastes are upon an equal footing emphasizes the modesty, and the scope, of Hume's project. Being incapable of identifying exactly what it is that taste allows us to know, Hume can only speak about the exercise of taste, largely by comparing it with the exercise of reason, so that he may claim, at least, that knowledge of what is beautiful is not impossible.

²⁵ It might be objected that the notion of aptness is the stock-in-trade of the projectivist: not of the realist. But the realist can perhaps reply by saying that whereas the projectivist stops in the notion of aptness (aesthetic judgements are acceptable in so far as they involve sentiments appropriate to an object), the realist demands more than aptness: aesthetic judgements must reflect or represent what is the case.

Some are disappointed with Hume's modest result. As Kivy notes, an anonymous reviewer of Hume's essay at the time of publication remarked that 'instead of fixing and ascertain the standard of taste, as we expected, our author only leaves us in the same uncertainty as he found us: and concludes with the philosopher of old, that all we know is, that we know nothing.'²⁶ But Hume is not so sceptical. For Hume we indeed know something, and countries and cultures, according to him, know well and simply who are their great authors and which are their outstanding works. As Hume's account suggests, unlike scientific and philosophical theories, which change continuously, many if not most aesthetic verdicts concerning masterworks and major authors tend to remain largely unaltered:

Theories of abstract philosophy, systems of profound theology, have prevailed during one age: In a successive period, these have been universally exploded: Their absurdity has been detected: Other theories and systems have supplied their place, which again gave place to their successors: And nothing has been experienced more liable to the revolutions of chance and fashion than these pretended decisions of science. The case is not the same with the beauties of eloquence and poetry. Just expressions of passion and nature are sure, after a little time, to gain public applause, which they maintain forever. (par. 26)

²⁶ Kivy (1967, 65).

So, Hume claims, even though in theory it is difficult to ascertain a standard of taste, in reality, at least the best cases are straightforward, and art history tells us about many consensual works. What is a masterwork is, generally, easy to discern, and Hume's last word is, as Kivy has noted, that these are 'questions of fact, not of sentiment' (par. 25).

The epistemology Hume proposes recommends that, if we want to find what is truly beautiful, we should pay attention to the verdicts of the best judges, which generally remain constant. We should attend to the standard of taste. That a standard of taste *exists* somewhere, to which our aesthetic beliefs and assertions must conform (in order to be true), is sufficient for Hume's project to be reckoned successful, against those who claim that it is incoherent. Hume's epistemological considerations, *prima facie*, aim at promoting such a standard.

The main difficulty for any realist project concerns the explanation of how we can know the reality in question. But Hume has provided us with an epistemology that seems to at least allow for realism. My next task will be to provide a sketch for a metaphysics of aesthetic reality.

Chapter Five

Arguments for Aesthetic Realism

5.1 A last anti-realist argument considered

In the previous chapters I have introduced and characterized the realism/anti-realism debate, in general and more specifically in the philosophy of art (Chapter 1); and I have considered two principal attempts to discourage aesthetic realism: the error-theoretic account of value discourse, offered by Mackie (Chapter 2), and the argument from 'aesthetic autonomy', most famously deployed by Kant, which I considered more or less on its own (Chapter 3). But so far I have not given positive argument for realism, except to claim, not uncontroversially, that Hume's project in 'Of the Standard of Taste' can be seen as largely, if not entirely, congenial to realism (Chapter 4). I shall attempt to provide a more positive defence and characterisation of aesthetic realism in this chapter and the next.

As we have also seen earlier, realism needs defence once it has been challenged: realism can be seen as a reply to the sceptic. Recall the sceptical

species of philosophy evoked by Hume in his essay on taste, and to which he attempts to reply (or so I argued). Replying to the sceptic is important, because it may turn out that the sceptic is correct. Reasons for listening to the sceptic are old and well-known. If a stick appears to be bent because it is half-submerged in water,¹ we should listen to the sceptic when he says that, in reality, the stick is *not* bent, despite appearances. The best and most useful description of it is that it *is not* bent, but that it appears to be so when half-submerged in water. Appearing to be bent is not a conclusive reason for saying that something is bent: when taken out of the water, the stick appears not to be bent. So the same stick appears to be bent and appears not to be bent in these different circumstances. The sceptic who claims that, despite appearances, the stick is not bent is certainly correct, and his opponent is certainly mistaken. Similarly, it may turn out that aesthetic reality is not best construed as the realist wants to construe it. It may turn out that, despite appearances, and in spite also of the ways we think and speak about aesthetic matters, aesthetic properties apparently referred to in aesthetic judgements should not be seen as objective properties after all. If this is so, the thought that they are real should be taken as an illusion from which we had better be released. The would-be realist has to address the sceptic's challenges, and he must be able to answer to them.

¹ See this classical example in Zemach (1997, 59), invoked to explain what 'standard observation conditions' (SOC) are: under standard observation conditions, a stick that is not bent appears as non-bent; to claim that a stick is straight we must be able to observe it in SOC.

The major threat to realism which persists, as various authors have noted,² is that disputes over aesthetic matters, even among well-informed critics, sometimes remain unsettled. Accordingly, aesthetic disagreements need not imply an error or misapprehension on the part of any of the disputants, the thesis goes, but only a difference in sensibility towards the same features. So we have irresolvable disputes (they are irresolvable because they involve no mistake).³ Such irresolvable disputes seem to suggest that there is no 'fact of the matter' (Bender 1996), and hence that realism is false. Before going on to consider some positive reasons for preferring aesthetic realism, I shall address, and hopefully refute, this last anti-realist claim. Goldman sums up the difficulty for the realist thus:

The most salient problem for the realist [...] reflects our suspicion that differences in taste, or in evaluative responses, and hence disagreements in ascriptions of aesthetic properties, survive extensive training in music and other art forms and hence persist within the class of ideal critics. If this is true, then

² See, especially, Bender (1996) and Goldman (1993; 1995). What these authors claim, to invoke Wright's account discussed in Chapter 1, is that aesthetic discourse does not 'exert cognitive command'. My reply will be, in brief, that such claim remains unsupported.

³ More recently (2001) Bender has suggested that differences in 'sensitivity' pose an even stronger problem for realism, because 'it is much more difficult to argue that sensitivities *ought to* converge as more experience or expertise with the art is accumulated' (2001, 73). But I think we can reply to this by saying that a finer sensitivity is always superior to a less fine one—whereas differences in sensibility, that is, in our 'propensities or abilities to *identify that* certain features of a work are aesthetically significant' (2001, 77), may not involve any misapprehension, so we may say that they do not need to converge. I will not consider Bender's argument (from 'sensitivity') any further.

ascribing real aesthetic properties by reference to this class of perceivers generates contradictory ascriptions to the same objects. (Goldman 1993, 33)

What Goldman is emphasizing is that even 'ideal critics' disagree, so if we wish to maintain that ideal critics' aesthetic attributions pick out genuine properties, we will have the result that contradictory, equally acceptable, evaluations are made of the same works. I should like to reply to this charge with three claims. Firstly, and as Levinson has also argued,⁴ even if there are aesthetic disputes that remain unsettled, the vast majority can be decided, and the realist can be content with this.⁵ If critics are honest and open-minded, they can for the most part agree on which properties a work possesses (including its aesthetic properties). Of course, critics may have different personal sympathies or preferences for certain works (and kinds of works) and also for various properties: some people might, some might not, like garishness. But in principle and in most cases, claims of personal preference can be distinguished from claims about the features that the works in question are said to have.⁶ The realist's claim is only that aesthetic discussion is about those features, not about

⁴ See Chapter 1, p. 42.

⁵ Levinson (2001, 80) claims, more precisely, that divergences due to sensibility are a minority among 'the boring norm of widespread, unheralded agreement [...] among those with adequate experience' and that the realist can be 'content' with such majority of consensus.

⁶ See Chapter 1, p. 40 (main text and note 35) for the claim that we can, in many cases at least, separate subjective preference from objective judgement.

critics' (subjective) preferences, and he claims that those features are to be reckoned objective.

Secondly, aesthetic reality is not alone in having irresolvable matters.⁷ In many other areas of thought and discourse, including in science, there are persistent and even irresolvable disputes, and this need not count against there being a genuine, non-mental, reality that we can know even though only in part, and that our discourse represents. In effect, the limits in our knowledge of an area should not lead us to claim that there is not an independent reality. That such reality exists must be independent even of whether we are capable of any knowledge of it. (Think of very distant planets, whose existence is clearly not affected by our knowledge or ignorance).

Thirdly, and more importantly, Goldman's charge seems question-begging: some example is needed of well-informed critics whose judgements about the same work (or features thereof) persist in being contradictory, without any of them being mistaken. More precisely, we cannot rely on the claim that critics' claims contradict each other to establish anti-realism, because this claim is what needs support in the first place. Granted, well-informed critics often (or sometimes) disagree, but it is not clear that their disagreements do not involve, *a priori*, any misapprehension on the part of any of the disputants. To draw from the discussion of Wright's proposal addressed in the

⁷ Even though, of course, being *alone* in having irresolvable matters would not, by itself, preclude realism.

first chapter: argument is still needed before we conclude that aesthetic discourse does *not* exert cognitive command.

Those dissatisfied with anti-realism may wish to consider arguments for the alternative view. In the remainder of this chapter I shall consider some of the main arguments (some of which are closely related) we might invoke for preferring aesthetic realism.

5.2 Indispensability and explanation

Aesthetic realism⁸ is sometimes defended on the grounds that aesthetic properties are indispensable to aesthetic discourse (in another way of seeing it: they are ineliminable from aesthetic discourse), and also on the grounds that they are the best way to explain aesthetic experience.⁹ Levinson has claimed that without countenancing aesthetic properties, it is difficult to see 'what competent critics with evaluative differences of opinion could really be talking about.'¹⁰ Aesthetic discourse is explained by the realist as being about something properly belonging to external reality, and aesthetic disagreement is thought to concern the best way to construe (not to construct) such independent reality.

⁸ In aesthetics and the philosophy of art, 'aesthetic realism' has been addressed as what Bender (2003, 81) calls 'aesthetic property realism'. It is this realism that I wish to consider and defend in this chapter and the next, even though adaptations are perhaps available for similar theses focusing on (e.g.) aesthetic facts.

⁹ Levinson (1994, 352; 2001, 65).

¹⁰ Levinson (1994, 352).

In a similar spirit, now emphasizing the 'universal' (normative) aspiration of aesthetic judgements noted famously by Kant, Zangwill has said, in favour of realism, that 'no other theory seems to be able to do justice to the normative aspirations of aesthetic judgments'.¹¹ And speaking specifically of beauty, Mothersill has claimed, also in support of realism, that 'it is beautiful' often has an explanatory role (and this should count towards objectivity), and that realism about beauty is supported also by the fact that aesthetic judgements demand the agreement of all.¹²

What the realist believes, then, is that when a critic claims that some work is elegant, delicate, unified, balanced, garish, etc, he is making genuine assertions which, when true, are true in virtue of the work's *being* elegant, delicate, unified, balanced, garish, etc., not in virtue of our attitudes, feelings or desires towards the work. Aesthetic properties thus provide the grounds for aesthetic judgements (and for disagreements) and the realist has an explanation in hand for aesthetic thought and discourse.

Realism also offers a plausible explanation of aesthetic experience: aesthetic experience is understood by the realist as a confrontation with something external to him.¹³ If we see aesthetic experience along these lines, aesthetic properties (including the aesthetic properties of works of art) are 'there

¹¹ Zangwill (1991, note 2; see also 2000, 598; and 2003).

¹² See Mothersill (1984, 151 and 153).

¹³ Tappolet (2000, 71): 'Notre expérience des valeurs se présente comme celle d'une confrontation avec quelque chose d'extérieur à nous, qui existe indépendamment de nous et de nos conventions.' This idea of a 'confrontation' with value is also suggested in McDowell (1983).

to be discovered',¹⁴ being in this respect like colours. Accordingly, aesthetic experience can be understood as an experience in perception, even if it may not be simply an experience in perception. Pettit makes the following remarks on this:

In the sense in which it is usually assumed that the colours of a picture are there to be perceived, there to be more or less exactly characterised in pictorial description, so the aesthetic properties are there to be detected and characterised. (Pettit [1983] 2004, 169)

Pettit, in the article, is defending the possibility of aesthetic realism against the difficulty of the 'elusive' nature of aesthetic properties, and against also the difficulty of their essentially perceptual nature (that is, of the fact that aesthetic properties are to be understood as essentially linked to perception). Pettit's main claim is that 'what [an aesthetic description of a painting] captures when it is a faithful record is something which properly *belongs to the painting* and something which is in principle accessible to all' ([1983] 2004, 169, emphasis added).

A conditional claim can thus be made, in this spirit and in favour of realism, if we accept what was said in Chapter 2 concerning the objectivity of

¹⁴ Mothersill (1984, 153): 'The merits of a work of art are discovered, not conferred.'

colours.¹⁵ If properties understood with essential reference to perception (such as colours) can nevertheless be genuine properties of objects, and thus be part of 'objective' reality, then the requirement of perception, by itself, cannot be invoked as a claim against aesthetic realism. In this sense, we can claim, more positively, and drawing still on Pettit's claims, that just as colours can be manifest properties of objects, which are there to be perceived, a positive ontological status can be available for aesthetic properties as well. If so, aesthetic experience can be explained as an experience of genuine aspects of external reality.

The elusive nature of aesthetic properties cannot be invoked conclusively against realism either. That a property is difficult to discern (or that it is difficult to discern for most or many of us) is not a reason for claiming that it is not real.¹⁶ Zemach makes this claim with respect to the notion of 'standard observation conditions' (SOC): 'SOC for some features (e.g., color) can be attained by nearly everyone; for other features (scientific and aesthetic ones) only experts attain the required SOC' (1997, 55). This, however, should not make us consider such features unreal. Similarly, we should not reject realism even if (some) aesthetic properties are detected only by a minority of people.¹⁷

¹⁵ To recall, in Chapter 2, building on argument by McDowell, it was claimed that colours can be objective (i.e., construed as being part of external reality) even though the concept of colour essentially makes reference to perception.

¹⁶ Accordingly, *pace* Goldman (1995, 30, quoted on p. 35), lack of convergence in judgement is not, by itself, a good reason to eschew realism.

¹⁷ Sibley, in 'Objectivity and Aesthetics' ([1961] 2001, 78-79), imagines a scenario in which the majority of people were partly colour-blind. Their convergence of opinion concerning

The aesthetic case is comparable with the following one. Even though only a small group of human beings (in which I am not included) can differentiate between a Lusitano horse and an Andalusian one,¹⁸ this does not imply that there is not a genuine distinction to be made. The distinction is based on real features, a distinction which only a few people happen to be able to make, even though it is, in principle, available to all with the relevant capacities and sufficient training. In effect, even if no one were ever able to distinguish them, the difference would still exist. The same applies to the capacity to tell varieties of cactuses or roses, brands of chocolate, shades of red, breeds of dogs, constellations, etc. In short, (vast) recognition is not a good criterion for existence. And this means also that we should not eschew aesthetic features only on the basis of their elusive nature. That is, elusiveness, per se, is not a good reason to reject realism.

Tappolet invokes the following phenomenological observation in favour of realism.¹⁹ Value experience appears to be a confrontation with an external reality (see note 13 above), and positing real values provides the best explanation of this appearance. Tappolet writes the following, concerning the beauty of a painting, in support of realism: 'La beauté d'une toile est perçue

colour would not be the correct opinion. The minority 'élite', capable of making colour judgements, would be correct. According to Sibley, this is what happens in aesthetic matters: those capable of making 'finer discriminations' ([1961] 2001, 79) are correct even though they are (sometimes) a minority.

¹⁸ Lusitano horses and Andalusian horses are very similar in conformation.

¹⁹ In the book, Tappolet defends ontological realism about values, and she claims that values are monadic axiological properties.

comme se trouvant dans l'œuvre d'art et non pas comme projetée sur elle ou encore comme relative à notre sentiment esthétique ou à nos conventions sociales' (Tappolet 2000, 71). For Tappolet, the way the beauty is 'perceived'—as being in the painting—is the way it is: there are no reasons for thinking that the phenomenology is misleading. Moreover, axiological realism (i.e., realism about values) comes as a simple explanation: 'Le réalisme axiologique est la façon la plus radicale, mais aussi la plus simple, de rendre compte de la grammaire des termes axiologiques, de la phénoménologie des valeurs et de l'objectivité que présuppose notre pratique' (Tappolet 2000, 72).

5.3 Descriptive limits of aesthetic attributions

Another argument for aesthetic realism rests on the claim that aesthetic attributions seem to have 'descriptive limits'.²⁰ That is, not everything can (truly) be said to be elegant, delicate, balanced, garish, etc. Some realists^{21,22} have claimed that aesthetic properties with an 'evaluative component' (such as being graceful, being elegant, being balanced, etc) have nevertheless a 'descriptive component' which can be isolated and which constitutes the core of the

²⁰ Levinson (2001, 62, 65).

²¹ Levinson (2001, 61).

²² The distinction between a 'descriptive' and an 'evaluative component' in aesthetic concepts is proposed by Sibley [1974] in Sibley (2001, 92).

aesthetic property. One difficulty with this account—leaving aside the difficulty of separating the descriptive from the evaluative component²³—is that a ‘solely evaluative’²⁴ property such as beauty, which we may feel inclined to consider the aesthetic property *par excellence*, will be denied, even by aesthetic realists, the positive ontological status that more specific properties will enjoy. And this separate treatment of beauty might seem unjustified.²⁵

One parallel difficulty is brought out by a contrast Zangwill makes between ‘verdictive’ and ‘substantive’ judgements:²⁶

Let us call *verdictive* aesthetic judgments those judgments to the effect that things are beautiful or ugly, or that they have or lack aesthetic merit or value. [...] We also judge that things are dainty, dumpy, graceful, garish, delicate, balanced, warm, passionate, brooding, awkward, or sad. Let us call these judgments *substantive* aesthetic judgments.’ (Zangwill 2001, 9).

This terminology suggests that ‘verdictive’ judgements are to be distinguished from ‘substantive’ ones, and the implicit claim is that only the latter seem to

²³ In defence of realists inclined to make this separation: the separation between the evaluative component and the descriptive component may be made similarly to the separation, mentioned in note 6 above, between an objective claim and a subjective claim.

²⁴ This phrase is suggested by Sibley in ‘Particularity, Art, and Evaluation’ [1974], in Sibley (2001, 91).

²⁵ I shall later on defend a unified account of aesthetic properties (against a separate account of beauty).

²⁶ Zangwill is building on a claim made by Sibley ([1965] 2001, 34). Lamarque (2009, 256) calls the former ‘summative’: ‘(X is good, Y is bad)’.

predicate something of an object, thereby leaving beauty with a dubious ontological status.

But perhaps we need not separate the two kinds of properties, at least with respect to the descriptive limits of aesthetic attributions. The descriptive limits of aesthetic attributions seem to apply also to the more general forms of predication. Mothersill has defended what I have been calling a unified account of aesthetic properties, that is, an account which includes both more specific properties and the most general ones. Mothersill has claimed that attributions of beauty, too, have descriptive limits, and that a judgement of beauty makes a 'substantive' claim about reality (as opposed to a claim merely expressing personal feelings about an object), a claim that is true of some but not all objects. In other words, Mothersill claims that to say that some work, *X*, is beautiful is to make a genuine, substantial, judgement, which can be true or false depending entirely on the nature of *X*, not at all on the feelings I might have with respect to *X*. Beauty may be detected through my feelings, but my feelings cannot confer beauty to an object. The example Mothersill gives is from music:

In judging [Beethoven's] Op. 59, No. 1 to be beautiful, by hypothesis, I implicate an avowal, but I also make a substantive claim, one that does not seem to me to involve any displacement or projection of my feelings on the object judged.
(Mothersill 1984, 150)

Another implicit, and crucial, thought we can detect in Mothersill's realist account is that no amount of feeling will make something beautiful. It is in this sense that beauty (and *a fortiori* the other aesthetic properties) can be construed by the realist as mind-independent: no amount of thought or feeling will change or take away the beauty of (to remain with Mothersill's example) Beethoven's Op. 59, No. 1, and beauty is never created by those feelings either. Aesthetic attributions are, ultimately, to be judged against reality, not against personal reactions. Accordingly, the limits of the application of the most general aesthetic terms are, too, indicated entirely by the objects, not at all by the feelings we might have concerning those objects. In short, aesthetic attributions (perhaps including the most general aesthetic attributions) have descriptive limits which, for the aesthetic realist, are simply imposed by the external, non-mental, reality they represent.

5.4 Simplicity

It is sometimes claimed that parsimony speaks in favour of anti-realism.²⁷

Granting for the sake of argument that simplicity is always a theoretical virtue,²⁸

²⁷ See, for instance, Matravers (2005, 208).

²⁸ The issue is controversial. See Baker (2004) in the entry 'Simplicity' in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Baker takes parsimony to be a species of simplicity. For him simplicity divides into 'syntactic simplicity' or *elegance* (concerning 'the number and complexity of hypotheses'); and 'ontological simplicity' or *parsimony* (concerning 'the number and

I should still say something about where I think simplicity lies and suggest, to the contrary, that simplicity can be invoked in support of aesthetic realism.

Some philosophers have explicitly invoked ontological parsimony as a reason to prefer anti-realism (the opposite of parsimony would be 'extravagance'). Matravers has argued for anti-realism on the grounds that it is 'ontologically parsimonious', allegedly without loss of explanatory capacity: 'Aesthetic attributions are grounded in experiences of certain distinctive sorts that are caused by non-aesthetic properties, and which exhibit a wide measure of inter-subjective agreement' (2005, 208). But as we saw earlier, according to other philosophers realism is to be defended on the grounds that it is 'the simplest' account of aesthetic experience, thought, discourse, and practice (Tappolet 2000, 72). How are we to adjudicate between these two apparently opposed claims?

I will address the issue by using a distinction²⁹ between two principles (following Baker 2004): the principle of *ontological* simplicity (or 'parsimony') and the principle of *theoretical* simplicity (or 'elegance').³⁰ The principle of ontological simplicity claims that '*entities* should not be multiplied beyond necessity' (a principle known as 'Ockham's razor'), whereas the principle of

complexity of the things postulated'). So the distinction concerns, as he also explains, 'simplicity of theory' versus 'simplicity of world'. But he also claims that 'the terms 'parsimony' and 'simplicity' are used virtually interchangeably in much of the philosophical literature.'

²⁹ Quine makes a distinction between 'ontology' and 'ideology', but not in this sense. In my distinction I follow Baker (2004).

³⁰ Baker (2004) calls the latter 'elegance'.

theoretical simplicity (or 'elegance') claims that *theories*, or more precisely hypotheses, should not be needlessly invoked. Both principles aim at promoting simplicity by avoiding unnecessary complication, but they find simplicity in different things.

The anti-realist proceeds by rejecting what he considers an 'extra kind' (or 'layer') of properties: aesthetic properties are seen as an unnecessary extravagance, and the anti-realist strives for a theory without them. So his claim is a claim for ontological simplicity, or parsimony: the fewer entities the better. The realist, by contrast, invokes common-sense as a friend of realism, and claims that a philosophical theory which respects common-sense (thereby remaining simpler) is to be preferred. So he chooses something akin to theoretical simplicity, or elegance, when he claims that aesthetic properties are part of a simpler theory which contemplates all sorts of 'manifest' properties (including aesthetic properties). The question for us is which form of simplicity better accounts for the realm of aesthetics and the philosophy of art. I wish to make two claims in this respect.

Firstly, aesthetic properties are, per se, quite innocuous ontologically. As we shall see in the next chapter, in which I address more directly the nature of aesthetic properties, realists do not need to posit queer entities existing outside space and time, and with a dubious epistemology. Aesthetic properties need not be extravagant posits (which would offend against parsimony), but only the contents of the aesthetic predicates, genuinely invoked by the aesthetic

judgements we make (as in other areas of discourse). Their distinctive 'aesthetic' nature, as I shall suggest in the next section (§5.5), does not, by itself, count against parsimony either. Admitting properties which function aesthetically comes naturally in our discourse and practice, and the difficult task is, it seems to me, in dispensing with them (recall §5.2 above).

Secondly, common-sense is with realism in claiming that there is an aesthetic reality for us to *discover*, and it seems that we need argument before we abandon this intuition (recall Chapter 2). For in effect we not only enjoy looking at a painting, but we also learn by looking at it, and (to a great extent at least) our interest in art—and in aesthetic matters in general, at least with respect to art—is, at least in part, cognitive. People go to museums and libraries and concert halls, not merely in search of pleasure, but also in search of knowledge, of an aesthetic (and artistic) sort. (Contrast with the cases of the pleasures of swimming, cycling, or sun-bathing). Of course, acquiring artistic knowledge through aesthetic experience is pleasant, but what I wish to emphasize is that what drives us is, to a great extent at least, ordinary *curiosity*, arguably concerning something properly belonging to reality, rather than mere pleasure. Or at least the pleasure involved is one of a higher-order (more fulfilling) sort.³¹

³¹ Lamarque (2009, 63) makes the claim that '[l]iterary works invite multiple readings because they offer *content with depth, inviting reflection*' (my emphasis).

As Hume well noted in his essay on taste, in our aesthetic practice there is what we might call a ludic dimension which accords legitimacy to (blameless) preferences, but, as Hume emphasized, there are also facts which are undeniable and which seem to be there to be found. Realism concerns, and hopes to account for, these. As Mothersill has observed, with reference to Hume's 'central insight': 'one truth remains incontestable: the *Iliad* is beautiful.' (1984, 259). For the aesthetic realist, the existence of instances of unquestionable beauty or aesthetic merit (which are there to be discovered) is sufficient to leave realism in place. Taking (aesthetic) claims to be about (aesthetic) reality, in turn, is in conformity with the rest of our understanding of aesthetic thought and discourse. Aesthetic realism, once again, is to be reckoned *simple* in its account of (aesthetic) thought and discourse.

5.5 The aesthetic/ non-aesthetic distinction

I shall now claim that the distinction between 'aesthetic' and 'non-aesthetic' (concepts, judgements, properties), made along the lines proposed by Sibley ([1959] 2001), helps to support aesthetic realism.³² The distinction Sibley

³² In his work, Sibley is reluctant to speak of 'properties', preferring to speak of how we use aesthetic terms, concepts, and how we make aesthetic judgements. However, throughout his essays he often mentions 'properties' 'qualities', 'features', 'characteristics'. His reluctance, he explains in 'Objectivity and Aesthetics' ([1968] 2001), concerns first the identity, and individuation, of some of aesthetic properties: 'What would be the property

proposes is not without difficulties, which have been noted,³³ but it seems to me that keeping the distinction is a better decision than rejecting it, and the distinction promotes aesthetic realism. In this section I try to explain how the distinction promotes realism.

Sibley points to the broad group of 'aesthetic concepts' through examples. In the following passage, he makes the contrast between 'aesthetic' and 'non-aesthetic':

We say that a novel has a great number of characters and deals with life in a manufacturing town; that a painting uses pale colours, predominantly blues and greens, and has kneeling figures in the foreground [...]. Such remarks may be made by, and such features pointed out to, anyone with normal eyes, ears, and intelligence. On the other hand, we also say that a poem is tightly-knit or deeply moving; that a picture lacks balance, or has a certain serenity and repose, or that the grouping of the figures sets up an exciting tension; that the characters in a

corresponding to 'gemlike fire' or 'marmoreal hardness'? However, Sibley adds: 'though we might say it has properties that make these descriptions apt'. Thus it seems that the individuation problem is not specific to the aesthetic case, but common to metaphorical ways of describing some feature. A further reason Sibley gives for his reluctance is that the philosophical uses of 'property' are 'varied and often obscure' (2001, 72). He explains that sometimes colours and tastes are not taken to be "properties in" objects as sizes and shapes are', because the latter are 'organism-related'. So his reluctance is, again, not specific to the aesthetic case. Since for me here what matters is whether 'objective characteristics' (2001, 81) could be picked out by terms used in what Sibley calls aesthetic descriptions or judgements, I will use the term 'property'. It is clear that Sibley is interested in emphasizing the presence of 'objective' features of objects, even when he admits that he has not succeeded in the task: 'I am far from thinking that I have made a case for aesthetic *properties*, even in the weak sense that some aesthetic characterizations are true or false, apt or inappropriate, etc.' (2001, 86-87, my emphasis). So, despite the occasional terminological reluctance, Sibley's view seems animated by a form of realism about aesthetic properties.

³³ See, for instance, Cohen ([1973] 1989).

novel never really come to life, or that a certain episode strikes a false note. It would be natural enough to say that the making of such judgements as these requires the exercise of taste, perceptiveness, or sensitivity, of aesthetic discrimination or appreciation [...]. Accordingly, when a word or expression is such that taste or perceptiveness is required in order to apply it, I shall call it an *aesthetic* term or expression, and I shall, correspondingly, speak of *aesthetic* concepts, or *taste* concepts. (Sibley [1959] 2001, 1)

This 'perceptiveness', 'taste' or 'sensitivity' is *not* a 'quasi-sense',³⁴ as Sibley makes clear, but more simply a 'characteristically human kind of awareness and activity'³⁵ (p. 23), varying 'in degree from the rudimentary to the refined' (p. 21). Taste thus concerns an ordinary perceptual capacity, 'an ability to notice or see or tell that things have certain qualities',³⁶ which can be substantially sophisticated with experience and appropriate training. The term does not single out any particular reality, but only a way of contemplating reality—one using 'taste' or 'aesthetic discrimination or appreciation'.

As Sibley puts it, judgements the making of which requires 'the exercise of taste' qualify as aesthetic; whereas those which may be made by, and 'features which can be pointed out to' (or by) 'anyone with normal eyes, ears, and intelligence' qualify as non-aesthetic. Paradigmatic cases of non-aesthetic

³⁴ Sibley ([1968] 2001, 72).

³⁵ In 'Aesthetic and Non-Aesthetic' ([1965] 2001, 34) Sibley suggests that the subject-matter of aesthetics is a 'kind of perception'.

³⁶ 'Aesthetic Concepts' (AC), p. 3.

features are shapes, gustatory tastes, textures, and colours.³⁷ Whereas the properties of being elegant, being balanced and being garish would qualify, for Sibley, as aesthetic.

The apparent fact that many of us may, in some cases, see the texture but not the balance, the colour but not the garishness, the shape but not the elegance seems to support Sibley's distinction. 'Aesthetic qualities are "emergent"' ([1965³⁸] 2001, 35) from non-aesthetic ones, Sibley explains, and cannot be reduced to them (or inferred from them). Moreover, some aesthetic properties are elusive for many if not all of us, whereas non-aesthetic ones are usually perceived by everyone 'with normal eyes, ears, and intelligence'. This is the crucial aspect of the proposed distinction.

The important claim to make for our purposes is that Sibley's account, by focusing on a 'kind of perception' (2001, 34)—understood as a substantial refinement of normal perception—presents taste as a world-sensitivity. Hence the aesthetic realm, to be known through taste, is presented as part of reality, since it is the object of such refined world-sensitivity. So, Sibley's account is realist in spirit and, more importantly for our aims, it provides an epistemology for aesthetic realism. The implicit ontological claim in his account is that aesthetic properties, too, are there to be perceived—if only we have taste. So the

³⁷ Authors disagree with respect to colour. Sibley takes colour to be non-aesthetic (De Clercq (2008, 896 and 904) too). But Beardsley (1981, 64) gives 'blueness' as an example of an aesthetic quality, and Eaton (1994, 386) claims that 'colour attributions can be aesthetic'.

³⁸ Essay 'Aesthetic and Non-Aesthetic' [1965] reprinted in (2001).

distinction between 'aesthetic' and 'non-aesthetic', made on the basis of a different degree of sophistication in perception, encourages realism when it promotes what Sibley calls 'aesthetic discrimination' and 'appreciation',³⁹ which involves a *finer* discrimination.

What seems to be missing in Sibley's aesthetic theory is an account of the relation between the more specific aesthetic properties (in which he is interested) and the more general ones that his account neglects. Austin is credited for having recommended that philosophers focus on the more specific aesthetic properties: 'if only we could forget for a while about the beautiful and get down instead to the dainty and the dumpy'.⁴⁰ In the same vein, Goodman (1976, 262) has claimed that '[e]stimates of excellence are among the minor aids to insight'⁴¹ and many aestheticians have indeed focused on what Zangwill has called 'substantive' (i.e., more specific) aesthetic judgements, as opposed to 'verdictive'⁴² (i.e., general) aesthetic judgements. Furthermore, some realists about aesthetic properties have explicitly or implicitly rejected realism about beauty, due to beauty's supposed lack of a 'descriptive component' which is believed to be present only in the more specific aesthetic terms.

³⁹ Sibley [1959] 2001, 1 (quoted above).

⁴⁰ Essay 'A Plea for Excuses' quoted by Mothersill (1984, 252). (Austin's essay can be found in Austin [1956-7] 1979, and the quote appears on p. 183 of the 1979 edition). Mothersill replies that without the 'beautiful' we do not 'get very far with the "dainty and the dumpy"' (1984, 253).

⁴¹ But Goodman also claims, just before the passage quoted above, that 'If a connoisseur tells me that one of two Cycladic idols that seems to me almost indistinguishable is much finer than the other, this inspires me to look for and may help me find the significant differences between the two' (1976, 262).

⁴² The phrase 'verdictive' is probably inspired in Sibley ([1965] 2001, 34).

But I think the neglect of beauty, and of the most general aesthetic judgements (considered 'uninteresting'), is a mistake. Think of the role of background knowledge in making general value judgements. Consider an analogy with the evaluation of a person's actions: M. makes a break in his work at lunch time and goes and read in a quiet café near his office. Someone seeing him there frequently reading his book could think that he is a spy. The appearances are compatible with the spy thesis. But such judgement would misrepresent the facts (we and M. know): such judgement would tell us more about the person judging than it would tell us about M. and his motives. Those calling him a spy would be making an incorrect general judgement (verdict) with respect to his behaviour. The example shows that the general, qualitative, value to attribute to a person's actions is not always a trivial matter: one can sometimes, and sometimes easily, misrepresent the general nature of an action, not only the details.

Similarly, concerning works of art, I think that even the most general aesthetic judgements can be *substantial*, both in the sense that they are (at least sometimes) not trivial, and in the sense that they can (apparently) make an objective claim about an object (as opposed to a claim of merely subjective preference). Moreover, it is possible, and in some cases it is even plausible, that we can be entirely mistaken about the general, qualitative, nature of an aesthetic object. For example, whether or not Jackson Pollock's or Mark Rothko's pictorial work is good as pictorial art is open to dispute (I especially like one of

them). Also, construing particular works by these artists as generally good or bad (and also as better or worse than other works) is at least sometimes a complex task: it is easy to neglect relevant aspects, to over-emphasize other aspects or to see them distorted by our own preconceptions, current preoccupations, preferences, etc. Two different communities may judge the same work very differently even at a general level, based not only on different sensibilities but also on the different amount and quality of background knowledge they possess about the work. So, general (aesthetic) value judgements are at least sometimes difficult, and interesting.

We have looked at some reasons for preferring aesthetic realism: at bottom, explanatory reasons are what ultimately motivates realism. Aesthetic terms seem indispensable in aesthetic discourse; aesthetic attributions exhibit descriptive limits; explaining aesthetic attributions with aesthetic properties is simple; and the taste-based distinction between aesthetic and non-aesthetic (predicates, judgements, concepts, properties) presents aesthetic experience as an experience in *perception*, though sophisticated. What I shall do in the next chapter is to build on Sibley's useful distinction and consider also what his account consciously neglects: what Sibley calls 'verdicts', that is, 'purely evaluative judgements: whether things are aesthetically good or bad, excellent or mediocre, superior to others or inferior'.⁴³ I shall attempt to support the thought that, with respect to most artistic matters at least, 'beauty is in the

⁴³ Sibley ([1965] 2001, 33-34).

background' (Mothersill). So, a *finer* discrimination, which Sibley correctly takes to be the means by which aesthetic reality is known, is also, at least in the case of art, a discrimination directed at beauty or aesthetic value. I will be suggesting that the proposal of a distinctively aesthetic realm (implicit in Sibley's 'aesthetic' / 'non-aesthetic' distinction) is to be seen not only as an elusive reality, requiring and rewarding fine, subtle, precise perception, but also as a reality to be seen 'through loving spectacles'.⁴⁴

My aim is also to suggest that a focus on the most general aesthetic claims is relevant and perhaps necessary for our understanding of the more specific ones, and of aesthetic matters generally. Of course, I am not alone in this endeavour (see, especially, Mothersill 1984; Zemach 1997; Zangwill 2001; Nehamas 2007; Scruton 2009). In the first instance, I will claim that what unifies the aesthetic properties is the requirement of an admiring perception (they are to be seen *through loving spectacles*), a feature which, I shall claim, need not prompt anti-realism. Secondly, my claim will be conditional: I will claim, relying on Sibley's notion of 'aesthetic' as requiring taste, that the ontological status we give to the more specific aesthetic properties must be available to the most general ones (such as beauty). That is, if any *aesthetic* properties exist, understood along the lines Sibley proposes (and accepting that his aesthetic *concepts* correspond to properties), then beauty must be one of them, because at least some ascriptions of beauty require taste, and even Sibley provides at least

⁴⁴ On this metaphor, which I borrow from Charles Hazlewood, see Chapter 2, p. 67, note 24.

one example which promotes this conclusion. This will be the *unified* account of aesthetic properties. As an adjunct, I will claim that this account helps to promote a theory of art which stands in opposition to one current and widespread theory holding that art (including literature) is best understood as fundamentally institutional.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ The institutional theory of art is championed by Danto and Dickie, among others. See, for example, Danto ([1964] 2004) and Dickie ([1983] 2004).

Chapter Six

The nature of aesthetic reality

I am now speaking to those inclined to choose aesthetic realism. More precisely, I am concerned in this chapter with what we are to think *if* we endorse realism. Let us bear in mind that aesthetic realism (as well as the aesthetic anti-realism we rejected) is meant to give an account of what art critics' aesthetic thought and discourse is fundamentally about. Before going on to consider some of the main contributions to aesthetic property realism,¹ I should like to give an illustration from painting (similar examples are of course available concerning poetry, music, dance, architecture, etc.).² Consider the following piece of art criticism, offered by Hobson (1989), on the work of the English painter John William Waterhouse, in particular on his first and most successful pictorial rendering of (a passage from) Tennyson's poem 'The Lady of Shalott'.³ The

¹ For an introduction the notion of aesthetic properties which remains neutral with respect to the realism/anti-realism debate, see Goldman (1992).

² I have been assuming all along that my reader is familiar with art criticism (including literary criticism). Here I pause only to look briefly at one example, to call more explicit attention to what criticism (typically) consists in.

³ *The Lady of Shalott* (1888). Oil on canvas, 153 x 200 cm, The Tate Gallery, London.

piece refers to various aspects of Waterhouse's work and it includes, among many other comments, the following:

- (1) General characterization of the painting:

'a full-scale scene from nature' (Hobson 1989, 40).

- (2) Identification and appraisal of the artist's choices:

'Waterhouse [...] carefully selects the moment within the incident to hold us in contemplation—the moment between the words: "She loos'd the chain and down she lay"' (Hobson 1989, 41).

- (3) Description, speculation:

'the centre scene is held by the haunting beauty of the figure, probably in this case the artist's wife' (ibid.).

- (4) Categorization, including criticism of different categorizations:

'Waterhouse has been wrongly called Pre-Raphaelite, but he was a Romantic Classicist: he had the Northerner's love of legend and mystery, but his Italian birth lent a warm personality to his rendering of classical myths' (1989, 9).

'Modern critics have too easily accepted the label ['Pre-Raphaelite'] but their invocation of Burne-Jones is wide of the

mark: the whole tenor of Waterhouse's work is classical and Italianate, rather than medieval and Gothic as with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and their followers' (1989, 122).

(5) Support of positive (or negative) judgements, comparisons:

'[Burne-Jones's] girls are anonymous and anaemic: Waterhouse's are individual, sensitive and warm-blooded: they are in fact the living models of his studio, with their own youth and their inimitable combination of modesty and sexuality imbued with the painter's creative imagination' (1989, 9).

'At the very first glance, his paintings have a virtually universal appeal: skilled in execution and harmonious in colour, they are inhabited by beautiful people and recall well-known stories or instantly acceptable personal situations' (1989, 122).

(6) Criticism (appraisal) of another piece of criticism, detailed description, including reference to colours:

'Critical appreciation of the picture [*The Lady of Shalott* (1888)] is nowhere better shown than in the retrospective article of 1909 by R. E. D. Sketchley in the *Art Journal*:

The harmony of the willow-green, darkened with rain and closing day, of the shadowed white of the dress, the black prow, and the grey light afloat on the water, has the cool open-air unity of French naturalism. Gold and rose of the

embroidered web, dipping unheeded into the green shadow of the boat, the candles, taken from the inner quiet air of some shrine to burn failingly in the drift, are imagery that paint more than the vision in the poem.' (1989, 41).

Art criticism includes all of these.⁴ For the most part, it consists in description (sometimes, if not always, suggesting a positive or negative evaluation), and in general the claims made by the critic refer clearly to the work: to its colours, representational and expressive content, connection with movements or schools, etc. What the aesthetic realist distinctively holds is that *aesthetic* sentences, too (those attributing aesthetic properties or aesthetic value to an object) refer to the object judged and to its genuine properties, not to the critic's feelings projected onto it. That is, the aesthetic realist believes that harmony, unity (etc.) invoked by the critic are, in an important sense, *in* the painting (in the piece of music, in the poem) to be detected, in a sense just like the colours and contours are there to be seen. Accordingly, art criticism concerns the discovery, characterization and evaluation, from an aesthetic and artistic point of view, of an object and its properties. So, even if such activity requires the active participation of the mind and the emotions, the discourse is properly about the objects being judged and their properties. Similarly, the properties invoked by the critic, including the aesthetic ones, are to be construed as real. What remains to be said is what

⁴ For a similar listing of the 'methods we use as critics', see Sibley ([1959] 2001, 18).

aesthetic properties, and aesthetic reality, must be. I shall look at some main proposals in this chapter, and outline my own view.

I should make one preliminary note on method. When considering each contribution to aesthetic realism, I focus mainly on the insights to be preserved. I wish primarily to consider what the various authors bring to the debate, rather than the limits of their contributions, even though I also mention some of those limits. The aim is to arrive at a set of possible ways of capturing the notion of *aesthetic properties*, without hoping for a definition in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. I should make one note, still, on terminology. Sibley was famously reluctant to speak in terms of 'properties',⁵ even though he did use the term occasionally. And Levinson (1978; 2006) has argued for a metaphysical distinction between *properties* and *qualities*, even though he has sometimes (2005) spoken in ways inconsistent with the distinction proposed (I shall address this in §6.3). My preference is for using the terms 'qualities' and 'properties' ('features', 'characteristics', 'traits') as synonymous.

6.1 The epistemic notion of 'taste'

⁵ See Chapter 5, p. 140, note 32. See also Sibley ([1968] 2001, 72).

Frank Sibley's contribution to aesthetic realism is clear, even though he never calls himself a realist: Sibley offers an epistemology for realism. The 'aesthetic concepts' are said to be concepts the application of which requires 'taste'. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Sibley's *taste* is an epistemic notion, and it is understood by Sibley, not as an odd 'quasi-sense', but as a (substantial) sophistication of ordinary perception, so that people 'with normal eyes, ears and intelligence' may sometimes fail to notice aesthetic features even when they are able to notice all of the non-aesthetic ones. Taste is, then, a finer perception which allows for the grasp of finer traits, a way of perceiving which need not be always directed at works of art. As we have seen, Sibley's explicit concern is with a 'kind of perception'⁶ rather than with attention to a specific kind of object. The aesthetic kind of perception in which he is interested encompasses 'scenery and sunsets, animals, faces, and people', together with art.

If we accept that Sibley's aesthetic *concepts* identify properties, then we will find the following ontology implicit in his work. First, we find properties such as [being] gemlike, picked out by terms which are 'merely descriptive', this meaning that they bear no direct relation to the overall value of a work (when speaking of art). The attribution of such properties has no positive or negative valence: it makes no reference to the value of the work. Then we find aesthetic properties which are partially evaluative, such as being balanced, or being graceful. Sibley takes the terms picking out these to be descriptive: even if

⁶ Sibley (2001, 34).

balance can be invoked to support a positive evaluative judgement of a work, it also has a descriptive component, in the sense that it corresponds to, or at least is compatible with, some but not all formal features. Finally, we have the 'purely evaluative' properties, such as [being] beautiful, [being] ugly. These last are especially problematic in Sibley's account, and I wish to focus on them,⁷ for they are good as a test: if the purely evaluative properties can be reckoned genuine properties of objects, then all the others can, too.

The difficulty for Sibley's account concerning evaluative concepts (and properties) is as follows. On the one hand, since Sibley does not take the terms 'beautiful' or 'ugly' to be descriptive, it seems that he does not take them to be terms corresponding to objective properties of works. However, Sibley also claims that the concepts in question may require taste to be grasped, so this points towards the objectivity of the (supposedly) corresponding properties. The general value of a work may also be elusive (or require taste), as an example from Sibley (2001, 7) shows: 'A failure and a success in the manner of Degas may be generally more alike, so far as their non-aesthetic features go, than either is like a successful Fragonard'. The example in this passage was meant to emphasize that possessing aesthetic value does not amount to possessing any specific (formal) feature common to all works that can be taken to possess aesthetic value. But the passage shows also that the difference

⁷ Most authors have focused on the difficulties of the very distinction between 'aesthetic' and 'non-aesthetic', a distinction which I am not questioning. On the usefulness of that distinction, see again Chapter 5, §5.5.

between excellence and mediocrity in a work may be as elusive as any other more specific (formal) aesthetic distinction. And if we might need taste to tell mediocrity from excellence ('failure from a success', as Sibley sees it), then the ascription of general merit or demerit must count, according to Sibley's own proposal, as aesthetic. But if general remarks such as (aesthetic) 'failure' or 'success' are, as Sibley also claims, purely evaluative, which he takes as non-descriptive, it is not clear how they can be taken as corresponding to genuine features of works. This seems to be a problem in his account.

My suggestion is that we preserve Sibley's insight concerning taste: the thought that certain features require a finer, more sophisticated, perception, and the related thought that the elusive nature of those features is no impediment to their reality. In many cases they are detected, even though sometimes only by a minority of experts. If we say that aesthetic features are those requiring taste, and if in some cases taste is required so that beauty is detected, then *beautiful* counts as an aesthetic concept and beauty as a genuine aesthetic property. All we need to reject in Sibley's account is the (in my view unsupported) claim that beauty has no objective component.⁸

But there is something about *aesthetic* judgements, concepts, and properties that Sibley's notion of *taste* seems to leave out. For Sibley, taste is a

⁸ Levinson (1994, 354, note 6) makes a similar suggestion pointing in the direction of objective beauty: 'I believe that in their original and primary employment, in regard to visual objects or appearances, ["beautiful" and "ugly"] imply particular kinds of phenomenal impression (involving harmonious pleasingness, or the opposite thereof), and not simply approval or disapproval.'

capacity of the nature of ordinary perception, though sophisticated. But if we are to deal with art criticism (and perhaps also with the aesthetic experience and appreciation of natural landscapes, which Sibley's considerations are to include), it seems that we have to account for the apparent fact that most aesthetic attributions refer ineliminably to the aesthetic value or beauty of what is being judged. This is an aspect that Sibley's account explicitly neglects in his account of taste.⁹ So, for instance, Sibley's view of taste cannot capture a crucial distinction between aesthetic properties (with an evaluative component) and the so-called secondary properties such as colour properties. But these are distinct in various ways. For instance, whereas to be able to attribute secondary qualities we need perception only, to attribute evaluative aesthetic qualities we seem to need also the participation of (appropriate) emotions.

This difference can be seen in the apparent fact that some animals can discern colours, whereas only human beings can discern beauty (and moral properties).¹⁰ Hume's essay on the standard of taste makes clear how the discernment of literary beauty requires the participation of the 'finer emotions of the mind' (par. 10). The affective nature of aesthetic evaluations is something that Sibley does not consider in his account of taste, however. And his account does not contemplate either the fact that making more aesthetic discriminations

⁹ See, for instance, Sibley ([1968] 2001, 71): 'I deliberately ignore [...] questions about evaluation, though many assertions of the sorts I discuss are relevant to whether a work has merits or defects.'

¹⁰ I am unable to say who else makes this contrast.

is not guarantee that we will be making an appropriate evaluation, whereas making more colour discriminations is always superior to making fewer colour discriminations¹¹ (so it seems that colour discrimination is a matter of pure perception). When evaluating a work of art, someone might be paying attention to a myriad of irrelevant details and fail to appreciate the value of the work only because he has failed to notice (or neglected) the few details that were relevant. Recall the analogy I invoked earlier in Chapter 5 (p. 145), concerning the general evaluation of another person's actions. Having the appropriate emotion towards the work in question seems to be a requirement for aesthetic apprehension, because it is, it seems, such emotion that guides one to perceive that which is relevant.

McGinn (1983) is an author who makes clear this seeming disanalogy between values and secondary qualities by contrasting colour-blindness with value-blindness.¹² Colour-blindness, McGinn claims, concerns ultimately the amount of (colour) discriminations that a person is capable of making, whereas a misevaluation by the value-blind 'consists rather in assigning the *wrong* value to a situation' (1983, 152), not necessarily in making fewer distinctions. Accordingly, a superior evaluation does not consist 'in the ability merely to make *more* discriminations than others' (ibid.), but in making the right ones (or better ones). So, McGinn's view implies, whereas making more colour

¹¹ This contrast is also made by McGinn (1983, 152). See below.

¹² McGinn (1983, 151-152). McGinn is considering moral values only.

discriminations is never inadequate, because it always amounts to a *finer* colour discrimination, it might be inadequate to make too many evaluative discriminations.¹³

Sibley's notion of taste does not capture this contrast, or the evaluative, affective, nature of many (if not all) aesthetic attributions. In other words, Sibley implicitly treats aesthetic properties as ordinary, though more sophisticated, secondary properties. But Sibley's notion of taste does bring, to realism, the conviction that the truth of aesthetic attributions is independent from convergence of judgement by a majority, since it acknowledges that aesthetic reality is discernible only to those whose perception is sufficiently sophisticated. Accordingly, his notion of taste also explains lack of convergence in a way that is compatible with, and perhaps promotes, aesthetic realism. So we should preserve the notion of taste, for it lets us understand why is it that sometimes aesthetic properties are elusive, without their reality being undermined by that apparent fact.

6.2 Value-grounding properties

¹³ McGinn (1983, 152). Cf. Hume's 'Of the Standard of Taste' (par. 21): 'to enable a critic the more fully to execute this undertaking, he must preserve his mind free from all prejudice, and allow nothing to enter into his consideration, but the very object which is submitted to his examination.'

According to another strong proposal, aesthetic properties are 'value-grounding' properties. Beardsley makes this proposal (1973; 1981).¹⁴ Beardsley (1973, 50) begins, explicitly, with realism about aesthetic properties: 'I assume [...] that there are such things as aesthetic qualities (A-qualities), and that aesthetic attributions (e.g., 'H's recent sculptures have an air of ominousness') are best construed as attributing such qualities to objects.' In arguing for the objectivity of aesthetic properties, Beardsley considers the difficulty, for realism, of the ineliminable participation of the 'perceiver's emotional condition' (1981, xxx) in aesthetic apprehension. His reply to this possible difficulty is that even though subjective (mental, emotional) factors do affect aesthetic perception, that does not imply that the presence of the aesthetic quality is dependent on that perception, so the subjective participation, per se, does not preclude the quality from being taken as 'objective'. Beardsley deals with the objection in this passage:

it is sometimes argued that whether you perceive restlessness in the painting, or how much of it you perceive, can be affected by your state of mind; if you happen to feel very laid back [...], a painting that is only slightly or moderately restless may strike you as greatly so. Then, restlessness is not to be considered a simple quality of the painting, but a quality it has relative to the perceiver's emotional condition. Of course this particular argument is rather easily set aside,

¹⁴ For a congenial proposal, see De Clercq (2008).

because we could say that although the *perception* of the quality may be affected by subjective factors, the *presence* is not affected. (1981, xxx. Emphasis in original)

The crucial (realist) claim is that the *presence* of the quality in question is independent from any act of perception. For instance, we might experience the same literary work differently in different readings, and this should have no effect on the properties the work possesses. The aesthetic experience of reading Shakespeare's *Hamlet* for the first time is of course different from the aesthetic experience of subsequent readings of the work. Yet we would not say that the work has different aesthetic properties in those different occasions: it is only that in each reading we notice different aspects.

Accordingly, even though aesthetic feeling is subjective, aesthetic experience involves crucially also a *discovery* of 'something phenomenally objective', not merely a projection of the feelings of the viewer:¹⁵

when I recall a tune [...], though the *feeling* of effort, or concentration, or satisfaction at success, is phenomenally part of myself as subject, the tune appears as something *found*, or *made*, and with its own individuality and self-existence. [...]

¹⁵ Later on in the book, when discussing beauty, Beardsley refers to the 'objective' definition of beauty thus: 'beauty and the value that inheres in it are characteristics of the aesthetic object itself, quite independently of the way anyone feels about it.' (1981, 512)

When we say, therefore, that Debussy's melody is sad, with an unutterably lost and hopeless sadness, we are again talking about something phenomenally objective, not about ourselves. (1981, 39)

In considering the nature of aesthetic properties, Beardsley follows a proposal by Freedman¹⁶ and suggests that aesthetic properties are 'value-grounding qualities' (1973, 62), that is 'qualities that affect aesthetic value either positively or negatively' (ibid.).

Beardsley anticipates two objections to this view. One is the claim that 'any quality could be cited as a perfectly good reason for a value judgement' (1973, 64). To this he replies by reformulating the proposal, saying that the property in question must count as a ground for aesthetic value 'independently', that is, 'without the help of any other quality' (ibid.). The second objection he considers is that some aesthetic predicates (such as, he suggests, 'languid', 'calm', 'swaggering', 'grotesque') seem to be neutral with respect to value. To this he replies that they are not properly value-neutral, but only variable in sense, or else vague (ibid.).

Beardsley (1973, 55) also mentions two problems in Sibley's suggestion that aesthetic properties are those requiring taste or perceptual sensitivity. Both problems concern the thought that the criterion proposed to distinguish

¹⁶ Beardsley quoting from Freedman (1968, 52): 'The value-tending feature of B-predicates [corresponding to aesthetic properties] is not just an incidental and acquired feature, but is *the* distinguishing or defining feature of them.'

aesthetic from non-aesthetic is not immune to counterexamples.¹⁷ Firstly, in order to distinguish (e.g.) shades of colours (Beardsley's example) perceptual sensitivity is needed, and yet these are not, according to Sibley, aesthetic properties. See Beardsley: 'it requires perceptual sensitivity to distinguish close shades of colors and subtle variations in the dynamics of music, or to notice difference between two slightly different ovals or harmonic progressions—and these are all NA-qualities' (1973, 55). Secondly, some aesthetic properties are detected with no need for any special perceptual sensitivity.¹⁸

Sibley could, perhaps, reply to these objections. First, when considering differences in shades of colours that require special sensitivity, he could take them to be aesthetic and include them in his account.¹⁹ Concerning the second objection, Sibley could also reply that for many (if not most) people the examples Beardsley gives²⁰ are of properties that qualify as aesthetic. It is just that, for Beardsley, the sophistication required to grasp them is not noticed by him as special, arguably because it is so ingrained that it appears natural (or

¹⁷ Kivy (1975) also objects to Sibley's distinction: 'it is usually said that "graceful" is an aesthetic term. Yet it seems false to say that applying the term "graceful" requires an ability *beyond* the capacities we think of as possessed by the "normal" person' (1975, 199); and: 'aesthetic terms would not be the only ones that require for their application some talent beyond the "normal". To apply terms in higher mathematics requires a talent that most "normal" people do not have.' (ibid.)

¹⁸ Beardsley's example is this: 'if he reports that the shapes in a late van Gogh seem to him tortured and tense, and that the finale of Beethoven's D minor symphony is powerful, I don't think we would want to say that he is "perceptive".' (1973, 55)

¹⁹ Eaton (1994, 386), for instance, claims also that 'colour attributions can be aesthetic'. Sibley could perhaps accommodate this in his account: even though colours don't generally require a special sensitivity to be discerned, in some cases the differences are very subtle—and in those cases I think Sibley could say that the attributions are properly aesthetic.

²⁰ See note 18 above.

second nature) to him. As Sibley maintains, taste comes in degrees, and for a highly perceptive, aesthetically and artistically well-trained person, some aesthetic distinctions may indeed appear simple and straightforward, in a way that does not seem to involve the participation of taste.

But Beardsley's objections do point to something we also found wanting in Sibley's account: the participation of emotion and the (related) evaluative dimension of aesthetic attributions, which a taste-based view of them leaves out. (Recall that Sibley's interest was in a 'kind of perception' (2001, 34) rather than in art criticism. This might help to explain the conscious neglect of evaluation,²¹ whereas for Beardsley the main endeavour of aesthetics is the theory of art criticism, in which the notion of aesthetic evaluation is crucial.)

The major contribution of Beardsley's proposal is, then, the restoration of attention to value. What his view does not capture entirely is the distinctively aesthetic nature of the value purported to be present in aesthetic properties: what kind of value is it that aesthetic properties ground? What is its basic nature? I can anticipate that the next proposal I will consider will not yet respond to these questions.

6.3 Higher-order ways of appearing

²¹ I am only claiming that Sibley neglects evaluation *in his account of taste*.

According to still another realist view, aesthetic properties are to be seen as 'higher-order ways of appearing'. This is the view championed by Levinson (1994; 2001; 2005).²² Levinson's view is clearly realist in that it holds that 'aesthetic attributions admit of being correct or incorrect because objects really do have or fail to have aesthetic properties' (2005, 215). Aesthetic judgements are to be measured against the aesthetic world containing aesthetic properties, not against critics' thought or feelings. Levinson's distinctive proposal is that aesthetic properties are 'higher-order ways of appearing' (2005, 211). What are these? It seems to me that Levinson's proposal is akin to Sibley's, though with a metaphysical leaning: higher-order ways of appearing are *manifest* properties

²² Levinson is the only author who explicitly addresses the purported metaphysical difference between properties and qualities (1978; 2006). According to Levinson, 'attributes' is the basic term for 'the respects in which objects differ or are the same' (1978, 1). But attributes, for Levinson, divide into two *metaphysically* distinct kinds: properties and qualities. According to Levinson (2006, 563), properties 'are exemplified by being red, being heavy, being wise [...] and are standardly designated by gerundive expressions, most notably, 'being___'. They are conditions, 'being-a-certain-way' (1978, 1). And they are 'indivisible, non-partitionable things' (2006, 563). Qualities, by contrast, are 'stuffs', 'seem to admit of quantization' (1978, 10), and are 'standardly designated by expressions formed from adjectives by appending certain suffixes' (1978, 11). They are 'exemplified by redness, heaviness, wisdom' (2006, 563). For Levinson the difference between properties and qualities is not simply grammatical: 'It is my contention that "being blue" and "blueness" designate distinct entities' (1978, 10). Levinson, however, somehow deflates the distinction when he claims that the two are very closely related: 'Of course a quality and the corresponding property are closely connected. As a rule, they will be coinstantiated; if an object has a certain condition (property) it will possess some related abstract stuff (quality) and vice versa.' (1978, 11) Given that when one is present the other is present too (they are 'coinstantiated'), it is natural to conflate the two terms, as referring to slightly the same thing. Levinson himself occasionally calls his qualities 'properties' at least in his (2005), an article on 'aesthetic properties': first, he refers to 'delicacy' (2005, 219), to 'gracefulness' and 'garishness' (2005, 222); then he more clearly conflates properties and qualities: 'aesthetic properties such as gracefulness and garishness' (2005, 223); '*unity*, or *dynamism*, or *fluidity*' (2005, 224); and clearly again he calls his qualities 'properties': 'aesthetic properties such as human beauty and ugliness' (ibid.). I take the two alternative ways of invoking aesthetic attributes as equivalent, at least for our current purposes.

(the properties that figure in common-sense accounts of phenomena, as opposed to those cited in scientific theories), though of a special kind. They contain, Levinson maintains (2001), a descriptive component and an evaluative component. For Levinson, only the descriptive component, which constitutes the 'core' of an aesthetic property, is to be reckoned objective.²³

Not surprisingly, the difficulties with Levinson's proposal are similar to the ones we found in Sibley's. First, it is not entirely clear what distinguishes aesthetic from non-aesthetic attributions: it seems that aesthetic attributions refer to features which require a finer perception, but it is not left clear where the frontier between them is. Second, the evaluative component, which seems essential to many (if not all) aesthetic attributions, is not taken into account. The merits of the proposal are visible, too: the inclusion of properties which are not simply phenomenal (or 'manifest') properties helps to explain aesthetic experience as a higher-order endeavour in perception (2005, 215), akin to Sibley's explanation of aesthetic attributions based on sophisticated perception or taste. And the view makes sense also of art critics' discourse as being about something in reality: more precisely, something of a higher-order sort. In a footnote, Levinson even claims that all aesthetic properties are 'value-relevant properties, that is, perceivable properties it is at least *prima facie* intelligible to cite in support of aesthetic evaluations.' (2005, 218, note 11). This footnote points,

²³ So, despite what he claims in (1994, 354, note 6—cf. note 8 above), according to his account beauty cannot be objective.

it seems to me, in the right direction when it emphasizes that aesthetic properties concern, in some important sense, the aesthetic value of works of art. Unfortunately, Levinson does not develop this idea any further.

6.4 Desire-mediated properties

Zemach's proposal (1997) is distinctive in recommending a desire-based realist view of aesthetic properties. According to Zemach, aesthetic properties are observed when non-aesthetic properties are seen through desire (more precisely, through a '*cognitive desire*').^{24,25} And 'aesthetic properties are features of things as they are in themselves' (1997, 95).

The account is realist because it holds that the truth of an aesthetic judgement depends on the (aesthetic) properties of the object, whereas an anti-realist account would 'maintain that aesthetic predicates describe attitudes or feelings of subjects' (1997, 74).²⁶ Moreover, Zemach's account also preserves the realist intuition that aesthetic reality can be, and possibly sometimes is, beyond actual knowledge: aesthetic properties are grasped via desire, but no amount of cognitive desire will make an object have an aesthetic property if the property is

²⁴ Cf. Zemach (1997, 106): 'an aesthetic property—a degree of unified significance—is a non-aesthetic property when viewed through the medium of desire.'

²⁵ Zemach (1997, 105).

²⁶ See also Zemach (1997, 70).

not present. Furthermore, (and this is another feature of any realist account) what we happen to know of aesthetic reality is probably not all that there is to know: reality might transcend, and it plausibly transcends, actual knowledge. Another equally realist claim of his is that aesthetic properties do not depend on particular aesthetic attributions, so that a world with no human beings would still possess (unperceived, unjudged, unappreciated) aesthetic properties: '[e]ven a lifeless world has aesthetic features, to wit, those that *would* be ascribed to it by an expert observing it under SOC' (1997, 61).²⁷ In other words, too, aesthetic reality does not depend on aesthetic judgement.

The account Zemach promotes is new in that it gives unusual primacy to the aesthetic realm. Zemach (1997) suggests that, 'whatever other properties the real world has, it has aesthetic properties too' (1997, 68), and also that 'phenomenal terms are ineliminable from any empirical account of reality' (1997, 63). One of his main claims was that '[s]cience is constrained by aesthetic criteria' (1997, 110): scientific theories are to be judged by their elegance and simplicity (among other virtues); elegance and simplicity are aesthetic properties; if progress in science is explained by the fact that aesthetic constraints are not entirely 'irrelevant' (1997, 110), then perhaps aesthetic properties are objective properties of reality.

The account is also *radical* for the same reason: the aesthetic realm is seen as basic. It is sometimes claimed that science provides the standard for what

²⁷ 'SOC' stands for 'standard observation conditions.'

there is. Zemach claims, on the contrary, that whatever else exists, aesthetic reality exists, since 'a world that is unamenable to aesthetic valuation' (1997, 68) is inconceivable. So, 'Even if there is no color or sound in the world, even if motion, space, and time do not exist, even if reality satisfies no predicate of our science, it must satisfy the aesthetic predicates' (1997, 68). The novelty of Zemach's approach is, also, in the recommendation of an account that is at odds with the widespread Kantian view that beauty (and aesthetic matters in general) require 'disinterested' apprehension.²⁸ Zemach is opposed to this view and makes clear that a disinterested mind (something that he finds difficult even to conceive) would grasp no aesthetic properties whatsoever. It is perhaps worth quoting the relevant passage:

A mind that has no interests can discern nonaesthetic phenomenal properties, say, see X as blue, but it cannot see things aesthetically, that is, as having aesthetic properties. Aesthetic properties appear only to those whose seeing is modulated by desire. [...]

When a real thing X impacts on a perceptual system, the latter presents X's primary properties as modulated and modified by the system's specific nature. The result is a phenomenal object having secondary properties: X's

²⁸ Zemach claims: 'Were we to look at things as Kant's aesthetics says we should, that is, to bracket our desire and observe things as covered by Rawl's veil of ignorance, abstracting from what they mean to us, we could discern no aesthetic properties in nature, and art would be impossible.' (1997, 105) This might not be entirely fair with respect to Kant's view, however. What Kant suggests, in my reading of him at least, is, rather, that aesthetic apprehension must not have *other* interests (that is, interests other than aesthetic ones).

properties as rendered by the system. A tertiary property results when yet another mental system further modulates a secondary property. That additional system is, I say, desire. (1997, 103)

If Zemach's account is correct, then we can understand what was missing in Sibley's account of aesthetic reality, for according to Zemach's proposal, it is clear that perception, no matter how sophisticated, is not sufficient for aesthetic apprehension. What Zemach (1997, 105) calls a '*cognitive* desire' is also required. And we can also see what is not included either in Levinson's proposal: Levinson excludes from his consideration, too, the evaluative component of aesthetic attributions, since he claims that the core of an aesthetic term is a descriptive core. Furthermore, Zemach's proposal has the advantage of accounting for the subjective contribution in aesthetic perception, without falling into anti-realism. Zemach thus keeps aesthetic reality objective,²⁹ whilst admitting that aesthetic properties require not only sentient but also feeling and desiring human beings in order to be fully grasped. In other words, his main contribution is to claim that aesthetic realism is not undermined by the fact that the grasp of aesthetic properties requires the participation of appropriate emotions. My aim in the next section is to develop this idea a little more.

²⁹ Zemach's realist project, at least, is made clear: 'let us now get to work: show the objective reality of the aesthetic properties.' (1997, 56)

6.5 'Through loving spectacles'

We should now recall the metaphor introduced earlier in Chapter 2³⁰ concerning seeing the work of an artist 'through loving spectacles'. We should add now, to the realist proposals discussed above, the epistemological suggestion that aesthetic properties are phenomenal properties whose distinctive value and significance is to be detected '*through loving spectacles*'.³¹ Something akin to this participation of positive emotions in the grasp of aesthetic properties is already implicit in Zemach's account: 'We interpret formal traits empathically' (1997, 105). My claim is, more precisely, that aesthetic properties prompt, and require, admiration, or a form of love: those incapable of feeling such emotions will be unable to detect aesthetic properties. This evaluative (affective) nature of aesthetic properties, also implied in Beardsley's account, helps explaining why some animals are capable of discerning colour, but only humans are capable of discerning aesthetic (and moral) properties.

The realist accounts we considered can indeed be seen as complementary, and I build on all of them. Beardsley and Zemach note the 'loving' (evaluating,

³⁰ Cf. Chapter 2, p. 67, note 24.

³¹ My aim is not to reduce aesthetic properties to something else—to define them in non-aesthetic terms—but only to see them under a possible (hopefully also plausible) description. For a congenial approach to aesthetic experience, making the distinctive suggestion that aesthetic appreciation is a matter of 'friendship' and that critics and interpreters of works of art can be construed as 'friends of interpretable objects', see Tamen (2001). (For a definition of aesthetic properties in non-aesthetic terms, see De Clercq 2002).

admiring) aspect I also wish to emphasize of aesthetic apprehension. On the other side, Sibley and Levinson bring the 'perceiving' component into focus, and they thereby note the 'contemplative' element needed for appropriate aesthetic judgement, according to realism. My proposal is to combine elements of the two broad approaches, and claim that aesthetic properties can be seen as typically requiring not only *sophisticated* perception or taste (since they are to be conceived as higher-order, finer, features of reality), but also that aesthetic perception is perception *focused on beauty* or aesthetic value.^{32,33,34} The result of this combination is an understanding of aesthetic thought and discourse which emphasizes both *apprehension* and *appreciation* (other cognate designations of this pair of notions would be 'understanding' and 'evaluation').^{35,36}

³² In effect, sophisticated perception is *not* always needed in aesthetic apprehension: some aesthetic features are grasped easily by almost anyone (so, *pace* Sibley, elusiveness is not an essential feature of aesthetic properties). Still, and especially with respect to art, aesthetic apprehension indeed *usually* requires a finer perception.

³³ For the claim that Mothersill's account (1984) has the merit of emphasizing and promoting the centrality of beauty in aesthetics, see Zemach (1987).

³⁴ I should make one note on terminology. I take 'beauty' and 'aesthetic value' as synonyms, denoting a kind of good, following Mothersill (1992) both in the account and in the caution. As Mothersill has noted (1992, 45), sometimes it is thought that 'beauty' is not the most appropriate term since it may suggest 'something mildly pleasing and non-strenuous'. But as Mothersill also adds (*ibid.*), 'aesthetic value' is also problematic: 'beauty is a good, so "value" is appropriate, but what do you say about "aesthetic"?'

³⁵ The recommendation of an emphasis on 'appreciation' (in particular concerning the less obvious case of literature) is made by Lamarque, apparently (I am relying on Lamarque's claims in lectures) after Olsen (supposedly his 1987). See, for instance, Lamarque (2007, *passim*). Cf. Olsen (1987, 152): 'To say that the appropriate mode of apprehension of a literary work is appreciation is to suggest that this appreciation is in an important respect comparable to the appreciation of wine, of scenic or other beauty, rather than comparable to the understanding of an utterance, a sentence, or a physical event.'

³⁶ For a congenial conflation of understanding and appreciation, see Kivy (1975, 210): 'To describe something in aesthetic terms is to *describe* it; but it is also to savor it at the same time: to run it over your tongue and lick your lips; to "investigate" its pleasurable possibilities.' For Kivy this is the reason why 'aesthetic descriptions are "terminal", [...] they

In particular, the account I recommend is meant to explain *positive* aesthetic judgements, which are understood as capturing the fact that a work (or whatever is being judged) is admirable, i.e. it can be *seen* as valuable aesthetically. And 'aesthetically' means 'as beautiful' ('as possessing aesthetic value').

One concern someone might express with respect to this proposal is that by bringing in the notion of *appreciation* and *love* we fall into anti-realism. But I believe the account I am recommending is fundamentally realist, for various reasons. Firstly, and crucially, it does *not* claim that aesthetic properties are projected onto works, but that they are *discerned* in them, when aesthetic vision (admiration) is possible and appropriate. (So, it might be important to note, this view allows us to explain why immoral works fail to be beautiful: admiration is not appropriate in those cases.)³⁷ What the account I suggest calls attention to is the requirement of a form of love or admiration in aesthetic apprehension: a feeling of affection and a positive attitude towards a work is required for aesthetic properties to be grasped. The account does not ignore the perceptual component, however. This account makes sense of the fact, noted by Hume in the essay on taste, that '[w]e choose our favourite author as we do our friend, from a conformity of humour and disposition.' (par. 29). But this does not

lead nowhere'; they provide 'no reason for anything except continued contemplation.' (1975, 211)

³⁷ This suggestion is also made by Scruton with respect to the aesthetic judgement of works of art (2009, 99): 'When it comes to art, aesthetic judgement concerns what you ought and ought not to like, and (I shall argue) the "ought" here [...] has a moral weight.'

undermine the claim that there is a cognitive element in aesthetic experience: it is an experience of apprehension as well. The account helps also explaining why the relevance of aspects of the author's biography for aesthetic judgement remains unchallenged.³⁸ In particular, we cannot be a friend of a work³⁹ if its author is our enemy, namely if we have strong moral objections against him. It is, then, inevitable on this account that moral considerations play a role in aesthetic apprehension, at least by excluding the aspects we cannot morally admire: positive affection and attitude is rendered impossible in cases of works promoting immoral ways of life.⁴⁰ The account remains realist in that it is the work's nature that allows for admiration or aversion *in its apprehension*, and a positive or negative aesthetic judgement of a work is still a genuine judgement, identifying the properties of the work (or at least nothing tells us otherwise), even though the identification of those properties requires the participation of appropriate emotions.

Secondly, according to the account I am suggesting, aesthetic reality is still conceived as independent from, and transcending, particular judgements. Giovanni Bellini's *St. Francis in the Desert* mentioned earlier would be delicate

³⁸ Of course, the *extent* to which biographical information matters aesthetically is open to dispute.

³⁹ I am here invoking the germane metaphor (of *friendship*) developed by Tamen (2001).

⁴⁰ As we shall see in the next paragraph, it is not only immoral attitudes represented or promoted in a work that prevent aesthetic appreciation: for instance a personal aversion to religion may prevent me from admiring religious paintings, for instance.

and mysterious even if no one would ever find it so.⁴¹ (The same could be said, it seems to me, with respect to general merit claims and what they mean: Augustine's *Confessions* would be no less valuable (admirable) as a work of literature if the entire world would cease to admire the work, for instance due to a global aversion to religion, or to a global aversion to the Christian religion, which would probably prevent a sympathetic, admiring reading). So, the account I am recommending remains realist also in conceiving of aesthetic reality as independent of, and plausibly transcending, actual knowledge and judgement of it.

Thirdly, according to this account aesthetic judgements are to be judged against the world. Works have, not only the properties we are able to identify, but also those that remain unjudged. And our aesthetic judgements are true or false depending only on those properties that works have, judged or unjudged. If we believe that the aesthetic properties of a work are seen in the aesthetic experiences that such work *can* afford (not only the ones the work actually affords), then we can simply expect that some of those possible experiences remain unexplored and, accordingly, that some of a work's aesthetic properties remain unjudged.

What the realism I advocate emphasizes is that the 'admiring' attitude apparently necessary for aesthetic contemplation can be accommodated by both

⁴¹ Also, just as there might be aspects of reality which (happen to) remain forever unknown to us, according to realism there might be works of art (natural landscapes, etc.) which remain forever unjudged.

realist and anti-realist accounts (so *a fortiori* it does not undermine realism). This attitude, according to the realist, is directed at something in the world and, more importantly, it is the appropriate way to know (to become acquainted with) a portion of the world. So disagreements concerning what is or is not aesthetically 'admirable' are, at least sometimes, genuine disagreements, as opposed to being merely (faultless) contrasts of preferences. This is therefore a clearly realist project, one concerning the existence of an objective aesthetic reality, which nevertheless recognizes and includes the subjective ('admiring') element also apparently inherent in aesthetic contemplation.

Another concern someone might express is that admiration is not always the proper emotion required to engage with works of art. Some works prompt negative emotions, such as disgust, rage, indignation, sadness, etc. But we can perhaps reply to this by saying that there is ultimately an attitude of admiration (an 'aesthetic attitude')⁴² which guides, invites and rewards our attention towards the artistic *achievement* which the work embodies, even in works inviting negative emotions: positive admiration (the aesthetic attitude) is directed, at bottom, at the achievement.

It might be objected that some works are not great achievements by universal standards: they are not admirable simpliciter. But we can reply to this concern by saying that it may be necessary to construe the work within a

⁴² This is also *the* central feature of Beardsley's aesthetic conception of art. See Beardsley ([1983] 2004, 58): 'An artwork is something produced with the intention of giving it the capacity to satisfy an aesthetic interest.'

'category',⁴³ and in certain cases charity might be needed, as when the work is an aesthetic achievement only if we consider e.g. the conditions under which it was produced (as opposed to an achievement which is an achievement by *any* standards). For instance, Ovid's poetry of exile ought to be ranked inferior to the *Metamorphoses*, as a literary achievement *tout court*, but if read as poetry of exile it can be seen as a great poetic accomplishment given its sincerity, expressiveness and emotional depth. It is also astonishing how modern some of those poems are.⁴⁴ So in the end, when the work is properly construed, admiration towards its features is in the background, and it is admiration, I claim, what guides the reader.

Consider another example in this respect. The poem sometimes known as 'Lines: "I Am"' (often simply called 'I Am'), by the English poet John Clare, was written in 1846, during the years in which Clare was an inmate of the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum.⁴⁵ The poem reads as follows:⁴⁶

I am—yet what I am, none cares or knows;
My friends forsake me like a memory lost:
I am the self-consumer of my woes—
They rise and vanish in oblivion's host
Like shadows in love-frenzied stifled throes—
And yet I am, and live—like vapours tossed

⁴³ On the now classical suggestion that works of art must be seen within a 'category', see Walton ([1970], 2004).

⁴⁴ For two good translations (for the modern reader) of Ovid's poetry of exile, see Ovid (1990) and Ovid (2005). My preference is for Ovid (1990).

⁴⁵ For an excellent biography of Clare, see Bate (2003).

⁴⁶ I use Bate's edition of the poem, in Clare (2004, 282).

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,
Into the living sea of waking dreams
Where there is neither sense of life or joys
But the vast shipwreck of my life's esteems;
Even the dearest, that I love the best
Are strange—nay, rather, stranger than the rest.

I long for scenes where man hath never trod,
A place where woman never smiled or wept,
There to abide with my Creator, God,
And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept,
Untroubling and untroubled where I lie,
The grass below—above the vaulted sky.

When we read the poem, there are many aesthetic (literary) possibilities⁴⁷ we can explore, that is, there are various aspects we can consider which can be seen as sources of positive literary interest and value in the poem. However, we can also detect various flaws. For instance, the subject, as portrayed, overtly shows self-pity and is too emotional towards himself: 'yet what I am, none cares or knows' (l.1); 'I am the self-consumer of my woes' (l.3). Furthermore, there are also references to the subject which might appear too emphatic ('And yet I am, and live', l.6), and references to God which might seem too unsubtle: 'There to abide with my Creator, God' (l.15). So it is possible, if we want, to dismiss the poem as sentimental, artless, uncritical or naïve. But this would be to misrepresent the *facts* and in any case to throw the baby out with the bath water. The facts misrepresented include not only what is written in the poem but also its author's circumstances: Clare's condition of being confined to an asylum

⁴⁷ Cf. Kivy (1975, 210) and note 36 above.

(possibly medicated?), of having only a few books with him, of being mentally impaired, of being only minimally literate, of having a limited supply of paper, etc. The poetic achievement is to be measured against the conditions of production as well. When we take all those aspects into consideration, we are free to contemplate, and admire, its merits. We can then see how candid, powerful and suggestive the poem *is*; how figures of repetition (especially alliteration) are both emotionally charged, and subtle: 'And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept, / Untroubling and untroubled where I lie' (ll. 16-17). How rhyme is finally effective: 'The grass below—above the vaulted sky.' (l. 18). In this reading we are *forgiving* the flaws. It is that forgiveness that allows us to see the genuine merits of the poem. We can see⁴⁸ how well the poem expresses the subject's desire for peace and quietness; we notice how neatly is introduced in the poem the paradox of feeling lonely, abandoned, and at the same time of wishing to be left alone (with God); we observe how subtly the Romantic image of happiness and absence of concerns associated with childhood is suggested: 'And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept' (l. 16). In short, we explore the poem's positive possibilities,⁴⁹ that we can admire, and we can do this partly by forgetting, or forgiving, the poem's aesthetic flaws.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ The following three comments are made (with modifications) by Joshua (2008, 67-70).

⁴⁹ Cf. Kivy (1975, 210) and note 36 above.

⁵⁰ Note that one criticism often made of (some) avant-garde art is its apparent lack of skill: some people say 'A 6-year-old could do that'. The accusation is that the work in question is not an achievement (arguably an *aesthetic* achievement), and so that it is not admirable as such. These accusations thus still depend on the claim that I am exploring: that art is to be an aesthetic achievement (calling for admiration on that account).

It seems, then, that the suggestion that we aesthetically contemplate works of art by looking at them *through loving spectacles* is on the right lines, by capturing the cognitive and the evaluative (affective) component of aesthetic experience. The aesthetic properties of works are, according to realism, there to be detected (or to remain unnoticed) when we engage in aesthetic experience. Rather than noting their pleasure-related nature (which I do not deny) I have, like Tamen (2001), focused on the admiration which seems to be in place in aesthetic apprehension.

My implicit contention was also that such aesthetic 'admirability' is, at the bottom, what distinguishes works of art: it is their *aesthetic* admirability (admirability based on their beauty) that in essence distinguishes works of art. Works are included in the 'artworld' not by arbitrary stipulation, but because they *can* be regarded as, or are thought to be, valuable (admirable) in a specific way, namely *aesthetic*.⁵¹ Their ultimate nature, as works of art, is not institutional, but aesthetic. Ideally, then, all works included in the artworld would be aesthetically valuable.

⁵¹ Beardsley ([1983] 2004, 58) describes an experience with an 'aesthetic character' thus: 'it takes on a sense of freedom from concern about matters outside the thing received, an intense affect that is nevertheless detached from practical ends, the exhilarating sense of exercising powers of discovery, integration of the self and its experiences. When experience has some or all of these properties, I say it has an *aesthetic character*'. My view is not incompatible with Beardsley's, but, rather like Mothersill's (see note 56 below), it understands the aesthetic as related to beauty or aesthetic value.

6.6 Including beauty

I should now turn to one aspect of aesthetic realism which requires decision. How should the aesthetic realist regard beauty? Zemach (1997, 111) readily admits beauty into his realist account. Beauty is clearly at the centre of his realist interest: 'If cleaving to beauty [...] is a good guide to empirical adequacy, then perhaps beauty is an objective feature of reality.' The contrast Zemach makes is between more general and more specific predicates, considered in a continuum:

grade aesthetic predicates by their generality, from specific predicates to the most general ones. The most general aesthetic predicates are 'beautiful' and 'ugly'; they inform us of the total aesthetic value of a thing without saying how, in what way, that thing has that value. Low in generality are 'gaudy', 'vulgar', 'dainty', 'coarse', 'tragic', 'graceful', 'dramatic', etc.; they too are value-laden predicates, but give a more detailed view of the object that has them. (1997, 103)

What Zemach was trying to do was to explain how an 'aesthetic object is [...] a desire-mediated phenomenon' (1997, 103). But we can also read the passage as showing the above predicates as a unified class. What unifies these predicates (besides their desire-mediated nature) is their informative aspect, according to

Zemach: the most general ones convey the 'total aesthetic value' believed to be present, whereas the most specific ones say 'how, in what way' a certain thing possesses aesthetic value. So they are all taken as referring to something in the world. But other authors, such as, for instance, Levinson, are sceptical about the objectivity of the 'evaluative component' of aesthetic attributions, thereby apparently leaving out a 'solely evaluative' property such as beauty.⁵² What is the best decision? Should we include or exclude the most general evaluative properties? Zemach, by taking general aesthetic predicates to be informative, suggests that beauty is not a mere voicing of approval: something seems to be claimed of reality in a judgement of beauty. But, as Moore has observed,⁵³ there seems to be an intuitive difference between properties and *values* (which, for Moore, are not properties). Moore is analysing the notion of an 'intrinsic' value, and he ends by contrasting it with an intrinsic property. In his words: 'I can only vaguely express the kind of difference I feel there to be by saying that intrinsic properties seem to *describe* the intrinsic nature of what possesses them in a sense in which predicates of value never do.' (1960, 274)

Moore grants, though, the objective existence of intrinsic value, which means: 'To say, of "beauty" or "goodness" that they are "intrinsic" is only [...] to say that this thing which is obviously true of "yellowness" and "blueness" and "redness" is true of them.' (1960, 269) The value in question does belong,

⁵² Even though Levinson also claims the opposite: see note 8 above.

⁵³ Moore ([1922] 1960).

according to Moore, to the object, so that an exact duplicate will possess it to the same degree: 'What is meant [by saying of such a predicate as "beautiful" that it is "intrinsic"] is just that if A is beautiful and B is not you could know *a priori* that A and B are *not* exactly alike.' (1960, 271)

But the also intuitive distinction which Moore makes, between values and properties, leaves us in doubt as to whether it is appropriate to include beauty among the aesthetic properties. On the one hand, beauty would be the aesthetic property *par excellence*—the most basic one—denoted by the most general aesthetic judgements (as Zemach takes it to be). But, on the other hand, the claim that the predicate 'is beautiful' lacks descriptive content points in the opposite direction. It is uncertain whether this lack is suggested by the (frequent) uncommitted use of the term: we often or at least sometimes use 'is beautiful' as a way of voicing mere pleasingness. It is left open whether the predicate can be taken more seriously as referring to an objective feature of things. It seems that aesthetic realism is compatible with both of these options.

I think we should make a stronger claim, however. It seems to me that, *pace* Moore, it is best to include beauty among the aesthetic properties. The reasons for this choice concern, firstly, at least two unwelcome implications I think follow from a *separated* (non-unified) view of aesthetic properties—the view that beauty should have a distinct ontological status from the more specific aesthetic properties. One implication could be put in this way. If we accept aesthetic realism, we claim that aesthetic judgements make genuine

attributions of properties, and (accordingly) that our judgements are to be measured against something in reality: the aesthetic realist claims that 'X is balanced' is true (or false) depending entirely on the (aesthetic) nature of X, not at all on the critic's feelings towards X, even if feelings are necessary to judge the balanced nature of X. What the unified account proposes is only that, *if any* aesthetic properties (such as being elegant, being garish, being delicate) are taken as real, then being beautiful should be treated no differently, this meaning that 'X is beautiful' is true (or false) also depending entirely on the (aesthetic) nature of X, not at all on the critic's feelings towards X.

Those suggesting a separate view for beauty could perhaps say that 'X is beautiful' is entirely evaluative (as opposed to being descriptive), and that this would be a reason to reject beauty as an objective property of things, whereas 'X is balanced' includes both an evaluative component and a descriptive component, so that it is an objective judgement insofar as it contains the descriptive component. But it is not obvious, to begin with, that 'is beautiful' is not descriptive, at least in the sense that some things are, some are not, beautiful. Furthermore, eliminating beauty on the basis of its evaluative nature would require that we eliminate, also, the evaluative component of all the other aesthetic properties, a component which seems intrinsic to many (if not all) of them, and intrinsic in particular to their *aesthetic* nature. In other words, the elimination of evaluative properties, or of the evaluative component of aesthetic

properties, seems problematic, and so does the separate ontological treatment of beauty by the aesthetic realist.

Another (related) unwelcome implication would be this. We have seen that realism about aesthetic properties is attractive partly as an explanation of aesthetic thought and discourse: realism acknowledges that aesthetic thought and discourse is an exercise in apprehension; and it recognises also that aesthetic thought and discourse is directed at beauty or aesthetic value (it is an exercise in evaluation.) So if we accept realism about aesthetic properties but reject realism about beauty, we decline the explanation which says that *general* aesthetic judgements, too, can be an exercise in apprehension; and we also need to explain what sort of distinct evaluative activity is involved in those judgements (of beauty) that is not an exercise in apprehension. (So the unified account is also to be promoted as simple. According to the alternative, separate view, beauty, in contrast with the other aesthetic properties, is not a genuine property of reality. We can, then, ask the following: why would [being] balanced explain the judgement which says that 'X is balanced' whereas [being] beautiful would not be explanatory? It seems that we need reasons motivating the separate treatment.)

We should, then, at least consider counting beauty among the aesthetic properties contemplated by aesthetic realism.⁵⁴ The inclusion of beauty both helps to explain the normativity of even the most general aesthetic judgements, and it makes sense, in a simple way, of the aesthetic nature of art. For better or for worse, in what it accepts and in what it rejects within its limits, art is to be conceived as intrinsically related to beauty.^{55,56} There are possible objections to this claim, but I think they can be answered. For example, someone might say that conceptual art is not aesthetic, or more precisely, it is not to be judged aesthetically. But I think even conceptual art can be accommodated in an aesthetic theory of art, as opposed to an institutional one: it is to count as art, not because it is included in the 'artworld' (to use Danto's phrase), but it is (eventually) included in the artworld because it has, or is thought to have, aesthetic value, even when it appears to be anti-aesthetic. Its aesthetic value need not be discernible in perceptual properties: literature already teaches that aesthetic properties might be intellectual rather than strictly perceptual.⁵⁷ It can be discernible either in a performance or in an idea (etc.) which embodies the

⁵⁴ This need not mean that beauty and the other aesthetic properties would have to behave similarly in every respect. Lamarque (2001, 106) suggests, for instance, that beauty may not be an essential property of works of art. I seek neutrality on this issue.

⁵⁵ Lamarque (2002, 142) makes what I think is a congenial claim, with respect to the identity conditions of works of art: 'evaluative matters will turn out to be crucial in the delineation of identity conditions for works.' (Lamarque, however, does not endorse an aesthetic theory of art).

⁵⁶ This aesthetic conception of art contrasts with the widespread institutional theory of art championed by Danto and Dickie. For an outline of an aesthetic theory of art, see Beardsley ([1983] 2004). Another author who defends an aesthetic theory of art, in particular claiming that 'Works of art are man-made items that are pre-eminently beautiful', is Mothersill (1992, 51).

⁵⁷ Sibley's original list also includes these (e.g., 'a poem is tightly-knit' in [1959] 2001, 1).

work. The same can be said about 'ready-mades'. As we have seen earlier in Chapter 3, Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (granting again that we can take it seriously as art) can be said to contain aesthetic properties not in virtue of the perceptual properties of the object which embodies the idea, but in virtue of the decision (the idea) of its author in converting an ugly or at least ordinary object into a work of art. So the notion of the aesthetic is still operative, even if the work appears as a rejection that art must be beautiful. In the case of *Fountain*, the author's decision and performance—where the work is, apparently, located—may well be seen as provocative, disturbing, challenging and perhaps also powerful. Whether it is good art will depend, according to the aesthetic theory, on whether the properties that the *work* (not just the physical object) has are, in the context, aesthetically valuable, that is, whether the work invites and rewards aesthetic attention. So in the end the notion of the aesthetic is still present. The value might reside partly in its *novelty*: posterior works converting (equally or similarly) ordinary objects into works of art may lack the value *Fountain* can be said to have, just like pictorial or literary or musical works following an artistic movement or school certainly are (other things being equal) less valuable than those that inaugurate that artistic movement or school. What is certain, at least for the aesthetic realist endorsing the aesthetic theory of art, is that works of art must possess some form of aesthetic value, or beauty. In short, again, the artworld's choices are not arbitrary: in an ideal world the artworld would include only aesthetically valuable works.

To those still suspicious of an aesthetic approach, and perhaps more inclined to choose an institutional theory of art, we could say the following. Firstly, and as Beardsley claims ([1983] 2004), the institutional conception cannot capture the apparent fact that artistic *activity* is (or can be) previous to its becoming an institution. Beardsley's claim ([1983] 2004, 56) is more precisely that 'we should want our definitions to leave open the possibility of new forms of artistic activity appearing before they become encompassed by institutions.' It seems that the institutional theory does not allow for works of art previous or posterior to institutional recognition, and this might seem unnatural (think of e.g. buried works of art, which are to remain unrecognized). We should want our definitions to encompass value, and in particular the apparent fact that what gives works of art their value is (the realist claims) their qualities, irrespective of whether they will be recognized. Moreover, it is odd to suppose that artists' activity consists fundamentally in producing items to be included in an institution, rather than aiming at producing items which might have the interest that works of art seem to have, namely aesthetic interest ('aesthetic' to be understood as related to beauty).

What is also being rejected is that the notion of a work of art (and its value) is comparable to the case of a piece of chess⁵⁸ which gains its value by stipulation. For the aesthetic theory the value of works of art is certainly not

⁵⁸ This example (included in an account of the institutional theory of art applied to literature) is offered by Lamarque (2009, 61).

based on stipulation, but on qualities agreed to be of aesthetic interest, or beauty (even in cases of works that defy an aesthetic conception of art). Beardsley makes the following claim, expressing his dissatisfaction with the institutional conception of art: 'To classify them as artworks just because they are called art by those who are called artists because they make things they call art is not to classify at all, but to think in circles' ([1983] 2004, 60).

What aesthetic realism brings to aesthetics and the philosophy of art, then, including the philosophy of literature, is the emphasis on both apprehension and evaluation as inherent in our aesthetic engagement with works of art (and natural objects), and as grounding aesthetic judgements. Our concern and admiration for objects amenable to aesthetic apprehension and evaluation can be understood as both cognitive and affective, and aesthetic experience can be seen as a world-directed endeavour, despite the crucial subjective participation. Our concern and admiration for the works of artistic genius, seen in the study, appreciation, protection and promotion of such works, is explained also by the thought that such works, in virtue of all of their qualities, constitute a genuine and positive contribution to the real world.

Aesthetic realism does not force us to endorse an aesthetic theory of art, but it does leave room for one. With a unified account of aesthetic properties, as outlined earlier, we can understand the aesthetic nature of art as essentially related to beauty or aesthetic value. We have seen that even conceptual art can be accommodated in this account (if the ideas or concepts explored can have

aesthetic value).⁵⁹ The institution of art is made, and gives institutional status to, works considered to be admirable aesthetically. What are those works? Who decides (knows) what has aesthetic value? Again, the answer is not always easy, but Hume has outlined the beginning of a positive solution when he suggested that true critics can show us the standard of taste.

6.7 Conclusion

In this dissertation I have attempted to promote the thought that it is desirable to countenance aesthetic properties in our general ontology, as the grounds for the aesthetic judgements we make. I have considered some forms of opposition to realism, and I have found them wanting. The first was Mackie's error theory, claiming basically that all aesthetic sentences are false because their truth would require that values exist, and for Mackie values do not exist. I have rejected the charge on the grounds that values need not be the extravagant posits Mackie finds 'queer'. The second form of opposition to realism I considered was based on the claim, most famously made by Kant, that aesthetic judgements cannot be

⁵⁹ Beardsley ([1983] 2004, 60) adds, in his account of the aesthetic theory, that even though the theory can accommodate novelty, we should not 'twist' the definition so that it accommodates everything that aspires to artistic status: 'I would incline toward generosity and a welcoming attitude toward novelty—but I would look for evidence of some aesthetic intention, and I see no reason to twist my definition to make room for something like, say Edward T. Cone's one hundred metronomes running down with nobody silly enough to wait around for them'.

based only on the testimony of others. My reply was to accept Kant's claim, and claim that this does not undermine realism. My strategy was to say that colour judgements, at least in the case we considered, may also ultimately require acquaintance and that this is not a decisive claim against the objectivity of colour. Furthermore, I claimed that Kant's epistemological claim does not, per se, threaten the ontological that aesthetic properties exist. The third argument I considered against realism was based on lack of convergence. My reply was brief: as in other areas, lack of convergence, per se, is not a reason to eschew realism.

My positive defence of aesthetic realism began by considering Hume's essay 'Of the Standard of Taste' as at least pointing towards a modest realism. My main claim was that Hume's project is germane to the realist's. Hume both wrote that at least some aesthetic matters are in the end 'questions of fact, not of sentiment' (par. 25), and the story of Sancho's kinsmen helped support the (realist) thesis that reality is beyond verification.

The arguments I offered in support of aesthetic realism were, at bottom, based on explanatory considerations. Aesthetic realism was promoted as the simplest explanation for aesthetic thought and judgement. I also claimed that realism makes sense of the apparently true intuition that aesthetic terms (including, perhaps, the most general aesthetic terms) have descriptive limits. My account of aesthetic properties emphasized that aesthetic experience involves both apprehension and evaluation. The metaphor I used to develop

this idea concerned both *sight* and *love*: aesthetic experience is to be understood as seeing 'through loving spectacles'. The emphasis on admiration as both *seeing* and *loving* promotes an account that is still realist about the aesthetic, whilst acknowledging the ineliminable subjective contribution of feeling, or Humean 'sentiment', in aesthetic contemplation.

References

- Alston, W. P. ([1979] 1999). 'Yes, Virginia, There Is a Real World'. *Proceedings and Addresser of the American Philosophical Association* 52 (6): 779-808. Reprinted in J. Kim & E. Sosa (eds.), *Metaphysics: An Anthology*, 620-633. Malden (MA): Blackwell.
- Austin, J. L. ([1956-7] 1979). 'A Plea for Excuses'. In *Philosophical Papers*, 175-204. 3rd Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baker, A. (2004). 'Simplicity'. In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/simplicity/>.
- Bate, J. (2003). *John Clare: A Biography*. London: Picador.
- Beardsley, M. C. (1973). 'What Is an Aesthetic Quality?'. *Theoria* 39: 50-70.
- Beardsley, M. C. (1981). *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*. 2nd Edition. Indianapolis / Cambridge: Hackett.
- Beardsley, M. C. ([1983] 2004). 'An Aesthetic Definition of Art'. In H. Curtler (ed.), *What Is Art?*, 15-29. New York: Haven Publications. Reprinted in P. Lamarque & S. H. Olsen (eds.), *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition*, 55-62. Malden / Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Bender, J. W. (1996). 'Realism, Supervenience, and Irresolvable Aesthetic Disputes'. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (4): 371-381.
- Bender, J. (2001). 'Sensitivity, Sensibility, and Aesthetic Realism'. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 59 (1): 73-83.
- Bender, J. W. (2003) 'Aesthetic Realism 2'. In J. Levinson (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, 80-98. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Blackburn, S. (1984). *Spreading the Word: Groundings in the Philosophy of Language*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

- Brock, S. & E. Mares. (2007). *Realism and Anti-Realism*. Stocksfield: Acumen.
- Budd, M. (1995). *Values of Art: Pictures, Poetry and Music*. London / New York: Penguin.
- Budd, M. (1999). 'Aesthetic Judgements, Aesthetic Principles and Aesthetic Properties'. *European Journal of Philosophy* 7: 295-311.
- Budd, M. (2001). 'The Pure Judgement of Taste as an Aesthetic Reflective Judgement'. *British Journal of Aesthetics* 41(3): 247-260.
- Budd, M. (2003). 'The Acquaintance Principle'. *British Journal of Aesthetics* 43 (4): 386-392.
- Clare, J. (2004). *John Clare: Selected Poems*. J. Bate (ed.). London: Faber and Faber.
- Cohen, T. ([1973] 1989). 'A Critique of Sibley's Position: Aesthetics/Non-Aesthetics and the Concept of Taste'. *Theoria* 39: 113-152. Reprinted in G. Dickie et al. (eds.), *Aesthetics: A Critical Anthology*, 375-393. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Danto, A. ([1964] 2004). 'The Artworld'. *The Journal of Philosophy* 61: 571-584. Reprinted in P. Lamarque & S. H. Olsen (eds.), *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition*, 27-34. Malden / Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- De Clercq, R. (2002). 'The Concept of an Aesthetic Property'. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 60 (2): 167-176.
- De Clercq, R. (2008). 'The Structure of Aesthetic Properties'. *Philosophy Compass* 3(5): 894-909.
- Devitt, M. (1984). *Realism and Truth*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Dickie, G. ([1983] 2004). 'The New Institutional Theory of Art'. *Proceedings of the 8th Wittgenstein Symposium* 10: 57-64. Reprinted in P. Lamarque & S. H. Olsen (eds.), *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition*, 47-54. Malden / Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Dummett, M. ([1963] 1978). 'Realism'. Reprinted in *Truth and Other Enigmas*, 145-165. London: Duckworth.
- Eaton, M. M. (1994). 'The Intrinsic, Non-Supervenient Nature of Aesthetic Properties'. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52 (4): 383-397.

- Freedman, M. P. (1968). 'The Myth of the Aesthetic Predicate'. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 27 (1): 49-55.
- Goldie, P. (2002). *The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Goldman, A. (1992). 'Aesthetic Properties'. In D. Cooper (ed.), *A Companion to Aesthetics*, 342-347. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Goldman, A. H. (1993). 'Realism about Aesthetic Properties'. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51 (1): 31-37.
- Goldman, A. H. (1995). *Aesthetic Value*. Boulder (Colorado): Westview Press.
- Goodman, N. (1976). *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*. Indianapolis / Cambridge (MA): Hackett Publishing Company.
- Guyer, P. (1997). *Kant and the Claims of Taste*. 2nd Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hobson, A. (1989). *J. W. Waterhouse*. Oxford: Phaidon.
- Hopkins, R. (2000). 'Beauty and Testimony'. In A. O'Hear (ed.), *Philosophy, the Good, the True and the Beautiful*, 209-236. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hopkins, R. (2001). 'Kant, Quasi-Realism and the Autonomy of Aesthetic Judgement'. *European Journal of Philosophy* 9 (2): 166-189.
- Hopkins, R. (2006). 'How to Form Aesthetic Belief: Interpreting the Acquaintance Principle'. *Postgraduate Journal of Aesthetics* 3 (3): 85-99.
- Hume, D. ([1742] 1985). 'The Sceptic'. In *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, 159-180. Edited with a Foreword, Notes, and Glossary by E. F. Miller. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund.
- Hume, D. ([1757] 1985). 'Of the Standard of Taste'. In *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, 226-249. Edited with a Foreword, Notes, and Glossary by E. F. Miller. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund.

- Isenberg, A. ([1949] 1973). 'Critical Communication'. *The Philosophical Review* 58 (4): 330-344. Reprinted in *Aesthetics and the Theory of Criticism. Selected Essays of Arnold Isenberg*, 156-171. Chicago / London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Jackson, F. (1982). 'Epiphenomenal Qualia'. *Philosophical Quarterly* 32: 127-136.
- Joshua, E. (2008). *John Clare: York Notes Advanced*. Essex: Longman & York Press.
- Kant, I. ([1790] 2000). *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. P. Guyer and E. Matthews (transl.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kivy, P. (1967). 'Hume's Standard of Taste: Breaking the Circle'. *British Journal of Aesthetics* 7 (1): 57-66.
- Kivy, P. (1975). 'What Makes 'Aesthetic' Terms Aesthetic?'. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 36 (2): 197-211.
- Kivy, P. (2003). *The Seventh Sense: Francis Hutcheson and Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Lamarque, P. (2001). 'Aesthetic Essentialism'. In E. Brady & J. Levinson (eds.), *Aesthetic Concepts: Essays after Sibley*, 100-122. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Lamarque, P. (2002). 'Work and Object'. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 102 (2): 141-162.
- Lamarque, P. (2007). 'Aesthetics and Literature: a Problematic Relation?'. *Philosophical Studies* 135: 27-40.
- Lamarque, P. (2009). *The Philosophy of Literature*. Malden: Blackwell.
- Lamarque, P. & S. H. Olsen (2004). 'The Philosophy of Literature: Pleasure Restored'. In P. Kivy (ed.) *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics*, 195-214. Malden / Oxford: Blackwell.
- Levinson, J. (1978). 'Properties and Related Entities'. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 39 (1): 1-22.
- Levinson, J. (1994). 'Being Realistic about Aesthetic Properties'. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52 (3): 351-354.

- Levinson, J. (2001). 'Aesthetic Properties, Evaluative Force, and Differences of Sensibility'. In E. Brady & J. Levinson (eds.), *Aesthetic Concepts: Essays after Sibley*, 61-80. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Levinson, J. (2002). 'Hume's Standard of Taste: the Real Problem'. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 60 (3): 227-238.
- Levinson, J. (2005). 'Aesthetic Properties—II'. *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 79 (1): 211-227.
- Levinson, J. (2006). 'Why There Are No Tropes'. *Philosophy* 81: 563-579.
- Livingston, P. (2003). 'On an Apparent Truism in Aesthetics'. *British Journal of Aesthetics* 43 (3): 260-278.
- Livingston, P. (2005). *Art and Intention: A Philosophical Study*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Loux, M. J. (2002). *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction*. 2nd Edition. London / New York: Routledge.
- Mackie, J. L. (1977). *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- MacLachlan, C. (1986). 'Hume and the Standard of Taste'. *Hume Studies* 12 (1): 18-38.
- Matravers, D. (2005). 'Aesthetic Properties—I'. *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 79 (1): 191-210.
- McDowell, J. (1983). 'Aesthetic Value, Objectivity, and the Fabric of the World'. In E. Schaper (ed.) *Pleasure, Preference and Value: Studies in Philosophical Aesthetics*, 1-16. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McDowell, J. (1996). *Mind and World. With a new introduction*. Cambridge (MA) / London: Harvard University Press.
- McGinn, C. (1983). *The Subjective View: Secondary Qualities and Indexical Thoughts*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- McGinn, C. (2000). *Logical Properties: Identity, Existence, Predication, Necessity, Truth*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

McGonigal, A. (2006). 'The Autonomy of Aesthetic Judgement'. *British Journal of Aesthetics* 46 (4): 331-348.

McLeod, S. K. (2001). *Modality and Anti-Metaphysics*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Meskin, A. (2004). 'Aesthetic Testimony: What Can We Learn from Others about Beauty and Art?'. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 69 (1): 65-91.

Miller, A. (2002). 'Realism'. In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/realism/>.

Moore, G. E. ([1922] 1960). 'The Conception of Intrinsic Value'. In *Philosophical Studies*, 253-275. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Mothersill, M. (1984). *Beauty Restored*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Mothersill, M. (1989). 'Hume and the Paradox of Taste'. In G. Dickie *et al.* (eds.), *Aesthetics: A Critical Anthology*, 269-286. 2nd Edition. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Mothersill, M. (1992). 'Beauty'. In D. E. Cooper (ed.), *A Companion to Aesthetics*, 44-51. Oxford / Cambridge (MA): Blackwell Publishers.

Nehamas, A. (2007). *Only a Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art*. Princeton / Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Olsen, S. H. (1987). *The End of Literary Theory*. Cambridge / London: Cambridge University Press.

Ovid (1990). *Ovid's Poetry of Exile*. D. R. Slavitt (transl.). Baltimore / London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Ovid (2005). *The Poems of Exile*. P. Green (transl.). Berkeley / Los Angeles / London: University of California Press.

Pettit, P. ([1983] 2004). 'The Possibility of Aesthetic Realism'. In E. Schaper (ed.), *Pleasure, Preference and Value: Studies in Philosophical Aesthetics*, 17-38. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Reprinted in P. Lamarque & S. Olsen (eds.), *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition*, 158-171. Malden (MA): Blackwell.

Pettit, P. (1991). 'Realism and Response-Dependence'. *Mind* 100 (4): 587-626.

- Putnam, H. (1990). *Realism with a Human Face*. Cambridge (MA) / London: Harvard University Press.
- Sainsbury, R. M. (1996). 'Crispin Wright: *Truth and Objectivity*'. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 56 (4): 899-904.
- Savile, A. (1996). 'Of the Standard of Taste'. In S. Lovibond & S. G. Williams (eds.), *Identity, Truth and Value: Essays in Honor of David Wiggins*, 130-146. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Schellekens, E. (2008). 'Three Debates in Meta-Aesthetics'. In K. Stock and K. Thomson-Jones (eds.), *New Waves in Aesthetics*, 170-187. Hampshire / New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Scruton, R. (2009). *Beauty*. Oxford / New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sellars, W. (1963). 'Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man'. In *Science, Perception and Reality*, Chapter 1. London / New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Sibley, F. (1959). 'Aesthetic Concepts'. *Philosophical Review* 68: 421-450.
- Sibley, F. (1965). 'Aesthetic and Non-aesthetic'. *Philosophical Review* 74: 135-159.
- Sibley, F. (2001). *Approach to Aesthetics: Collected Papers on Philosophical Aesthetics*. J. Benson et al. (eds.). Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Stecker, R. (2005). *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: An Introduction*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Tamen, M. (2001). *Friends of Interpretable Objects*. Cambridge / London: Harvard University Press.
- Tamen, M. (2005). 'My Taste'. *Boundary 2* 32 (1): 209-222.
- Tappolet, C. (2000). *Émotions et Valeurs*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- van Inwagen, P. (1993). *Metaphysics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Walton, K. L. ([1970] 2004). 'Categories of Art'. *The Philosophical Review* 79: 334-367. Reprinted in P. Lamarque & S. H. Olsen (eds.), *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition*, 142-157. Malden / Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Weitz, M. ([1956] 2004). 'The Role of Theory in Aesthetics'. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 15: 27-35. Reprinted in P. Lamarque & S. H. Olsen (eds.), *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition*, 12-18. Malden / Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Williams, B. (1978). *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Wollheim, R. ([1968] 1980). *Art and Its Objects*. 2nd Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wright, C. (1987). *Realism, Meaning and Truth*. Oxford / New York: Basil Blackwell.

Wright, C. (1992). *Truth and Objectivity*. Cambridge (MA) / London: Harvard University Press.

Wright, C. (1996a). 'Précis of *Truth and Objectivity*'. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 56 (4): 863-868.

Wright, C. (1996b). 'Response to Commentators'. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 56 (4): 911-941.

Yates, D. (2008). 'Recent Work on Response-Dependence'. *Philosophical Books* 49 (4): 344-354.

Zangwill, N. (1991). 'Metaphor and Realism in Aesthetics'. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 49 (1): 57-62.

Zangwill, N. (2000). 'Skin Deep or in the Eye of the Beholder?: The Metaphysics of Aesthetic and Sensory Properties'. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 61 (3): 595-618.

Zangwill, N. (2001). *The Metaphysics of Beauty*. New York: Cornell University Press.

Zangwill, N. (2003). 'Aesthetic Realism 1'. In J. Levinson (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, 63-79. New York: Oxford University Press.

Zemach, E. (1987). 'Aesthetic Properties, Aesthetic Laws, and Aesthetic Principles'. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 46 (1): 67-73.

Zemach, E. M. (1997). *Real Beauty*. University Park (Pennsylvania): Pennsylvania State University Press.