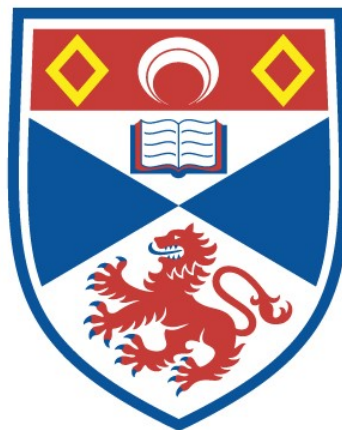


THE ANATOMY OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

James Ursell

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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The Anatomy of Aesthetic Experience

James Ursell



University of
St Andrews

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

at the University of St Andrews

September 2019

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Abstract

The primary aim of this thesis is to formulate an intensional definition of aesthetic experience. Its secondary aims are (i) to show how this definition might be used for empirical research and (ii) to better understand other terms that are qualified by 'aesthetic' (chiefly, 'aesthetic properties' and 'aesthetic value'). In chapter one, I will explain the nature of the problem we face and why it demands our attention. In chapters two and three, I will critically survey positions in the literature and argue that none adequately characterise aesthetic experience. In chapter four, I will motivate and defend an intensional definition of 'aesthetic experience' and an art-based account of 'aesthetic properties'. The former states, put briefly, that aesthetic experiences are those which acquire a valence when the subject attends to the content of her experience for its own sake and discerns aesthetic properties. The latter states that 'aesthetic properties' are those which comprise the value artworks have as works of art. In chapter five, I will use this definition of aesthetic experience to formulate the hypothesis that mindfulness training can augment one's propensity for having rewarding aesthetic experiences of nature and everyday life. I will then propose how this hypothesis could be empirically investigated. In chapter six, I conclude by examining what my analysis of 'aesthetic experience' and 'aesthetic properties' reveals about 'aesthetic value'. I will then, finally, highlight topics requiring further research.

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1. Introduction

This thesis is an attempt to answer the question of what exactly makes some experiences 'aesthetic'. My contention is that there are currently no satisfactory accounts of aesthetic experience in the literature. I will make the case for this in the following two chapters (chapters two and three). In this chapter, I shall elucidate the problem before us and explain its significance. I will then discuss desiderata of an account of aesthetic experience. Finally, I will provide an overview of the chapters which follow.

The Problem Before us and Why It Matters

Aesthetic experience is not an easy topic to discuss. According to Silvia Jonas aesthetic experiences 'often involve a specific state of mind that is impossible to put into language; no expression seems adequate to capture the quality of being in that state of mind'¹ (Jonas 2016: 3). Jonas is at least right to draw attention to the difficulty one often faces in communicating *what it is like* to have an aesthetic experience. One explanation for this is that aesthetic experiences seem to resist introspection: when one reflects on an aesthetic experience one is having, the very act of doing so can disrupt one's reverie and dispel whatever 'aesthetic' character the experience had.

The issue is compounded by the ambiguity of the term 'aesthetic'. This is not only used to qualify 'experience', but also such terms as 'pleasure', 'emotions', 'judgement', 'value,' 'concepts', and 'properties'². When we investigate what exactly makes, for instance, a 'property' or a 'judgement' *aesthetic*, we find no consensus, but only a patchwork of differing views. This was not lost on Frank Sibley, who describes the conceptual landscape before us as follows:

'There is no notion of the aesthetic; there are many criss-crossing ones, some very puritanical, some very catholic, some merely stipulative, some mere prejudice, some hand-me-downs, many for which intelligible reasons are available but with which one need not sympathize' (Sibley 2001: 254)

Jane Forsey adopts a less forgiving tone:

¹ Note that Jonas (2016) is referring specifically to aesthetic experiences of art.

² 'Aesthetic' is also used as a noun to denote a distinctive design style, as when we talk about a film's 'aesthetic' or the 'aesthetic' of an artistic movement.

‘Our confident and often facile use of such notions as aesthetic experience, aesthetic value, artistic value, and so on, in fact belies a great deal of confusion about what they mean’ (Forsey 2017: 175).

It will therefore be useful to first get our bearings by discussing some types of aesthetic experience. This will also help to elucidate the nature of the problem before us and why it demands our attention.

Aesthetic experiences vary in their duration, intensity and character. Some are brief moments of fleeting pleasure in which we savour a sumptuous quality we chance upon in our surroundings: the fragrant scent of a plant, or the undulating peal of church bells, for example. In the following extract, Pulitzer Prize winner Diane Ackerman describes one such experience:

‘When you consider something like death [...] it probably doesn’t matter if [...] a neighbour, fetching her mail, sees us standing in the cold with our own letters in one hand and a seismically red autumn leaf in the other, its color hitting our senses like a blow from a stun gun, as we stand with a huge grin, too paralyzed by the intricately veined gaudiness of the leaf to move’ (Ackerman 1991: 65).

Other aesthetic experiences are not so pleasant: we may feel repulsed, oppressed, distressed, indignant or frustrated. These are experiences we might have of, for example, a formulaic pop song played *ad nauseum*, or the decomposing carcass of a bird, or a landfill site from which even plastic debris seems to flee. Such experiences offer no escape from the stresses of life and sometimes amplify them. Still other aesthetic experiences offer catharsis: unacknowledged emotions are stirred-up, brought to the fore and find the recognition they were denied (music in particular can be a potent means of catharsis). Some have a restorative effect, comparable to a good night’s sleep or a vacation, and enable us to return to daily life with renewed vigour. Francis Bacon, the painter, seems to be referring to an aesthetic experience of this kind in the following:

‘If I go to the National Gallery and I look at one of the great paintings that excite me [...] the painting unlocks all kinds of valves of sensation within me which return me to life more violently’ (Sylvester 1987: 141).

The intensity of some aesthetic experiences can displace the sense we have of ourselves as experiencing subjects who are apart from the observed world. These experiences may acquire a

quasi-spiritual or quasi-religious character. Ralph Waldo Emerson describes one such experience in the following:

‘I see the spectacle of morning from the hilltop over against my house, from daybreak to sunrise, with emotion which an angel might share. The long slender bars of cloud float like fishes in the sea of crimson light. From the earth, as a shore, I look out into that silent sea. I seem to partake its rapid transformations; the active enchantment reaches my dust, and I dilate and conspire with the morning wind’ (Emerson 2003: 43).

The experience John Milton describes in the following lines also seems to have both an aesthetic and a religious character:

‘[...] let the pealing Organ blow,
To the Quire below,
In Service high, and Anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into extasies,
And bring all Heav'n before mine eyes’ (Milton 1931: 96).

These examples help illustrate, firstly, how diverse and pervasive aesthetic experiences can be and, secondly, the significance they can have – for better or worse – in lived experience. The challenge we face is to provide an account which is sufficiently broad and inclusive to accommodate this diversity without being uninformative or imprecise. My central aim in what follows is to identify conditions that are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for aesthetic experience. As the foregoing examples illustrate, some aesthetic experiences have tremendous significance, whilst others seem to be deleterious and make our lives worse. This is a clear incentive to provide a definition of aesthetic experience that will allow for further (empirical and personal) investigation into how they can contribute to our well-being. A loose characterisation of the features which aesthetic experiences tend to exhibit will be of considerably less use for this project than a description of the conditions under which all and only aesthetic experiences occur.

There are, of course, alternatives to an intensional definition which are also informative. We could provide a non-exhaustive, disjunctive set of sufficient conditions, for example. Alternatively, we could develop a cluster account which consists of a set of criteria that are disjunctively necessary (so it is necessary that at least one criterion is satisfied by every aesthetic experience), and sufficient as a whole and in subsets for aesthetic experience.

However, if we can name conditions which are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for aesthetic experience – and I will argue that we can – then we should.

We have touched on one incentive for investigating aesthetic experience which is the significance they can have in our lives. Clive Bell goes so far as to describe aesthetic experience as ‘one of the most valuable things in the world’ (Bell 1987: 35). Hyperbole aside, human behaviour across different cultures and eras points to our being the type of creatures who place great value on having (at least certain kinds of) aesthetic experience. Huge amounts of effort have been, and continue to be, expended in securing their provision (we write novels, carve sculptures, learn instruments, produce films, fund orchestras, design and construct opera houses, museums and cinemas, plant flowers and trees, weed gardens, and so on). I suspect introspection will reveal for most, if not all, people, just how pervasive, transformative and valuable aesthetic experience can be. Therefore, to reiterate, achieving greater clarity about it holds the promise of learning how we might live more rewarding and more fulfilling lives.

Another reason to investigate aesthetic experience is to help answer the question of just how pervasive it is in our lives. Recent years have seen a widening of interest beyond the traditional focus on art and nature as experienced through vision and audition. Aestheticians have drawn attention to how our everyday lives are imbued with aesthetic character. The hegemony of vision and audition in aesthetic theory has been challenged by a burgeoning literature on the aesthetics of gustation, olfaction, tactition and somatosensation. Sherri Irvin has even argued that scratching an itch can be an aesthetic experience (Irvin 2008). Of course, to productively explore ‘aesthetic experience’ in a novel context, we must first be absolutely clear about what we mean by the term. By precisely specifying what makes an experience ‘aesthetic’, we will be in a stronger position to examine how exactly aesthetic experiences figure in our everyday lives and across different sense modalities.

Furthermore, clarifying what makes experiences ‘aesthetic’ will help shed light on the network of other terms qualified by ‘aesthetic’ (some of which were mentioned above). The concepts these terms name, and the relations in which they stand to one another, comprise what Malcolm Budd terms, ‘the abstract heart of aesthetics’ (Budd 2008: 1). I will argue ‘aesthetic properties’ are analytically prior³ to ‘aesthetic experience’. I will also argue that the concept of ‘disinterestedness’ (where this is understood, put briefly, as relinquishing one’s practical or

³ ‘To say that the notion of X is analytically prior to the notion of Y is to say that Y can be analysed or elucidated in terms of X while the analysis or elucidation of X itself does not have to advert to Y’ (Davies 1996: 96).

personal interest in the object of experience [Stolnitz 1960: 35]) may be a requirement for ‘aesthetic judgements’ and ‘aesthetic evaluations’ to have intersubjective validity, but should not be considered a necessary precondition for ‘aesthetic experience’. Furthermore, in the concluding section, I shall distinguish two ways of construing ‘aesthetic value’ and explain what is required, given my analysis of aesthetic experience and aesthetic properties, to non-circularly adopt each one (though I will remain neutral as to which we should endorse).

In summary, the challenge we face is to establish what makes some experiences ‘aesthetic’ and the rewards of doing so are three-fold. Firstly, it will allow for further investigation into how aesthetic experience can be recruited to enrich our lives. Secondly, it will help bring some clarity to how aesthetic experience figures in everyday life and across different sense modalities. Thirdly, it will cast some light on the network of terms qualified by ‘aesthetic’ which comprise the ‘abstract heart’ of the discipline. I will now consider what features a good account of aesthetic experience should have.

I propose to use the following desiderata of an account of aesthetic experience to assess positions in the literature:

- (i) It is instructive and offers the uninitiated practical guidance on how to have an aesthetic experience.
- (ii) It is amenable to experimental research, offering researchers a definition that can be used to conduct experiments.
- (iii) It is compatible with an established theme or strand of thought within philosophical aesthetics.
- (iv) It is extensionally adequate.⁴
- (v) It implies a position on, or approach to addressing, the question of which sense modalities are capable of providing aesthetic experiences.
- (vi) It has something to say about whether borderline or indeterminate cases qualify as ‘aesthetic experiences’.
- (vii) It amply accommodates the aesthetic experience of non-art (including the natural world, as well as human artefacts, and practices).

The reason for (i) and (ii) is clear: given aesthetic experiences can have tremendous significance in our lives, an account of it should be both instructive and lend itself to empirical research. We

⁴ (i)–(iv) are adapted from Carroll (2006: 82-3).

have also covered the motivation for including (v) and (vii): an account of aesthetic experience should help us understand just how pervasive aesthetic experience is.

With regards to (iii), ‘aesthetics’ in its current use has a relatively recent history. Alexander Baumgarten (1735) famously first uses it in a sense we would recognize today to name a subject area, domain, or field of study⁵. However, it has since come to qualify states (‘aesthetic [dis]pleasure’, ‘aesthetic emotion’, ‘aesthetic experience’), mental processes (‘aesthetic judgements’ ‘aesthetic evaluations’), experiential objects (‘aesthetic properties’) and value (‘aesthetic value’) which fall within the scope of that domain (or the one it has now become)⁶. Although the states which ‘aesthetic experience’ names may be familiar to everyone (or almost everyone), the term itself is not: it is primarily used by philosophers within the context of the discourse succeeding Baumgarten’s denomination of the field. An account of aesthetic experience should, at least, be congruent with this discourse. Its use within philosophical aesthetics, to clarify the meaning of terms qualified by ‘aesthetic’, would be severely limited were it not. Furthermore, an account which is entirely unmoored from previous work in aesthetics would be of limited use in aiding the process by which philosophical investigation of a phenomenon brings it more clearly into focus so it can be subjected to scientific investigation.

An account of aesthetic experience should also be (iv) extensionally adequate in the sense that experiences which are widely considered to be ‘aesthetic’ will qualify as such. This need not include indeterminate or borderline cases. However, a good account of aesthetic experience should (vi) have something to say about these. Levinson (2016) raises the question of whether sexual, pharmacological, and mystical experiences are or can be ‘aesthetic’. He argues that, of these, only sexual experiences could count as such (Levinson 2016: 40-42). An account of aesthetic experience which can help us decide, in this manner, whether borderline cases qualify is, *ceteris paribus*, better than one which cannot. Now that we have formulated desiderata of an

⁵ He uses it to name ‘the science of sensible cognition’ (Guyer 2007) which is the study of the cognition of perfection (beauty) and imperfection (ugliness) in the arts and in sensory experience more generally (Wessell 1972: 336-7) (Åhlberg 2003:145).

⁶ It is perhaps this change in the use of ‘aesthetic’ from denominating a heterogenous field of study to qualifying particular states, mental processes, and objects which explains the ambiguous manner in which it does so; areas of study tend not to have fixed and precise boundaries, so it should come as no surprise that expressions qualified by a term which was originally used to designate an area of study (i.e. ‘aesthetics’) are ambiguous. An alternative, more optimistic view might compare this change in the use of ‘aesthetic’ to the process by which a science branches off into subdisciplines as the nuances of the area being investigated are better understood and brought into focus.

account of aesthetic experience, I will proceed to provide an overview of the chapters which follow.

Overview

In the following two chapters (chapters two and three), I critically survey positions in the literature and argue that none of the existing positions adequately characterise aesthetic experience. In chapter four, I motivate and defend a ‘hybrid’ account of aesthetic experience and an art focused account of aesthetic properties. In chapter five, I discuss how some aesthetic experiences of nature and everyday life can enrich our lives and hypothesise that mindfulness can enhance the propensity for having such experiences. I additionally propose how this effect of mindfulness on aesthetic experience could be empirically investigated. In chapter six, I conclude by identifying some unresolved issues and outlining avenues of future research.

Chapters Two and Three

I will confine my critical survey of positions in the literature to those formulated since the start of the 20th century. This is partly to constrain the exegetical element of my research and partly because the term ‘aesthetic experience’ (rather than, say, ‘aesthetic judgement’) only features prevalently in English language philosophy publications since the start of the 20th century⁷.

Chapter two examines Noël Carroll’s *content-oriented account* which defines aesthetic experiences as those we have when attending to the aesthetic properties of an artwork with understanding of the category of art to which it belongs. I will argue that having an experience which is directed at aesthetic properties is necessary, but not sufficient, for aesthetic experience. It is not sufficient as we can experience the aesthetic properties of an artwork whilst understanding the category of art to which the work belongs, but only have a perceptual experience (and not an ‘aesthetic experience’). My reasons for concluding aesthetic experiences are necessarily experiences of aesthetic properties are two-fold: firstly, it is difficult – and, I shall argue, impossible – to imagine an aesthetic experience with content which could not be described in terms of aesthetic properties. Secondly, alternative accounts of aesthetic experience which do not refer to ‘aesthetic properties’ – but which just refer to the ‘mode’ and not the ‘content’ of the experience – are unsuccessful.

⁷ The earliest example I have found is (Adams 1907).

I will demonstrate the latter in chapter three where I discuss *'mode-oriented' accounts*. These characterise aesthetic experience in terms of how the experiencing subject approaches, or engages with, or responds to the content of her experience (rather than what that content is). Mode-oriented accounts fall into three categories: (i) axiological accounts, which treat aesthetic experiences as being of final, and not just instrumental, (dis)value; (ii) affect-oriented accounts, which characterise aesthetic experience in terms of a distinctive affective state or set of affective states or a type of pleasure; and (iii) attitudinal accounts, which explain aesthetic experience by reference to an 'aesthetic' attitude or an 'aesthetic' way of allocating attention.⁸

Proponents of (i) *axiological* accounts include Gary Iseminger (2006), Robert Stecker (2006), and Jerrold Levinson (2016). I will examine their views and argue that having an experience one values for its own sake is neither necessary nor sufficient for aesthetic experience. It is not necessary as some aesthetic experiences simply lack a valuing component (though they may be pleasurable or enjoyable). It is not sufficient as some experiences we value for their own sakes are not 'aesthetic' (spending time with loved ones, for example).

Proponents of (ii) *affect-oriented* accounts include Clive Bell and Monroe Beardsley. Bell's view implies a subject is having an aesthetic experience of an artwork if and only if her attention is trained on the 'significant form' of an artwork and, as a result, she feels 'aesthetic emotion'. I will argue Bell's account is false as some aesthetic experiences involve attending to non-formal aesthetic properties (the properties of being 'shocking', 'macabre' or 'unnerving', for example) or feeling affects unlike 'aesthetic emotion' (which Bell characterises as euphoric).

We can attribute three accounts of 'aesthetic experience' to Beardsley. His initial (1958) account characterises aesthetic experience in terms of unity, intensity, and complexity. I will argue that these are neither necessary nor sufficient for aesthetic experience. Beardsley later (1969) proposes a hedonic account in which feeling pleasure is a necessary condition for aesthetic experience. His hedonic account is problematic as some aesthetic experiences are devoid of pleasure and involve only displeasure or negative affect. Beardsley's final (1982) account lists five criteria for aesthetic experience. These are, object-directedness, felt freedom, detached affect, active discovery, and wholeness. (Beardsley 1982: 288-9). Beardsley argues that a subject is having an aesthetic experience if and only if she satisfies the first of these and at least three of the remaining four (*ibid*: 288)⁴. I will argue that some experiences which are 'aesthetic' do not satisfy any of the disjunct sets which, according to Beardsley, are each

⁸ This is a modification of a taxonomy devised by Carroll (2002: 146).

disjunctively necessary and individually sufficient for aesthetic experience. I conclude that aesthetic experience cannot be adequately characterised just in terms of an affective state or set of affective states.

Proponents of (iii) *attitudinal approaches* characterise aesthetic experience in terms of an 'aesthetic attitude' that is productive of aesthetic experience or an 'aesthetic' way of allocating attention. Proponents of this approach include Edward Bullough, Jerome Stolnitz, and Bence Nanay. Bullough and Stolnitz argue, in differing ways, that taking a 'practical interest' in an object (i.e. considering it as a means to some further end) is inimical to experiencing it aesthetically. I will argue against this using counter-examples. I will then examine Bence Nanay's position which states that some paradigmatic 'aesthetic experiences' involve attention which is both focused on an object and distributed among that object's properties. I will raise several problems with Nanay's proposal and will conclude that it fails to tell us what is distinctive about aesthetic experience.

I will suggest that attitudinal accounts do tell us something informative about aesthetic experience. They tell us that attending to something exclusively for instrumental reasons (i.e. just as a means to something else) prevents one from experiencing it aesthetically. Where attitudinal approaches go wrong is, firstly, in failing to recognise that instrumental and non-instrumental reasons for attending to something are not opposed or mutually exclusive but frequently co-occur. And, secondly, in thinking that aesthetic experience can be adequately described just in terms of the subject's objectives for attending to something.

Chapter Four

In chapter four, I will consolidate the conclusions reached in the previous two chapters into an intensional definition of 'aesthetic experience'. This states that a subject is having an aesthetic experience if and only if: (i) the experience is directed toward an aesthetic property or properties, or towards lower-level properties the subject judges to be apt for description in terms of aesthetic properties, or the relation(s) therebetween; (ii) the subject is attending to the content of her experience for its own sake, or for the sake of an affective payoff intrinsic to the experience; and (iii) the experience has a positive and/or negative valence because the subject has an appropriate affective response to the content to which she is attending and/or because she assigns final value and/or final disvalue to the experience.

This account treats 'aesthetic properties' as analytically prior to aesthetic experience, which raises the question of what, precisely, we mean by 'aesthetic properties'. I will motivate an art-based account according to which aesthetic properties comprise the value artworks have as works of art. I will then make the case against thinking 'art' is best defined in terms of 'aesthetic experience' which, if true, would render my account of the latter circular. The chapter concludes by demonstrating how the account I will propose meets the desiderata of an account of aesthetic experience.

Chapter Five

The fifth chapter examines how one might recruit aesthetic experiences to enrich one's life and contribute to one's well-being. I will first consider ideas expressed by William Wordsworth in *Tintern Abbey*. I will use Wordsworth's poem to help elucidate two effects aesthetic experience can have on one's well-being: firstly, an immediate effect by which aesthetic experience transforms one's occurrent mental state and; secondly, a long-term effect in which aesthetic experiences enhance one's subjective sense of well-being. I will then develop the proposal that proficiency in mindfulness can furnish one with the propensity for having aesthetic experiences of nature and everyday life which exert these effects. I will conclude by suggesting how this relation between mindfulness and aesthetic experience could be empirically investigated.

2. The Content-Oriented Account of Aesthetic Experience

I will now discuss Noël Carroll's content-oriented account of aesthetic experience. I will argue that Carroll's accounts of artistic 'form' and 'aesthetic properties' are problematic. I will also argue that his formulation of the content-oriented account does not name conditions that are sufficient for aesthetic experience. Furthermore, Carroll's proposed application of the content-oriented account to nature would erroneously classify some experiences as 'aesthetic' when they are not. I will conclude by showing how Carroll's account fails to meet the desiderata which we discussed in the Introduction.

Noël Carroll is the main exponent of the content-oriented account. He writes, '[insofar] as aesthetic experience is an experience, it has content. One straightforward way of attempting to get at the nature of aesthetic experience is to attempt to circumscribe that content' (Carroll 2012: 173). He does so in the following:

The Content-Oriented Account: '[O]ne is having an aesthetic experience of an artwork just in case one is attending with understanding to the formal properties and/or the expressive properties and/or the aesthetic properties and/or the reflexive relations of the aforesaid properties (or just one of them) of the artwork to the relevant spectator' (Carroll 2015: 172).

By 'with understanding' Carroll means only that one must be 'informed to some degree about the kind of work to which [one] is attending' (Carroll 2015: 171). He breaks with convention by using the expression 'just in case' (which conventionally means 'if and only if') to indicate the disjunctions are each sufficient for aesthetic experience of art (he does not think any or all of them are necessary) (*ibid*).

Most authors classify the 'formal' and 'expressive' qualities of an artwork as subcategories within the broader set of 'aesthetic properties' (see Goldman 1995: 17). Conventionally, an artwork's 'formal' properties are the aesthetic properties it has by virtue of its form (examples include: 'tightly knit', 'balanced', 'chaotic', 'coherent', and 'unified') and its 'expressive' properties are its aesthetic properties which either elicit or resemble emotions (for example, 'serene', 'angry', 'euphoric', 'brooding', 'melancholy', and 'anguished') (*ibid*). Carroll's formulation of the content-oriented approach might suggest he thinks otherwise. However, he clarifies his position in the following:

‘All these properties, of course, might be called “aesthetic properties” in the broad sense; however I am using that term narrowly in order to denote qualities like brittleness and garishness that [...] refer to the qualitative dimensions of artworks. Roughly, these are the kind of non-expressive qualities to which Frank Sibley often alludes’ (Carroll 2015: 171).

Carroll thinks aesthetic experience of art is directed at ‘aesthetic properties’ (in the broad, conventional sense of the term) because these are *how* the purposes of artworks are articulated or embodied (Carroll 2015: 174). In his words,

‘the formal properties, the expressive properties, and the aesthetic properties are what implement the purposes of the artwork. They are *how* the artwork articulates or embodies—gives flesh to—the purposes of the artwork.’ (Carroll 2015: 174).

So ‘aesthetic properties’ (in the broad, conventional sense) are the properties of artworks which implement their points or purposes. The idea that artworks have points or purposes is, Carroll argues, ‘scarcely controversial, once we realize how diverse these purposes may be’ (Carroll 1999: 143). Expanding on this, he writes,

‘the purpose of an artwork may be to advance a theme or a point of view, or the purpose may be to display an expressive property, or may be to arouse feelings, including the feelings of pleasure, in audiences. An artwork may be about communicating ideas – ideas about the world or ideas about art – or it may have no ideas or meanings, but simply be devoted to engendering a certain sort of experience, such as repose, excitement, suspense, or delight. Artworks may make points, or they may merely have points, – to encourage viewers, for instance, to use their discriminatory faculties delicately.’ (*ibid*).

Drawing these elements together, Carroll presents a view of aesthetic experience as attentiveness to the ways the point(s) or purpose(s) of an artwork are realised by it or embodied in it⁹. As he puts it,

‘Artworks have points or purposes [...] The form of the work and the qualities with which it is invested are the means by which the purposes of the work are realized. In

⁹ This is also how Carroll describes his view in conversation with Hans Maes, as recorded in the latter’s *Conversations on Art and Aesthetics* (Maes 2017: 258).

this regard, aesthetic experiences involve focus upon the how of the work (Carroll 2012: 174)

Carroll seems to have formulated *the Content-Oriented Account* so it can accommodate two ways of aesthetically experiencing artworks. These include: firstly, (i) appreciating the design choices made in the production of an artwork ('design appreciation') (Carroll 1999: 201)¹⁰; secondly, (ii) just experiencing the aesthetic properties of an artwork.

With regards to (i), we appreciate the design of an artwork by considering how the choices made in its production work to realize its point or purpose (Carroll 1999: 150). The provenance of 'design appreciation' can be located in Hume's statement that '[e]very work of art has [...] a certain end or purpose for which it is calculated; and is deemed more or less perfect, as it is more or less fitted to attain this end' (Hume 1995: 263) (Carroll 2016: 3). Carroll seems to equate design appreciation with appreciation of artistic 'form', where his definition of 'form' is, 'the ensemble of choices elected to realize the point or purpose of the work' (Carroll 2006: 90). I will now briefly discuss some problems with Carroll's definition of artistic 'form', after which I shall raise some more general objections to *the Content-Oriented Account*.

Some authors have objected that Carroll's definition of 'form' is too inclusive (including Goldman 2013: 327 and Stecker 2006: 6-7). Consider, for instance, Picasso's decision to include a light bulb in *Guernica* which is commonly regarded as a reference to Goya's *The Third of May 1808*. Picasso's inclusion of the lightbulb in *Guernica* is a choice he made to realize the point or purpose of the work. So, according to Carroll, it would count as a component of *Guernica's* form or one of its formal properties. Yet formal properties are typically understood to be non-relational¹¹. Moreover, Picasso's choice to include a light bulb in *Guernica* is clearly a choice about the *content* of the work, rather than its *form* (at least as these terms are typically understood)¹².

¹⁰ More recently, Carroll recasts 'design appreciation' as 'the art appreciative heuristic' (Carroll 2016: 5). This states that, 'in order to appreciate a work of art, one must 1) identify its intended purpose or purposes and 2) determine the adequacy or appropriateness of its forms – its formal choices – to the realization or articulation of its intended purpose (or purposes)' (*ibid*).

¹¹ Where a 'relational' property is one an object possesses by virtue of the relation in which it stands to things other than itself and the observer's sensory experience of it (Zangwill 2001: 56-7).

¹² This is not question begging against Carroll – merely an attempt to show how revisionary his view of 'form' is.

According to what might be termed the ‘standard’ or ‘received’ view, the ‘form’ of an artwork is contrasted with its ‘content’: ‘content’ refers to what is represented in the work, whereas ‘form’ is how the work appears when considered independently of its representational content. To paraphrase Collingwood, to consider the ‘content’ of an artwork is to examine *what* its artist intends to say, whereas to consider its ‘form’ is to examine *how* she says it (Collingwood 1929: 335).

In an earlier work, Carroll rejects the distinction between ‘form’ and ‘content’ on the grounds that, ‘it is probably impossible to distinguish’ the two (Carroll 1999: 138). More recently, he has suggested that the same feature of a work can be both an aspect of its ‘content’ and an aspect of its ‘form’ depending on how we attend to it (Carroll 2015: 183). For example, if we attend to the lightbulb in *Guernica* ‘in terms of its construction relative to its purpose’, or as a ‘design [element] in the work [...] contemplated for the way in which [it] advance[s] the point or purpose of the work’, then we are attending to it as part of the work’s form (*ibid*). Whereas, if we view it ‘from inside our emotional response’ or ‘as the [object] of our emotional response’ (*ibid*), then we attend to it as part of *Guernica*’s content.

It is not clear what Carroll means by this last point. Surely we can comprehend the content of an artwork without emotionally responding to it? We just see things (or hear) things *in* artworks. We might emotionally respond to what a work represents, but often we do not.

Another concern is what Carroll would say about the ‘form’ of an artwork that is produced by multiple artists. Consider, for example, the traditional Japanese practice of *kintsugi* in which broken ceramics are repaired using lacquer containing gold or silver. Objects repaired in this way contain visually striking seams of gold or silver that emphasize the fractures along which they broke¹³. Now suppose an artist creates a pot and her design choices are aimed at producing something which is faultless, pristine, or perfect. At some point that pot breaks. A second artist, who is a *kintsugi* practitioner, then repairs it, but her choices are aimed at producing a work which celebrates imperfection (Keulemans 2016: 19). If we adopt Carroll’s account of form, it is not clear which of the two artist’s choices are constitutive of the repaired pot’s ‘form’. Perhaps it has two ‘forms’ corresponding to each artist’s set of choices? Or perhaps it has one compound form composed of both?

¹³ Any ceramic work could be repaired in this way, including ceramics best described as ‘art’ (Grayson Perry, for example, used *kintsugi* techniques in the production of his *Huhne Vase*).

Works of art which are produced by multiple artists who each work to realize contrasting purposes reveal, at least, an explanatory lacuna for Carroll's view of form as the *choices* intended to realize the point or purpose of an artwork. A more intuitive view states the form of a kintsugi pot just consists in its configuration in three-dimensional space (i.e. its shape, thickness and texture) and the configuration of colours on its surface.

Returning to Carroll's ***Content-Oriented Account***, note that problems with Carroll's definition of form do not imperil his view that some aesthetic experiences of art involve (i) design appreciation. He could dispense with his definition of 'form' altogether and still maintain that some aesthetic experiences of art involve appreciating how successfully the design choices an artist makes in producing a work realize its point or purpose. We need not adopt Carroll's definition of form in order to appreciate how the use of gold lacquer to repair a broken pot embodies the celebration of imperfection, for example.

The other sort of aesthetic experience we have of artworks just involves (ii) discerning their aesthetic qualities (without considering them in relation to a purpose or point). Carroll gives the example of 'standing back from a picture by Delacroix and noting its turbulence' (Carroll 1999: 201). If (i) design appreciation of art is an active, cognitively demanding experience that recruits 'the constructive powers of the mind' (*ibid*), then (ii) detecting aesthetic properties of artworks is comparatively passive.

The Content-Oriented Account can accommodate both types of aesthetic experience (both [i] and [ii]). One would expect (i) design appreciation to typically satisfy at least two of the disjuncts, such as 'attending with understanding to the formal properties of an artwork' and attending to 'the reflexive relations of the aforesaid properties [...] of the artwork to the relevant spectator'. Whereas (ii) discerning aesthetic properties may only satisfy one of the disjuncts (such as 'attending with understanding to the expressive properties of an artwork'). The problem is that experiences which are not 'aesthetic' can also satisfy one of the disjuncts that Carroll claims are sufficient for aesthetic experience. Put otherwise, discerning an aesthetic property (in the broad sense of the term) of an artwork, with understanding of the kind of artwork it is, is not sufficient for aesthetic experience of it, particularly given Carroll's account of 'aesthetic properties'.

Consider Yves Klein's *IKB 79*, which is a monochromatic blue painting. Let us say its point or purpose is to encourage the viewer to 'enter into the contemplation of a single colour' (Bois 2007: 91). According to Carroll, the 'aesthetic properties' of *IKB 79* are its features which

implement or realize or give flesh to this purpose. In which case, being coloured a particular hue of blue qualifies as one of *IKB 79*'s 'aesthetic properties'. Yet surely one can attend to its colour and understand what kind of artwork it is without having an aesthetic experience?

Imagine an art conservationist has been tasked with measuring *IKB 79* to check whether its colour has faded or changed¹⁴. Suppose she is well informed about the kind of artwork it is (and so attends to it 'with understanding'). According to *the Content-Oriented Account*, the conservationist will (must) have an aesthetic experience whilst she is measuring the colour of *IKB 79*: she is attending with understanding to a property which, according to Carroll, qualifies as 'aesthetic'. However, she may not (and probably will not) have an aesthetic experience as she takes her measurements. In which case, *the Content-Oriented Account* is false.

In a second counter-example, imagine a museum guide gives daily tours in which she shows visitors a painting. Her brief is to point out one of its subtler expressive qualities. To do this she must look at the painting, locate the property, and point to it for the benefit of the tour group. Suppose she does this every day, week-in, week-out. Now, one would be very surprised if she had an 'aesthetic experience' every time she looked at and pointed to the expressive quality. Some days she might simply go into 'autopilot' and just have a visual experience of the aesthetic property. If she fails to have an aesthetic experience on at least some occasions, *the Content-Oriented Account* is false.

In a final counter-example suppose an English teacher is teaching poetry to ten-year-old pupils. She is teaching them about rhyme schemes and uses a lesson plan she has taught countless times. This involves writing a poem on the board, then pointing to the last words of every other line to show her pupils they rhyme¹⁵. Whilst doing this, the teacher is attending to a formal aesthetic property of the poem (its rhyme scheme) and she understands the kind of artwork the poem is. Yet, surely, she would not have an 'aesthetic experience', given her focus is on making sure her pupils understand and engage with the lesson? If it is possible that she does not, then *the Content-Oriented Account* is false.

The Content-Oriented Account is vulnerable to counter-examples for two reasons: firstly, because Carroll's account of aesthetic properties is too inclusive and allows properties like

¹⁴ Changes in the colours of, e.g., painting can be measured using a number of devices, the most accurate of which seem to be spectrophotometric devices (Bacci et. al. 2008).

¹⁵ Carroll uses a similar example to argue against axiological accounts (Carroll 2002: 163).

colour to qualify as ‘aesthetic’¹⁶; secondly, because it places no constraint or restrictions on how or why the subject is attending to an aesthetic property; it does not require the subject engage with, or respond to, or be moved by aesthetic properties – only that she attends to them (and has understanding of the kind of artwork in which they obtain).

If we adopt Carroll’s account of aesthetic properties, then it seems possible to perceptually process or discriminate an ‘aesthetic property’ without having an aesthetic experience. Furthermore, the same is true of some, and perhaps all, of the properties which – in the wider literature – are conventionally regarded as ‘aesthetic’. The properties generally thought to qualify as members of the category ‘aesthetic properties’ are very diverse and include: ‘beautiful’, ‘ugly’, ‘graceful’, ‘elegant’, ‘grotesque’, ‘pretty’, ‘balanced’, ‘monotonous’, ‘derivative’, ‘formulaic’, ‘concise’, ‘true to life’ and ‘original’ (De Clercq 2008: 895). One might think that *just* discerning ‘beauty’ or ‘elegance’, say, in an artwork is sufficient for aesthetic experience of it. But what of ‘originality’ or ‘derivativeness’ or ‘concision’? It seems *prima facie* more plausible that we can discern these qualities without having an aesthetic experience.

Furthermore, when we think about experiences of ‘beauty’ or ‘elegance’, we typically bring to mind an experience in which we are not *just* discerning or discriminating these properties, but also valuing the experience of them, or being moved by them, or attending to them in a particular way. In which case, these cases do not support the claim that *just* discriminating beauty or elegance is sufficient for aesthetic experience. They instead lend support to the view that aesthetic experiences involve being moved by these qualities, or valuing the experience of them, or attending to them in a particular way.

Carroll cannot introduce further constraints on *how* formal, expressive, and aesthetic properties are discerned during ‘aesthetic experience’, without also conceding that the content-oriented account *by itself* fails to give a satisfactory account of the nature of aesthetic experience. Put otherwise, he would have to adopt a hybrid position which specified both the content and mode of aesthetic experience.

Carroll could respond by making his position more restrictive. He could propose the following:

Content-Oriented Account 2.0: One is having an ‘aesthetic experience’ of an artwork if

¹⁶ Colours are not usually classified as aesthetic properties. An aesthetic quality might obtain by virtue of a colour or a combination of colours (‘garish’ or ‘vibrant’, are examples of aesthetic properties which obtain by virtue of colours) but in such cases a colour or combination of colours will comprise the lower-level properties on which the higher-level aesthetic quality depends.

one is attending with understanding to its aesthetic properties (in the broad, conventional sense) and to the way(s) in which they implement or embody the point(s) or purpose(s) of the artwork.

I take it ***Content-Oriented Account 2.0*** is (roughly) what Carroll refers to as ‘design appreciation’. However, this too is vulnerable to counter-examples. Consider the English teacher who is teaching her pupils about rhyme schemes in poetry. Suppose she points to the rhyming words of a poem she has written on the board as she explains to her pupils, and rehearses in her own mind, how the rhyme scheme implements the point of the poem (by being appropriate to the subject matter, say). Here she is attending with understanding to an aesthetic property of the poem (its rhyme scheme) and to the way it implements the point or purpose of the poem. However, it seems possible, if not probable, that she would not aesthetically experience it – she has taught the class innumerable times and her focus will be on making sure her students understand what she is teaching, rather than on the poem itself. Given she might not aesthetically experience the poem, ***Content-Oriented Account 2.0*** must be false.

Some might take issue with this counter-example. They might assert that the teacher would be having an aesthetic experience of some kind. Intuitions may differ here. But even if ***Content-Oriented Account 2.0*** is sufficient for aesthetic experience – which I am denying – it would only describe a small segment of our aesthetic experiences of artworks: many aesthetic experiences of artworks just involve enjoying their aesthetic qualities without also contemplating whether and how they advance the work’s point or purpose.

A related concern is that Carroll’s initial account (i.e. ***the Content-Oriented Account***) only applies to our experiences of *art*. Many aesthetic experiences are not experiences of art. Carroll goes some of the way to responding to this concern (Carroll 2006: 92-3). He suggests two complementary accounts of aesthetic experience of nature, one of which is an analogue of design appreciation of art in which the subject attends to the way a part of nature has been produced by natural processes, pressures and constraints (*ibid*: 92). The other does not require that we bring any scientific understanding to our experience of nature, but only that we open ourselves to its stimuli and are put in a certain emotional state by attending to its aspects (Carroll 1993: 245). For our present concerns, we can discount the latter of these which is not, strictly-speaking, a content-oriented account (as it describes how the subject approaches and emotionally responds to the content of her experience, and not just what that content is).

With regards to the former, Carroll proposes, ‘inasmuch as form is to be understood

functionally, we can note an analogous way of engaging nature to apprehending the formal design of artworks. Specifically, one can attend to nature functionally, sizing up the ways in which the contours of an ecological system have evolved from natural processes, pressures, and constraints [...] Attention to form in works of art, then, has an analogue in the aesthetic experience of nature in the naturalistically informed attention to apparent teleology of natural processes and prospects' (Carroll 2006: 92-3).

Recall Carroll conceives of artistic 'form' as the ensemble of choices elected to realize the point or purpose of a work of art. Design appreciation involves considering how those choices function to implement or realize the point or purpose of the artwork. Here Carroll seems to be proposing that the 'form' of a portion of the natural world consists of the processes, events, and pressures responsible for making it the way it is. So the analogue of design appreciation in the experience of nature would be attending to the ways the various processes, constraints, and pressures and their interactions have given rise to a specific segment of the natural world.

Some experiences this describes might be 'aesthetic'. Aesthetic experiences of a portion of nature can – some would argue *must* (Parsons 2002) – involve recruiting scientific knowledge to explain the way it appears. However, this is not sufficient for aesthetic experience. Suppose a desperate farmer in a drought-ridden part of the world surveys the ecosystem in which her crops are failing. She sizes up the way the desert is encroaching on her land and how the top soil has run off, whilst contemplating the natural processes and pressures responsible. Would her experience be 'aesthetic'? Most probably not. It could be, were there not so much at stake for her, or if she had the luxury of looking at the land as an end, and not just a means to feeding her family, say.

To summarise, this section has argued that Carroll's content-oriented account is problematic on four counts. Firstly, his account of 'form' is too inclusive and raises questions about the forms of artworks produced by multiple artists. Secondly, his account of aesthetic properties is problematic as it implies that colours, for example, are 'aesthetic properties'. Thirdly, his formulation of *the Content-Oriented Account* does not name conditions that are sufficient for aesthetic experience. Fourthly, Carroll's proposed application of *the Content-Oriented Account* to nature would erroneously classify some experiences as 'aesthetic' when they are not.

In the introduction, I presented seven desiderata of an account of aesthetic experience. They were as follows:

- (i) It is instructive and offers the uninitiated practical guidance on how to have an aesthetic experience.
- (ii) It is amenable to experimental research, offering researchers a definition that can be used to conduct experiments.
- (iii) It is compatible with an established theme or strand of thought within philosophical aesthetics.
- (iv) It is extensionally adequate.
- (v) It implies a position on, or approach to addressing, the question of which sense modalities are capable of providing aesthetic experiences.
- (vi) It has something to say about whether certain borderline or indeterminate cases qualify as 'aesthetic experiences'.
- (vii) It amply accommodates the aesthetic experience of non-art (including the natural world, as well as human artefacts, and practices).

Desiderata (i) – (iv) are extracted from Carroll's work. He regards his position as meeting condition (i), since it instructs the uninitiated in how to have 'aesthetic experiences' by directing them to attend to the aesthetic properties of artworks with understanding. Similarly, Carroll takes his account to satisfy (ii) insofar as researchers can use it to instruct their test participants to have 'aesthetic experiences', again, by directing them to attend to aesthetic properties of artworks with understanding. However, Carroll's account only satisfies (i) and (ii) if it names conditions that are sufficient for aesthetic experience. I have made the case for thinking it does not.

Carroll musters support for the content-oriented account by appealing to a historical precedent for treating aesthetic properties as 'the loci of aesthetic experience' (Carroll 2000: 207). With regards to 'formal properties,' Carroll refers to 'Clive Bell's notion of significant form', which he claims is influenced by Kant (*ibid*). Similarly, Carroll claims that 'aesthetic properties' and 'expressive properties' have '[a] historical connection [with] the invented term "aesthetics"' (*ibid*). Carroll's position therefore satisfies (iii) and is compatible with established strands of thought in philosophical aesthetics.

Carroll's account satisfies criteria (v) as it suggests an approach to addressing the question of which sense modalities one can have aesthetic experiences through. It suggests aesthetic experience through gustation, olfaction, tactition, and somatosensation is possible if aesthetic properties (in the broad, conventional sense) can be discerned through these sense modalities. Sherri Irvin (2008), for one, uses Carroll's content-oriented account to argue that scratching an

itch can be an aesthetic experience.

To satisfy criteria (vi) Carroll's position would need to provide us with a way of establishing whether certain borderline cases are 'aesthetic experiences'. Examples of these include mystical, sexual, and pharmacological experiences (Levinson 2016: 40-42). These are not experiences of art. Whether Carroll's account has anything to say about them therefore depends on whether it satisfies criteria (vii) and applies to non-art. This will also determine whether Carroll's position meets (iv) and is extensionally adequate. I have argued that Carroll's proposed application of the content-oriented account to nature fails to specify conditions that are sufficient for aesthetic experience. Moreover, his account of aesthetic properties as ways the points or purposes *of artworks* are implemented prevents him from saying we discern them in things other than art. In which case, ***the content-oriented account*** does not satisfy (iv), (vi) and (vii).

In summary, Carroll's content-oriented account only satisfies two of the seven desiderata ([iii] and [v]). I now proceed to examine whether mode-oriented accounts of aesthetic experience fare any better.

3. Mode-Oriented Accounts of Aesthetic Experience

In contrast with the content-oriented account, mode-oriented accounts describe *how* the aesthetically experiencing subject approaches, or engages with, or responds to the content of her experience (rather than *what* she experiences)¹⁷. Mode-oriented accounts have a distinct advantage over the content-oriented account. They can resolve the thorny question of what, exactly, makes ‘aesthetic properties’ *aesthetic* by casting them as the qualities which figure in aesthetic experience¹⁸. Robert Stecker, who proposes a mode-oriented account (‘the minimal view’) of aesthetic experience, adopts this strategy:

‘[I]f we rely on the minimal view, we can say that aesthetic experience is experience we value for its own sake in virtue of being directed at the forms, qualities (perceivable properties), or meaningful properties of an object; aesthetic properties are the properties of objects appropriately related to the experience we value for its own sake [...] If we adopt this suggestion we don’t have to do so in terms of the minimal conception. We could do it in terms of [other conceptions of aesthetic experience] [...] The one conception of aesthetic experience that is ruled out is the content-oriented approach, since it defines aesthetic experience in terms of aesthetic properties’ (Stecker 2005: 61-2).

As Stecker mentions, characterising aesthetic properties as those figuring in aesthetic experience is not a viable strategy for a proponent of the content-oriented account (or of any account that explains ‘aesthetic experience’ in terms of ‘aesthetic properties’), as it would make their position circular: ‘aesthetic experience’ would be explicated as experience of ‘aesthetic properties’, and ‘aesthetic properties’ as those which figure in ‘aesthetic experience’.

There are two reasons why it is problematic to argue, as Stecker does, that ‘aesthetic properties’ are those which figure in aesthetic experience (or, put otherwise, that aesthetic experience is analytically prior to aesthetic properties). The first is that it is possible to experience an aesthetic property without having an aesthetic experience, as the previous chapter argued. In which case, we do not discern aesthetic properties *only* during our aesthetic

¹⁷ Clive’s Bell’s account, which I discuss under the rubric of mode-oriented accounts, characterises aesthetic experience as experience in which a ‘sensitive’ percipient attends to ‘significant form’ and feels ‘aesthetic emotion’. So, it may be more accurately labelled a hybrid position, as it describes both the content (‘significant form’) and mode (‘sensitivity’ and ‘aesthetic emotion’) of aesthetic experience. However, I group it with mode-oriented accounts for the sake of exegetical clarity.

¹⁸ Clive Bell’s position excluded (assuming ‘significant form’ is an aesthetic property).

experiences. Secondly, this account of aesthetic properties presupposes that aesthetic experience can be adequately described *just* in terms of its mode, without adverting to aesthetic properties. In this chapter, I will argue it cannot. To do so, I will examine mode-oriented positions in the literature (including Stecker's) and demonstrate that none are satisfactory.

There are three sections in this chapter corresponding to the three types of mode-oriented account. The first examines 'axiological accounts' which explicate aesthetic experience in terms of final (dis)value. The second examines 'affect-oriented approaches' which characterise aesthetic experience in terms of the affect(s) the experiencing subject feels. The third examines 'attitudinal approaches' which explicate aesthetic experience by reference to an 'aesthetic attitude' or an 'aesthetic' way of allocating attention.

In the following chapter (chapter four), I will argue that the failure of content-oriented and mode-oriented accounts speaks in favour of a hybrid position that combines elements of both. Therefore, the overarching aim in this chapter is to examine whether mode-oriented accounts tell us anything informative about the mode of aesthetic experience which we can then use to formulate an intensional definition. I will argue that they do. They tell us, firstly, that aesthetic experiences are valenced and, secondly, that to have an aesthetic experience of something one must attend to the content of one's experience for its own sake and not exclusively for instrumental reasons.

Axiological Accounts

In this section I will examine accounts of aesthetic experience that are proposed by Robert Stecker, Gary Iseminger, and Jerrold Levinson. They each, in different ways, explicate aesthetic experience as experience which is valuable for its own sake. To provide an overview, Stecker – who could be described as a pluralist about aesthetic experience – argues ‘there is no single best definition of aesthetic experience’ (Stecker 2001: 76), but that *being finally (dis)valued* comprises a ‘necessary condition that links the various plausible conceptions of aesthetic experience’ (*ibid*). Iseminger, by comparison, argues that experiencing a state of affairs and valuing that experiencing *for its own sake* is necessary and sufficient for being in an ‘aesthetic state of mind’ (Iseminger 2006: 100). Levinson is sympathetic to Iseminger’s position and argues that, with modification, it constitutes a sufficient condition for ‘aesthetic experience’ (Levinson 2016: 38-9). The modification Levinson proposes construes ‘final value’ as an ‘*active or occurrent* state’ with ‘some sort of phenomenology’ which is best described as ‘endorsed satisfaction’ (*ibid*: 36-7). I shall firstly discuss some preliminary terminological issues, then assess these three accounts. I will argue some aesthetic experiences do not include a valuing component, which means that *being finally (dis)valued* is not, *pace* Stecker and Iseminger, an essential feature of (or a necessary condition for) aesthetic experience. I will also argue that Levinson’s and Iseminger’s accounts do not state sufficient conditions for aesthetic experience. I will conclude by developing Carroll’s objection that axiological accounts are ‘stunningly uninformative’ (Carroll 2012: 168).

Preliminary Considerations

Value: ‘Objective’, ‘Subjective’, ‘Intrinsic’ and ‘Final’

Carroll helpfully points out the ambiguity of the claim that aesthetic experience is valuable for its own sake (Carroll 2006: 83). It could mean that ‘aesthetic experience’ is valuable for its own sake from an objective point of view (from ‘the view from nowhere’ [*ibid*]). Or it could mean that aesthetic experience is *valued* for its own sake from the point of view of the experiencing subject (*ibid*). Carroll suggests that axiological approaches can be bifurcated on this basis into ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ accounts respectively.

The positions proposed by Stecker, Iseminger, and Levinson are ‘subjective’ in this sense. In discussing them, I eschew the term ‘intrinsic value’, and instead use the expressions ‘valued for its own sake’ and ‘final value’ (and their cognates). This reflects the terminology used by

proponents of axiological accounts. It also avoids conflating the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic value with the distinction between instrumental and final value (see Korsgaard 1983: 170-1).

Both Stecker and Iseminger argue that valuing something for its own sake is compatible with valuing that thing as a means to something else. Stecker gives the example of health: being healthy is valuable for its own sake and as a means to achieving longevity (Stecker 2005: 48). Likewise, one can value the experience of reading a novel both for its own sake and as a means to participating in a book club. In what follows, I assume that one can both value something for its own sake and instrumentally.

Negatively Valenced Aesthetic Experiences

As we saw in the Introduction, some aesthetic experiences seem to be negative experiences which we do not finally value. Negatively valenced aesthetic experiences include, for example: '[focusing] upon the formal structure of a piece of choreography and [finding] it insufficiently varied for the amount of time it demands our attention' (Carroll 2012: 167); 'experiences where the inept design of the work is displeasing' (*ibid*: 166); and being 'trapped in an inept performance of a Wagnerian opera' (Carroll 2002: 152). These are all experiences of 'bad' or flawed artworks. We also have negatively valenced aesthetic experiences of non-art, such as finding a putrefying animal carcass when hiking, or seeing a dilapidated garden strewn with litter, or being surrounded by dreary pebbledash buildings on a rainy day.

I take it that we do have negatively valenced aesthetic experiences. We certainly avail ourselves of a host of (at least partly evaluative) adjectives which (typically) attribute *disvalue* to objects we experience aesthetically. These can be found peppered throughout the works of Frank Sibley and his successors, and include: 'ugly', 'garish', 'trite', 'sentimental', 'dull', 'gloomy', 'bland', 'insipid', 'kitsch', 'anticlimactic', 'derivative' and 'formulaic'.

Carroll marshals negatively valenced aesthetic experiences as counter-examples to the axiological approach (Carroll 2012: 166-7 and 2015: 172-3). He argues, 'are not there [*sic*] negative aesthetic experiences—such as experiences of bad artworks? Surely, any account of aesthetic experiences should countenance experiences of disvalue, experiences where the inept

design of the work is displeasing. The valuing ['axiological'] approach seems to neglect this possibility, and yet it is surely one that we have all experienced' (Carroll 2012: 166)¹⁹.

Stecker agrees that we have negatively valenced aesthetic experiences and argues that they are 'consistent with the idea that such experiences are valued for their own sake' (Stecker 2006: 7): 'All that is needed is that the negative evaluation is of the experience itself rather than further things it brings to us' (*ibid*).

Carroll denies this proposal makes sense: 'it seems to make no sense at all to talk about the having of experiences that we disvalue for their own sake. Disvaluing does not seem to be an idea that we can conjoin coherently with the formula "for its own sake." Language buckles at the prospect' (Carroll 2012: 166).

I beg to differ. Suppose you stub your toe and experience an intense pain that rapidly diminishes after a few moments (where the pain is intrinsic to the experience). Also suppose no damage has been done. Surely, the experience of stubbing your toe, which is dominated by a short intense feeling of pain, is disvaluable for its own sake? Put otherwise, surely you would disvalue the experience for its own sake, given it is painful and no further negative consequences result from it?

It may not be common to analyse disvaluing in this way, but it is not, *pace* Carroll, incoherent. If this is right, then axiological approaches can accommodate negatively valenced aesthetic experiences by saying, as Stecker does, that they are experiences we disvalue *for their own sakes* (or which have final disvalue). In what follows, I will elide concerns that axiological accounts cannot accommodate negative aesthetic experiences. I will also use the shorthand 'final (dis)value' to mean 'final value or final disvalue'.

Robert Stecker: Constrained Pluralism

Stecker argues there is no one correct conception of aesthetic experience. He surveys various approaches to specifying its nature and concludes there are several plausible accounts, which 'carve out the realm of the aesthetic in different but acceptable ways' (Stecker 2005: 34-56). We can therefore describe Stecker as a pluralist about the nature of aesthetic experience.

Stecker's pluralism is not unconstrained. Firstly, he only regards as 'plausible' those

¹⁹ Note, again, that an axiological account which only provides a sufficient condition for aesthetic experience is not affected by the possibility of negatively valenced aesthetic experiences.

accounts of aesthetic experience which withstand philosophical scrutiny. Secondly, he states that aesthetic experiences are necessarily experiences that we value for their own sake and adopts this as the ‘common thread or necessary condition that links the various plausible conceptions of aesthetic experience’ (Stecker 2001: 76). He defines ‘final value’ negatively, as follows:

‘if we value something for its own sake, we continue to value it even when we believe it brings us nothing *further* that we value’ (Stecker 2005: 48)²⁰.

The accounts which Stecker surveys and assesses include:

- 1) A Kantian view which characterises ‘aesthetic experience’ as an experiential analogue of Kant’s judgements of free beauty (or pure judgements of taste). On this account, (positively valenced) aesthetic experience is: (i) ‘subjective’, based on a feeling of pleasure; (ii) appears ‘universally valid’, so one expects others to have the same experience; (iii) is ‘disinterested’ in the sense that one is indifferent to the existence of the experiential object; and (iv) engages both the imagination and the intellect (or the ‘understanding’) (Stecker 2005: 35-38).
- 2) A second, more expansive, neo-Kantian account, which identifies ‘aesthetic experience’ with experiential analogues not only of Kant’s judgements of free beauty, but also his judgements of dependent beauty and his judgements of the agreeable (ibid: 38-40).
- 3) The ‘selfless absorption’ approach, according to which ‘aesthetic experience’ of art involves a separation from self, or willing, or practical concerns. Stecker describes Schopenhauer and Clive Bell as proponents of this approach (ibid: 40-42).
- 4) The ‘object-directed sensuous pleasure’ approach, according to which – very roughly – aesthetic experience involves taking pleasure in objects of sensory experience (ibid: 42-45).
- 5) A position advanced by Levinson (Levinson 1996: 6), which Stecker terms ‘the two-level conception’. According to this, aesthetic experience involves deriving pleasure

²⁰ Stecker’s account of final disvalue can be formulated as follows: if we disvalue something for its own sake, we continue to disvalue it even when we believe it brings us nothing *further* that we disvalue.

from attending to forms, qualities and meanings for their own sake and to how they emerge from lower-level perceptual features (Stecker 2005: 46).

- 6) A 'minimal conception', according to which 'aesthetic experience' involves, 'attending in a discriminating manner to forms, qualities, or meaningful features of things, attending to these for their own sake or the sake of a payoff intrinsic to this very experience' (ibid: 46-7).
- 7) And a 'content-oriented' approach, similar to Carroll's (ibid: 52-4).

Of these, Stecker seems to think that (2)-(6) are plausible, but (1) and (7) are not (ibid: 77). Stecker's preferred account is (6) the 'minimal conception' which he argues is extensionally adequate and, 'captures the idea that aesthetic experiences are valued for their own sake' (Stecker 2005: 54).

However, (6) is not a sufficient condition for aesthetic experience. It cannot differentiate failed attempts to have an aesthetic experience from actual aesthetic experiences. When attempting to have an aesthetic experience, one might attend in a discriminating manner to an artwork's forms or qualities for their own sake or for the sake of a payoff intrinsic to the experience. However, it cannot be guaranteed that, just by doing this, one will have an aesthetic experience: the payoff for which one is attending may not come to pass. Sometimes, despite one's best efforts, aesthetic experience is elusive: this may be because one has 'museum fatigue' (the unresponsiveness that can result from viewing art all day), or is unfamiliar with the norms and nuances of a work's genre or is preoccupied with other concerns. I take it failed attempts to have aesthetic experiences are not actual aesthetic experiences.

Consider a concrete example: suppose you know some Japanese and concentrate intensely on understanding an untranslated Japanese haiku. Your intention is just to enjoy reading the poem, so you are attending to the Japanese characters for their own sake or for a payoff intrinsic to the experience (e.g. the pleasure of reading an untranslated haiku). However, as you attend to the poem, you realize that very few of the characters look familiar. Try as you may, you cannot make head nor tail of the poem. Clearly this would not be an aesthetic experience. However, you are attending in a discriminating manner to forms and meaningful features of things for their own sake or the sake of a payoff intrinsic to the experience. As the experience is not 'aesthetic', (6) does not name a sufficient condition for aesthetic experience.

It might be replied that this is not an example of attending in a ‘discriminating’ manner: a ‘discriminating’ subject would be able to fully translate the poem and so would understand it. I take it, though, that this is just a verbal dispute concerning the meaning of ‘discriminating manner’ and that the more general point stands: (6) does not distinguish failed attempts to have aesthetic experiences from actual aesthetic experience.

One reason the minimal conception is vulnerable to counter-examples is because Stecker fails to distinguish between *attending* to something for its own sake, and *valuing* something for its own sake. The two are distinct. One can attend to something for its own sake without having an experience one values for its own sake. For example, I can attend to a peeling strip of wallpaper for its own sake, rather than as a means to something else, just by choosing to allocate my attention to it (or just by being curious about it). I subsequently may or may not place final (dis)value on the resultant experience.

More could be said about Stecker’s ‘minimal conception’, but our primary concern here is with his claim that aesthetic experiences are necessarily experiences to which we assign final (dis)value. One objection is that it is possible to aesthetically experience something and withhold one’s judgement about whether that experience has final (dis)value. We often feel ambivalent about our aesthetic experiences: when asked about one’s aesthetic experience of an artwork, it is perfectly legitimate to reply, “I’m not sure” or “I need to think about it further”²¹. We may subsequently reflect on the experience further and assign final value or final disvalue to it. Equally, we may choose not to reflect on the experience, or we may simply forget to. Therefore, we sometimes abstain from placing, or neglect to place, final (dis)value on our aesthetic experiences. In which case, it is false that aesthetic experiences are necessarily experiences we value or disvalue for their own sakes.

Another objection states that some aesthetic experiences are too fleeting or faint to be afforded final (dis)value. Suppose you are weaving through a crowded train station when your attention is momentarily arrested by the light of the setting sun which streams through the vaulted glass ceiling and illuminates the previously gloomy interior. The experience elicits a faint feeling of gladness, which dissipates as you rush to catch a train. I take it this is, plausibly, an aesthetic experience. However, you may not reflect on the experience, form any beliefs about it or cherish it. It is hard to see how one could (dis)value an experience for its own sake without reflecting on it, forming beliefs about it or cherishing it. Therefore, the

²¹ Where, by “it”, you are referring to your aesthetic experience of the artwork, rather than the artwork.

brevity and faintness of some aesthetic experiences also militates against thinking they are experiences to which we necessarily assign final (dis)value.

Levinson makes the more general point that some aesthetic experiences simply lack any valuing component. He writes,

‘It seems that there are experiences of a positive character that we would be inclined to classify as aesthetic experiences, ones which may indeed be valuable, but which do not include as such the element of *valuing* on the part of the subject of experience’
(Levinson 2016: 39).

Stecker could reply that Levinson and I have misunderstood what (dis)valuing an experience *for its own sake* involves. He may have an alternative conception of final (dis)valuing in mind which would allow for us to finally (dis)value experiences which, at face value, seem to lack any valuing component. If there is any such plausible (and non-circular) account of final (dis)value, Stecker gives no suggestions as to what it might be. As mentioned, he only defines final value negatively, as follows:

‘if we value something for its own sake, we continue to value it even when we believe it brings us nothing *further* that we value’ (Stecker 2005: 48).

He does not tell us what ‘valuing’ itself consists in (whether it involves, for example, having certain beliefs or whether it is an affective response of some kind). One account of final value of which Stecker could avail himself is as follows:

Weak final value: A person finally values an experience if, were she to reflect on the experience, she would conclude that her life was better *ceteris paribus* because of it²².

This account allows that some experiences which are finally (dis)valued do not feature any occurrent valuing element on the part of the experiencing subject. It also allows that some of the experiences we finally (dis)value are ones that we have not reflected upon or thought about (and perhaps never will). It only states that if we finally value an experience, then, if we did reflect on it, we would think it made our lives better (or worse²³) all other things being equal. If

²² Similarly, **weak final disvalue** could be formulated as follows: A person finally disvalues an experience if, were she to reflect on the experience, she would conclude her life was worse *ceteris paribus* because of it.

²³ See previous footnote.

final (dis)valuing is construed in these terms, Stecker's claim that aesthetic experiences are necessarily finally (dis)valued seems more plausible.

One problem with *weak final value* is that we rarely reflect on the effect that an experience has on our lives *all other things being equal*. Instead, when we reflect on our experiences, we typically also appraise their instrumental significance (what they equip us to do or what consequences will ensue). Consequently, it is unlikely that, just by reflecting on an aesthetic experience, one would conclude it made one's life better (or worse) *ceteris paribus* (though one might conclude it made one's life better or worse *sans phrase*). In which case, very few, if any, experiences would qualify as having final value according to *weak final value*.

We can modify the formulation to circumvent this concern:

Weak final value*: a subject (S) finally values an experience if, were S asked if the experience made her life better all other things being equal, S would truthfully reply "yes"²⁴.

However, *weak final value** is also problematic. One concern is that it fails to capture what it means to actually (dis)value something for its own sake. Arguably, it is only at the point at which S recognises or acknowledges or believes that a particular experience has made her life better (or worse), all other things being equal, that she actually finally (dis)values it. Up to that point, she does not (dis)value it, but only has a *disposition* to do so, should the stimulus conditions of being prompted or asked occur. There is a distinction between having a disposition to do something and manifesting that disposition. For example, a fragile glass vase has the disposition to shatter if struck, though it may never manifest this disposition. So, having the disposition to place final (dis)value on an aesthetic experience is not equivalent to finally disvaluing it (just as having the disposition to shatter if struck is not equivalent to shattering). In which case, *weak final value** does not state conditions for finally valuing an experience, but only conditions for having the disposition to do so. Therefore, Stecker could not appeal to it to explicate the claim that aesthetic experiences are necessarily experiences which we finally (dis)value.

There is also the issue of aesthetic experiences which are finally valued and finally disvalued in equal measure. For example, suppose you hear a bad performance of your favourite piece of

²⁴We can formulate final disvalue in these terms as follows, ***weak final disvalue****: a person finally disvalues an experience if, were she asked if her life was worse all other things being equal for having had the experience, she would truthfully reply "yes".

music. You finally value the experience insofar as you are hearing a piece of music you like (or fragments of it), but you finally disvalue the experience on account of how bad the performance is. In this example, the valuable and disvaluable aspects of the experience are equivalent in degree. This means your life is neither better nor worse *ceteris paribus* as a result of the experience. If you were asked whether the experience made your life better all other things being equal, you would have to reply “no”. In which case, according to ***weak final value****, you do not ‘finally value’ the experience. Likewise, if asked whether the experience made your life worse all other things being equal, you would have to reply “no”. So, according to ***weak final value**** you neither ‘finally value’ nor ‘finally disvalue’ the experience. ***Weak final value**** is therefore false, as you do finally value and finally disvalue the experience – it just so happens that in this case you assign *equal* amounts of final value and final disvalue to it.

As it stands, ***weak final value**** fares no better than ***weak final value***: neither provide an acceptable account of final (dis)value. There may be some other plausible, weak view of final (dis)valuing which explains why some experiences are finally (dis)valued despite seeming not to be. If there is, it is beyond the grasp of my comprehension. Moreover, the burden to provide such an account falls on those who, like Stecker, argue that aesthetic experiences are experiences we necessarily finally (dis)value. Given that some aesthetic experiences do not have a valuing component, and in the absence of any forthcoming account of final (dis)valuing which suggests otherwise, we can conclude that aesthetic experiences are not necessarily experiences on which we place final (dis)value.

This is not to say that some aesthetic experiences are entirely devoid of value. As Levinson intimates, aesthetic experiences might necessarily have value or disvalue from an objective point of view (from the ‘view from nowhere’) (Levinson 2016: 39). Whether they do depends on which theory of objective value we endorse and on what the essential characteristics of aesthetic experience are. The current conclusion we have reached is just that aesthetic experiences are not necessarily finally (dis)valued *by the person who has them*. We can now examine the two remaining axiological accounts.

Gary Iseminger and Jerrold Levinson

Iseminger does not give an account of ‘aesthetic experience’, but rather of ‘the aesthetic state of mind’. He identifies the ‘aesthetic state of mind’ with ‘appreciation’, which he defines as follows:

Appreciation: ‘Someone is *appreciating* a state of affairs just in case she or he is *valuing for its own sake the experiencing of that state of affairs*’ (Iseminger 2006: 99).

Iseminger intends this to be a definition of ‘appreciation’ *sans phrase*, and not ‘aesthetic appreciation’. He writes, ‘appreciation is not here defined in terms of any prior notion of the aesthetic. It is not the aesthetic species of the genus appreciation; it is rather appreciation *sans phrase*, and my proposal is to identify it as the aesthetic state of mind’ (Iseminger 2006: 100).

Both Levinson and Stecker take issue with this definition of ‘appreciation’. If we interpret the phrasing ‘just in case’ to mean ‘if and only if’, then Iseminger here claims that experiencing a state of affairs and valuing that experiencing for its own sake is necessary and sufficient for ‘appreciating’ something. Both Stecker and Levinson point out that one can appreciate a state of affairs for its instrumental value (Stecker 2006: 4) (Levinson 2016: 35). Levinson gives the examples of appreciating a lecture for the lasting insights it provides and appreciating a massage for the effect it will have on one’s future mobility (*ibid*). If we can appreciate things just for their instrumental value, then ‘valuing for its own sake the experiencing of a state of affairs’ is not necessary and sufficient for ‘appreciation’ (though it may be sufficient for it).

A further problem is with Iseminger’s proposal to identify appreciation *sans phrase* as ‘the aesthetic state of mind’ (Iseminger 2006: 100). Does he mean to say that all instances of appreciation involve being in an ‘aesthetic state of mind’? If so, why would he want to say this? Surely a person is not in an ‘aesthetic state of mind’ every time she appreciates something?

Suppose it is your birthday and you receive a generous cheque from a relative. You *appreciate* her generosity. Yet in appreciating it you are not thereby in an ‘aesthetic state of mind’, surely? So why then does Iseminger want to identify appreciation *sans phrase* with the ‘aesthetic state of mind’?

I suspect he intends to use ‘the aesthetic state of mind’ to non-circularly define other terms qualified by ‘aesthetic’ (such as ‘aesthetic properties’, ‘aesthetic pleasure’, ‘aesthetic value’, and so on). He can only do this if the term ‘aesthetic’ does not figure in the definition of the ‘aesthetic state of mind’. ‘Aesthetic’ does not need to figure in a definition of ‘appreciation’. However, ‘appreciation’ *sans phrase* includes a diverse range of mental states, many

(perhaps most) of which are not obviously 'aesthetic'. We should not therefore treat 'the aesthetic state of mind' explicated in terms of 'appreciation' *sans phrase* as analytically prior to other terms qualified by 'aesthetic'.

I will now proceed to further examine Iseminger's position. He describes the aesthetic state of mind as 'complex' since it consists of both an *experiential* component (experiencing some state of affairs) and an *axiological* component (valuing for its own sake the experiencing of that state of affairs). I will now discuss these in turn.

Iseminger says the experiential component (i.e. *the experience* which is valued for its own sake) must be 'cognitive', in the sense that it involves '*noticing* something' (Iseminger 2006: 100) and 'noninferential' in the sense that what is *noticed* is directly or immediately apprehended or grasped, not inferred (*ibid*). He terms this an 'epistemic' concept of experience and contrasts it with a 'phenomenological' one:

'Two different [...] concepts of experience are that of experience as something characterized primarily by 'what it is like' to undergo it, and that of experience as involving direct or non-inferential knowledge: the first may be called a *phenomenological* concept of experience, the second an *epistemic* one (Iseminger 2003: 100).

To be clear, Iseminger does not think that being in the aesthetic state of mind requires that we come to know an experience has final value non-inferentially. He instead thinks that what we learn from our experiencing whilst in an aesthetic state of mind is known immediately and directly, not inferred. If the object of the experience is the gracefulness of a line, for instance, then, if one is in an aesthetic state of mind, one comes to know that line is graceful *non-inferentially* (by directly apprehending its gracefulness). However, one's experience would not be 'epistemic' (and one's state of mind not 'aesthetic') if one inferred the line is graceful on the basis of another person's testimony or from the artist's reputation (but did not directly apprehend or grasp its gracefulness).

With regards to the axiological component of the aesthetic state of mind, Iseminger argues that finally *valuing* something is a matter of having certain beliefs about it. Specifically, he argues that valuing something *for its own sake* is 'believing *not merely for reasons that describe [it] as a means to other ends* that it is good' (Iseminger 2006: 105).

Iseminger considers the proposal that final valuing consists in taking pleasure or enjoyment

in an object. However, he rejects this on the grounds that some of the things we value for their own sakes are not pleasurable or enjoyable (*ibid*: 105): ‘consider watching the final scene of *Hamlet* or the conclusion of Alban Berg’s opera *Wozzeck*’ (Iseminger 2004: 40).

In addition, Iseminger allows that the ‘appreciation’ with which he identifies ‘the aesthetic state of mind’ comes in degrees of intensity:

‘Someone who appreciates something in this sense may, but need not, become a “spellbound spectator”, lost in contemplation. Appreciation may sometimes be all-consuming and drive out all other thoughts, but, as I have described it, it seems possible that it may be relatively fleeting and casual’ (Iseminger 2006: 100).

Iseminger’s position can be formulated as follows:

Iseminger: A subject (*S*) is in an ‘aesthetic state of mind’ if and only if *S* is experiencing (in the ‘epistemic’ sense of coming to know something non-inferentially) some state of affairs and valuing the experiencing of that state of affairs *for its own sake*.²⁵

Iseminger does not provide an account of ‘aesthetic experience’, but rather of ‘the aesthetic state of mind’. He does this in response to the following objection, raised by Carroll. I quote this at length, to do justice to the force of Carroll’s argument:

‘[A] believer in the intrinsic value of aesthetic experience (whom we shall call “an aesthete”) and an evolutionary psychologist both attend to the same piece of music. The evolutionary psychologist believes that this sort of aesthetic experience is [only] instrumentally valuable [for the cognitive benefits it yields]. Nevertheless the evolutionary psychologist is alert to the same features of the music as the aesthete contemplates: the evolutionary psychologist tracks the same formal developments, recognizes the same expressive and aesthetic properties in the work, and discerns the same formal relationships that the aesthete does [...] both are cognitively and affectively tuned to the music in the same way; they both notice the same things about the structure of the music and its impact on their cognitive-perceptual-emotive system [...] In short we are imagining that the succession of computational states in these two individuals are type-identical with each other. They attend to the same artistic stimulus in the same ways, ways furthermore that are canonical within the

²⁵ The biconditional is implied by Iseminger’s proposal to ‘identify’ ***appreciation*** (‘valuing for its own sake the experiencing of a state of affairs’) as the aesthetic state of mind.

traditions of reception within the relevant culture [...] Both percipients, then, are processing the artwork in the same ways, correctly noticing the same formal articulations and the same expressive and aesthetic properties. The only difference is that the aesthete believes this experience is valuable for its own sake, whereas the evolutionary psychologist believes it is instrumentally valuable. According to the axiologist [a proponent of the axiological account], this belief is enough to discount the evolutionary psychologist's experience as aesthetic. But isn't this simply arbitrary? [...] Surely the evolutionary psychologist is processing her experience aesthetically, if the aesthete is, since the two processes are step-by-step identical' (Carroll 2006: 85-6).

To summarize, if two percipients have experiences which are *ex hypothesi* the same, then either they both have 'aesthetic experiences' or neither of them do. However, if only one of the percipients believes her experience is valuable for its own sake, then proponents of axiological accounts must classify only her, but not her counterpart, as having an 'aesthetic experience'. Axiological accounts therefore imply two percipients can have the same experiences, whilst one but not the other is having an 'aesthetic experience'. They therefore imply an implausible or counter-intuitive conclusion, so must be false.

Iseminger construes this objection as a *reductio ad absurdum* (Iseminger 2006: 102). He responds to it by distinguishing 'experience' from 'state of mind'. He then argues two people can have the same *experience* yet be in different *states of mind*. Specifically, he argues that the aesthete (who values her experience of the music *for its own sake*) is in an 'aesthetic state of mind' (*ibid*), whereas the evolutionary psychologist (who has the same experience as the aesthete and only values it instrumentally) is not. In effect, Iseminger dispenses with the notion of 'aesthetic experience' all together, in favour of the supposedly more expansive notion of an 'aesthetic state of mind'.

There are other, more economical ways Iseminger could respond which would allow him to retain the notion of 'aesthetic experience'. Firstly, he could argue that Carroll's objection is off-target, so to speak. All Carroll has shown is that the aesthete and the evolutionary psychologist perceptually process music in the same way (Stecker 2001: 79). This falls short of demonstrating that they have the same *experiences* (Levinson 2016: 36). Put otherwise, if the aesthete finally values her experience, but the evolutionary psychologist does not, then their experiences cannot be *ex hypothesi* the same and the premise of Carroll's argument is

flawed.

The success of this response depends on how we understand the operative notions of final value and instrumental value. Specifically, it depends on whether the value placed on one's experiencing during a period of time is intrinsic or extrinsic to the overall experience one has during that time. If valuing is understood as extrinsic to the experience, then the aesthete and the evolutionary psychologist arguably can have the same 'experiences'. Whereas if valuing is intrinsic to their experiences, then they do not. At the very least, Carroll's example reveals that proponents of the axiological account need to say that finally valuing one's experiencing over a stretch of time comprises an intrinsic part of the resultant experience one has during that time. However, this would mean that an experience which one placed final (dis)value on retrospectively, but not during the experience, could not qualify as 'aesthetic' by virtue of being finally (dis)valued (assuming that final value which is retrospectively placed on an experience would thereby be extrinsic to that experience).

An alternative response to Carroll's argument states that there is a phenomenological difference between valuing something for its own sake, and valuing it instrumentally, and that this phenomenological difference affects the character of the two percipients' respective experiences²⁶. If the two percipients have qualitatively different experiences, then it is not problematic to describe one, but not the other, as having an 'aesthetic experience'.

Levinson argues that 'Iseminger gives up prematurely on the notion of a distinctively aesthetic experience because he seems impelled to withhold the label of "experience" from the complex state of mind he has characterized' (Levinson 2016: 38). 'What', Levinson asks, 'stands in the way of simply identifying aesthetic states of mind and aesthetic experiences?' (*ibid*: 35).

If Iseminger were to do this, he could retain the concept of 'aesthetic experience' (Levinson 2016: 36-7). His position, so modified, would be as follows:

Iseminger*: A subject (*S*) is having an 'aesthetic experience' if and only if *S* is experiencing (in the *epistemic sense*) some state of affairs *and* valuing the experiencing of that state of affairs *for its own sake*.

In addition to proposing this modification, Levinson also argues that Iseminger's belief-based

²⁶ However, this would require he revise his belief-based account of final value or at least explain how the beliefs which comprise final (dis)value can affect the phenomenological character of experience.

account of final value inadequately reflects the nature of ‘appreciation’. He writes, ‘if [valuing] is to be the definitive mark of appreciating, [it] must be an active or occurrent stance; a finding-valuable, so to speak, with some sort of phenomenology, and mere believing, which is normally non-occurrent and devoid of phenomenology, seems ill-suited to fulfilling such a role’ (Levinson 2016: 37).

Levinson proposes an alternative: ‘valuing is, to a rough approximation, *endorsed satisfaction* [...] *to take satisfaction in [...] an activity for its own sake while, at some level, endorsing or approving doing so*’ (Levinson 2016: 37).

We can present Levinson’s position as follows:

Levinson: A subject (*S*) is having an ‘aesthetic experience’ if *S* is experiencing some state of affairs and *S* derives satisfaction from the experiencing of that state of affairs, and (at some level) approves of that feeling of satisfaction.

An important caveat is in order. Although I attribute this view to Levinson, and he seems to endorse it, he does not think that it exhausts plausible conceptions of aesthetic experience. He writes,

‘Though I have defended, with qualification, a non-minimalist conception of aesthetic experience [...] offered by Gary Iseminger, which proposes that valuing is the core of aesthetic experience, I am not in fact wedded to that specific proposal. It seems that there are experiences of a positive character that we would be inclined to classify as aesthetic experiences [...] but which do not include as such the element of *valuing* on the part of the subject of experience’ (Levinson 2016: 38-9).

So, Levinson, like Stecker, seems to be a *pluralist* about aesthetic experience. However, unlike Stecker, Levinson does not think aesthetic experiences *necessarily* have final value. Rather, he seems to think that final value can figure in an account that names a sufficient condition for aesthetic experience.

Assessing Levinson and Iseminger’s Positions

I now assess Levinson’s and Iseminger’s accounts in turn. With regards to **Levinson**, it is too inclusive. Suppose you witness a thief breaking into a car: just as she has broken the window and is climbing in, a pair of police officers happen upon her, catching her red-handed. Suppose you find this satisfying to watch. You then become aware of your feeling of satisfaction and

wonder whether you are savouring another person's misfortune. On reflection you decide that the feeling of satisfaction springs from an innate sense of justice (and is not *schadenfreude*). You judge the feeling of satisfaction to be morally permissible, or appropriate given the circumstances to which it is a response, so approve of, or endorse, it.

Clearly this would be an instance of moral experience or moral deliberation. You are concerned with whether it is permissible to feel satisfaction at the thief's misfortune. Yet this case satisfies the conditions which according to *Levinson* are sufficient for aesthetic experience: it involves experiencing a state of affairs, deriving satisfaction from experiencing that state of affairs, then endorsing or approving of that feeling of satisfaction. In which case, *Levinson* implies it is an 'aesthetic experience', when it is not, and is therefore false.

Now, it is possible that I have misrepresented Levinson's position. He might intend a modified version of *Levinson* to provide a general characterisation of a type of aesthetic experience, rather than a sufficient condition for it. His view might be closer to the following:

Levinson*: A subject who is having an 'aesthetic experience' will typically be experiencing some state of affairs, deriving satisfaction from the experiencing of that state of affairs, and (at some level) approving of that feeling of satisfaction.

If *Levinson** more accurately resembles Levinson's view, then it cannot be directly opposed by marshalling counter-examples, as we did for *Levinson*. However, *Levinson** is far less informative than *Levinson*. It cannot satisfy a number of the desiderata, listed in the Introduction, which a good account of aesthetic experience would. For instance, it is too vague to be used in an experimental setting. It cannot be extensionally adequate since it does not demarcate particular instances of experience and classify them as 'aesthetic'. It also cannot provide us with a way of establishing whether certain borderline cases are 'aesthetic experiences' or not. Finally, it seems too vague to contribute much to the debate about which sense modalities it is possible to have aesthetic experiences through.

What, then, of Iseminger's position?

In assessing Stecker's position, we saw that some aesthetic experiences lack a valuing component and, therefore, aesthetic experiences are not necessarily experiences that we finally (dis)value. This is also problematic for *Iseminger** which states that aesthetic experiences are necessarily finally (dis)valued. Furthermore, Iseminger's position does not

provide us with a sufficient condition either for 'aesthetic experience' or for 'the aesthetic state of mind'. Suppose you enjoy some rare quality time with your family. Whilst doing so, you non-instrumentally grasp that you love and care for them. This leads you to value the experience for its own sake (believe it is good for non-instrumental reasons). The experience is therefore 'epistemic' and has the required axiological component. Clearly, though, it is not an aesthetic experience and you may not be in an *aesthetic state of mind*. In which case, **Iseminger** and **Iseminger*** are false.

There is also the issue of basic somatic experiences. Suppose you are hot and thirsty and enjoy drinking a cold glass of water: you immediately and non-inferentially know that your thirst has been slaked, so the experience is 'epistemic'. Further, you value the experience for its own sake, because of the pleasure intrinsic to it (you might also value it instrumentally, of course). If the experience of drinking a cold glass of water when thirsty is not aesthetic, or if you might not be in an 'aesthetic state of mind', then, again, **Iseminger** and **Iseminger*** are false.

Axiological Approaches are 'Stunningly Uninformative'

Carroll argues that axiological approaches are 'stunningly uninformative' (Carroll 2012: 168). His point is that, unlike his content-oriented account, they do not tell us how to have an 'aesthetic experience'. This objection can be developed further: axiological accounts do not tell us what it is about 'aesthetic experiences' that makes us (dis)value them for their own sakes. To bring this point into focus, I will now outline some reasons why we might finally (dis)value an experience.

Some of the experiences we finally value are pleasurable and we finally value them because of the pleasure that is intrinsic to them. There are many such experiences, such as gustatory experiences, sexual experiences, or having a stimulating conversation. Conversely, we finally disvalue some experiences because of the pain or displeasure which is intrinsic to them (such as being ill or stubbing one's toe).

There are other experiences which are (dis)valuable for their own sakes but which do not seem to occasion an emotional state which is as straightforwardly connected to final (dis)value as pleasure or pain are: visiting a dying relative, for instance; or celebrating a friend's life at her funeral; or realizing the wisdom in some advice one was given long ago; or realizing how emotionally close to (or distant from) another person one has become; or finding oneself finally

able to 'move on' and put the past behind one. We (dis)value these experiences for their own sakes on account of the depth at which they move us (because they are *cathartic*, *profound*, or *traumatising*). So very *intense* experiences, as well as pleasurable and painful experiences, can be (dis)valued for their own sakes.

In a related vein, experiencing something monumental (or which one perceives to be monumental) is often valued for its own sake. One imagines that those who witnessed the dismantling of the Berlin wall valued the experience for its own sake (as well as, perhaps, for instrumental reasons). Additionally, one might value for its own sake the experience of seeing Africa from the southern-most tip of Gibraltar, or of seeing Earth from space. Here a sense of wonder or awe is intrinsic to the experience; wonder or awe, like pleasure, can produce experiences that one finally values.

A further reason one might finally value an experience is because one has developed an almost obsessive fascination with a particular type of object or activity. An ornithologist might value for its own sake the experience of seeing a rare bird species, for example. Likewise, a golf enthusiast might value the experience of playing a round on the world's oldest golf course.

A related but slightly different reason for valuing an experience for its own sake is on account of a deeply held, perhaps socially conditioned, belief that certain sorts of experiences are important. A dyed in the wool Maoist might value the experience of visiting Chairman Mao's mausoleum for its own sake. Similarly, a Tibetan Buddhist might value for its own sake the experience of meeting the Dalai Lama. People also place final value (perhaps in addition to instrumental value) on seeing sacred relics (the remains of a religious figure, for example) because of the significance those relics are afforded by a religious belief system.

I have mentioned just five reasons *why* one might (dis)value an experience for its own sake. Yet axiological accounts only seem to say that 'aesthetic experiences' are (dis)valuable for their own sakes. They do not tell us *why* we (dis)value them for their own sakes. Therefore, Carroll is right to describe them as stunningly uninformative.

A final counter-example emerges from this. There are some artworks which seem to have acquired relic-like or celebrity-like status. These are very famous works which one must usually view from afar due to the large crowds they attract. Think of the *Mona Lisa* or *Starry Night*. The experience of viewing one of these paintings *in the flesh*, as it were, might be valued for its own sake simply because it has acquired a monumental status and its appreciation is sanctioned by deeply held cultural and social attitudes.

Now, it seems possible that someone might generally find art boring yet finally value the experience of seeing the *Mona Lisa* simply because it is such a famous, monumental object and appreciation of it is sanctioned by her cultural and social attitudes. If such a person is not having an ‘aesthetic experience’, then this case would constitute a further counter-example to axiological accounts (at least to those which provide a sufficient condition for aesthetic experience).

We can put this objection in more illustrative terms: Suppose two people view the *Mona Lisa*. One finds art boring. She is familiar with the *Mona Lisa* because her idol uploaded an image of it on social media and she has seen it referenced in popular culture. The other spends a lot of time viewing art, greatly admires Leonardo da Vinci, is interested in seeing the *Mona Lisa*, but also has a broad interest in other artists and artworks. Call the former Instagram Izzy and the latter Arty Anne. Now suppose Izzy visits the Louvre and gets very excited by the crowds jostling to see the *Mona Lisa*. She finally gets to see it and, realising that she is beholding an object which has acquired monumental status, places final value on the experience of seeing it. Anne by comparison bemoans the unwarranted hype associated with the *Mona Lisa*, but tries to view it with an open mind. Suppose Anne patiently attends to the work and feels a glow of contentment as she detects the masterful hand of da Vinci in the softness of the *Mona Lisa*’s features. This makes Anne place final value on the experience of seeing the *Mona Lisa*.

It seems plausible to suppose that Anne has an ‘aesthetic experience’ and Izzy does not. Izzy finally values her experience of the *Mona Lisa* on account of its monumental status as an object of popular acclaim. Alternatively, we could say Izzy finally values the experience because of a deeply held, socially conditioned belief she has that the experience of it is important²⁷. However, unlike Anne, she has not grasped the reasons why an experience of the *Mona Lisa* might be valued for its own sake.

²⁷ Recall Iseminger understands final value in terms of belief. According to Iseminger, Izzy would finally value her experience of the *Mona Lisa* if she believes the experience is good for reasons that do not describe it as a means to something else. Neither of the two reasons I have just given for why Izzy values her experience (that it is experience of an object which has acquired monumental status and because of a deeply held, socially conditioned belief she has that the experience is important) describe it as a means to something else. Now one might argue that Izzy does not qualify as ‘finally valuing’ the experience because her reasons for valuing it are that it puts her in a closer relation to her idol or makes her feel socially sanctioned and these reasons describe the experience as a means to something else. However, this line of argument is not an objection to the counter-example I have presented. It changes the terms of the counter-example, which states Izzy values her experience of the *Mona Lisa* because of its monumental status as an object of popular acclaim or because of a deeply held belief she has that the experience of it is important.

Both Izzy and Anne satisfy conditions which, according to **Iseminger*** are sufficient for 'aesthetic experience': they both experience a state of affairs (in an 'epistemic' sense), and value that experience for its own sake. Given that Izzy is not having an 'aesthetic experience', **Iseminger*** must be false. If Izzy is not in an 'aesthetic state of mind', which seems plausible, then **Iseminger** is false as well. Izzy would also constitute a counter-example to **Levinson** if she feels satisfaction in viewing the *Mona Lisa* and endorses or approves of the feeling of satisfaction.

We can conclude two things from this. Firstly, axiological accounts which provide sufficient conditions for aesthetic experience are too inclusive. Secondly, they are too inclusive because they do not specify what it is about (some) aesthetic experiences which makes us finally (dis)value them. Consequently, if final (dis)value is to feature in an account of aesthetic experience, then that account should additionally explain what makes us assign final (dis)value to (some of our) aesthetic experiences. Moreover, as we have seen, some aesthetic experiences are not finally (dis)valued. An account in which final (dis)value figures should not, therefore, imply that every aesthetic experience is finally (dis)valued. These conclusions, and others to follow, inform the hybrid account of aesthetic experience that I shall propose in chapter four.

In summary, this section has examined three axiological accounts and found that none of them adequately characterise aesthetic experience. My overarching aim in this chapter is to show that ('mode-oriented') accounts of aesthetic experience, which do not refer to 'aesthetic properties', are unsuccessful and we should therefore adopt a hybrid account which describes both the mode and content of aesthetic experience. Thus far we have only established that one of the three types of mode-oriented accounts are unsuccessful. We now need to examine the other two.

However, we should firstly consider whether there are any further insights from the foregoing discussion which we can later use to formulate an intensional definition of aesthetic experience. Although we have established that some aesthetic experiences are not finally (dis)valued, we have yet to consider what motivates the (false) belief that they are. One proposal is that all aesthetic experiences are *valenced*. Where axiological accounts go wrong is in assuming that experiences can only acquire a valence by being (dis)valued. This is mistaken. Experiences can also acquire a valence because of the affects felt during them. Aesthetic experiences which have a valence because of their affective character may, but need not, additionally be finally (dis)valued. So, we can preserve the intuition undergirding axiological accounts by adopting the requirement that aesthetic experiences must have some valence, which is due to either the affects felt or the final (dis)value placed on them.

The previous chapter argued that the content-oriented account is problematic as it does not require that the aesthetically experiencing subject *engage* with the aesthetic properties she discerns. It therefore erroneously classifies non-aesthetic experiences of impassively noting an aesthetic property as 'aesthetic'. Drawing these elements together, we have thus far arrived at the views that aesthetic experience involves *engaging* with aesthetic properties and that aesthetic experiences are valenced either because they are finally (dis)valued or because of the affects felt (or for both reasons). These two proposals aptly supplement one another: one indicator that the subject is *engaging* with aesthetic properties is that her experience acquires a valence (either because she is moved by the aesthetic properties she discerns and/or because she finally [dis]values the experience of them). This brings us to the initial proposal that *aesthetic experiences are valenced because the subject engages with aesthetic properties she discerns*. I will now proceed to examine the two remaining types of mode-oriented account with a view to further refining this initial proposal.

Affect-Oriented Accounts of Aesthetic Experience

Clive Bell and Monroe Beardsley are the two most prominent aestheticians of the twentieth century to characterise aesthetic experience in terms of affect. I will now examine their positions in turn. My overarching aims in this section are two-fold: firstly, to argue that aesthetic experience cannot be adequately characterised just in terms of affect; and, secondly, to elucidate the role affect plays in determining the valence of some aesthetic experiences. With regards to the former, I will argue that neither Bell nor Beardsley provides a satisfactory account of aesthetic experience. With regards to the latter, I will use Paul Silvia's taxonomy of the emotions which arise during art appreciation to examine how affective states figure in 'multi-valenced' aesthetic experiences (i.e. aesthetic experiences which have both a negative and positive valence).

Clive Bell

This section discusses Clive Bell's theory that, put briefly, artworks elicit 'aesthetic emotion'. I shall discuss the elements of his book *Art*, first published in 1914, which are salient to unpacking this idea. I will then attribute to him and assess an account of aesthetic experience. I will argue that Bell's account is not only philosophically problematic, but that it is deleterious insofar as people who adopt his formalist approach to art appreciation may, as a consequence, forgo rewarding aesthetic experiences they would otherwise have had.

Bell's central aims in *Art* are, firstly, to describe the essential quality common to all works of (visual) art, and, secondly, to motivate the 'formalist' view that the most rewarding experiences of artworks are had by attending exclusively to their forms, rather than what they represent or depict. To this end, Bell formulates 'the aesthetic hypothesis', which can be summarised as follows:

Bell's Aesthetic Hypothesis: Something is a work of visual art just in case it has significant form, where a 'significant form' is an arrangement of shapes and colours that elicit 'aesthetic emotion' in 'sensitive' percipients (Bell 1987: 3-37).

Bell restricts his inquiry to visual art, admitting a dearth of expertise in music (*ibid.*: 32-3). He arrives at the aesthetic hypothesis by first stating that 'either all works of art have some common quality, or when we speak of "works of art" we gibber [...] There must be some one quality without which a work of art cannot exist' (*ibid.*: 7). He additionally states that there is

consensus among 'sensitive' people that 'a peculiar kind of emotion is provoked by [...] every kind of visual art, by pictures, sculptures, buildings, pots, carvings, textiles &c.' (*ibid*: 6-7). He terms this 'aesthetic emotion' and asks what single quality all works of (visual) art have such that they elicit 'aesthetic emotion' in sensitive percipients. His answer is 'significant form' (*ibid*: 8). A form – that is, an arrangement of shapes, colours, and representations of three-dimensional space²⁸ in an artwork – is 'significant' if it has the power to move sensitive percipients to 'aesthetic emotion'.

Bell describes 'aesthetic emotion' as a rapturous, positively valenced feeling of transcendence of everyday life and its concerns. He stresses the dissimilarity between aesthetic emotion and all other emotional states, except those felt by the 'rapt philosopher' (Bell 1987: 26) and '[t]he pure mathematician rapt in his studies' (*ibid*: 25)²⁹. Additionally, Bell claims that every artwork produces a distinct aesthetic emotion, but that all aesthetic emotions are 'recognisably the same in kind' (*ibid*: 6).

Bell thinks that the character or feeling tone of a 'pure' aesthetic emotion elicited by a particular artwork remains unchanged by the vicissitudes of time and place. He writes, '[b]efore the grandeur of those Sumerian figures in the Louvre he [the art appreciator] is carried on the same flood of emotion to the same aesthetic ecstasy as, more than four thousand years ago, the Chaldean lover [of art] was carried [...] To those who have and hold a sense of the significance of form what does it matter whether the forms that move them were created in Paris the day before yesterday or in Babylon fifty centuries ago?' (*ibid*: 36-7).

Bell's definition of 'art' is avowedly revisionary; it excludes putative artworks that lack significant form. He uses the term 'descriptive pictures' to refer to paintings which aim primarily to convey information, but which lack significant form. He argues the Italian Futurists mostly produce 'descriptive paintings', rather than 'works of art', since, 'they aim at presenting in line and colour the chaos of the mind at a particular moment' (*ibid*: 21). In addition, Bell takes the extension of 'art' to include objects that his contemporaries may have regarded as 'historical

²⁸ Bell's decision to classify representations of three-dimension space as 'form' could result from his unwavering reverence for Cézanne, who developed innovative ways of representing depth in his landscape paintings (Schmitt 2000:45). In addition, Bell presumably thinks that the forms of some visual artworks, such as sculptures, is comprised not of represented, but of actual, three-dimensional spatial extension (though he does not say so explicitly).

²⁹ With regards to the latter, Bell writes, '[the mathematician] feels an emotion for his speculations which arises from no perceived relation between them and the lives of men, but springs in-human or super-human, from the heart of an abstract science' (Bell 1987:25).

artefacts' or 'ethnographic objects'. These include, 'wooden Bodhisattvas', 'Sumerian sculpture', 'pre-dynastic Egyptian art', 'archaic Greek [masterpieces]', and 'the Wei and T'ang masterpieces' (*ibid*: 22-23). Bell suggests the artists who created these "primitive" works were not preoccupied with 'technical swagger', 'ostentatious cunning', or the 'display of extravagant accomplishment', so could 'concentrate their energies on [...] the creation of form' (*ibid*: 24-5).

Although Bell does not explicitly formulate an account of 'aesthetic experience', we can attribute to him the following view:

Aesthetic Experience (Bell): A subject (*S*) is having an aesthetic experience of an artwork just in case *S*'s attention is at least partly trained on the significant form of the work and this causes *S* to feel some degree of aesthetic emotion.

This formulation accommodates Bell's view that art appreciation comes in degrees of 'purity'. 'Pure' art appreciation requires attending to artworks exclusively as non-representative forms. Appreciation is 'impure' to the extent to which we attend to what is represented in an artwork, or otherwise bring 'human interests' and 'the ideas of life' to bear on our experience (Bell 1987: 32). Bell illustrates the gradations of aesthetic experience with reference to his own experience of music:

'I understand music too ill for music to transport me into the world of pure aesthetic ecstasy. But at moments I do appreciate music as pure musical form [...] as pure art with a tremendous significance of its own and no relation whatsoever to the significance of life [...] Tired or perplexed, I let slip my sense of form, and my aesthetic emotion collapses, and I begin weaving into the harmonies, that I cannot grasp, the ideas of life. Incapable of feeling the austere emotions of art, I begin to read into the musical forms human emotions of terror and mystery, love and hate, and spend the minutes, pleasantly enough, in a world of turbid and inferior feeling [...] I have tumbled from the superb peaks of aesthetic exaltation to the snug foothills of warm humanity. It is a jolly country. No one need be ashamed of enjoying himself there. Only [...] let no one imagine, because he has made merry in the warm tilth and quaint nooks of romance, that he can even guess at the austere and thrilling raptures of those who have climbed the cold, white peaks of art.' (*ibid*: 31-33).

His position is that viewing artworks as representative forms does not preclude *any* aesthetic experience, but only 'pure' aesthetic experience. Bell writes, 'provided there is some fraction of

pure aesthetic emotion, even a mixed and minor appreciation of art is, I am sure, one of the most valuable things in the world' (*ibid*: 35).

Before assessing Bell's position, I first outline his 'metaphysical hypothesis'. This is his explanation of why certain combinations of shapes and colours are such that they elicit aesthetic emotion in sensitive percipients. Bell presents this as speculative and suggests its falsehood would not affect the truth of his aesthetic hypothesis (Bell 1987: 49). I therefore only summarise his metaphysical hypothesis, without assessing it, in order to provide a richer sense of the emotional states Bell terms 'aesthetic'.

The Metaphysical Hypothesis

Bell hypothesises that 'artists can express in combinations of lines and colours an emotion felt for reality which reveals itself through line and colour' (Bell 1987: 54). He suggests that artists, and occasionally non-artists, have experiences of the world in which they 'passionately apprehend' some part of it as 'pure form'. This involves seeing (or otherwise experiencing) something both as 'an end in itself' and stripped from all associations which it has acquired 'from its commerce with human beings' (*ibid*: 53). Bell hypothesises that the experience of the world as 'pure form' elicits 'aesthetic emotion' because the subject has '[caught] a sense of ultimate reality' or 'that which philosophers used to call "the thing in itself"' (*ibid*: 54):

'What is the significance of anything as an end in itself? What is that which is left when we have stripped a thing of all its associations, of all its significance as a means? What is left to provoke our emotion? What but that which philosophers used to call "the thing in itself" and now call "ultimate reality"?' (*ibid*: 53-54)

When an artist feels aesthetic emotion for 'pure forms' in the world, she is filled with 'an intolerable desire to express [herself]' (Bell 1922: 42). She then creates artworks which possess 'significant forms' capable of eliciting in art appreciators an emotion resembling that which she felt upon apprehending 'ultimate reality'. Importantly, Bell does not think these significant forms *represent* aesthetic emotion, in the way that, for instance, Munch's *the Scream* might be said to represent anguish. Rather, they are *causally efficacious* arrangements of lines and colours capable of 'provoking' aesthetic emotion in sensitive percipients.

Bell's metaphysical hypothesis in effect raises ('true') artists to the status previously enjoyed by mystics and sages: they see beyond human concerns and interests, acquire insight into the nature of reality, and then communicate their experiences in a format comprehensible to

laypersons. Alternatively, we might draw a comparison between Bell's artists and those prisoners who, in Plato's *Republic*, are freed from their shackled positions in underground caves, and ascend into knowledge of reality.

As mentioned, Bell presents his metaphysical hypothesis as speculative; he even describes it as 'altogether fantastic' (Bell 1987: 54). However, it reveals how he regards 'aesthetic emotion' as a quasi-spiritual affective state comparable to religious ecstasy.

How Plausible is Bell's Aesthetic Hypothesis?

To return to the 'aesthetic hypothesis', Feagin has questioned whether it is psychologically possible to attend to representative artworks exclusively in their capacities as non-representative arrangements of lines and colours (Feagin 2012: 122). For example, when we look at Cézanne's still life paintings we cannot help but 'see' apples in the roughly spherical shapes coloured red, green and yellow. Bell seems to think that this 'seeing-in' precludes the experience of pure aesthetic emotion. However, if it is an automatic, involuntary response to (at least some) paintings Bell deems 'artworks' (which certainly include works produced by Cézanne), then it follows that these works cannot yield 'pure' aesthetic emotion. Our experience of their forms will always be tempered by an awareness of what those forms represent. Bell thinks 'aesthetic emotion' is the only basis on which a painting or object can be recognised as a work of art. In which case, we might question how those paintings that cannot yield pure aesthetic emotion could reliably be classified as 'art' or 'non-art'.

Bell could reply that 'aesthetic sensibility' partly consists in the ability to experience representative paintings exclusively as non-representative forms. This position is indicated by the following observation he makes: 'people who cannot feel pure aesthetic emotions remember pictures by their subjects; whereas people who can, as often as not, have no idea what the subject of a picture is. They have never noticed the representative element, and so when they discuss pictures they talk about the shapes of forms and the relations and quantities of colour' (Bell 1987: 30).

It seems unlikely that one could view a representational painting and remain oblivious as to what it represents (particularly if it represents something disturbing or grotesque). This is, however, an issue best resolved by empirical research. What we can presently object to is Bell's normative view that the best way to appreciate a representative work of art is by exclusively focusing on its non-representative qualities (its lines and colours). The only argument Bell seems

to give for this counter-intuitive position is that attending to art works exclusively as forms yields pure 'aesthetic emotion', which is 'one of the most valuable things in the world' (Bell 1987: 35).

One objection to this argument questions the existence of distinctively 'aesthetic emotions'. Many, if not most, commentators are unclear about what affective state(s) 'aesthetic emotion' names. A related objection questions how lines and colours, viewed as non-representative forms, are able to elicit an emotional state which is as intense and as profoundly moving as Bell considers 'aesthetic emotion' to be. We have good reason to doubt that very intense and profound emotions are felt in response to situations that have no bearing on our individual concerns or personal wellbeing. This has to do with the nature of emotions themselves. The emotions that move us most intensely are those that occur when we believe a situation may or does affect our wellbeing or our concerns. Emotions alert us about whether, and in what way, a particular situation might affect us, and can stimulate us to act in response. For our present purpose, we just need to agree that intense and profound emotions are not elicited by situations that have no bearing on our individual concerns or personal wellbeing. Now Bell thinks that the most intense emotions that arise during art appreciation, and which arise *tout court*, only occur when we cease relating the object of appreciation to our 'human concerns' and daily lives. Yet these are precisely the conditions in which we have just agreed that very intense emotions do not occur. It is therefore psychologically implausible to think that 'aesthetic emotions' arise with the intensity, and under the conditions, described by Bell³⁰.

Bell might reply by asserting that 'aesthetically sensitive' people just have anomalous, inexplicably intense, affective responses to certain arrangements of lines and colours. He anticipates that 'aesthetic emotion' might be unfamiliar to some people. He suggests a 'good' critic could direct their attention to the salient features of an artwork's form (Bell 1987: 9). If this does not stimulate in them a feeling of aesthetic emotion, then Bell seems to think they are constitutionally unable to feel it.

At this point, we might question the expertise of an art appreciator, or critic, whose affective responses to a range of different artworks were all 'recognisably the same in kind' and could be characterised as a positively-valenced, ecstatic feeling of transcending the everyday. Consider, for instance, Bridget Riley's vertiginous *Fall* which is composed of curved black and white lines

³⁰ This point is a development of an argument made by Tom Cochrane for the non-existence of an 'aesthetic' class of emotions, given at a conference in 2017, then later clarified through personal correspondence.

that oscillate in increasingly tighter curves as they descend from the top of the work. An appropriate affective response to *Fall* is surely a *not entirely pleasurable* feeling of disorientation or dizziness. We might say that disorientation or dizziness is *mandated* by the work; they are the affective states the (actual or hypothetical) artist intends to elicit in her audiences. We can compare *Fall* with Miro's abstract *Triptych Bleu I-III*, which feature striking red and black colour patches and lines on vast, mostly empty, cerulean backgrounds. I suspect that those who are moved by *Triptych Bleu I-III* will experience feeling tones in the region of pleasant serenity or a gentle, subdued awe. Our affective responses may differ here. However, I think we can safely say *Triptych Bleu I-III* do not elicit or mandate an unpleasant sensation of dizziness, as *Fall* does. An art appreciator or critic who viewed these very different abstract works and, in both cases, felt a rapturous ecstasy would surely be unqualified (or unwell). Furthermore, it is unclear why we should regard their affective responses as authoritative indicators of the presence of significant form. Bell does not detail any qualities 'aesthetically sensitive' people possess that would convince us of their art appreciative expertise (unlike, by comparison, Hume's description of 'true judges').

Bell might argue, in response, that *Fall* and *Triptych Bleu I-III* do not elicit aesthetic emotion because they lack significant form and are not 'works of art'. Yet this is also problematic as their status as works of art seems beyond reasonable dispute. A definition of art which excluded them would be extensionally inadequate.

Problems with how Bell defines his central concepts ('work of art', 'aesthetic emotion', 'significant form', and 'sensitivity') do not stop here. A charge of vacuous circularity is often levied against Bell's aesthetic hypothesis. Bell is accused of defining his central concepts ('work of art', 'significant form', 'aesthetic emotion', and 'aesthetic sensitivity') in terms of one another, without providing independent definitions of them (see Beardsley 1963: 291 and Stecker 2005: 89). However, Bell does characterise 'aesthetic emotion' independently of his other central concepts, as a feeling of ecstatic transcendence of the everyday. He also proposes a revisionary concept of (visual) 'art'. His definitions of these four concepts are therefore not entirely vacuous. However, as already mentioned, many commentators are unable to introspectively recognise the emotional states which Bell terms 'aesthetic'. For these persons, who seem to be in the majority, ambiguity about the nature of 'aesthetic emotion' renders it a poor explicans for Bell's other central concepts. The psychological implausibility of 'aesthetic emotion' also militates against using it to explain what 'significant form' and 'aesthetic sensitivity' are.

Commentators have also objected to Bell's initial assumption that 'either all works of art have some common quality, or when we speak of "works of art" we gibber [...] There must be some one quality without which a work of art cannot exist' (Bell 1987: 7) (Feagin 2012: 120-1). There are good reasons for denying that a single quality is essential to all works of art (in the sense of being a necessary and sufficient condition for an object to qualify as a 'work of art'). These include: the huge variety of different objects designated by the term 'art' (even once we restrict our inquiry to works of visual art); the penchant many artists seem to have for 'challenging' preconceptions about what 'art' is; and widespread disagreement about whether certain objects or types of objects qualify as 'art'.

So, it seems likely that there is no one quality that all 'works of art' possess, by virtue of which they are 'works of art'. A 'work of art' may be what Wittgenstein refers to as a 'family resemblance term', which does not name a single property common to all instances of it, but rather, 'a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing' (Wittgenstein 1974: 32). This means that two instances of the same concept – such as two very different 'works of art': a play and a watercolour, for example – may not share a single common quality by virtue of which they qualify for membership. However, each instance of the concept will share at least one common property or similarity with another instance of the concept. By way of illustration, Wittgenstein famously uses the analogy of a rope composed of a series of short interwoven strands (*ibid*: 32), none of which extends from one end to the other, yet each of which overlaps with another strand: just as a single rope can be composed of a series of overlapping strands, so too a single concept can consist of a network of overlapping similarities.

Similarly, art might be a 'cluster concept' consisting of a set of conditions which are disjunctively necessary, and sufficient as a whole and in subsets, for its application (Gaut 2000). If 'art' is best characterised as a 'cluster concept', two instances of 'art' may share no single common quality (other than that they both satisfy at least one criterion within the disjunctively necessary set).

A final objection to Bell's 'aesthetic hypothesis' comes from Kendall Walton's paper, 'Categories of Art'. Walton argues that how an artwork appears, including which aesthetic qualities it has, depends on the category of art with which it is identified. 'Categories of art' include, 'media, genre, style, forms, and so forth' (Walton 1970: 339). An artwork belongs to or is excluded from a category of art on the basis of its non-aesthetic properties. Walton terms non-aesthetic properties which ensure, or count in favour of, an artwork's membership in a given category, 'standard' features in respect of that category. Whereas he terms non-aesthetic properties that count against a work's membership in a given category 'contra-standard' features of that

category. Those non-aesthetic properties that are irrelevant to whether an artwork belongs in a category of art are termed 'variable' features in respect of that category. We could say that for each category of art, there is a set of (implicit or explicit) 'rules for membership' that tell us which non-aesthetic properties are 'standard', 'contra-standard', and 'variable' for it.

The features of an artwork that are 'contra-standard' to its category appear 'shocking, or disconcerting, or startling, or upsetting' (*ibid*: 352). For instance, mime is 'contra-standard' for the category of 'Opera' and if it were to figure in a performance of, for example, *Don Giovanni* we would be shocked or startled. By contrast, the features of an artwork that are 'standard' for its category tend not to attract our attention, but are taken for granted and overlooked. For example, our appraisals of paintings are rarely informed by their being flat and painted, since these are 'standard' features common to all (or most) of the members of the category 'paintings'. When viewing a painting, we instead attend to how the paint is arranged on the flat surface. The particular arrangement of paint on a surface is a 'variable' feature of the category 'paintings'. Variable features in respect of a given category are often the basis on which we distinguish between, compare, and assess members of that category.

Walton endorses the widely held view that an artwork's aesthetic properties stand in dependency relations with its lower-level, non-aesthetic properties (Walton 1970: 337). I take his key insight to be that the 'rules for membership' in categories of art influence the structure of these dependency relations. They do so in three ways:

- (i) By directing our attention away from non-aesthetic properties which qualify as 'standard'.
- (ii) By directing our attention at, and mandating a shocked response to, any non-aesthetic properties which qualify as 'contra-standard'. The non-aesthetic properties of an artwork which qualify as contra-standard for its category could be cited as reasons for describing an artwork as 'jarring', 'daring', 'original', 'shocking', 'subversive', 'challenging' or 'bold', for example.
- (iii) By directing our attention towards non-aesthetic properties which qualify as 'variable' and so to any aesthetic properties that obtain by virtue of them.

Walton famously illustrates this by inviting us to imagine a society which lacks the category 'painting', but has a category of *guernicas*. Members of the latter are all variations of Picasso's *Guernica*, 'done in various bas-relief dimensions' (*ibid*: 347): 'Some *guernicas* have rolling

surfaces, others are sharp and jagged, still others contain several relatively flat planes at various angles to each other, and so forth' (*ibid*). In Walton's fictional society, the compositional elements of Picasso's *Guernica* (such as, the lightbulb, the horse, the bull, and the human figures) are 'standard' features of the category '*guernicas*'. Whereas the degree to which those elements are configured in three-dimensional space are the 'variable' features of the category '*guernicas*'. Art appreciators in this society would therefore evaluate Picasso's *Guernica* not on the basis of its compositional elements (as we might), but rather on how those compositional elements are configured in three-dimensional space. These art appreciators, Walton argues, would find Picasso's *Guernica* 'cold, stark, lifeless, or serene and restful, or perhaps bland, dull, boring' (*ibid*), when viewed in comparison to the other members in the '*guernicas*' category. This is opposed to our experience of Picasso's *Guernica*, as 'violent, dynamic, vital, [and] disturbing' (*ibid*).

Having established that the aesthetic properties an artwork appears to have depends on the category of art with which that work is identified, Walton then proceeds to argue for the stronger claim that 'at least in some cases' there are correct and incorrect categories with which to identify artworks (*ibid*: 356). In practice, Walton argues, we often retract our previous aesthetic judgements about a work (that is, we think they are false) once we acquire an understanding of a different category with which the work could be identified. He gives the examples of cubist paintings, serial music, or Chinese music (*ibid*: 356). One's initial aesthetic judgements of these might be unfavourable. One might, for instance, erroneously identify a piece of serial music with the category 'piano sonata' and form an unfavourable judgement of it. However, upon learning about the principles or rules followed by serial musicians and hearing other works in the category, one might retract one's prior judgement, regarding it as uninformed and false. To do so would commit one to the view that the category 'sonata' is an *incorrect* category with which to identify the work, and that it should instead be identified with the category 'serial music' (which is to say 'serial music' is the *correct* category). This practice of correcting one's past aesthetic judgements therefore entails a commitment to the view that, at least in some cases, there are correct and incorrect categories with which artworks can be identified. Walton's argument for this conclusion involves showing how we already assume it to be the case in our critical practice. He offers several suggestions for determining the correct category in which to perceive a work of art (*ibid*: 357-8), which, for our present purposes, we can overlook.

Now Bell would surely want to say that the ‘significant form’ of, for example, a landscape painting by Cézanne is not discerned by attending to the rectangular shape of the frame, or its depth, or the flatness of the canvas. Rather, the salient non-aesthetic properties are those comprising the particular configuration of paint on the canvas. So, we need to identify an artwork with a category of art in order to know which of its non-aesthetic properties comprise its ‘form’ (and so to discern whether the form is ‘significant’). To correctly identify an artwork with a category of art requires that we recruit background knowledge and contextual information about the work. This is problematic for Bell’s formalist account of art appreciation, according to which, ‘to appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing but a sense of form and colour and a knowledge of three-dimensional space’ (Bell 1987: 27). Walton’s argument demonstrates the contrary: to appreciate a work of art, we must come armed with knowledge of the different categories of art, and the ability to discern which one a particular art object should be identified with.

To summarise, this section questioned whether we can attend to representative artworks just as lines and colours and whether doing so can elicit an emotion as intense as Bell’s ‘aesthetic emotion’. It then argued that his conception of art appreciation in terms of ‘aesthetic emotion’ is too narrow. Finally, it was argued that the appreciation of an artwork’s form – which Bell regards as paradigmatic of art appreciation – requires background contextual knowledge, which is inconsistent with Bell’s view of art appreciation.

Where does this leave us with regards to ‘aesthetic experience’? If our aesthetic experiences are pervaded by a distinctive feeling tone or affect, then Bell does not get us any closer to specifying what, exactly, it is. I have given reasons against thinking that the forms of visual art can evoke the ecstasy-like state Bell describes. However, even if we grant that ‘aesthetic emotion’ is sometimes felt in response to artistic form, it is clearly absent from the vast majority of our aesthetic experiences of art. Moreover, Bell advises that we should not attend to the representational elements of artworks. So not only is his position philosophically problematic, it is also deleterious insofar as people who follow this advice may, as a consequence, forgo rewarding aesthetic experiences in an arguably vain attempt to feel ‘aesthetic emotion’.

Philosophical discourse concerning Bell’s aesthetics tend to omit his apparent concern for the spiritual health and wellbeing of his audience and of society at large. One way to read *Art*, which was first published in 1914, is as a manifesto for how art and aesthetic experience might fill the void created by declining religiosity. He seems to think that, like a religion, art and aesthetic emotion can help us to live profoundly meaningful lives, provide us with transcendent

experiences, give us insight into the fundamental nature of reality, and provide an expansive context – or “bigger picture” – within which to situate one’s daily life. In his words:

‘For those who can feel the significance of form, art can never be less than a religion. In art these find what other religious natures found and still find, I doubt not, in impassioned prayer and worship. They find that emotional confidence, that assurance of absolute good, which makes of life a momentous and harmonious whole [...] He who goes daily into the world of aesthetic emotion returns to the world of human affairs equipped to face it courageously and even a little contemptuously’ (Bell 1987: 291-2).

Bell’s view that art can play this role in our lives presupposes that aesthetic emotion is elicited by significant form and is therefore, for the reasons outlined, problematic. However, we need not throw the baby out with the bathwater, so to speak. There is a place within a secular worldview for aesthetic experience to enhance our wellbeing and bring to our lives some of the benefits which a religion or spiritual practice might. Aesthetic experience can help us to periodically transcend the myriad concerns of daily life and return to it refreshed, renewed and with a sense of purpose or, at least, perspective. It can also furnish us with a sincere appreciation of – if not gratitude for – the very fact that we are conscious beings fortuitously alive on this beautiful planet. Furthermore, there are reasons to think some aesthetic experiences are structurally similar to mindful experiences (both can involve attending to an experiential object exclusively for non-instrumental reasons and feeling positive affect as a consequence – I will expand on this in chapter five). In which case, we might expect both to yield comparable cognitive and therapeutic benefits. The cognitive and therapeutic benefits of mindfulness, particularly for emotional regulation, are well-documented. There may therefore be some truth to Bell’s claim that aesthetic appreciation can provide ‘emotional confidence’ and ‘make of life a momentous and harmonious whole’ (*ibid*: 292). I will return to this topic in chapter five. For now, we can continue to examine whether other affect-oriented accounts successfully characterise aesthetic experience.

Monroe Beardsley

We can attribute three accounts of ‘aesthetic experience’ to Beardsley. His initial (1958) account is given in the final pages of his *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*, where he characterises aesthetic experience in terms of unity, intensity, and complexity. He later (1969) proposes a hedonic account in which feeling pleasure is a necessary condition for aesthetic experience. Beardsley’s final (1982) account lists five criteria for aesthetic experience.

These are, object-directedness, felt freedom, detached affect, active discovery, and wholeness. (Beardsley 1982: 288-9). He argues that a subject is having an aesthetic experience just in case she satisfies the first of these and at least three of the remaining four (*ibid*: 288)³¹. I will now argue that each of these accounts is problematic.

Beardsley's First Account: Unity, Attention, and Intensity

Beardsley gives his initial account of aesthetic experience in *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*. Here Beardsley uses the term 'aesthetic experience' to name experiences which meet the following three criteria:

- (i) The subject's *attention* is trained on the complex of compositional elements of an aesthetic object³², which causes or controls her experience.
- (ii) The experience is *intense*.
- (iii) The experience is *unified*, in the sense that it is 'coherent' and 'complete' (1958: 527-8).

Beardsley presents these as 'generalisations' about the phenomenological character of aesthetic experience, which various writers (including, I.A Richards, Kant, Schopenhauer, Edward Bullough, and John Dewey, among others [*ibid*: 552-4]) have obtained through 'acute introspection' (*ibid*: 527).

³¹ In 1963, following vigorous debate with George Dickie, Beardsley switched tack and inquired about the nature of 'aesthetic enjoyment', rather than 'experience'. I largely overlook this section of Beardsley's writing, referring to it only in relation to his (1969) hedonic account of aesthetic experience, and in establishing his (1982) distinction between 'experiences with an aesthetic character' and fully-fledged 'aesthetic experiences'.

³² Perhaps in light of Bell's and others' failures to adequately define 'work of art', Beardsley eschews the term in favour of 'aesthetic object'. He accepts the latter is 'somewhat artificial', and that '[w]e may not be able to give a complete definition of it' (Beardsley 1958: 17). However, he thinks it is 'safe to use' since 'aesthetic objects' can be clearly distinguished from other types of objects in the following ways (*ibid*): Firstly, aesthetic objects differ from the objects their creators intended to produce (*ibid*: 17-29). Secondly, aesthetic objects are perceptual objects, not physical objects – where the former is, for instance, a melody, and the latter vibrations of particles in the air (*ibid*: 29-34). Thirdly, aesthetic objects are 'phenomenally objective', which means that they appear to be outside of oneself, or as given in experience (*ibid*: 34-43). Fourthly, an aesthetic object differs from a particular performance of it – Debussy's *Claire de Lune*, for instance, which is an aesthetic object, should not be identified with any particular performance of it (which may be excellent or amateurish) (*ibid*: 43-58).

At an earlier point in *Aesthetics*, Beardsley argues that ‘unity’, ‘complexity’, and ‘intensity of human regional qualities’³³ are the qualities of artworks to which critics refer in support of their evaluative critical statements (*ibid*: 462-4). He then explains that experiencing these qualities in *artworks* produces an ‘aesthetic’ *experience* which is unified, intense, and involves attentiveness to complexity. He says these experiences are desirable, so can be described as ‘valuable’. This informs an ‘instrumentalist’ definition of aesthetic value³⁴ according to which: (i) the distinctive function of ‘aesthetic objects’ is to provide aesthetic experiences; and (ii) the ‘aesthetic value’ of an aesthetic object is determined by the ‘magnitude’ of the aesthetic experience it is capable of producing (where ‘magnitude’ refers collectively to the ‘unity’, ‘intensity’, and ‘attentiveness to complexity’ of an experience). In Beardsley’s words:

“X has aesthetic value” means “X has the capacity to produce an aesthetic experience of a fairly great magnitude (such an experience having value)”.

And,

“X has a greater aesthetic value than Y” means “X has the capacity to produce an aesthetic experience of greater magnitude (such an experience having more value) than that produced by Y” (*ibid*: 531).

I will return to Beardsley’s *instrumentalist definition* of aesthetic value in chapter six. With regards to his above account of ‘aesthetic experience’, I take it (i) and (ii) do not require further explanation. With regards to (iii), Beardsley describes an experience as ‘unified’ if it is both ‘complete’ and ‘coherent’. He says an aesthetic experience is ‘complete’ in the sense that it, ‘detaches itself, and even insulates itself, from the intrusion of alien elements’. Expanding on this he writes, ‘[t]he impulses and expectations aroused by elements within the experience are

³³ Beardsley uses the term ‘regional quality’ to refer to qualities or properties which belong only to a set (or ‘complex’) of perceptual elements considered as a whole, but do not belong to any one of those elements considered by themselves (*ibid*: 83). A perceptual ‘element’ here is simply ‘[a]n absolutely homogenous part of the [perceptual] field’ (*ibid*). For instance, ‘[y]ou can distinguish the light and dark parts of the surface of the moon, but if within a dark patch you can find no differences, then that patch is elementary’ (*ibid*). Similarly, a homogenous patch of colour is an ‘element’ in the ‘complex’ of the painting in which it is located, or a single musical note is an ‘element’ in the ‘complex’ of the composition it features in. A human regional property is simply one, ‘which is similar to qualities of human behaviour, especially to mental states and processes: sombreness, serenity, frolicsomeness, determination, calm, voluptuousness, indecisiveness, for example’ (*ibid*: 328).

³⁴ Beardsley suggests we could formulate the instrumentalist definition of aesthetic value as a conditional: ‘If it be granted that aesthetic experience has value, then “aesthetic value” may be defined as “the capacity to produce an aesthetic experience of some magnitude”’ (*ibid*: 533).

felt to be counterbalanced or resolved by other elements within the experience, so that some degree of equilibrium or finality is achieved and enjoyed' (*ibid*: 528).

With regards to 'coherence', Beardsley says aesthetic experiences 'hang together', and, '[o]ne thing leads to another, continuity of development, without gaps or dead spaces, a sense of overall providential pattern of guidance, an orderly culmination of energy towards a climax' (*ibid*: 528). The 'coherence' of aesthetic experience is evidenced, Beardsley argues, by our ability to re-enter or reinstate an aesthetic experience after an interval: 'when we lay down the novel to water the lawn or eat dinner, it can retain a remarkable degree of coherence. Pick up the novel and you are immediately back in the world of the work, almost as if there had been no interruption' (*ibid*).

The exact mechanisms by which the 'unity' of an object can produce an *experience* that is 'unified' ('coherent' and 'complete') has proved the most contentious aspect of Beardsley's account. George Dickie, who is Beardsley's main interlocutor on the topic, objects to Beardsley's use of the terms 'complete' and 'coherent' to describe segments of experience. Dickie argues that these terms instead describe the objects of experience and not the experiencing itself. If Dickie is right, then Beardsley's account of aesthetic experience and, by implication, aesthetic value are defective. I now examine the debate between Dickie and Beardsley in greater detail.

Dickie and Beardsley: Can a Segment of Experiencing be 'Unified'?

Dickie takes issue with Beardsley's argument that a portion of experience can be 'complete' because it involves the arousal and subsequent satisfaction of expectations. The type of expectations in question are those aroused by 'temporal' artworks – such as novels, plays, music, and film (Dickie 1965: 132)³⁵. For example, when reading a novel, we form expectations about the events that will transpire, or the way certain characters will behave. Likewise, our experience of music is often shaped by expectations about what we will next hear³⁶.

Dickie (1965) agrees that the expectations that arise when we attend to temporal artworks are effects of those artworks on our experience. However, he denies the same is true of the satisfaction of those expectations by, for example, the timing of a drumbeat, or an event in a

³⁵ Note, though, that we also form expectations about non-temporal visual art (such as sculpture, or paintings), as when we anticipate how an art object will appear when viewed from different angles and distances.

³⁶ For a detailed discussion of the role of expectation in music appreciation see (Meyer 1956), and, more recently, (Huron 2006).

novel. Instead, he construes the satisfaction of an expectation by an element of an artwork as a way we come to recognise the unity or completeness of that *artwork*. In which case, it is the artwork, and not a segment of *experience*, that is 'complete' and 'unified' (1965: 132-3).

Beardsley (1969) replies that he uses the term 'experience' to include both the perceptual experience of the phenomenally objective field, as well as resultant ('phenomenally subjective') affective states. This means the (phenomenally subjective) expectation and the (phenomenally objective) feature of an artwork which fulfils that expectation are both elements of an 'experience'.

Beardsley (1969) mentions two examples of satisfied expectations that could be described as 'complete': firstly, when an artwork elicits an expectation, following which we are in a continued state of suspense until that expectation is satisfied (Beardsley 1969: 8). Secondly, when artworks elicit an expectation which we forget about until its eventual satisfaction causes us to recollect it and to think about how it was used for artistic effect (*ibid*). Beardsley seems to regard both of these processes as features of a segment of experience which make it 'complete' and 'unified'.

George Dickie (1974a) has the final word on this issue. He concedes that an experience of a temporal artwork could be 'complete', but only when it, 'sets up an expectation, the expectation is sustained by subsequent occurrences, and finally in the end something happens which fulfils the expectation' (1974a: 20-1). However, he argues that many artworks – such as paintings – do not arouse any expectations, and those that do often arouse and satisfy more than one expectation (*ibid*: 21). In cases of the latter sort, Dickie argues, why think that multiple instances of satisfied expectations collectively constitute a 'complete' set, such that the overall segment of experience in which they occur is 'unified'? (*ibid*).

To illustrate Dickie's point, suppose that you expect a parcel to be delivered by noon, and to receive a phone call at half-past noon. The parcel arrives at noon, and your expectation is satisfied. Between noon, and half-past noon, you listen to a piece of music. The music evokes, then satisfies several further expectations. Subsequently, at half past noon, you receive a phone call, and another expectation is satisfied. Dickie's point seems to be that there is no reason to consider the series of satisfied expectations that occur whilst you were listening to the music a 'complete' set which excludes the satisfied expectations that occur before and afterwards.

In his last paper mentioning the unity of aesthetic experience, Beardsley (1982) seems persuaded by Dickie's arguments. He writes, 'if the earlier formula did insist too much on

completeness, that insistence has been properly withdrawn' (1982: 296). To draw a conclusion from this debate, there seem to be only one sense in which the expectations aroused during an aesthetic experience of a temporal artwork could be said to make that experience 'complete'. This is when, as Dickie comments, an artwork arouses an expectation which is sustained, then finally satisfied and its satisfaction marks the end of the aesthetic experience. However, to characterise aesthetic experiences as 'complete' in this sense is inaccurate since it will be true of only very few aesthetic experiences.

I will now examine another strand of the debate between Beardsley and Dickie, which concerns the former's description of aesthetic experience as 'coherent'. Beardsley (1958) describes the coherence of aesthetic experience in the following terms:

'One thing leads to another, continuity of development, without gaps or dead spaces, a sense of overall providential pattern of guidance, an orderly culmination of energy towards a climax' (1958: 528).

Dickie (1965) argues that this description refers only to ('phenomenally objective') features of art objects, and not the effects they have on experience. In which case, 'coherence' is, again, a feature of art objects, rather than our experiences of them. Dickie adds that the only time *experience* could be described as 'coherent' is 'when we contrast it with experience which is deluded in some way' (1965: 133). In which case, all normal experience is 'coherent' (*ibid*).

Beardsley (1969) replies that some of his above description of 'coherence' applies to the feelings aesthetic objects provoke. He writes,

'A feeling, for example, may vary in intensity over a certain stretch of time, and it may change by gentle degrees or abruptly; it may fluctuate in a random way, at the mercy of shifts in the phenomenally objective field, or it may begin as one feeling among many and slowly spread over the whole field of awareness. It seems to me that the terms "continuity" and "discontinuity" apply quite clearly to such sequences, and continuity makes for coherence, in affects as well as in objects' (1969: 7).

Beardsley points to common-ground he shares with Abraham Maslow. Maslow characterises 'peak-experience' in terms of 'integration', which Beardsley regards as a form of 'coherence'. Maslow writes, 'the person in the peak experience feels more integrated (unified, whole, all-of-a-piece) than at other times' (Maslow 2011: 85). Beardsley proposes that during an aesthetic

experience one's feelings are 'integrated' – so 'coherent' and 'unified' – because, 'they feel closely related to each other, as though they belong with each other and to each other' (*ibid*).

Dickie (1974a) concedes that artworks can produce feelings that are 'unified' or 'coherent', but only in three types of case. One such case is when an artwork produces and sustains a single feeling throughout its entire duration (1974a: 19-20). A second case is when an artwork, such as a horror film, produces, 'a series of discrete feelings all of the same type' (*ibid*: 20). A third type of case is when a work of art produces a pattern of alternating, opposing feelings (exhilaration and relaxation, for example [*ibid*]).

Dickie tempers this concession to Beardsley by contrasting the sense in which these three types of experiences are 'unified' with the 'unity' apparent in the rhyme of a poem, or a piece of music. If Beardsley's broader aesthetics (which analyses evaluative critical statements, aesthetic experience, and aesthetic value, along the dimensions of unity, intensity, and complexity) is correct, we might expect the unity of an aesthetic experience to reflect the degree of unity in the object of that experience. Dickie's objection is that there is an asymmetry between the sense in which aesthetic objects are 'unified' and the 'unity' that supposedly occurs in aesthetic experience of those objects. Beardsley does not seem to directly address this concern.

I take the outcome of this debate to be that criteria (iii) of Beardsley's (1958) account of aesthetic experience should be revised as follows:

(iii)* Aesthetic experiences are 'unified' because they are (a) 'complete' in the sense they involve the arousal of a single expectation which is sustained throughout the duration of the experience and satisfied at its conclusion and (b) 'coherent' in the sense they involve a single, sustained affective response, or a series of discrete affective responses that are all of the same kind or which form an obvious pattern.

Having made this modification, we can now ask how plausible Beardsley's (1958) account of 'aesthetic experience' is. One objection is that it does not name necessary conditions for aesthetic experience. (i) states that the subject's attention is trained on the complex of elements that comprise the 'aesthetic object'. 'Aesthetic objects' are, for Beardsley, the objects about which art critics issue critical statements³⁷. Experiential objects such as mountain ranges

³⁷ See Footnote 32.

and sunsets, which we can experience aesthetically, would not qualify as 'aesthetic objects'. This means (i) is not a necessary condition for aesthetic experience.

(ii) is also not a necessary condition as aesthetic experiences come in varying degrees of intensity, from the subtle to the overwhelming. With regards to (iii)*, some aesthetic experiences may not involve a 'completed' expectation or 'coherent' affects. As mentioned, expectations do not figure in all our aesthetic experiences. When they do, they may not render one's aesthetic experience complete and unified; some artworks elicit expectations which they do not satisfy (such as Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*) and some elicit a series of discrete expectations, which are not sustained throughout the duration of the aesthetic experience. Similarly, the series of affects evoked by a film or a novel, for example, may be diverse and not conform to any pattern. Moreover, some aesthetic experiences may not involve any affect (but are 'aesthetic' by virtue of the final [dis]value placed on them³⁸). In which case, (iii)* is not a necessary condition for aesthetic experience.

Furthermore, Beardsley's account does not name sufficient conditions for aesthetic experience. Consider the experience of a watchsmith who, with the aid of a magnifying device, is assembling the very small, intricate components that make up the mechanism of a watch. Let's assume this watch is an 'aesthetic object'. Now, it seems the experience of the watchsmith has all three features with which Beardsley characterises 'aesthetic experience'. The watchsmith's attention is (i) firmly fixed on a complex of inter-related elements in a phenomenally objective field. Furthermore, the objects of her experience – the arrangement of the small gears and springs, say – control her experience, insofar as their correct arrangement causes her to feel satisfied, and their incorrect arrangement is frustrating. The watchsmith's experience is also (ii) intense, as the arrangement of the components requires extreme precision and concentration. This intensity of concentration pervades the experience, giving it a sense of (iii)* unity. When the mechanisms are correctly assembled, and the magnifying lenses removed, the experience achieves a 'completeness' (suppose the watchsmith's experience of fixing the watch is pervaded by the expectation that she will do so successfully which is satisfied once she removes her magnifying lenses and sees the second hand moving). Yet clearly, we would be reluctant to say the watchsmith is having an 'aesthetic experience'. She is merely doing what she does all day, every day: fixing watches.

³⁸ I discuss this further in chapter four.

These objections might not be problematic for Beardsley, if he is read as providing generalisations that point us towards what ‘aesthetic experiences’ are, which is how Dickie (1974a: 15) and Fisher (1983: 88) read him³⁹. However, if his account does just list three generalisations about aesthetic experience, then it is of considerably less use. With regards to the desiderata of a good account of aesthetic experience given in the Introduction, a list of generalisations cannot be (ii) used as an operational definition for experimental research and (iv) cannot be extensionally adequate. It would also not be of much use for deciding whether (vi) certain borderline cases are instances of aesthetic experience. I will now examine Beardsley’s other accounts of aesthetic experience.

Beardsley’s Hedonic Account

Beardsley (1969) proposes the following:

‘[A] person is having an aesthetic experience during a particular stretch of time if and only if the greater part of his mental activity during that time is united and made pleasurable by being tied to the form and qualities of a sensuously presented or imaginatively intended object on which his primary attention is concentrated’ (1969: 5).

Beardsley’s stated reason for formulating this account is to explain what statements of the form ‘object X is artistically better than Y’ mean, and how they can be true or false (*ibid*: 9) – he terms this the problem of ‘artistic betterness’ (*ibid*). He proposes that one object is artistically better than another if it provides a more *pleasurable* aesthetic experience (*ibid*).

In the above formulation, Beardsley intends the term ‘pleasurable’ to include a range of ‘positive affective states’, including, ‘the sense of liberation, the joy of play, elation, [and] fullness of power’ (*ibid*: 9). He states, ‘it is plain to me that aesthetic experience is pleasurable, and indeed, essentially so’ (*ibid*).

An immediate problem is that some aesthetic experiences are devoid of pleasure or any positive affect. In the Introduction and the previous section (on axiological approaches), we saw that

³⁹ Textual evidence can be found both in support of and against this interpretation. On the one hand, Beardsley describes the three features he mentions as ‘generalisations’ (Beardsley 1959: 527), which suggests he is not stating the conditions under which aesthetic experience must or can occur. On the other hand, he says, ‘[t]he traits of aesthetic experience are to be found individually in a great many other experiences, of course, but not in the same combination’ (*ibid*: 530). Here it looks like Beardsley intends his account to name conditions that are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for aesthetic experience.

some aesthetic experiences are experiences we disvalue and which make our lives worse. A similar point applies here: some aesthetic experiences are negative because of the affects we feel during them. These include aesthetic experiences of bad artworks which make one irritated, indignant, or weary. Similarly, one might feel sickened, saddened, or angry during aesthetic experience of a degraded environment. Beardsley's account states that aesthetic experiences *necessarily* involve pleasure or positive affect, and, for this reason, can be summarily rejected.

However, we can make a concession to Beardsley. Some (though not all) aesthetic experiences which involve negative affect are also experiences we enjoy or finally value. At the end of the previous section (on 'Axiological Accounts'), I argued that an experience can acquire a valence either because of the affect(s) experienced *or* because of the (dis)value one places on the experience. This disjunction is inclusive: some aesthetic experiences are valenced by virtue of both their affective character and of the final (dis)value we place on them. When an experience is both negatively and positively valenced, it can be said to have a 'complex' valence or be 'multi-valenced'.

To shed further light on the phenomenon of multi-valenced aesthetic experiences, we can recruit psychologist Paul Silvia's four-fold taxonomy of the emotions that arise during art appreciation. In addition to 'positive emotions', this distinguishes, 'knowledge emotions', 'hostile emotions', and 'self-conscious emotions' (Silvia 2011: 265-71). Knowledge emotions include surprise, interest and confusion (*ibid*: 265-6). Hostile emotions which motivate aggressive behaviour include anger, disgust and contempt (*ibid*: 268-9). And self-conscious emotions include pride, shame, guilt and embarrassment (*ibid*: 269). We can use this taxonomy to explore some of the ways negative affective states can figure in multi-valenced aesthetic experiences. This will help to precisify the objection to Beardsley's hedonic account: of those aesthetic experiences which involve negative affect, a proportion will not be problematic for Beardsley's hedonic account as they are experiences which, in the round, we find pleasurable. The following discussion will also demonstrate just how diverse the affects that arise during aesthetic experience can be. The diversity of the affects felt during aesthetic experience militates against characterising aesthetic experience in terms of a single affective state or a narrow band of affective states.

Knowledge Emotions:

We feel knowledge emotions about the ‘challenges associated with knowledge and understanding’ (*ibid*: 265). Some of the knowledge emotions we feel when viewing and analysing art might be positive, comparable to feelings of wonderment at the night sky or the enjoyment of solving a puzzle. Others might be negative: we may feel overwhelmed, confused, bewildered, or despondent. If an artwork is too confusing or obscure, or if our art appreciative expertise is not up to task, then we might only feel negative knowledge emotions without deriving pleasure from them or valuing the experience overall. Often, though, we welcome, if not relish, negative knowledge emotions as necessary stages in the vivifying process of understanding and interpreting artworks. We might value the cognitive challenge for its own sake (as well as, perhaps, instrumentally, as a means to finessing one’s appreciative expertise). We might also feel satisfaction or delight or pride if we arrive at a meaningful insight about the work. So, feeling negatively valenced knowledge emotions and finally valuing them or having a second-order positive affective response to them (or both) comprises one sort of multi-valenced aesthetic experience.

Hostile Emotions

Silvia theorises that hostile emotions – anger, disgust, and contempt – occur when ‘something violates a goal, value, or standard of conduct’ (Silvia 2011: 269). Some artworks elicit hostile emotions because their points or purposes are contemptable. For example, *Myra* is a painting of the “Moors Murderer” Myra Hindley, whose victims were children. *Myra* was produced using a plaster cast of an infant’s hand dipped in paint (Storrs 2015: 16). One might feel anger when viewing *Myra* because it violates a standard of conduct (it is potentially distressing for the families of the murdered children). If one feels angry or indignant for a fleeting moment, then one could plausibly value the experience of, or derive enjoyment from, *Myra*’s shock-value. In which case, the feeling of anger would figure in a multi-valenced aesthetic experience. Of course, if one feels intensely angry or indignant, then the aesthetic experience one has of the work, if it qualifies as such, will only be negatively valenced.

Artworks can also elicit hostile emotions by alerting us to injustice in the world. In these cases, the hostile emotions are not directed at the artworks themselves, but rather at the states of affairs to which they alert us. Ernest Cole’s photographs of racial segregation in apartheid-era South Africa are examples of artworks which can elicit these kinds of hostile emotions. We are unlikely to enjoy feeling hostile emotions toward injustice in the world, though we may value

them (if not for their own sake, then instrumentally). If we do, then this is another way hostile emotion might figure in a multi-valenced aesthetic experience (note that according to the view I will propose in the following chapter the experience would be 'aesthetic' by virtue of the hostile affect elicited, rather than the *instrumental* value one places on the affect).

Meret Oppenheimer's *Object* is a tea cup, saucer, and spoon, which have been covered entirely in animal fur. Andrew Serrano's *Piss Christ* is a photograph of a crucifix submerged in Serrano's urine. And Patricia Piccinini's *Graham* is a life-like sculpture of a physiologically misshapen, mostly nude humanoid (the physiology of Graham is intended to represent how a human body would need to be formed in order to withstand a car crash). Each of these works can elicit disgust (actual disgust, as well as perhaps moral disgust in the case of *Piss Christ*). We can take pleasure in, or find satisfying, the feelings of disgust which art (and perhaps, in some cases, non-art) elicits. We might become fascinated in the features of the objects which provoke our disgust, perhaps feeling a compulsion to look at them and further intensify the feeling. There may be an evolutionary explanation for this: if we can safely inspect something disgusting, then we become better informed about it and better equipped to safely respond to it in the future. For our present purposes, we can elide the psychological question of why we sometimes enjoy or value disgust. There is debate in the literature about this (see, e.g., Robinson 2014), which itself confirms that disgust can figure in a multi-valenced aesthetic experience of art.

Self-Conscious Emotions

Silvia suggests guilt, shame and embarrassment occur in response to 'confrontational, political, and challenging art' (Silvia 2011: 2670). Might guilt, shame, or embarrassment figure in multi-valenced aesthetic experiences of artworks?

Consider Duchamp's *Étant Donnés*. This is an art installation that is viewed through two holes in an old wooden door. Through these 'peep-holes', spectators see a life-like figure of a nude female lying on a bed of twigs and leaves with her legs spread apart. A waterfall and trees are painted on the backdrop, giving the impression she is in a natural environment (Philadelphia Museum of Art 2017).

Haladyn describes the experience of viewing *Étant Donnés* in three phases:

- '1. The first phase occurs when you, the viewer, are standing at the back of the darkened liminal room watching another viewer peeping through the door, catching her/him in the

process of an erotic and/or confessional-like exchange: a private moment within a public context [...]

2. The second phase, which is the most important and traumatic, is when you get to peep through the door and view the artwork; here you are positioned at the focal point of the entire optical process, but by engaging in this voyeurism you become the viewer that is watched [...]

3. The third phase once more resembles the first, in that you, the viewer, are recounting your experience with [*Étant Donnés*], which you describe in terms of watching another viewer peeping through the door' (Haladyn 2013: 7-8).

Haladyn uses the terms 'shame' and 'guilt' to describe the experience of viewing *Étant Donnés* (*ibid*: 1). These emotions can be very intense and unpleasant when they occur unexpectedly in everyday life. However, viewing an artwork that elicits embarrassment, guilt, or shame in the context of a museum or art gallery provides what Haladyn terms, 'a collective alibi' (*ibid*: 5). That these emotions are, for once, socially sanctioned reduces their unpleasantness. This in turn enables one to appreciate how the design of the artwork marshals our self-conscious emotions for artistic effect. It also opens the door to a deeper understanding of our collective humanity and shared vulnerabilities. So it seems possible to enjoy the experience of artworks that elicit shame, guilt, or embarrassment for artistic effect, providing those emotions are felt less intensely than they typically are.

To summarise, this section has argued Beardsley's hedonic account is false as some aesthetic experiences are not pleasurable. It then qualified this objection by examining some of the ways negative affect can figure in complex or multi-valenced aesthetic experiences of art. To be clear, some aesthetic experiences in which negative affect is felt do not also involve second-order pleasure (i.e. pleasure taken in the experience of the negative affect). This means Beardsley's hedonic account, which states feeling pleasure is a necessary condition for *all* aesthetic experiences, is false.

More generally, the foregoing has illustrated how diverse and complex the affects which arise during aesthetic experiences of art can be. The cases mentioned are not, of course, exhaustive of the ways affect can figure in aesthetic experiences. This militates against characterising aesthetic experience just in terms of an affective state or a narrow band of affective states. I will now examine Beardsley's final position.

Beardsley's Final Account

Beardsley (1982) wants to distinguish the many experiences that have some aesthetic character (1982: 41) from fully-fledged 'aesthetic experiences', which are 'rather special occasions' (*ibid*: 287). We have an experience of the former when, for example, listening somewhat inattentively to music whilst driving. Beardsley describes these experiences as having 'aesthetic character' in the sense that they occasion 'aesthetic enjoyment'. However, he distinguishes them from fully-fledged aesthetic experience on the grounds that they 'lack completeness or consummation' (*ibid*). By 'aesthetic enjoyment' Beardsley means,

'the kind of enjoyment we obtain from a qualitatively diverse segment of the phenomenal field, insofar as the discriminable parts are unified into something of a whole that has a character (that is, regional qualities) of its own' (1963: 296).

Leaving 'aesthetic enjoyment' aside, Beardsley (1982) lists five criteria for 'fully fledged' aesthetic experiences. These are, 'object-directedness', 'felt freedom', 'detached affect', 'active discovery', and 'wholeness'. (1982: 288-9). He argues that a subject is having an aesthetic experience if and only if she satisfies the first of these and at least three of the remaining four (*ibid*: 288). In his words,

'[A]n experience has aesthetic character if and only if it has the first of the following features and at least three of the others [...],

1. *Object directedness*. A willingly accepted guidance over the succession of one's mental states by phenomenologically objective properties (qualities and relations) of a perceptual or intentional field on which attention is fixed with a feeling that things are working or have worked themselves out fittingly.
2. *Felt freedom*. A sense of release from the dominance of some antecedent concerns about past and future, a relaxation and sense of harmony with what is presented or semantically invoked by it or implicitly promised by it, so that what comes has the air of being freely chosen.
3. *Detached affect*. A sense that the objects on which interest is concentrated are set a little at a distance emotionally – a certain detachment of affect, so that even when we are confronted with dark and terrible things, and feel them sharply, they do not oppress but make us aware of our power to rise above them.

4. *Active discovery*. A sense of actively exercising constructive powers of the mind, of being challenged by a variety of potentially conflicting stimuli to try to make them cohere; a keyed-up state amounting to exhilaration in seeing connections between percepts and between meanings, a sense (which may be illusory) of intelligibility.
5. *Wholeness*. A sense of integration as a person, of being restored to wholeness from distracting and disruptive influences (but by inclusive synthesis as well as by exclusion), and a corresponding contentment, even through disturbing feelings, that involves self-acceptance and self-expansion' (*ibid*: 288-9).

According to Beardsley's proposal, all fully-fledged aesthetic experiences will satisfy one of the following sets.

- a. (1) Object directedness, (2) Felt freedom, (3) Detached affect, (4) Active discovery
- b. (1) Object directedness, (2) Felt freedom, (3) Detached affect, (5) Wholeness
- c. (1) Object directedness, (2) Felt freedom, (4) Active discovery, (5) Wholeness
- d. (1) Object directedness, (3) Detached affect, (4) Active discovery, (5) Wholeness
- e. (1) Object directedness, (2) Felt freedom, (3) Detached affect, (4) Active discovery, (5) Wholeness

Carroll (1986) takes issue with Beardsley's view that aesthetic experiences are necessarily 'object-directed'. He writes,

'[I]mportant aspects of our interaction with artworks are not strictly speaking object directed, but are devoted to concerns with issues outside the object. We don't concentrate on the object in splendid isolation; our attention fans out to enable us to see the place of the art object within a larger, historical constellation of objects [...] I am disquieted by the implicit picture that aesthetic theories project of the standard artgoer [...] [T]here is something strange about their standard viewer, viz., that he or she responds to each work of art monadically, savouring each aesthetic experiences as a unitary event and not linking that event to a history of previous interactions with artworks' (1986: 65-7).

However, nothing in this seems to contradict Beardsley's characterisation of 'object-directedness', which he explicitly articulates in broad terms (Beardsley 1982: 289). Art-historical or contextual information about an artwork can be counted among its 'relational properties'. For the duration in which we are aesthetically experiencing an artwork, that work and its

properties, rather than a particular artistic movement or tradition, is the primary object of our attention. An aesthetic experience of an object ceases when we shift our attention from it, and instead focus on an artistic movement as a whole. So long as object-directedness is understood to mean attending primarily to the object and its qualities (including its relational properties), Carroll's concern is not problematic for Beardsley⁴⁰.

We can test Beardsley's formula by seeing if it applies to a paradigmatic aesthetic experience. One example is the spine-tingling elation felt when listening to the first movement of Elgar's *Cello Concerto*. If you know this piece well, your experience of it will not occasion 'active discovery'. So, to be an 'aesthetic experience' it must satisfy the criteria given in (b) (this is the only set of criteria that does not contain 'active discovery'). That is, it must have:

- (1) object-directedness, (2) felt freedom, (3) detached affect, and (5) wholeness.

I do not think we can take issue with the idea that hearing Elgar's *Cello Concerto* occasions 'felt freedom' in the sense that there is, 'release from [...] concerns about past and future' (*ibid*: 288), a 'lift of the spirit' (*ibid*: 290), and a 'dropping away of thoughts and feelings that were problematic' (*ibid*). However, the affects it provokes might not be 'detached'. In the above extract, Beardsley suggests affect is 'detached' in aesthetic experience in the sense that the object of experience is 'set a little at a distance emotionally' (*ibid*: 288). He has in mind experiences of artworks that are particularly disgusting, disturbing, or gruesome (he gives the example of Gaetano Zumbo's wax figurines of corpses). We might find these disturbing, yet the affect (of, e.g., disgust or repulsion) we feel is tempered by an understanding that the object 'has an air of artifice [or] fictionality' (*ibid*: 291). Now, the feelings evoked during Elgar's *Cello Concerto* (as well as many other powerful pieces of music) are often not, in this sense, 'detached'. They can feel more intense, vivid, and overpowering than those which arise in one's everyday life. In which case, this experience must be 'aesthetic' by virtue of satisfying a criteria-set which does not contain 'detached affect'. However, this only leaves criteria-set (c), which contains 'active discovery'.

Above I claimed that no 'active discovery' occurs when listening to a piece of music one knows well. It could be replied that I have misunderstood what 'active discovery' is. There may be room for 'active discovery' any time an artwork is performed, even if (or, perhaps, *especially if*) one

⁴⁰ It is a separate question whether one can have an aesthetic experience by reflecting on an art movement or tradition.

knows that work well. For instance, one can discover how the work will be performed in relation to one's expectations and prior experiences of it. One can also discover how a particular orchestra or theatre company performs a work and the way individual performers execute their parts. In short, prior experience of a performed work does not preclude, but may facilitate, active discovery of unfamiliar performances of that work.

Suppose, though, that one is not aesthetically experiencing different performances of Elgar's *Cello Concerto*, but instead listening to a recording one has heard many times and knows intimately. Would there still be room for 'active discovery' in this case? It seems implausible. In which case, we have an example of an aesthetic experience which contains neither 'detached affect' nor 'active discovery'. Each criteria set that Beardsley presents as disjunctively necessary and individually sufficient for aesthetic experience ([a]-[e]) contains either 'active discovery' or 'detached affect' or both. In which case, the criteria sets are not disjunctively necessary and Beardsley's formula is wrong.

One might take issue with my claims that the affects music can elicit are not 'detached' and that no active discovery is involved when listening to a recording one knows intimately. Intuitions may differ here. In any case, there is another, important type of aesthetic experience which does not satisfy any of the criteria sets which Beardsley presents as disjunctively necessary and sufficient: these are negative aesthetic experiences of degraded or polluted environments. We have negative aesthetic experiences of, for example, landfill sites or of once pristine beaches which are now carpeted with plastic detritus. These experiences are (1) object-directed and could be said to involve (4) active discovery. However, they certainly do not involve (2) felt freedom: they *amplify* – rather than provide release from – one's concerns about the future and do not occasion relaxation or a sense of harmony. These experiences can be upsetting and one may feel angry or saddened or dispirited. These negative affects are not (3) detached. The objects which elicit them do not have the air of artifice or fictionality: they are all too real. The affects they occasion oppress one and make one question one's power to rise above them. The net effect is not a sense of (5) 'wholeness' in which one feels contentment and self-acceptance. Rather one feels conflicted for being a part of the consumer society that is responsible for the environmental degradation. Therefore, some negative aesthetic experiences of degraded natural environments do not satisfy any of the criteria sets ([a]-[e]). In which case, Beardsley's account is false.

Beardsley could reply that I have not applied the criteria correctly. However, in the Introduction, I argued a good account of aesthetic experience should be *instructive* (by offering practical

guidance on how to have an aesthetic experience) and *amenable to experimental research* (offering researchers a definition of aesthetic experience they can use to run tests). I take it my application of the criteria have not been far-fetched or disingenuous. Therefore, if I have failed to apply the criteria correctly, then it is hard to see how they could be of use for instructing the uninitiated how to have aesthetic experiences or for running tests. In which case, Beardsley's account does not meet all the desiderata of an account of aesthetic experience.

Beardsley suggests that the formula could be modified or the criteria set expanded (Beardsley 1982: 288). However, this is not an adequate response to the counter-examples I have given. We cannot propose conditions that are necessary and sufficient for a concept with the caveat that *if the account is wrong, modify it till it's right*. In any case, this response would, again, disqualify Beardsley's account as a suitable account for scientific research and would make it even less instructive to the uninitiated.

More generally, a similar point can be made about the quasi-disjunctive structure of Beardsley's account. There is nothing wrong, as such, with this structure. However, it does not happily lend itself to either the pedagogical aim of teaching the uninitiated how to have aesthetic experiences or to providing an operational definition for use in empirical research. As mentioned in the Introduction, both ends would be better served by an account which names features that are common to *all* and only aesthetic experiences (i.e. which provides individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for aesthetic experience).

In summary, this section has examined affect-oriented accounts proposed by Clive Bell and Monroe Beardsley. I have argued that their accounts do not successfully characterise aesthetic experience. From the foregoing discussion, we can conclude that the affects we feel during aesthetic experience are as diverse (or nearly as diverse) as those we feel throughout the rest of our lives. This means we cannot characterise aesthetic experience just in terms of a single affect or a narrow band of affective states. In addition, it seems improbable that there are affective states which occur exclusively during aesthetic experience. Note that even if there were a purely 'aesthetic' emotion – and I have argued there is not – then, clearly, it does not figure in *every* aesthetic experience, so does not help us to specify the conditions common to *all* and only aesthetic experiences.

At the end of the previous section, we arrived at the initial proposal that aesthetic experiences have an evaluative or affective valence because the subject is engaging with the aesthetic properties she discerns. Note that this does not comprise a sufficient condition for aesthetic

experience; one might feel positive affect when attending to an aesthetic property, but only because that property is useful for achieving something further one desires, such as money or social status. For example, an art dealer might feel excited when seeing a painting that features a certain aesthetic property but only because she knows she stands to make a large profit (from reselling the painting). We would not want to say this qualifies as an 'aesthetic experience'. We therefore need to refine our initial proposal so that it can exclude cases like this. I will now examine 'attitudinal accounts' to see whether they shed light on how we might do so.

Attitudinal Approaches

‘This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune’

From *The World is Too Much with Us* (Wordsworth 1907: 198)

A lot of effort is expended in securing aesthetic experiences: continents are crossed, museums, cinemas, and concert halls are constructed, grass is mown, trees and flowers planted, rooms furnished, voices trained, and so on. But what if the key to having an aesthetic experience lies in one’s attitude or manner of attending, not in the composition of the objects to which one attends? What if, to borrow from Wordsworth, we are just ‘out of tune’?

Attitudinal accounts characterise aesthetic experience in terms of an ‘aesthetic’ attitude or an ‘aesthetic’ way of allocating attention. This section discusses three prominent twentieth century attitudinal approaches. Firstly, Edward Bullough’s position that inserting ‘psychical distance’ between one’s practical interests and the content of one’s experience occasions ‘aesthetic consciousness’, under the condition of which one’s experiencing is ‘aesthetic’. Secondly, Jerome Stolnitz’s view that ‘aesthetic experience’ is experience had whilst adopting the ‘aesthetic attitude’. And thirdly, Bence Nanay’s attention-based account which states that during some paradigmatic aesthetic experiences attention is focused on an object but distributed among its properties.

I will argue, *contra* Bullough, that inserting psychical distance between oneself and the object of one’s experience is neither necessary nor sufficient for aesthetic experience. I shall provide examples of aesthetic experiences which occur as one pursues practical aims or interest and so in which the subject is not ‘psychically distanced’. These are also problematic for Stolnitz who states practical interests are opposed to the aesthetic attitude and so, by extension, to the having of aesthetic experiences. Stolnitz’s position is additionally problematic as he argues that all aesthetic experiences are positively valenced which, as we have seen in the foregoing, is false. With regards to Nanay, I will argue that the phenomena which he takes to count in favour of an attention-based account are readily explicable by other accounts in the literature. Furthermore, Nanay only describes how attention is allocated in some paradigmatic aesthetic

experiences. Attention is allocated in the same way when we are not having aesthetic experiences. This means he fails to tell us anything distinctive about aesthetic experience.

My overarching aims in this section are two-fold: firstly, to demonstrate why attitudinal accounts of aesthetic experience are unsuccessful; and, secondly, to examine whether they offer any conceptual resources which will help us refine our current proposal about aesthetic experience (which states they are valenced because the subject engages with aesthetic properties). With regards to the latter, I will propose we adopt the distinction between attending to something for its own sake and attending to it for instrumental reasons and use this to formulate an intensional definition of aesthetic experience.

Edward Bullough: Psychological Distance

In his article, “‘Psychical Distance’ as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle’, first published in 1912, Edward Bullough characterises ‘aesthetic consciousness’ in terms of ‘psychical distance’. Bullough uses the term ‘distance’ (or ‘distancing’) as a metaphor for a two-fold process consisting of (i) a negative component that involves ‘cutting-out [...] the practical sides of things and our practical attitudes to them’ (Bullough 2008: 244), and (ii) a positive component which involves ‘the elaboration of the experience on the new basis created by the inhibitory action of Distance’ (*ibid*).

The former, negative component requires that one prevents or inhibits oneself from considering how the object(s) of experience might further, frustrate, or otherwise affect one’s needs, ends, or practical interests. In Bullough’s words, one must ‘[separate] the object of appeal from one’s own self by putting it out of gear with practical needs and ends’ (Bullough 2008: 245). Elsewhere he writes, ‘Distance is produced [...] by putting the phenomenon, so to speak, out of gear with our practical, actual self; by allowing it to stand outside the context of our personal needs and ends’ (*ibid*: 244).

The latter, positive component of ‘distancing’ seems to involve imaginative engagement with the experiential object or phenomenon that one has suspended one’s practical interest in. Bullough describes this as ‘elaboration of the experience’ (*ibid*: 244). Unfortunately, he is somewhat vague about what it involves. Some hints are given in the following passage, where Bullough describes how ‘psychical distance’ can transform the distressing experience of encountering fog when at sea:

‘[A] fog at sea can be a source of intense relish and enjoyment. Abstract from the experience of the sea fog, for the moment, its danger and practical unpleasantness [...] direct the attention to the features “objectively” constituting the phenomenon – the veil surrounding you with an opaqueness as of transparent milk, blurring the outline of things and distorting their shapes into weird grotesqueness; observe the carrying-power of the air, producing the impression as if you could touch some far-off siren by merely putting out your hand [...] note the curious creamy smoothness of the water [...] and, above all, the strange solitude and remoteness from the world [...] and the experience may acquire [...] a flavour of such concentrated poignancy and delight as to contrast sharply with the blind and distempered anxiety of its other aspects’ (ibid: 243-244).

Here ‘elaboration’ seems to involve the following: (a) deliberate attention to qualities of one’s surroundings (e.g. the smoothness of the water, the grotesqueness of shapes in the fog); (b) imaginatively interpreting those qualities (e.g. imagining one could touch a siren); (c) making comparisons (e.g. comparing the opacity of the fog to ‘transparent milk’); and (d) feeling the effect these activities yield (e.g. feeling solitude, remoteness from the world, and delight).

How, then, does Bullough understand the relationship between ‘distancing’, so defined, and aesthetic experience? He writes,

‘[Distance] may claim to be considered as one of the essential characteristics of the “aesthetic consciousness,” – if I may describe by this term that special mental attitude towards, and outlook upon, experience, which finds its most pregnant expression in the various forms of Art’ (ibid: 245).

I take Bullough’s position to be that ‘distancing’ is required for, if not entirely constitutive of, ‘aesthetic consciousness’. ‘Aesthetic consciousness’ is, in turn, the state of mind or attitude which begets aesthetic experience. This is also how George Dickie reads Bullough:

‘Psychical distance is supposed to be a psychical component of a specific kind of consciousness which when ‘inserted’ between a subject and his affections is productive of aesthetic experience’ (Dickie 1973: 17).

Having characterised ‘aesthetic consciousness’ in terms of ‘distancing’, Bullough proceeds to propose how we can recruit ‘distancing’ to enhance our appreciation of artworks. Specifically, he argues that ‘distancing’ comes in degrees and that art is best appreciated under the

condition of *'the utmost decrease of Distance without its disappearance'* (Bullough 2008: 246). If we are too 'distanced' from an artwork then it will have no appeal. In Bullough's words,

'without some degree of predisposition on our part, it [the artwork] must necessarily remain incomprehensible, and to that extent unappreciated. The success and intensity of its appeal would seem, therefore, to stand in direct proportion to the completeness with which it corresponds with our intellectual and emotional peculiarities and the idiosyncrasies of our experience' (*ibid*: 246).

So, we have to find the themes or subject matter of an artwork familiar and identifiable in order to engage with the work. However, if we lose 'distance' altogether, Bullough argues, then our appreciation of the work ceases. We lose distance completely when the themes or narrative of an artwork cut too close to home and cause us to consciously relate a personal experience to what is represented in the work. Bullough gives the example of a man who watches *Othello* and has concerns his wife is cheating on him (*ibid*). When seeing Othello's anger at Desdemona's apparent infidelity, the man suddenly and acutely becomes aware of his own feelings of jealousy concerning his wife, at which point he loses all 'distance' and ceases appreciating the work (or, at least, his appreciation of it is severely diminished).

Now, a feature of an artwork might bring to mind something from one's past or a concern one has about the present or the future. One might then pay less attention to the artwork, and more attention to that thought or memory. One's appreciation of the artwork then diminishes to the degree that one is attentive to that thought or memory rather than the artwork. This much is true. However, we do not need the concept of 'psychical distance' to explain why one's appreciation of the artwork diminishes in such cases. Plain old 'inattentiveness' or 'mind-wandering' or 'distraction' will do. George Dickie makes a similar point about attitudinal accounts in general:

'What attitude-aestheticians are calling attention to is the occurrence of irrelevant associations which distract the viewer from the painting or whatever. But distraction is not a special kind of [practical or "undistanced"] attention, it is a kind of inattention' (Dickie 1964: 58)

A further objection to Bullough's position denies that 'psychical distance' is necessary for aesthetic experience *simpliciter* (and not just aesthetic appreciation of art). With regards to the negative component of 'distancing', we can have aesthetic experiences whilst striving to realize our personal ends or attending to our needs. A gardener might have an aesthetic experience

when cross-pollinating flowers to breed a new plant variety, for example. To do so, she does not need to first suspend or arrest her aim of producing a new plant variety: her aesthetic experience and her efforts to realize her aim co-occur. Similarly, a graphic designer might have aesthetic experiences as she tweaks the colour values or other design elements of a graphic she is tasked with producing: again, she does not need to suspend her aim of producing the graphic in order to have aesthetic experiences. On the contrary, her aesthetic experiences are precipitated by her aims of executing the task professionally and to a high standard. Put another way, her aesthetic experiences are integral to the process by which her practical aims are realized. Another example is a student who has an aesthetic experience of a poem or novel she is reading in preparation for a forthcoming test. She does not need to first suspend her practical aim of achieving a high mark in order to have an aesthetic experience; rather, her aesthetic experience is a means by which she realises her aim of academic success. Dickie makes the same point with reference to Bullough's own example of aesthetically experiencing fog when at sea:

‘a person might even attend to and appreciate the fog qualities [sic] at the same time as he takes practical action against the dangers that the fog brings about. A sailor, for example, might appreciate the sight of the “milky opaqueness” of the fog while securing lines [...] Or a sailor might appreciate the sight of the fog and the feel of the dampness on his face as he peers from the bow for obstacles dead ahead’ (Dickie 1973: 25-6).

If we can have aesthetic experiences whilst realizing our aims, then the negative component of ‘distancing’ – i.e. the suspension of our aims and practical interests – is not a necessary precondition for aesthetic experience. For further counter-examples we can turn to the *Everyday Aesthetics* literature, which is replete with examples of subjects who aesthetically experience the tasks they perform for practical ends. Pauliina Rautio (2009), for example, asked participants in Finland to write about beauty in their everyday lives. Here is an excerpt from one participant's response:

‘In the green-gray trousers of Pirkko there were pink linings around the pockets. I hung the trousers up with one grey [sic] wooden peg and one bright yellow. The yellow looked beautiful with green, pink and grey. And when I looked around me, my eyes started to register yellow here and there. Yellow plastic bucket on a grey chopping block in front of the sauna, in the background bright green raspberry leaves and yellow autumn hawkbits

all across the lawn [...] Somehow the combination of yellow and grey, greenish and pink awoke me to notice colors and beauty around me' (Rautio 2009).

For this participant, the activity of hanging up laundry to dry outside occasions an aesthetic experience of her surroundings. She does not need to first inhibit or relinquish her practical aim of doing the laundry in order to have the aesthetic experience. I take it such experiences are not uncommon; fortunately, they inflect our daily lives and can make menial tasks enjoyable and rewarding. This participant's reported experience gives us further *prima facie* reason to deny that aesthetic experience requires putting one's practical interests 'out of gear' with the content of one's experience.

In Bullough's defence, one could offer an alternative analysis of this case. One could argue the participant's efforts to realize the practical aim of drying her laundry cease for the duration of her aesthetic experience. The point at which she refocuses on hanging up the laundry will be the point at which her aesthetic reverie ('aesthetic experience') stops and any 'psychical distance' she has placed between her practical interests and her surroundings is lost. Therefore, this example can be cast as an illustration of how 'distancing' might work in an everyday context.

It is true that during the participant's aesthetic experience her focus is directed at the beauty she sees in the colours around her. She may therefore pay less attention to the task at hand and more to the aesthetic qualities in her environment. However, we cannot infer from this that she has placed 'psychical distance' between her practical aims and the content of her experience. If she is inattentive to the task of hanging up laundry, it is only because her attention is otherwise occupied and our processing and attentional resources are finite. Furthermore, there is no obvious point at which the subject actively suspends her practical aim or at which she pauses to insert 'distance' between her practical interest and the content of her experience (which is what we would expect given Bullough's description of the negative component of distancing). Rather, the participant's attention seems to seamlessly transition from the task of hanging up laundry to the beauty she notices in her surroundings. This indicates that any loss of focus she may incur as regards the practical task of doing the laundry is attributable just to a shift in her attention and her (or anyone's) inability to fully allocate attentional resources to more than one thing at any given moment.

With regards to the positive component of 'distancing' (that is, 'elaborating' the experience), some aesthetic experiences are relatively passive, so do not seem to require 'elaboration'. For

example, when listening to relaxing music, one can passively submit oneself to whatever experience ensues. Similarly, one might have an aesthetic experience because one's attention is arrested by a visually striking or garish colour scheme. Here the stimulus or cause of the experience is a striking aesthetic quality one chances upon and not any deliberate elaboration on the part of the subject.

It is unclear whether Bullough thinks 'distancing' is sufficient for aesthetic experience. He says only that it is an essential characteristic of 'aesthetic consciousness' (Bullough 2008: 245). In any case, 'distancing' is not sufficient for aesthetic experience. Suppose you aimlessly look at a wooden floorboard and see a pattern in the grain that looks like a face; in the knots and fibrous contortions of the wood you "see" a pair of eyes, a nose and a mouth. Here you attend to a phenomenon outside the context of your practical interests and 'elaborate' the experience imaginatively. However, the experience is not 'aesthetic' (or, at least, it might not be, given you are just detecting a pattern).

In summary, 'psychical distance' does not provide necessary or sufficient conditions for aesthetic experience. However, we can make a concession to Bullough. There is a place in aesthetic theory for 'psychical distance' or something thereabouts. We sometimes make aesthetic evaluations that we believe express more than just personal preference or liking. We believe that (at least some) other people will or should agree with these evaluations, in much the same way they would agree with us about the colour of an object or the sweetness of a food. These aesthetic evaluations can be said to make a claim to intersubjective validity. If such judgements are to have (at least some degree of) intersubjective validity, then they must not be biased or prejudiced by our personal or practical interests. For example, a parent at a school music recital might judge her daughter's violin performance to be more beautiful than the other children's performances. The parent's judgement would be biased if it is at all based on pleasure she derives from feelings of parental pride at watching her daughter on stage. Of course, the parent may not be able to distinguish the pleasure she derives just from hearing violin music from the pleasure she feels as a proud parent (perhaps the two cannot be distinguished). In any case, if the parent's aesthetic judgement is to have intersubjective validity, then she would need to 'distance' her personal affection for or interest in her daughter from her experience of the music her daughter plays. Hume makes a similar point when he describes the true judge as being 'free from all prejudice' (Hume 1995: 262). Kant makes a not dissimilar point when he describes 'disinterested' judgements of free beauty as 'universally valid'. Most saliently, he writes, 'One must not be in the least bit biased in favour of the

existence of the thing [the object of experience], but must be entirely indifferent in this respect in order to play the judge in matters of taste' (Kant 2000: 205).

However, this is an issue about the possibility of intersubjectively valid aesthetic judgements: if such judgements are possible, then they will have to be informed by aesthetic experiences which are 'distanced' insofar as they are not prejudiced or biased. However, not every aesthetic experience will inform an aesthetic judgement and those which do need not inform aesthetic judgements that have pretensions to intersubjective validity – I take it some aesthetic judgements are just judgements about what an individual enjoys (or dislikes) aesthetically experiencing and are not issued with the expectation that others will agree. We should not therefore base our account of aesthetic *experience* on a condition that aesthetic judgements or evaluations must satisfy if they are to be intersubjectively valid.

I will now proceed to examine Jerome Stolnitz's position.

Jerome Stolnitz

This section presents Stolnitz's account of the aesthetic attitude which he uses to explicate aesthetic experience. I will object to Stolnitz's view that all aesthetic experiences are positively valenced and that any object at all can yield a positively valenced aesthetic experience. I will also argue against his view that the aesthetic attitude is opposed to having a 'practical' interest in something (such as an interest in using the object of one's experience for some further end). I will then discuss Dickie's argument that Stolnitz commits a category error as only purposes or motivations or intentions, but not attention, can be 'disinterested'. I will conclude that insofar as the 'aesthetic attitude' names an attitude we can actually adopt, doing so is neither necessary nor sufficient for having an aesthetic experience.

Stolnitz defines 'aesthetic experience' as 'the total experience had whilst [the aesthetic] attitude is being taken' (*ibid*: 42). He defines the 'aesthetic attitude' as,

'disinterested and sympathetic attention to and contemplation of any object of awareness whatever, for its own sake alone' (Stolnitz 1960: 35).

I will now clarify what Stolnitz means by the terms 'disinterested', 'sympathetic', and 'attention'. Firstly, a subject's experience is 'disinterested' just in case she 'is not trying to use or manipulate the object' and 'there is no purpose governing [her] experience other than the purpose of just *having* the experience' (Stolnitz 1960: 35). Stolnitz gives the following examples of 'interests'

that would disqualify someone from being 'disinterested' and so from adopting the aesthetic attitude: 'the interest in owning a work of art for the sake of pride or prestige' (*ibid*); interest in an old manuscript only for its rarity or purchase price (*ibid*); 'the interest in gaining knowledge about an object', such as 'the interest which the sociologist or historian takes in a work of art' (*ibid*); and interest in a painting 'merely to cover a stain on the wall paper' (*ibid*).

He contrasts 'disinterested attention' with 'practical perception' in which 'the object is apprehended with an eye to its origins and consequences, [and] its interrelations with other things' (*ibid*). However, it is not clear how precisely we can draw the distinction between being 'disinterested' and having a 'practical interest'. For example, would one qualify as 'disinterested' if one listened to a piece of music for the purpose of relaxing? What about reading a novel for the purpose of arresting ruminative thoughts? Here one is *using* an object (a piece of music or a novel) for some purpose. This means one's purpose is not just to have the experience, but for that experience to realize an antecedent aim (the aim of relaxation or arresting troubling thoughts). In which case, one's attention would not be truly 'disinterested'. I take it that we can (and often do) have aesthetic experiences when listening to music for relaxation or when reading a novel for escapism. In which case, adopting the aesthetic attitude, insofar as that means being 'disinterested', is not a necessary precondition for 'aesthetic experience'.

Placing this concern to one side for the moment, another component of the aesthetic attitude is being 'sympathetic'. This refers to the way we prepare ourselves to respond to the object of experience. Stolnitz mentions positive and negative components of 'sympathy'. The positive component involves making oneself receptive to the work, accepting it on its own terms, and 'setting' oneself to 'accept whatever it may offer in perception' (Stolnitz 1960: 36). The negative component involves inhibiting any hostile responses which would make one unreceptive to the object of experience. This includes one's personal biases and any moral objections one has to the work (*ibid*).

The third component of the aesthetic attitude is the subject's 'attention' which must be: (i) 'held' by the object, to a greater or lesser extent (Stolnitz 1960: 37); (ii) often accompanied by some form of activity such as, 'muscular, nervous, and "motor" responses such as the feeling of tension or rhythmic movement' (*ibid*) – tapping one's foot, for example; and, (iii) discriminative of the details and complexities of the object of experience (*ibid*: 38).

Stolnitz argues these three components are constitutive of the 'aesthetic attitude'. He takes this formulation of the aesthetic attitude to imply that *all* aesthetic experiences are positively valenced. He writes,

'If the aesthetic attitude has been described accurately, it can now be said that aesthetic awareness is always oriented "positively" towards its object [...] Our description of the aesthetic attitude [implies] what is most significant about aesthetic experience – it is an experience which is good to have in itself. Or to say the same thing another way, the experience is *intrinsically valuable*' (Stolnitz 1960: 42).

Although unstated, Stolnitz's reasoning seems to be as follows:

- i) Aesthetic experience occurs only when the subject adopts the 'aesthetic attitude', in which case she will, by definition, be 'sympathetic' to the object(s) she experiences.
- ii) A 'sympathetic' subject will inhibit any hostile responses to the object(s) she experiences.
- iii) Negatively-valenced aesthetic experiences, were they to occur, would be hostile responses to experienced objects.
- iv) Therefore, negatively valenced aesthetic experiences cannot occur while the subject adopts the aesthetic attitude (from [i]-[iii]).
- v) Therefore, negatively valenced aesthetic experiences cannot occur (from [i], and [iv]).
- vi) If negatively valenced aesthetic experiences cannot occur, then all aesthetic experiences are positively valenced.
- vii) Therefore, all aesthetic experiences are positively valenced (from v-vi).

If this is Stolnitz's reasoning, then he needs to argue, with regards to (vi), that there are no neutral or non-valenced aesthetic experiences. Leaving this point aside, (vii) commits Stolnitz to the conclusion that *all* aesthetic experiences are positively valenced. What then of the significant proportion of our aesthetic experiences that are negatively valenced? As previously discussed, we often have negative aesthetic experiences which are, for example, frustrating, nauseating, distressing or disappointing and which we disvalue and would rather not have had.

To make matters worse, Stolnitz claims that when one adopts the aesthetic attitude, '**any object at all** can be apprehended aesthetically' (Stolnitz 1960: 39, emphasis added). This implies the absurd conclusion that when the aesthetic attitude is adopted, *any object at all* will yield a

positively valenced aesthetic experience. This is absurd as it implies that vomit, faeces, pus, hissing cockroaches, putrefying animal carcasses, gulags and the like can yield positively valenced aesthetic experiences.

Another problem concerns Stolnitz's view that 'the aesthetic and the practical attitudes are mutually opposed'. He says they are opposed in the sense that 'the focusing of attention characteristic of one inhibits the kind of attention proper to the other' (Stolnitz 1960: 45). This leaves Stolnitz open to the objection raised above against Bullough: pursuing one's aims or needs does not prevent, and sometimes initiates, aesthetic experience. However, unlike Bullough, Stolnitz acknowledges that 'in concrete experience, practical and aesthetic interest can, and frequently do, coexist with each other' (*ibid*). He writes, '[o]ur experience may be preponderantly practical, we may be chiefly concerned with the task at hand, and yet some of our attention, however slight, may be devoted to aesthetic enjoyment of the things about us' (*ibid*). He explains that in such cases one adopts both a practical attitude and an aesthetic attitude at the same time and that each attitude controls one's attention for a different purpose whilst inhibiting the sort of attention characteristic of the other (*ibid*).

Imagine that you are shopping for a present in an art gallery. Your purpose is to purchase an artwork for your partner's birthday. Suppose you aesthetically experience an artwork whilst declaring "this is the perfect gift!" and so have an aesthetic experience whilst realising a practical aim. Stolnitz is suggesting that in cases like this you adopt two discrete attitudes at the same time:

- (i) A *practical attitude* which is *not* disinterested, since your purpose is to find a gift your partner would like, rather than to just experience the work. And,
- (ii) An *aesthetic attitude* which is disinterested.

Now, according to Stolnitz, these two attitudes each simultaneously govern our attention in ways that are mutually opposed or inhibitory of one another. However, this is clearly inaccurate. Assuming that there are distinct 'attitudes' at play, in this case they are clearly operating in a complementary manner. You recruit the 'aesthetic attitude' (in discerning what is beautiful or attractive) in order to realize a practical aim (to buy a beautiful gift). Put otherwise, the aesthetic attitude is subsumed under the practical attitude. In what sense, then, are they mutually opposed?

A further objection comes from George Dickie (1964), who argues that Stolnitz commits a category error in claiming that *attention* can be 'disinterested'. Dickie argues that 'disinterest', as Stolnitz construes it, refers to the *purpose* a subject has. Consequently, whilst 'disinterest' and 'interest' can describe, for example, one's motivations or intentions, they do not name a variant or species of attention (Dickie 1964: 58-60). In Dickie's words, "[d]isinterestedness" is a term which is used to make clear that an action has certain kinds of motives [...] Attending to an object, of course, has its motives but the attending itself is not interested or disinterested according to whether its motives are of the kind which motivate interested or disinterested action' (*ibid*: 60).

Dickie suggests there are only two dimensions along which attention varies: (i) what it is allocated or trained on, and (ii) how strongly or weakly it is focused (Dickie 1964: 58). Having a 'disinterested' purpose may affect one's attentional profile by making one focus intensely and single-pointedly on an object. However, one often focuses intensely and single-pointedly when one has a practical interest (such as when one is running late and intensely watches a red traffic light, waiting for the moment at which it turns green). Furthermore, one's attention can be weakly focused on several objects when one's purpose is disinterested and consists in 'just *having* the experience'. This means there is no attentional correlate to having a 'disinterested' motivation or intention. Stolnitz defines the aesthetic attitude in terms of 'disinterested attention' and so Dickie concludes that the aesthetic attitude – or at least its main component, 'disinterested attention' – is a 'myth' (Dickie 1964: 57-61).

Now, Stolnitz might modify his position by specifying that 'disinterested attention' is not a species of attention but is just a shorthand for attention that is governed or directed by a disinterested motivation or intention. However, this would not address the concern, raised above, that some aesthetic experiences occur when and because we have a practical interest in the object of experience (for example, we have aesthetic experiences when listening to music for the purpose of relaxing, or when reading a novel for the purpose of arresting ruminative thoughts, or when adjusting the colour value of a graphic one is designing for a client). Here one uses the object of experience to realize a practical end (relaxation, or arresting troubling thoughts, or completing a job for a client). In which case, one's motivation for attending to it does not consist in just having the experience and so is not, by Stolnitz's lights, 'disinterested'. Therefore, having a disinterested motivation cannot be a necessary precondition for aesthetic experience (otherwise we would not have aesthetic experiences when pursuing practical interests).

Above I argued that we sometimes have negatively valenced aesthetic experiences we disvalue. This means that being 'sympathetic' (which involves inhibiting one's hostile responses to the objects of experience) is also not necessary for aesthetic experience. So we have now arrived at the conclusion that the two main components of the aesthetic attitude – that is, 'sympathy' and 'disinterest' – are not necessary preconditions for having aesthetic experiences.

Note that we can also satisfy the conditions required for being in the aesthetic attitude without having an aesthetic experience. Consider the experience of staring at the static on an untuned television screen. The barrage of flickering black and white lines are somewhat hypnotic, so your attention is 'held' by the object of experience. You are also attentive to complexity insofar as the screen to which you are attending is filled by a complex of rapidly moving black and white lines. Suppose, in this example, you are also sympathetic and set yourself to accept whatever experience ensues and inhibit any hostile responses you feel. In addition, suppose your intention is just to have the experience and so is 'disinterested'. Here you are adopting the 'aesthetic attitude' as Stolnitz characterises it. Yet it is far from obvious that by doing so you will have an 'aesthetic' experience. You will just be staring blankly at the static on a television screen! If there is a possibility that the experience is not aesthetic – and I take it the experience would not be – then adopting the aesthetic attitude is not sufficient for having an aesthetic experience.

To summarise, Stolnitz defines aesthetic experience in terms of 'the aesthetic attitude', and the 'aesthetic attitude' in terms of 'disinterestedness', 'sympathy', and 'attention'. It is problematic to say the aesthetically experiencing subject will be 'sympathetic' since this prohibits negatively valenced aesthetic experiences, and implies the absurd conclusion that *anything* can yield a positively valenced aesthetic experience. It is also problematic to characterise aesthetic experience in terms of 'disinterested attention', since there is no clear reason why the practical and the aesthetic are, as Stolnitz claims, 'mutually opposed'. Furthermore, as Dickie comments, 'attention' itself cannot be disinterested. In conclusion, the 'aesthetic attitude' – in so far as it describes an attitude we can actually adopt – does not precede or produce our aesthetic experiences.

Before proceeding to discuss Nanay's position, there is one final concern to raise about both Bullough's and Stolnitz's accounts. This states that they are inconsistent with 'exogenous' aesthetic experiences. Attention is 'exogenous' when it is automatically and involuntarily directed to an external stimulus (such as when a loud sound or flashing light directs one's attention to its source) (Carrasco 2011: 1487-8). This contrasts with 'endogenous' attention,

which is attention that is deliberately or voluntarily allocated (*ibid*). An ‘exogenous’ aesthetic experience is just an aesthetic experience which involves exogenous attention, such as when one’s attention is automatically directed to a striking or captivating feature in one’s perceptual field. One might have an exogenous aesthetic experience of a full moon, or a rainbow, or a sunset, or a breath-taking panorama, or a booming peal of thunder, where these are phenomena one did not expect to encounter and to which one’s attention is automatically directed. These are problematic for attitudinal accounts which characterise aesthetic experience as experience had when one adopts the aesthetic attitude or attains ‘aesthetic consciousness’. When an aesthetic experience is initiated by a moment of exogenous attention, one has no opportunity to first adopt the aesthetic attitude or achieve aesthetic consciousness. Put otherwise, if we were to chart the succession of mental states leading up to the start of an exogenous aesthetic experience, there would be no point at which one could adopt the aesthetic attitude.

It could be replied that the aesthetic attitude can be provoked by elements in one’s perceptual field. When your exogenous attention is automatically directed to a sunset, for example, this instigates the aesthetic attitude in you. However, it is not clear how this would work. Bullough and Stolnitz each construe the adoption of the aesthetic attitude (or ‘aesthetic consciousness’) as an active undertaking on the part of the subject, rather than a passive occurrence that one undergoes. Furthermore, it is unclear how the experience of a sunset, for example, could cause us to place ‘psychical distance’ between our practical interests and the experience of the sunset. Likewise, how could the experience of a full moon render us ‘disinterested’ and ‘sympathetic’? At the very least, this objection brings to light an explanatory lacuna which proponents of attitude accounts of aesthetic experience must fill. I now examine Bence Nanay’s account which characterises aesthetic experience just in terms of ‘attention’.

Bence Nanay

The recent history of philosophical aesthetics is often told by presenting George Dickie’s (1964) objection to Stolnitz (discussed above) as the final nail in the coffin of the ‘aesthetic attitude’ and the cause of widespread scepticism about ‘disinterestedness’. Bence Nanay’s overarching aim is the revival of the idea that there is a distinctively ‘aesthetic’ attitude or outlook, and to articulate its nature using resources from the science of perception, with particular emphasis on attention.

To this end, Nanay takes issue with Dickie's objection to Stolnitz. Specifically, he objects to Dickie's claim that the only dimensions along which attention varies are the objects to which it is directed and how strongly or weakly it is focused (Nanay 2016: 21-22). Nanay draws on the scientific literature to show that (visual) attention can also vary in the following three ways⁴¹:

- (i) Attention can be *focused or distributed*. This refers to the number of objects attended to. Attention may be 'focused' on a single object, or 'distributed' over many objects (Nanay 2016: 21-22).
- (ii) Attention can be *overt or covert*. 'Overt' attention is accompanied by shifts in eye-movements directed at the object to which one is attending. 'Covert' attention is attending to an object without directing one's gaze to it (Carrasco 2011: 1487).
- (iii) Attention can be *exogenous or endogenous*. 'Endogenous' attention is voluntarily allocated by the subject, whereas 'exogenous' attention is automatically directed by a stimulus (*ibid*: 1487-8)⁴².

Nanay additionally introduces a 'conceptual' distinction between (iv) *objects* and their *properties* (Nanay 2016: 22). He then argues that certain paradigmatic cases of aesthetic experience are best characterised in terms of attention which is 'focused' with regards to an object (for example, focused on a single artwork), but 'distributed' among its properties. Nanay names this 'aesthetic attention', which is somewhat misleading given he does not think it is either necessary or sufficient for aesthetic experience (*ibid*: 27-8)⁴³. Nevertheless, Nanay suggests this way of attending is uncommon enough to warrant description as 'aesthetic' (*ibid*: 24-5). I will now discuss the reasons Nanay gives for thinking paradigmatic cases of aesthetic experience involve 'aesthetic attention', so defined.

⁴¹ Further distinctions can be found in the scientific literature (see Carrasco 2011).

⁴² It should be noted that these distinctions primarily refer to *visual* attention. There seems to be some overlap between the visual and auditory attentional systems, particularly with regards to spatial attention (Fritz et. al. 2007: 4). However, it is far from clear whether distinctions used in the literature on visual attention can be straightforwardly transposed on to auditory attention and attention in other sensory modalities.

⁴³ Nanay's position seems to be that there is a variant of aesthetic experience for which aesthetic attention is necessary ('required'), but not sufficient: 'Some experiences that may be called aesthetic may not require aesthetic attention. All I claimed was that [some] paradigmatic cases of aesthetic experience [...] do' (Nanay 2016: 28).

Firstly, Nanay cites a research study which examined the eye-movements of both art experts (who had between 5-11 years of art education) and lay persons as they viewed photographs (Vogt and Magnussen 2007: 93-7). The study found that art experts scanned a broader spatial area of the photographs than their lay counterparts, who predominantly confined their attention to 'regions of interest' (i.e. notable features, such as a human figure or face) (*ibid*: 97-8). Nanay concludes that art experts exhibit 'aesthetic attention' (attention that is focused on the photograph but distributed among its spatial area) to a greater extent than laypersons and therefore his proposal must be 'on the right track' (Nanay 2016: 27)⁴⁴.

Secondly, Nanay takes his account of 'aesthetic attention' to explain two commonly reported features of aesthetic experience. One feature is that during aesthetic experiences we sometimes notice seemingly irrelevant and often overlooked characteristics of objects. Nanay argues that this is a consequence of *distributing* attention among the properties of an object, when we would usually focus our attention to just those few properties that are salient to our interests.

Another common feature of aesthetic experience is that familiar objects become 'defamiliarised' or appear as if seen for the first time. This occurs, Nanay proposes, because we tend to distribute our attention among the properties of objects that are unfamiliar or new to us:

'If an object is unfamiliar, we do not know how to approach it, and we therefore tend to attend to a number of its properties to figure out what to do with it or what can be done with it' (Nanay 2016: 34).

Thus 'aesthetic attention', distributing attention among the properties of an object, can have the effect of making familiar objects seem unfamiliar, or appear as if seen for the first time. Note, though, that this implies that attention which is *focused* with regards to objects but *distributed* with regards to properties is not, *pace* Nanay, unusual or uncommon: it occurs whenever we encounter a new or unfamiliar object. Surely, Nanay would not want to describe

⁴⁴ Nanay only takes this to count in favour of his proposal, and qualifies it with the following: 'I do not take these findings to be definite proof about the importance of aesthetic attention because I don't think that art school training strongly correlates with one's ability to have aesthetic experiences and I also need to acknowledge that the distribution of attention these experiments are about is spatial distribution, whereas not all distribution with regards to properties is spatial distribution. But I do think that these experiments at least indicate that the account of aesthetic attention is on the right track' (Nanay 2016: 27)

as ‘aesthetic’ the attention which accompanies every experience of an unfamiliar object? If not, then he needs to specify the differentia between the attention that accompanies our experiences of unfamiliar objects and that which is involved with paradigmatic aesthetic experiences.

Nanay’s account of ‘aesthetic attention’ has drawn criticism from Peter Fazekas who suggests Nanay’s use of ‘distributed attention’ is inconsistent with the scientific literature. Fazekas argues that attending to a set of properties in a ‘distributed’ way, as the term is standardly used, means attending to all of those properties *simultaneously* (as when attending simultaneously to all the stars in Van Gogh’s *Starry Night*, for example). Distributed attention is typically thought to produce, ‘only a faint copy of what could be detected with focal attention, i.e., only a low resolution percept that lacks information about details’ (Fazekas 2016: 73). This means ‘aesthetic attention’ as Nanay understands it, would fail to provide the kind of rich, detailed perceptual experience that is characteristic of aesthetic experiences of artworks.

Fazekas proposes ‘aesthetic attention’ should instead be understood as ‘stimulus-driven rapid sequential reallocation of focused attention [among the properties of a single object]’ (Fazekas 2016: 82). He argues that, ‘sequentially focusing on different properties — contrary to allocating distributed attention to them — is able to convey the kind of rich and detailed information content that is typically characteristic of aesthetic experiences’ (*ibid*).

Proponents of the content-oriented approach might accuse both Nanay and Fazekas of putting the cart before the horse, as it were. They could argue that ‘aesthetic attention’ just describes how attention is allocated when discerning the aesthetic qualities of artworks. Aesthetic qualities, the argument goes, typically stand in dependency relations to simpler non-aesthetic properties which are distributed among an artwork (these non-aesthetic properties are sometimes referred to as the ‘supervenience base’)⁴⁵. An artwork is ‘unified’, for example, by virtue of its constituent elements and the relations in which they stand to one another. So, in discerning the ‘unity’ of an artwork, the subject’s attention needs to be focused with regards to the object (as she is attending to only one object, the artwork), but distributed – or, following Fazekas, rapidly and sequentially reallocated – among its properties. But this is *only* because the subject is processing the large sub-set (the ‘supervenience base’) of non-aesthetic properties on which ‘unity’, the aesthetic property, depends. So, Nanay’s or Fazekas’s descriptions of the

⁴⁵ Sibley refers to this type of dependency relation between an aesthetic property and non-aesthetic properties as ‘total specific dependence’ (see Sibley 1965: 138)

attentional profile common to paradigmatic cases of aesthetic experience may well be accurate, the argument goes. However, attention is only allocated in this way because that is how aesthetically experiencing subjects discern or detect aesthetic qualities. In which case, the emphasis should remain of the *content* of the experience, and the subject's attentional profile should perhaps just be mentioned as a footnote (alongside other physiological changes which she may incur – her pulse rate, pupil dilation, perspiration etc.) (c.f. Nanay 2016: 28-9).

The primary issue with the attention-based accounts of Nanay and Fazekas is that neither tell us what is distinctive about aesthetic experience. They just describe the way attention is allocated during some aesthetic experiences, which is also the way attention is allocated at other times (when we are not having aesthetic experiences). They are therefore, to borrow from Carroll, stunningly uninformative. They satisfy only one of the desiderata listed in the Introduction, which is that they can be situated within a long-standing tradition or strand of thought within philosophical aesthetics (namely the thought that there is an 'aesthetic' attitude, which in turn draws on the Kantian concept of 'disinterestedness'). However, they do not (i) offer the uninitiated practical guidance on how to have aesthetic experiences. They are not (ii) amenable to experimental research as they are neither instructive nor specify features that are distinctive of just 'aesthetic' experiences. They are not (iv) extensionally adequate as the mode of attention they describe is not exclusive to 'aesthetic' experience. They are focused on visual attention only, so do not (v) shed light on which other sense modalities we can aesthetically experience through. As they do not name necessary and/or sufficient conditions for aesthetic experience, they cannot (vi) help us establish whether borderline cases qualify as 'aesthetic experiences' or not. And they do not (vii) accommodate aesthetic experiences of non-art insofar as they do not tell us what is distinctive about aesthetic experience and the experimental data on which they are based are experiences of art.

These objections would seem to be devastating to Nanay's attention-based account.

Nevertheless, in his most recent article on the subject, Nanay (2018) is less concerned with the detail of an attention-based account of aesthetic experience, and more intent on demonstrating the explanatory superiority of attention-based accounts in general, as compared with content-oriented and axiological accounts. To this end, Nanay discusses three characteristics of aesthetic experience, for which, he argues, attentional accounts provide the best explanation. These are as follows:

- (i) Aesthetic experiences are occasionally elusive. We cannot force ourselves to have aesthetic experiences by just looking at artworks. Some days, despite our best efforts, aesthetic experiences are just not forthcoming (Nanay 2016: 30-1).
- (ii) We sometimes have aesthetic experiences of banal, everyday scenes (such as bus stops, car parks, and streetscapes) immediately after prolonged periods of art appreciation (such as when leaving a cinema, concert, or art gallery). Nanay describes this as the ‘lingering effect’ or ‘the short-term effect of art appreciation’ (Nanay 2018: 74).
- (iii) Aesthetic experiences of artworks are a precondition for everyday aesthetic experiences of non-art. Nanay terms this ‘the long-term effect of art appreciation’ (Nanay 2018: 73-4).

Nanay thinks these speak in favour of an attentional or attitudinal account. I will now discuss his reasons for this, and then propose that these phenomena can be equally well explained by the content-oriented and axiological accounts and so do not speak in favour of an attention-based account.

Aesthetic Experiences are Elusive

Nanay describes the elusiveness of aesthetic experience as follows:

‘[W]e do not have full control over whether we have an aesthetic experience. We go to a museum to have an aesthetic experience of an artwork we had an aesthetic experience of a day ago, but it is just not happening. We stand in front of it and, although we really want to, we fail to experience it in an aesthetic manner’ (Nanay 2016: 30).

One could question how generalisable this observation is across different art forms. It may be true of paintings, for example, but less so of music or poetry. I suspect most people know of certain pieces of music or poems which are reliable sources of aesthetic experience.

Nevertheless, Nanay is right to say that aesthetic experiences of some artworks are, despite our best efforts, unrepeatable and elusive. He suggests that the content-oriented approach (Noël Carroll’s position) is at a loss to explain this elusiveness:

‘[I]f aesthetic experience is just the detection of the object’s “aesthetic and/or expressive qualities”, then why couldn’t we control whether we have an aesthetic

experience? If I was capable of detecting the object's "aesthetic and/or expressive qualities" yesterday, there must be a reason why I am incapable of it today. And the [content-oriented] account doesn't give us a reason why this would be so' (Nanay 2016: 30).

He makes a similar objection to Gary Iseminger's axiological account:

'Valuing an experience for its own sake is [...] not something one can fail to do in spite of one's best efforts. If my experience yesterday in the museum was of the very same properties of the artwork as today, what explains that I don't seem to be able to value this experience for its own sake (while I could do so yesterday)? We have the same experience (the very same properties are attributed to the very same object), but while I valued this experience for its own sake yesterday, I can no longer do so. At the very least, proponents of the 'valuing for its own sake' approach would need to say more about what concept of 'valuing' is at play here and why it is not fully under our control' (*ibid*: 31).

Nanay argues that, unlike either of these approaches, the attentional approach has a ready explanation of why we sometimes try but fail to have aesthetic experiences: it is because 'attending in a certain way is not something we can always force ourselves to do' (Nanay 2016: 32). If we cannot force ourselves to pay 'aesthetic attention' (however that is understood) to an object then our prior aesthetic experiences of it may be unrepeatable.

At this point, the details of 'aesthetic attention' matter. If 'aesthetic attention' is – as Nanay (2016) proposes – *focused* on a single object and *distributed* among its properties, then, arguably, we can force ourselves to pay 'aesthetic attention'. One can focus one's attention on a single brick in a building's façade or *distribute* one's attention over all bricks in the façade, for example. Likewise, one can choose to focus on a single thread of a woven rug or to distribute one's attention over the whole rug. In both cases, one can make oneself focus one's attention on a single object (the building or the rug) and distribute one's attention among its properties (the bricks of the façade or the threads of the rug).

Returning to Nanay's argument, the occasional elusiveness of aesthetic experience is only a compelling reason to favour the attention-based account if the other two approaches cannot provide a good explanation of the phenomenon. I will now consider how they might.

Elusiveness and the Axiological Approach

Is the unrepeatability of an aesthetic experience (of, e.g., a painting) problematic for the axiological account? It is unclear why Nanay thinks ‘valuing an experience for its own sake is [...] not something one can fail to do in spite of one’s best efforts’ (Nanay 2018: 31). Surely any plausible view of final value would be inconsistent with the idea that we can choose, at will, the objects or experiences to which we assign final value? We cannot just arbitrarily assign final value to a piece of litter, or a discarded cigarette butt, for example.

More to the point, Nanay assumes that if we value for its own sake our experience of an object *O* at a time *t1*, then we will also value for its own sake our experience of *O* at time *t2*. This is what we would expect if our experiences of *O* at *t1* and *t2* were the same (or very similar). Of course, our experience of *O* at *t1* might be quite different to our experience of *O* at *t2*, for a number of possible reasons: one might have had the chance to examine other works like *O*, and so acquired a more expansive understanding of the genre. Or one might have debated the merits of *O* with a friend. Or one might have failed to get enough sleep. Or one might have developed ‘museum fatigue’ on one occasion but not the other (see Bitgood 2009). Or one might view *O* in a different venue on one of the occasions (see Brieber et. al. 2014). Or one might have learnt relevant contextual information about *O* (see Swami 2012). Or one might have formed the belief that *O* is a forgery (see Leder 2001). Or perhaps something like the ‘mere exposure’ effect might lead one to prefer *O* more (see Cutting 2003) or less (see Meskin et. al. 2013) on the second viewing. So axiological accounts can reply that failure to repeat an earlier aesthetic experience of a particular artwork is simply due to experiencing it differently the second time round. Proponents of the axiological account therefore have a ready explanation of why some aesthetic experiences are unrepeatably and elusive.

Elusiveness and the Content-Oriented Account

Can the content-oriented account explain the unrepeatability and elusiveness of aesthetic experience? Suppose that yesterday one aesthetically experienced the *serene* character of a painting, but today – despite one’s trying – it does not seem *serene* at all, and no aesthetic experience of it is forthcoming. What might the content-oriented approach have to say about such cases?

One response argues that aesthetic properties (used in the broad, conventional sense of the term) differ in how easy or difficult they are to experience. It seems easier to experience the

'garishness' or 'luridness' of colours, than it is to experience the 'harmony' or 'unity' of an abstract composition, for example. The more difficult an aesthetic property is to experience, the less likelihood there is of being able to repeat one's earlier aesthetic experience of it.

Comparisons can be drawn with difficult actions: most golfers will be unable to repeat a hole-in-one shot they performed on a previous occasion, for example. Difficult actions are extremely demanding to perform, require skill and luck, and are affected by a large number of variables. Similarly, a high level of skill and opportune conditions are required to experience those aesthetic properties which are particularly fickle and subtle to detect. What, then, might determine how easy or difficult an aesthetic property is to detect?

One factor is concept acquisition and mastery. Experiencing a particular aesthetic property (P) may be difficult, if not impossible, without first acquiring the concept of P⁴⁶. Concepts differ in terms of how easy or difficult they are to master. For example, the concept of 'irony' is harder to master than the concepts of 'danger' and 'sexiness'. This may be due to a scarcity of good exemplars, or because the exemplars of a concept are significantly different from one another (at least superficially), or because a concept is inherently complex, or because it is not initially obvious why effort should be expended in acquiring it. If we have only partially mastered a difficult concept, then we may be unreliable at detecting instances of it. Confounding variables (such as those mentioned in defense of the axiological approach: failure to get enough sleep, suffering from 'museum fatigue', changes in the venue in which the work is displayed, and so on) could interfere with our capacities to do so.

Another factor to consider is the extent to which an aesthetic property is exemplified in an artwork. There are degrees to which objects can possess aesthetic properties: an artwork can have a hint of 'playfulness', or be quite 'playful', or extremely 'playful', for example⁴⁷. It can be difficult to experience those aesthetic properties which are only present in an artwork to a very subtle or marginal degree. To experience the faint, subtle aesthetic properties of an artwork requires the average percipient to be working at the peak of her cognitive and appreciative capacities. Given that we all have rare moments of clarity, or off-days, it is hardly surprising that some experiences of subtle aesthetic properties are elusive and unrepeatable.

⁴⁶ It might be possible to experience P without explicitly knowing P's designation: this is presumably why aesthetic adjectives are first coined. However, in such cases we would expect the subject to have, at least, developed a nascent sense of P such that she could, for example, identify more than one instance of P or contrast it with a non-P.

⁴⁷ Not all aesthetic properties may admit of degrees. It is hard to imagine how an artwork could be only slightly 'anguished' or slightly 'triumphant'.

To summarise, some aesthetic properties are very difficult to experience (either because, conceptually, they are difficult to master and deploy, or because they present to only a very marginal, subtle degree), and our repeat experience of them can be affected by even the slightest change in circumstance. Consequently, from the perspective of the content-oriented account, it is to be expected that experiences of aesthetic properties are sometimes unrepeatable and elusive.

I take the forgoing considerations to demonstrate that the unrepeatability and elusiveness of aesthetic experiences is no more problematic for the axiological and content-oriented approaches than it is for the attentional approach.

The 'Lingering Effect' of Art Appreciation

The second phenomenon Nanay takes to count in favour of an attentional account is the 'lingering effect' of art appreciation, which he describes as follows:

'When you spend an entire day in the museum and you walk home afterwards, the drab bus stop may look to you like one of the pictures in the museum. And when leaving a good concert or movie, the ugly, grey, dirty streetscape can look positively beautiful [...] aesthetic experiences often do not stop when the contemplation of the object of the aesthetic experience stops' (Nanay 2018: 74).

The idea is that prolonged aesthetic experiences of art sometimes inflect one's subsequent experience of everyday scenes with an 'aesthetic' character. A comparison could be drawn with the experience of returning to land after a prolonged period of time at sea: one continues to feel a rocking, swaying sensation, as if still on a boat.

Nanay's contention is that the attentional account can provide the best explanation of this phenomenon, in roughly the following terms: as we do not have complete control over how we allocate attention, the way we attend during a given activity sometimes persists for a short while, even after a change in activity calls for a different sort of attention (*ibid*: 79). During prolonged periods of art appreciation, we become accustomed to attending in a special 'aesthetic' way which continues, or 'lingers', for a short duration after we leave the art venue. The result is that, after leaving the art venue, we continue to attend to the streetscape or bus shelter in the same way as we were attending to the artwork(s). This is why upon leaving art venues we sometimes have aesthetic experiences of a bus shelter or streetscape (we find them 'positively beautiful', or 'atmospheric', or 'filmic', for example).

Note that we should avoid conflating the following two distinct phenomena:

- (a) Before entering an art venue, the scenery seems ‘ugly’ and ‘drab’, which is to say one has a negatively-valenced aesthetic experience of it. After a prolonged period of art appreciation, one leaves the venue and the same scenery now seems ‘beautiful’, which is to say one has a positively-valenced aesthetic experience of it. This can be termed *the polarity-reversal effect*.
- (b) Before entering the art venue, one does not aesthetically experience the scenery. After a prolonged period of art appreciation, one leaves the venue and has a (positively-valenced) aesthetic experience of the same scenery. This seems to be what Nanay describes as *the lingering effect*.

In the former, a prolonged period of art appreciation effects a reversal in the polarity – from negative to positive – of the valence of one’s aesthetic experience of a place or object. In the latter, a period of art appreciation leads one to have an aesthetic experience of a place or object which, on a previous occasion, did not elicit an aesthetic experience.

The *polarity reversal effect* does not speak in favour of the attentional approach. This is because one aesthetically experiences the streetscape (as ugly and drab) *before* entering the venue – that is, *before* the prolonged period of attending in a special ‘aesthetic’ manner. Indeed, the *polarity reversal effect* is problematic for the attentional approach. It indicates that the special ‘aesthetic’ way of attending – which occurs during, and lingers after, we visit the art venue – is only characteristic of aesthetic experiences which have a positive valence. This would also explain why (b) the ‘lingering effect’ Nanay describes would not occur, one imagines, if the film, concert, or exhibition was awful and frustrating (i.e. if one’s prolonged aesthetic experience in the art venue was negatively valenced). So the phenomenon Nanay describes speaks against understanding *all* aesthetic experience in terms of a particular way of attending.

I take it that Nanay is concerned only with whether the content-oriented and axiological accounts can accommodate (b) the *lingering effect*.

The content-oriented account needs to explain why it is that before entering the art venue the streetscape appears to have no aesthetic character but upon leaving it appears ‘positively beautiful’. One explanation is that artworks typically contain a high concentration of aesthetic qualities, exposure to which makes us more sensitive, albeit for a short time, to the aesthetic properties of our immediate surroundings. An additional proposal is that experiencing a

particular sub-set of aesthetic properties (such as the aesthetic properties indicative of a particular director's style) for a sustained period of time in an art venue inclines us to detect similar properties upon leaving the venue. The content-oriented account can concede as much whilst still maintaining that it is the content of an experience which gives it its aesthetic character.

Nanay also presents the 'lingering effect' as problematic for the axiological approach:

'While it may sound convincing to say that we value our experience of the concert or the theatre performance for its own sake, it is difficult to see why anyone would value the experience of looking at random street scenes after leaving the building for its own sake' (*ibid*: 79).

His point seems to be that, unlike attention, a prolonged period of (dis)valuing one's experience for its own sake will not affect whether one (dis)values any subsequent experiences one has. But this is patently false. Experiences you value for their own sake tend to be life-affirming and inspire a sense of *joie de vivre*. It often happens that this life-affirming feeling endures for a short while, during which one also values one's experiencing for its own sake. Consider, for example, the experience of having a romantic picnic with a lover: this is an experience one would value for its own sake and which can cause one to savour one's immediate subsequent experiencing and find it valuable for its own sake.

In summary, the short-term 'lingering' effect of art appreciation can be readily explained by both the content-oriented account and the axiological account. It does not therefore speak in favour of an attention-based account.

The Long-term Effect of Art Appreciation

The third phenomenon Nanay takes to count against the content-oriented and axiological accounts, but in favour of an attention-based account, is the long-term effect which art appreciation has on our capacities to experience everyday scenes aesthetically. Nanay proposes that our everyday aesthetic experiences (of non-art) depend on our prior aesthetic experiences of art. He distinguishes a radical from a weak view of this dependency relation. The 'radical view' – which Nanay locates in Proust's writing – is that, 'experience of artworks is a necessary condition and prerequisite of our ability to experience everyday scenes in an aesthetic manner [...] if we had never had aesthetic experiences of artworks, we would not be able to experience everyday scenes aesthetically' (Nanay 2018: 73). The 'weak view', which Nanay attributes to E.

H. Gombrich, is that 'engaging with an artwork can teach us ways to [aesthetically] experience everyday scenes' (*ibid*: 74). The weak view (presumably) does not state that prior experience of art is required for everyday aesthetic experiences, but only that it will increase their frequency or intensity or quality. Unlike the lingering effect, this 'long-term effect' is not time-limited: aesthetically experiencing artworks supposedly furnishes one with the enduring, life-long ability to have aesthetic experiences of everyday scenes.

Nanay argues that the long-term effect of art appreciation can be easily explained by the attentional approach, but that no obvious explanation is indicated by either the content-oriented account or the axiological account. The explanandum can be presented as follows: take time t_1 to be a time before a subject (S) has had any aesthetic experiences, and time t_2 to be a significant time after t_1 . Between t_1 and t_2 , S has aesthetic experiences of artworks. At t_1 , S views a non-art object (O), but does not experience O aesthetically. At t_2 , S again views O but this time has an aesthetic experience.

According to the content-oriented account, this means S experiences aesthetic properties at t_2 , but not at t_1 . Given that the properties of O do not change between t_1 and t_2 , we would expect some explanation of why S only experiences the aesthetic properties of O at t_2 , and not at t_1 . However, nothing in the content-oriented account, Nanay argues, indicates why this might be (*ibid*: 79). He argues that this explanatory lacuna counts against the plausibility of the content-oriented account.

The axiological account must analyse the explanandum as follows: S values her experience of O for its own sake at t_2 , but not at t_1 . This seems strange, given that O is the same at t_1 and t_2 . So the axiological account needs to explain why S only assigns final value to her experience of O at t_2 , not at t_1 .

The attentional account, by contrast, offers the following explanans: aesthetic experiences of art teach us 'to attend to some seemingly irrelevant features of the everyday objects around [us] and this new way of allocating [our] attention [changes] the phenomenal character of [our] experience[s], [turning] them into aesthetic experiences' (Nanay 2018: 79).

Note that Nanay's argument against the content-oriented and axiological accounts can be read as remaining neutral with regards to which of the radical or weak versions of the long-term effect of art appreciation is correct: S may not have had an aesthetic experience of O at t_1 either because (*the weak version*;) at t_1 , S rarely has aesthetic experiences of non-art because she has yet to learn through appreciating art how to have (frequent or intense) everyday

aesthetic experiences, or because (*the radical version:*) everyday aesthetic experiences *require* prior experiences of art, which, at t1, *S* lacks.

Nanay is perhaps right to highlight the un informativeness of the axiological approach (a point discussed above in ‘Axiological Approaches’). That said, he seems to assume that just because *O* does not change from t1 to t2, *S*’s experience of *O* will be the same at both times, such that she should value both (or neither) of the experiences for their own sakes. Of course, for any number of possible situational reasons, *S*’s experience of *O* at t1 may differ radically from her experience of *O* at t2 (particularly if a lot of time elapses between t1 and t2). In which case, we would not expect her to value both (or neither) of those experiences for their own sake.

The content-oriented account can reply that we learn how to detect aesthetic properties by appreciating art. Artworks tend to contain a high concentration of aesthetic properties. They can often be viewed in relatively quiet environments at our behest, which is ideal for learning to detect, and becoming acquainted with, the aesthetic properties they contain. Furthermore, artworks differ in how obvious and apparent the aesthetic properties they feature are. This allows for us to first become acquainted with aesthetic properties by attending to those works which contain aesthetic properties that are very obvious and easy to detect. One can subsequently progress to those artworks which feature subtler aesthetic properties that are harder to detect. Consider the artworks aimed at, or enjoyed by, children (Thomas Kinkadee’s paintings based on Disney stories, for example): the aesthetic qualities in these works tend to be very obvious to detect, which helps children to develop familiarity with them (vividness, liveliness, and prettiness, for example). The more art they experience, the more familiar they become with a wider variety of aesthetic qualities and the better they become at detecting them. As children grow up, they learn to bring this ability to bear on everyday scenes which, unlike artworks, are full of distractions and can be subject to rapid change.

So the content-oriented account is able to present art as the means by which we first become acquainted with aesthetic qualities, then learn how to recognise them in our everyday lives. It therefore has something to say about how art teaches us to have everyday aesthetic experiences. The attentional account, by comparison, just tells us that art teaches us, ‘to attend to some seemingly irrelevant features of the everyday objects around [us]’ (Nanay 2018: 79). However, we are not told how art teaches us this or what it is about artworks in particular which makes us attend in a special ‘aesthetic’ way.

To summarise, the content-oriented and axiological accounts can amply accommodate (i) the elusiveness and unrepeatability of aesthetic experiences, (ii) the lingering effect of art appreciation, and (iii) the long-term effect of art appreciation on our capacities to have every day aesthetic experiences. This undermines Nanay's conclusion that these phenomena militate against the content-oriented and axiological accounts of aesthetic experience and count in favour of an attention-based account. Although I have defended both accounts, I take Nanay's arguments to provide the following two insights: firstly, they lend further support to the objection that the axiological approach – considered by itself – is, in Noël Carroll's words, 'stunningly uninformative'. Secondly, the content-oriented approach would be more informative, and have greater explanatory power as regards the three phenomena Nanay identifies, if it described *how* we engage with aesthetic properties during aesthetic experience.

This section has examined accounts proposed by Bullough, Stolnitz and Nanay. None of their positions adequately specify the nature of aesthetic experience. We have now examined all three 'mode-oriented' approaches (axiological, affect-oriented, and attitudinal accounts); these are attempts to specify the nature of aesthetic experience just in terms of the mode of the experience, without adverting to 'aesthetic properties' as the content-oriented account does. None of the positions we have examined do so successfully. I take this to indicate that a plausible account of aesthetic experience needs to name 'aesthetic properties' as the experienced content. I will develop this point in the following chapter. At present, we can ask whether attitudinal accounts get us any closer to a plausible account of aesthetic experience. Do they tell us anything informative or useful about the nature of aesthetic experience?

I think they do. There is one distinction we should certainly retain. This is between attending to something for instrumental reasons (or attending to it as a 'means') and attending to it *for its own sake* (or as an 'end'). As Dickie comments, this does not describe a feature of 'attention' itself, but rather the purpose or motivation or intention which governs or directs one's attention. If one attends to something for its own sake, then one's reasons for attending to it are not exhausted by its usefulness as a means to something else.

Some examples will help to bring this distinction into focus. Suppose you are walking in the countryside and have no way of telling the time. Fortunately, you are within earshot of a church bell located in a nearby village which strikes out the time each hour. You hear the first chime, then listen attentively in order to count how many times the bell sounds. Your aim is just to learn the time. This means you are attending to the sound of the bell just for instrumental reasons, or just as a means. We can contrast this with another example where the situation is

the same (you are walking in the countryside within earshot of the church bell) except you are wearing a watch, so already know the time. When you hear the first bell chime, you decide to pause during your walk just to listen to the sound it makes. Here you would be attending to the sound made by the bell for its own sake or as an end. These two motivations – that is, to know the time and to listen to the sound of the bell for its own sake – are not mutually exclusive but can co-occur: when listening to the bell to learn the time, you can simultaneously attend to the sound for its own sake (and not *just* as a means). If you were to do so, your reasons for attending to the sound of the church bell would not be exhausted by its usefulness as a means to telling the time. Put otherwise, you would have a reason to continue attending to the chiming bell even if it no longer proved useful for telling the time (or if you no longer desired to know the time).

Here is another example: suppose you are walking at night under a clear sky punctuated with stars and want to check that your compass is accurate. To do this, you find north by looking for Polaris (the North Star) and checking it tallies with your compass. As you scan the stars for Polaris, your intention is exclusively to corroborate the reading given by your compass. You are therefore attending to the night sky just for instrumental reasons, or just as a means. Now imagine a parallel case in which you are also walking at night under the stars, but this time you are confident you are heading in the right direction. You nevertheless decide to pause and gaze upwards just to experience the night sky. This time you are attending to the night sky for its own sake or as an end. Again, these motivations can co-occur: as you search for Polaris you can also attend to the night sky for its own sake (and so would have reason to continue doing so even if you no longer wanted to corroborate your compass reading).

On a more mundane level, as you walk around a city, the motivation governing your experiencing can comprise both the practical motivation of safely traversing the urban environment – so you would be attending to the environment, or particular features of it, for instrumental reasons or as a means of safely arriving at your destination – and a motivation to just enjoy the sights and sounds you encounter, to which you would attend for their own sakes or as ends.

I take the key insight provided by attitudinal accounts to be that aesthetic experience of something requires attending to it for its own sake and not just as a means to something else. This is not to say that an instrumental motivation (attending to something as a means) *inhibits* or is opposed to having an aesthetic experience. Only that aesthetic experience of something requires that one attends to it, at least in part, for its own sake or as an end.

With regards to the above examples, this implies that you would not have an aesthetic experience when attending to the sound of church bells only to learn the time. It also implies that you would not have an aesthetic experience of the night sky when your motivation for attending to it is just to check your compass is working. I take it there is nothing controversial about this. On the contrary, it seems intuitively right: it is hard to imagine having an aesthetic experience of the sound of church bells when listening to them only in order to learn the time, for example. Likewise, it is hard to imagine having an aesthetic experience when scanning the night sky exclusively to check the accuracy of one's compass. However, if, whilst looking for Polaris, you did have an aesthetic experience of the night sky, you would, I imagine, have started attending to it not just as a means to corroborating your compass reading, but also for its own sake.

4. The Anatomy of Aesthetic Experience

It will now be helpful to review the key findings of the forgoing analysis of positions in the literature. We have arrived at the following conclusions about what aesthetic experience is not:

- (i) Aesthetic experience does not just consist in experiencing aesthetic properties as we can attend to an aesthetic property without having an aesthetic experience.
- (ii) Aesthetic experience does not just consist in finally (dis)valuing an experience, since some experiences we finally (dis)value are not 'aesthetic'. Nor does aesthetic experience require that we assign final (dis)value to our experiences as we do not place final (dis)value on all aesthetic experiences.
- (iii) Aesthetic experience cannot be defined in terms of a single affect or a narrow band of affective states since the affects felt during aesthetic experiences are very diverse and do not arise exclusively during aesthetic experiences.
- (iv) Aesthetic experiences cannot be defined in terms of a 'disinterested' or 'distanced' attitude as some aesthetic experiences occur in conjunction with, and are recruited for the sake of realizing, our practical interests or personal aims.
- (v) Aesthetic experience cannot be defined just in terms of how attention is allocated as there is no attentional profile that is common to all aesthetic experiences. Furthermore, Nanay's proposed mode of 'aesthetic' attention occurs outwith aesthetic experience.

In short, we have examined four approaches (the content-oriented approach and three mode-oriented approaches) to specifying the nature of aesthetic experience and found that no one approach by itself holds water. We have also arrived at three initial ideas about what aesthetic experiences are:

- (i) They are experiences of aesthetic properties,
- (ii) They have a valence because they are finally (dis)valued and/or because of the affects experienced, and
- (iii) They involve attending to experiential content for its own sake, and not exclusively for instrumental reasons.

I will now develop these into an intensional definition of aesthetic experience. One of the definientia uses the expression ‘aesthetic properties’, so I will also explain what ‘aesthetic properties’ are. I will then demonstrate how the proposed account of aesthetic experience satisfies the desiderata listed in the Introduction.

The Hybrid Account of Aesthetic Experience

We can ask three questions of any segment of experience:

- (i) What is it an experience of (what is its *content*)?
- (ii) How does the subject attend to that content (what is the *mode* of the experience)?
- (iii) If the experience has a *valence*, then what gives it that valence?

My proposal is to define aesthetic experience in terms of these questions. Specifically, an experience is ‘aesthetic’ if and only if,

- (i) The experience is directed toward an aesthetic property or properties, or towards lower-level properties the subject judges to be apt for description in terms of aesthetic properties, or the relation(s) therebetween, and
- (ii) The subject attends to, dwells on, or assesses the content of her experience for its own sake or for the sake of an affective payoff (such as pleasure, enjoyment, or satisfaction) that is intrinsic to the experience, and
- (iii) The experience has a positive and/or negative valence because the subject has an appropriate affective response to the content to which she is attending for its own sake and/or because it is an experience the subject values for its own sake and/or disvalues for its own sake.

This account treats aesthetic properties as analytically prior⁴⁸ to aesthetic experience. This raises the question of what ‘aesthetic properties’ are, which I address in the following section. For our present purposes, note that (i) remains neutral on the question of whether aesthetic properties are represented in perceptual experience or just inferred (see Brogaard 2013 and

⁴⁸ ‘To say that the notion of X is analytically prior to the notion of Y is to say that Y can be analysed or elucidated in terms of X while the analysis or elucidation of X itself does not have to advert to Y’ (Davies 1996: 96).

Logue 2018). It seems plausible, given the heterogeneity of 'aesthetic properties', that some are represented in perception (being 'garish' or 'pallid' or 'vivid', for example) whilst others are only inferred (such as, being 'true to life', or 'formulaic', or 'derivative').

Proponents of a content-oriented approach might argue that (i) is sufficient (or both necessary and sufficient) for aesthetic experience. Some counter-examples to this are given in the above chapter, 'the Content-Oriented Approach'. Here is another:

Art-Overload: You are in Venice for the day and are determined to enjoy all the art it has to offer. You visit the Peggy Guggenheim collection, the Museo Correr, the Accademia Gallery, and the Doge's palace. By 4pm, you make it to the Ca'Rezzonico and are looking at an early masterpiece by Canaletto. You know you ought to be enjoying the experience. You can see how the aesthetic qualities of the painting should, and typically would, occasion awe and delight. Yet you have museum fatigue. Try as you may, to your frustration the Canaletto leaves you cold and unmoved. Had you seen it at the start of the day, you probably would have had an aesthetic experience. As it is, there is nothing remarkable, memorable or even pleasant about the experience.

In a fatigued state, you can perceptually process the Canaletto and register its aesthetic qualities, yet you are not having an aesthetic experience. This is evidenced by the frustration you feel in being entirely unmoved by, what you recognise as, the sorts of qualities which you would typically experience aesthetically. I take it this type of experience is not uncommon. In which case, (i) is not sufficient for aesthetic experience.

Relatedly, I expect most people can identify with the experience of feeling out of sorts or dispirited and so unable to appreciate the beauty of the natural world. Sometimes one visits a beautiful place – such as a hilltop with a view, or a woodland, or a beach – but is unable to appreciate the scenery because of feeling preoccupied or unsettled. On such occasions, one can recognize that the scenery is beautiful and worthy of appreciating but is simply unable, at that time, to appreciate or aesthetically experience it. One might even chastise oneself for being unable to view one's surroundings with the reverie it warrants. These are not aesthetic experiences. However, they are experiences in which we recognise an aesthetic quality (beauty). In which case, again, (i) is not sufficient for aesthetic experience.

In short, aesthetic experience does not just consist in experiencing aesthetic properties: gawking mindlessly or impassively or despondently at an aesthetic property does not qualify as

an aesthetic experience⁴⁹. During aesthetic experience we are *moved* by the qualities we discern. They excite us, or disgust us, elicit pleasure or displeasure, furnish us with experiences we value or disvalue, or which affect the character of our lives, for better or worse. So, in addition to (i) we need to include condition (iii) which is satisfied when the subject appropriately *engages with* the content of her experience.

One indicator of the appropriate sort of engagement is that the subject places final (dis)value on her experience. We can construe final (dis)value in terms of belief: a person who finally (dis)values something believes it is good (or bad) for reasons which do not just describe it as a means to something else (Iseminger 2006: 105). Someone who reflects on an experience and concludes it made her life better (or worse) *ceteris paribus* would qualify as finally (dis)valuing her experience. But so would someone who just thinks an experience is ‘good’ or ‘worth having’ (or ‘bad’ or ‘not worth having’), where her reasons for thinking this are not exhausted by its being a means to something else. We should allow that the belief component of ‘final (dis)value’ can be either occurrent or dispositional and can be held with more or less confidence.

Another indicator of appropriate engagement with aesthetic properties is that the subject is moved by, or has an appropriate affective response to, the content of her experience. Examples of appropriate affective responses include: feeling relaxed when listening to a *soothing* piece of music; feeling disappointed when reading an *anticlimactic* denouement; feeling uplifted by a *cheerful* melody; feeling disgust at a *grotesque* sculpture; feeling unnerved by an *uncanny* figurine, and so on. We do not need to be too prescriptive about what appropriate affective responses to aesthetic properties are. As a heuristic, we can use the conceptual relations that many aesthetic properties have with particular affective states⁵⁰.

One might question why we need to include the notion of final (dis)value at all. Why not formulate (iii) just in terms of appropriate affective responses? One reason is that aesthetic experiences sometimes have complex valences: we sometimes finally value feeling negative affect (such as when watching a gruesome or frightening film) or finally disvalue feeling positive

⁴⁹ As David Davies writes, ‘taking an aesthetic interest in something is not to be equated with mere “mindless gawking,”’ (Davies 2015: 57).

⁵⁰ The appropriate affective response to an aesthetic property may, of course, change depending on the context. The appropriate affective response to a cheerful melody may be ‘feeling uplifted’. However, that same cheerful melody may be used to create tension in a horror scene, in which case the appropriate affective response to it would be ‘feeling unnerved’, for example (one example of this is the use of Tiny Tim’s *Tiptoe Thru’ the Tulips* in the horror film *Insidious*).

affect (such as finding an inappropriate joke funny or a music score inappropriately uplifting given the subject matter). The inclusive disjunction in (iii) accommodates these experiences.

A second, more significant reason is that there are some experiences which lack any affective character but which we would still describe as 'aesthetic'. One example is the experience of discerning skill or technical excellence (or lack thereof) in an artwork without feeling pleasure, excitement, delight, or any other affect. If one finally (dis)valued the experience, then I think we would want to describe it as 'aesthetic'. Another example is attentively following a piece of music composed using Schoenberg's 12-tone method (in which no one musical tone is predominant). This might be intellectually stimulating or engaging, but not elicit any affect. If one placed final (dis)value on the experience, then I think we would, again, want to say it was 'aesthetic'.

We also have aesthetic experiences of bad artworks which fail in their aim of eliciting affect. For example, a novel or film (or other narrative artwork) may fail to adequately develop a character (the character may be 'two-dimensional') and so we – the audience – do not become emotionally invested in her. The work may then fail in its aim to make the audience feel cheered or saddened or otherwise moved by the events which befall that character. Were one to recognize that the artwork has failed in this aim, one might then place final disvalue on the experience of *not feeling* affect. I think we would want to say that this experience is 'aesthetic', even though no affect was elicited by the work (and we can suppose, in this case, one did not feel frustrated or irritated by the work's poor character development). (iii) allows for experiences like this to qualify as 'aesthetic', providing they are finally (dis)valued.

Now, one might think aesthetic experience can be adequately characterised just in terms of experience of (i) aesthetic qualities with which we (iii) engage. However, some experiences in which we discern and engage with aesthetic qualities are not 'aesthetic'. Consider the following cases:

Snobbery: Some people buy art for the purpose of impressing or intimidating visitors to their homes. One such person may look at an artwork which is prominently on display in her hall, note its positive aesthetic qualities and feel pleasure or delight but only because of the effect which she anticipates it will have on a visitor who is soon to arrive.

Savvy Dealer: Suppose a savvy art dealer knows her clients' tastes very well. One day she finds a work which has a combination of aesthetic qualities that one of her clients cherishes and will certainly buy. The dealer is able to pay a very low price for the work,

and she knows she will be able to make a large profit. Upon first recognizing that the work has the aesthetic qualities her client cherishes, the dealer feels delight or pleasure but only on account of the large profit she stands to gain.

Both cases describe experiences which are not ‘aesthetic’, but in which pleasure or delight are felt in response to the discernment of aesthetic qualities. One strategy for excluding cases like these from qualifying as ‘aesthetic’ is by being more prescriptive about what, exactly, constitutes an *appropriate* affective response to an aesthetic quality. We could then argue that the pleasure the snob and the savvy dealer feel do not qualify as ‘appropriate’ affective responses (and so neither has an ‘aesthetic experience’). However, there are several reasons not to adopt this strategy. Firstly, being highly prescriptive about what qualifies as an appropriate affective response to aesthetic qualities risks disqualifying (as not ‘aesthetic’) the experiences of people who have atypical affective responses to aesthetic qualities. People differ in how they affectively respond to aesthetic properties – an account of aesthetic experience should accommodate a diversity of tastes and affective responses. Secondly, being too prescriptive about what constitutes an appropriate affective response could make the account normative: my aim is to provide a descriptive account of aesthetic experience, not to state what sorts of aesthetic experiences we *should* be having. Thirdly, and most significantly, the sensation of pleasure that, for example, the **savvy dealer** feels may not differ much qualitatively from the pleasure her client would feel when having an *aesthetic* experience of the same qualities: if ‘pleasure’ qualifies as an appropriate affective response to a given combination of aesthetic qualities, then the savvy dealer’s affective response is appropriate, insofar as she is feeling ‘pleasure’. The reason her experience is not ‘aesthetic’ is not so much the affect she feels, but that she is not feeling it for the right reasons. It is her reasons for feeling pleasure which disqualify her from aesthetically experiencing the work, not the affect itself.

To exclude cases like **snobbery** and **savvy dealer**, we can instead add the requirement that (ii) aesthetic experiences involve attending to the object of experience for its own sake or for the sake of a payoff (such as pleasure or enjoyment) which is intrinsic to the experience of it. The snob and the savvy dealer are not attending to an artwork for its own sake, but rather as a means to achieving social status or to making money. Furthermore, introspection reveals that whenever one has an aesthetic experience in which one (i) discerns and (iii) engages with aesthetic properties, one is invariably attending to the content of one’s experience for its own sake and not exclusively for instrumental reasons.

At the end of the previous chapter on attitudinal approaches to aesthetic experience, I gave some examples of (ii) attending to something *for its own sake*. To reiterate, I take this to describe the motivation or objective one has in looking at, or listening to, or otherwise experiencing something: if one's motivation consists only in interest in or curiosity about the object to which one is attending, then one is attending to that object *for its own sake*. This contrasts with attending to it just *as a means to some further end*. If one is attending to something just as a means to some further end, then, necessarily, the experience one has cannot be 'aesthetic' (or so I am arguing). The only exception is attending to an object as a means to an affective payoff (such as, satisfaction, pleasure, or enjoyment) which is, or is anticipated to be, intrinsic to the experience of the object.

As a quick illustration, pause for a moment to note the time by looking at your watch. After doing this, look at your watch a second time, but now attend to it for its own sake or as an end, not for the purpose of telling the time. I expect you attended to your watch just for instrumental reasons in the first case, but for its own sake in the second. The experiences are noticeably different. When one's aim is only to find out what time it is, one is attentive only to the parts of the watch which are salient to this aim (i.e. the hands and numerals). Indeed, one's focus is not so much on the watch as on acquiring the information it provides; the watch is significant only to the extent that it accurately provides that information. By contrast, when one attends to one's watch as an end, one is attentive to more than just its hands and numerals: one's attention fans out and one notices qualities like the finish of its casing, its weight and sturdiness, the colours and textures of the materials of which it is composed, how well the strap fits and so on. If one is to have an aesthetic experience of one's watch, then, I am arguing, one needs to attend to it for its own sake (or for the sake of an affective payoff that is intrinsic to the experience), and not exclusively for the purpose of telling the time (or exclusively for some other end).

Another example of satisfying (ii) is listening to a piece of music for pleasure or relaxation, where the pleasure or relaxation is intrinsic to the experience of the piece. By contrast, (ii) would not be satisfied if one were attending to a piece of music only to determine whether its volume is sufficiently loud to drown out noisy neighbours. Nor would (ii) be satisfied if one were attending to a work of art only in its capacity as a means of propping open a door, or concealing a stain on the wall, or impressing visitors to one's home, or making a profit at resale. Of course, in attending to an art object for one of these purposes, one may become curious about it and attend to it for its own sake. One would then cease to attend to it *just* as a means to some

further end. One's instrumental motivation for attending to it would then co-occur with the motivation of attending to it for its own sake. Alternatively, it might be that one's dispositional motivation for attending to the object is instrumental, whereas one's occurrent motivation is to attend to it for its own sake. In any case, attending to an object for its own sake and attending to it as a means to something else are not mutually exclusive, but can cooccur.

This is an important point. In the previous section on 'Attitudinal Approaches', I argued that some aesthetic experiences occur when we are trying to achieve a further practical outcome: a gardener might have an aesthetic experience of a flower she is cross-pollinating by hand in order to breed a new variety, for example. Or a graphic designer might have an aesthetic experience whilst manipulating the colour values of a graphic she is producing for a client. Or a student might have an aesthetic experience of a poem she is studying for an assignment. The above account of aesthetic experience can accommodate such cases providing the subject is attending to the content of her aesthetic experience *both* as a means to some further end (such as creating a new plant variety, or completing a job for a client, or achieving a good grade) and for its own sake.

Attending to something for its own sake is sometimes conflated with valuing something for its own sake or placing final value on something (Stecker [2005: 47] seems to conflate the two). I take it one can attend to something for its own sake just by being curious about it or interested in its nature. One subsequently may, but need not, assign final (dis)value to that thing or to one's experience of it. We should therefore treat valuing something for its own sake and attending to something for its own sake as distinct.

One might object to (ii) by arguing that it only amounts to the trivial requirement that aesthetic experience of an object requires that one focuses on, or is attentive to, it. It could be argued that when one attends to an object just for instrumental reasons one is not attentive to the object itself, but only to the end for which one is using it. In *snobbery*, for example, it could be argued the snob is not attentive to the artwork itself but only to her aim of impressing or intimidating her visitor. That she is not attentive to the artwork itself is indicated by the fact that any artwork which would impress or intimidate her visitor would equally elicit feelings of delight in the snob. In which case, to say aesthetic experience requires attending to something 'for its own sake' boils down to the requirement that aesthetic experience of something involves attending to *it*, rather than to the satisfaction of a desire or the realisation of an aim. This is similar to the objection Dickie makes of attitudinal accounts when he says, 'distraction is not a special kind of attention, it is a kind of inattention' (Dickie 1964: 58). To adapt his point:

attending to something for instrumental reasons is not a special way of attending to it, it is a kind of inattention.

Attending to something for its own sake may make one more attentive to it and less distracted by one's efforts to realize an aim or satisfy a desire. This much is true. However, the degree of one's *attentiveness* to an object and one's *motivation* for attending to it are distinct. One can attend to something for its own sake, yet be only faintly attentive to it (as when absent-mindedly gazing at a view through the window); conversely, one can be highly attentive to something when one's motivation for being so is exclusively instrumental (as when a sailor in a fog at sea is highly attentive to the flash of a lighthouse in order to avoid running aground). In which case, (ii) is not equivalent to the requirement that one must be attentive to, and not distracted from, the object(s) of experience.

Another objection states that aesthetic properties do not figure in some aesthetic experiences, so (i) is not necessary for aesthetic experience. Suppose that on a bright and still winter's day, you venture into the wilderness and walk through a field deeply carpeted with fresh snow. You pause, close your eyes and savour the complete silence (or what appears to be complete silence) – at some point, you start to feel cold and hasten onwards. I take it the experience of apparent silence, in this case, has a strong claim to being 'aesthetic', particularly given that you are savouring, so enjoying the silence. If this is an 'aesthetic experience', then it seems problematic for the hybrid account as silence is the *absence* of sound. In the absence of sound, you would surely not be able to discern any aesthetic qualities (through audition, at least). If so, this is an example of an aesthetic experience in which your attention is *not* directed at aesthetic qualities. In which case, (i) is not a necessary condition for aesthetic experience.

This objection only succeeds if we cannot experience auditory aesthetic qualities (i.e. aesthetic qualities we discern through audition) in moments of silence. A plausible case can be made for thinking we can: auditory aesthetic qualities experienced during silence do not obtain by virtue of the absence of sounds, but rather by virtue of the contrast between the experience of silence and the antecedent experience of sound. If we were in a permanent state of silence, then just attending to that silence for a period of time would probably not lead one to discern any aesthetic qualities. However, assuming functioning audition, the experience of silence does not occur *in vacuo* but invariably stands in sharp contrast to the bustle and noise to which we are accustomed. A period of silence will be immediately preceded by sounds and immediately followed by their resumption (the sound of clothing rustling or laboured breathing, for example). We can easily make sense of discerning aesthetic qualities during periods of silence

by reflecting on how they are used for artistic effect. For example, in Jazz music the pause between notes is sometimes referred to as ‘hang time’ and is used during improvisation to create tension or to play with our expectations. Periods of silence also punctuate dramatic dialogue (the “Pinter pause”, for instance) and play a vital role in the delivery of jokes. Thus, in moments of silence we can experience confusion, suspense, an accumulation of tension, a release of tension, or surprise. Depending on the context, we might find silence powerful, or pregnant, or poignant, or majestic, or tranquil, or unnerving, or frightening, or disorientating, for example.

A more general point to note is that we may not always recognise which aesthetic property an aesthetic experience is directed at: we may not attain the degree of second-order awareness that is required to identify the property or properties at which the experience is directed; or our knowledge or repertoire of aesthetic properties may be deficient. This does not mean the experience is not directed at aesthetic properties, only that we are sometimes unaware of which properties we are experiencing.

Before we discuss aesthetic properties further, note that the order in which (i)-(iii) are satisfied will vary depending on whether the aesthetic experience involves ‘endogenous’ or ‘exogenous’ attention. These describe how attention is directed and were discussed briefly in the previous section on Attitudinal Approaches. Attention is ‘exogenous’ when it is automatically directed by an external stimulus (such as when a flashing light or a loud sound attracts one’s attention towards its source) (Carrasco 2011: 1488). Attention is ‘endogenous’ when it is voluntarily allocated by the subject (*ibid*). We can classify all aesthetic experiences as involving either ‘exogenous’ or ‘endogenous’ attention.

In endogenous aesthetic experiences (i.e. aesthetic experiences involving endogenous attention), (ii) will typically precede (i) and (iii): the subject will attend to an object for its own sake, or the sake of a payoff intrinsic to the experience. This will permit her the opportunity to (i) discover and (iii) engage with any aesthetic properties the object has. This is the sort of experience described in the aphorism attributed to Schopenhauer, ‘treat a work of art like a great man: stand before it and wait patiently till it deigns to speak’ (Zimmerman 1879: 87).

By comparison, in exogenous aesthetic experiences (aesthetic experiences which involve exogenous attention), (i) may proceed (ii) and (iii), or they may all be satisfied concurrently. These are experiences in which one’s attention is unexpectedly captivated by, for example, a strikingly handsome person, or a sunset, or a rainbow, or a full moon, or birdsong, or a booming

peal of thunder. In such cases, (i) recognition of and (iii) engagement with the experiential object's aesthetic properties will (typically) cause one to (ii) attend to that object for its own sake or the sake of a payoff intrinsic to the experience of it.

Aesthetic Properties

The hybrid account defines aesthetic experience, in part, as experience of aesthetic properties (or lower-level properties the subject judges to be apt for description in terms of aesthetic properties). This raises the question of what, exactly, makes a property 'aesthetic', which I shall now address. I will defend an art-based account which states they are the properties which comprise the value artworks have *qua* works of art (i.e. their 'artistic value'). I then outline alternatives to the one definition of 'art' (the 'functional' or 'aesthetic' definition) which would make my account of 'aesthetic experience' circular.

There are a great number of questions one could ask about aesthetic properties: how objective are they? Can statements attributing them to objects have truth-values? Are they perceived or inferred? What kind of expertise, if any, is required to detect or apply them? And, in what relation do they stand to non-aesthetic properties?

We are presently interested in these insofar as they are relevant to circumscribing the intentional objects of aesthetic experience. The following list (Table 1), compiled by De Clercq, enumerates terms some authors have taken to name aesthetic properties:

Table 1.	
Sibley, 'Aesthetic Concepts'	unified, balanced, integrated, lifeless, serene, sombre, dynamic, powerful, vivid, delicate, moving, trite, sentimental, tragic, graceful, dainty, handsome, comely, elegant, garish, melancholy, tightly-knit, lovely, pretty, beautiful, flamboyant, majestic, grand, splendid, fiery, massive, flaccid, weakly, washed out, lanky, anaemic, wan, insipid, joyous, fiery, robust, strident, turbulent, gaudy, chaotic, strong, monotonous, forceful, gay, taut, solemn, ugly, exquisite, nice
Sibley, 'Aesthetic and Non-Aesthetic'	graceful, dainty, garish, gaudy, balanced, moving, powerful, unified, sad, gay, sprightly, cheerful, solemn, majestic, pensive, serene

Goldman, Aesthetic Value (and Stecker, <i>Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art</i>)	beautiful, ugly, sublime, dreary, balanced, graceful, concise, loosely woven, sad, angry, joyful, serene, powerful, stirring, amusing, hilarious, boring, sluggish, bouncy, jaunty, realistic, distorted, true to life, erroneous, vivid, dull, muted, steely, mellow, derivative, original, daring, bold, conservative
Hermerén	garish, tense, graceful, harmonious, gay, nervous, sad, exciting, somber, serene, solemn, joyous, cheerful, bold, sublime, monumental, coherent, picturesque, mysterious, beautiful, unified, melancholy, disorganized, clumsy, powerful, intriguing, moving
Carroll, <i>Philosophy of Art</i>	graceful, dark, brooding, somber, melancholic, gay, bold, stately, pompous, unified, balanced, tightly knit, chaotic, gaudy, vulgar, kitschy, garish, sublime, beautiful, comic, suspenseful
Zangwill	Beautiful, ugly, dainty, dumpy, graceful, elegant, garish, delicate, balanced, warm, passionate, brooding, awkward, sad
Levinson, 'Philosophical Aesthetics'	beautiful, ugly, sublime, graceful, elegant, delicate, harmonious, balanced, unified, powerful, [having] drive, [having] elan, ebullient, witty, vehement, garish, gaudy, acerbic, anguished, sad, tranquil, cheerful, crude, serene, wiry, comical, flamboyant, languorous, melancholic, sentimental
Levinson, 'Aesthetic Properties II'	balanced, unified, dynamic, fluid, impressionist, fauvist, cubist, futurist, beautiful, ugly, lovely, sexy, dumpy, tense, sublime, tender, solicitous, mournful, lugubrious, cheerful, confident, goodhearted, graceful, garish (De Clercq 2008: 895)

Goldman helpfully provides the following taxonomy of aesthetic property terms:

- i. **Broadly evaluative terms** (e.g. beautiful, ugly, sublime, dreary)
- ii. **Formal terms:** (e.g. balanced, graceful, concise, loosely woven)
- iii. **Emotion terms:** (e.g. sad, angry, joyful, serene)
- iv. **Evocative terms:** (e.g. powerful, stirring, amusing, hilarious, boring)
- v. **Behavioural terms:** (e.g. sluggish, bouncy, jaunty)
- vi. **Representational terms:** (e.g. realistic, distorted, true-to-life, erroneous)

- vii. **Second-order perceptual terms:** (e.g. vivid, dull, muted, steely)
- viii. **Historical terms:** (e.g. derivative, original, daring, bold, conservative).

(Goldman 1995: 17)

A (very) potted history of 'aesthetic properties' might go something like this: 18th and 19th century philosophers were primarily interested in the beautiful and the sublime. Then in 1957, in a presidential address to the Aristotelian Society, J. L. Austin expressed the desire to see aestheticians broaden their focus. In his words: 'if only we could forget for a while about the beautiful and get down instead to the dainty and the dumpy' (Austin 1957: 9). This call to arms was met shortly afterwards in Frank Sibley's 'Aesthetic Concepts' (1959). Here Sibley enumerates a plethora of 'aesthetic terms' (see Table 1. above) which, he argues, share the common features of (i) not being governed by sufficient conditions and (ii) requiring the exercise of the faculty of 'taste' for their application.

Both (i) and (ii) have been challenged. Most problematically, Sibley seems to define 'taste' and 'aesthetic concepts' in terms of one another (Beardsley 1973: 55): 'taste' is the ability to discern or notice 'aesthetic qualities', and 'aesthetic concepts' are those we apply by exercising 'taste' (where 'aesthetic qualities' are instances of 'aesthetic concepts'). Several authors have also objected that Sibley provides no evidence for the existence of a faculty of taste, nor any explanation of how it might work (Broiles 1964: 222) (Goldman 1995: 20). The widespread rejection of Sibley's view that 'aesthetic terms' are those we apply by exercising 'taste' was not accompanied by a wholesale denial that the 'aesthetic terms' he enumerates form a unified set. On the contrary, Sibley's examples of aesthetic terms came to form a *de facto* canon of 'aesthetic properties' which has been periodically expanded by various authors (see Table 1) who, unfortunately, have not all adopted the same rule for adding new members.

Now the sceptic might argue that the category 'aesthetic properties' consequently consists of a smorgasbord of adjectives grouped together only by historical happenstance and problematic philosophical methodology. She might take this to imply that seeking a unifying account of what makes aesthetic properties 'aesthetic' is futile and we should instead refocus on the archetypal aesthetic properties of 'beauty', 'ugliness' and 'the sublime'. I am not entirely unsympathetic to this view. It is compatible with my account of aesthetic experience: it would just mean restricting the intentional objects of aesthetic experience to things which are 'beautiful', or 'ugly', or 'sublime', or some combination thereof.

However, the sceptical view can be challenged by appealing to the intuition that there are significant similarities between the prototypical aesthetic concepts of ‘beauty’, ‘ugliness’ and ‘the sublime’ and the terms which feature in Table 1 (or the majority of them, at least). As Beardsley comments, ‘It seems that merely by giving a handful of examples – a method on which there has been a certain amount of reliance – one can teach a standard use of [“aesthetic quality”] [...] and achieve a considerable degree of unanimity in the classification of other examples’ (Beardsley 1973: 50). So, at the very least, the items in Table 1. are intuitively *of a kind* with ‘beauty’ and ‘ugliness’. The challenge, then, is in specifying *how* they are like ‘beauty’ and ‘ugliness’.

One intuitive thought is that aesthetic qualities are those with which artists aim to imbue their works. Artists aim to produce artworks which are, for example, ‘beautiful’, or ‘unnerving’, or ‘powerful’, or ‘shocking’, or ‘subversive’, or ‘true to life’. Note, though, that some of the qualities artists aim to imbue their work with are not ‘aesthetic’ (being ‘bespoke’, ‘expensive’, or ‘sought after’, for example). Furthermore, some artworks feature aesthetic qualities which affect their value in ways their authors did not intend. Examples include being ‘trite’, ‘gaudy’, ‘anti-climactic’, ‘kitsch’ and ‘formulaic’.

A more promising thought, then, is that ‘aesthetic properties’ are those we refer to when evaluating artworks. There are different ways artworks can be evaluated: as investments; as historical records; as propaganda; as sentimental items; or for their religious significance, for example. So, to be more specific, aesthetic properties are those to which we refer when evaluating artworks in their capacities as *works of art* (Gaut 2007: 34).

The association between aesthetic properties and artistic merit (or demerit) has been a cornerstone of much twentieth and twenty-first century theorising in aesthetics. Isenberg uses the expression ‘aesthetic qualities’ to name the qualities to which we refer when giving reasons for evaluations of artworks (Isenberg 1949: 330, 343). Likewise, Beardsley (1973), Goldman (1995), Zangwill (1995), and Gaut (2007) each, in differing ways, explicate aesthetic properties by reference to our evaluations of artworks. So, an art-based account of aesthetic properties has significant philosophical pedigree.

Here is one account:

The artistic-value view: ‘Aesthetic terms’ are terms which are evaluative of artworks *qua* works of art (Gaut 2007: 34-35).

We can define ‘aesthetic properties’ as the qualities which aesthetic terms pick out and which, therefore, comprise the value artworks have *qua* works of art (*ibid*). There is a crucial distinction to note between, on the one hand, the qualities of an artwork which *affect* its artistic value and, on the other, those which *comprise* its artistic value. We can test whether a quality *comprises* a work’s artistic value by considering whether it would make sense to cite it *sans phrase* as a reason for thinking the work is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ *qua* work of art (*ibid*: 36). For example, we could justify describing Bacon’s *Study after Velázquez’s Portrait of Pope Innocent X* as ‘a great work of art’ on the grounds that it is ‘powerful’ or ‘disturbing’ or ‘dark’ or ‘bold’ or ‘angry’. In the lower half of Bacon’s painting is a splattering of small red paint drops. The colour of these paint drops is a property of the painting which *affects*, but does not *comprise*, its artistic value. It affects the work’s artistic value by, for example, giving the impression that blood has been spilt over it (the painting’s being ‘dark’ and ‘disturbing’, in part, depends on their being coloured red). However, the redness of the paint drops does not *comprise* the work’s artistic value as we could not cite it *sans phrase* as a reason why the painting is ‘a great work of art’.

Note in Table 1. that Levinson (2005) classifies ‘impressionist’, ‘fauvist’, ‘cubist’, and ‘futurist’ as aesthetic properties. There might be an evaluative use of these terms. However, when used just as sortal terms which designate membership in a category of art, ‘impressionist’, ‘fauvist’, ‘cubist’, and ‘futurist’ are non-evaluative, so would not qualify as ‘aesthetic’ according to the *artistic-value view*. I take it this is not problematic; terms which designate categories of art should not be classified as ‘aesthetic properties’. This follows from Walton’s (1970) ‘Categories of Art’ (which is discussed in the assessment of Clive Bell’s position). Walton argues that whether an aesthetic property obtains in an artwork depends on which category of art one identifies the work with. In his example, whether Picasso’s *Guernica* is ‘dynamic’ rather than ‘bland’ depends on whether it is identified with the category ‘painting’ or the fictional category of ‘*guernicas*’ (Walton 1970: 347). Categories of art and aesthetic properties are therefore distinct categories insofar as the former affect which of the latter obtain. The exclusion of terms naming categories of art from the category of ‘aesthetic properties’ should therefore be welcomed.

One objection to *the artistic-value view* states that some aesthetic terms are only descriptive and not evaluative. In which case, the *artistic-value view* would be false. The objection states we can apply an aesthetic term to an artwork, pick out one of its aesthetic properties and, in doing so, be neither evaluating the work nor naming a quality which comprises its artistic value.

The first thing to note is that aesthetic terms differ in how evaluative they are. We can situate them at various points along a continuum that extends from the 'purely evaluative' at one end, to the 'almost, but not entirely, descriptive', at the other. An individual can apply aesthetic terms which are situated at the more descriptive end of the continuum to an artwork without it appearing as if she is evaluating the artwork. Now this could be because the evaluation which the term implies is sufficiently subtle to appear as if its attribution is just a description (though it is not). Alternatively, it could be that the aesthetic term the subject applies is evaluative, but she does not yet understand what its evaluative significance is – suppose she has yet to discover some other salient qualities of the work which would shed light on its evaluative significance. The subject's ambiguity about *how* the term is evaluative may give the impression that she is not evaluating the work. But this is mistaken. It is rather that her evaluation of the work is just incomplete. This often happens when listening to a piece of music for the first time: as we first hear it, we detect its aesthetic qualities – find the piece 'suspenseful' and 'brooding', for example – without fully understanding their evaluative significance, which only become clear as the piece progresses or after repeated hearings. So, I take it that *the artistic-value view* can provide an explanation of cases in which it appears as if aesthetic terms are used in a purely descriptive manner.

The *artistic-value view* can remain neutral with regards to the question of which qualities make artworks valuable *qua* works of art: this is best resolved through critical discourse and theory. However, it does raise the question of what we mean by 'art'. One way to define 'art' is in terms of its intended function – namely, to provide an 'aesthetic experience'. Carroll presents the 'functional' definition of art as follows:

Art: 'x is an artwork if and only if (1) x is produced with the intention that it possess a certain capacity, namely (2) the capacity of affording aesthetic experience' (Carroll 1999: 162).

If **Art** is correct, then we have a problem. I have argued aesthetic experiences are directed at aesthetic properties, and that aesthetic properties can be circumscribed by reference to our evaluations of artworks. Now, if 'artworks' are best defined as objects intended to elicit 'aesthetic experiences', then the proposed account of aesthetic experience is circular (though nevertheless informative). There are alternative ways we might circumscribe 'aesthetic properties'. However, we should only do so if **Art** is true or is more persuasive than the alternatives. I now briefly discuss some reasons why it is not.

Firstly, **Art** does not state that artworks are produced with the *sole* or single intention of affording aesthetic experience. It is satisfied by an object which is produced by someone who has *an* intention that the work she produces will afford an aesthetic experience, where this intention is just one of several she has (others might include, 'to produce a work that inspires religious devotion', or 'to produce a work that sells for a high price' or 'to produce a work that will be positively reviewed by critics'). However, many things which are not 'art' are also produced by persons who intend, among other things, that the object they produce affords an aesthetic experience. For example, some toilet brush holders have small fish embossed on them. These have no practical function. Presumably, the designer thought the addition of fish would afford some degree of aesthetic experience. If she did, which is the most likely explanation, then the toilet-brush holder satisfies (1) and (2) of **Art** but is not an artwork. In which case, **Art** is false. Aesthetic considerations inform the design of a huge range of items and products which are not art. It is hard to see how **Art** can exclude these from counting as 'art'.

The functional definition (**Art**) also implies that artists necessarily intend that (among other things) the works they produce will have the capacity to elicit aesthetic experiences. Duchamp's *Fountain* and other 'ready-mades' are typically cited as counter-examples to this (see Dickie 1969: 255). In addition, artists often turn to their craft in moments of despair when their only objective is to express or purge themselves of that which troubles them. A musician I know sometimes plays his drums in the same manner as someone might scream into a pillow. His innate sense of rhythm and years of practice enable him to play rhythms automatically (so he does not need to first think about what he plays). This allows him to use the activity of drumming to express his anguish or rage. Surely the music he produces for catharsis is 'art'? If it is, then, given his sole intention is catharsis, the functional definition must be false.

It might be objected that the anguished drummer does not only intend to purge himself of that which troubles him. He is not just hitting the drums randomly as one might hit a pillow: he is recruiting patterns and rhythms that afford aesthetic experiences and using these to structure his acoustic outburst. Therefore, on some level, he must intend that the music he is producing will afford some aesthetic experience, otherwise why would he impose any structure or pattern on the sounds he makes when hitting the drums?

We can instead suppose the drummer just plays incredibly fast, so only structures his drumming around the aim of exerting himself as vigorously as possible. His technical expertise in being able to play very fast for a prolonged time period means the sound he produces has a strong

claim to qualifying as ‘music’ and so as ‘art’. In which case, given his aim is not to produce something that affords an aesthetic experience, **Art** must be false.

Intuitions may differ about whether fast, technically skilled drumming qualifies as ‘music’. We could debate the point further. However, it is clear from this initial probing that the functional definition has considerable challenges to contend with. Here are some alternatives:

- a) **A historical definition:** objects are ‘art’ by virtue of relations in which they stand to pre-existing artworks (see Levinson 1990).
- b) **An institutional definition:** ‘art’ is a status conferred to objects by art-world institutions (see Dickie 1974).
- c) **A cluster account:** there is no one essential feature common to all and only artworks. Rather ‘artworks’ satisfy all or some, but at least one, of a disjunctive set of criteria (see Gaut 2000 and 2005).
- d) **A buck-passing account:** an object is a work of art if it belongs to a kind and that kind is *an art* (see Lopes 2014: 11-63).

It falls outside the scope of this project to examine these in detail. However, note that for our present purposes we do not require an account of art. Appraising the value of something *qua* an object-type (T) does not require that one can give an account of what makes something a T. All it requires is that one is familiar with Ts or has formed a sense of what makes for a good or bad T. Consider how a Gettier case involves appraising a justified true belief (that ‘a barn is in the field’, for example) *qua* ‘knowledge’. We come to see, without having an accurate prior account of ‘knowledge’, that some justified true beliefs are not ‘knowledge’. Something similar could be said of any counter-example which invalidates an established definition. So why should ‘art’ be any different in this case? It seems equally plausible that we can evaluate something *qua* work of art in the absence of an account of what ‘art’ is. In which case, the *artistic-value view* does not require an account of art. That said, it is compatible with all but the problematic ‘functional’ definition of art.

The most plausible version of the *artistic-value view* would adopt a broad notion, if not a fully-fleshed out account or definition, of ‘art’, which includes objects experienced through senses other than sight and sound (some foods and drinks, ‘olfactory art’, gardens, and flower arrangements). This will broaden the range of terms which are – or could be – evaluative of ‘art’

qua 'art'⁵¹. Specifically, we would allow for terms which are evaluative of olfactorily and gustatorily experienced 'art' to qualify as 'aesthetic terms' which name 'aesthetic qualities'.

Crucially, the *artistic-value view* does not entail that aesthetic properties can only figure in artworks. It provides a criterion with which to establish the membership of the category 'aesthetic properties'. However, this criterion is not the grounds on which we apply individual members of that category. The grounds on which the various members of the category are applied are heterogenous: Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries* is 'powerful', 'triumphant', and 'stirring' but not 'sluggish', 'mellow' or 'dumpy', for example. I suspect that we apply individual aesthetic terms by virtue of the resemblance between the experiential object, *which may or may not be an artwork*, and our operative prototypical exemplars of the relevant aesthetic term (which are likely to be derived from artworks). The process of acquiring appreciative expertise could be cast, at least in part, as the refinement and enhancement of one's repertoire of exemplars of aesthetic property terms. In any case, the questions 'on what grounds do terms qualify as "aesthetic"?' and 'how do we discern aesthetic qualities in objects?' are quite distinct such that how we answer the former does not dictate how we must answer the latter. Two things follow from this: firstly, that the *artistic-value view* does not restrict the experience of aesthetic properties exclusively to experiences of artworks; and, secondly that the *artistic-value view* does not entail that when we discern aesthetic properties in non-art, we treat those non-art objects *as if* they were art or subsume them under the concept 'artwork'.

Another objection first makes a distinction between aesthetic terms which can be used to name non-aesthetic qualities of things and aesthetic terms which always name aesthetic qualities. Examples of the former include 'stirring', 'balanced', 'harmonious', 'powerful', 'moving', and 'cold' – these all have non-aesthetic uses (a *moving* train, or a *powerful* politician, for example). Examples of the latter include 'beautiful', 'ugly', 'graceful', 'garish', 'kitschy', 'elegant', 'handsome', 'dainty' and 'dumpy' – these only have aesthetic uses. Call the former 'mixed-used' aesthetic terms and the latter 'single-use' aesthetic terms. The *artistic-value view* might seem to imply that mixed-use terms *become* 'aesthetic' when and because they are used to evaluate artworks *qua* works of art, but not when we apply them to things which are not art. In which case, one might question how they can be applied *as* 'aesthetic terms' to things which are not art.

⁵¹ Note that 'olfactory artworks' – artworks which use smells for artistic effect – have been exhibited in mainstream museums and galleries (Shiner and Kriskovets 2007: 277)

That mixed-use terms can be used to evaluate art *qua* art means they qualify for membership as 'aesthetic'. However, this, again, is just the criterion for establishing membership in the category 'aesthetic terms'. We can apply members of that category to things which are not art. Above I suggested individual members of the category are applied to experiential objects on the basis of resemblance between those objects and the prototypical exemplar(s) of a given aesthetic property term. In the case of a mixed-used term, things other than art can resemble the prototypical exemplar(s) indexed to its aesthetic use.

A further objection states that early humans or their proto-human forebears may have discerned properties like 'beauty', 'ugliness', and 'disgust' in the natural world, in their food, or in their companions before they had developed a concept resembling 'art'. If they did, then ***the artistic value view*** must be false as it explicates aesthetic properties by reference to our evaluations of artworks.

We can bracket the fascinating though seemingly irresolvable question of whether experiences of 'beauty', 'ugliness', and 'disgust' (or of any aesthetic property) predate the formation of a concept resembling 'art'. Even if they did, this would not be problematic for ***the artistic value view***, which, at most, implies that these qualities did not comprise a unified set until after the formation of the concept 'art' (since what makes them unified, according to *the artistic value view* is that they are designated by terms used to evaluate art *qua* art). However, this is not problematic, since the idea that 'aesthetic properties' form a unified set is relatively recent; I imagine that few would date it before the 18th century (in which Baumgarten famously first uses the term 'aesthetics' in a sense we would recognise today). Put otherwise, ***the artistic value view*** does not imply that members of the category aesthetic properties owe their genesis to our evaluations of art *qua* art, only that such evaluations constitute the best basis on which to circumscribe an otherwise heterogeneous set.

In this section I have motivated an account of aesthetic properties (***the artistic-value view***) which is compatible with their application to things that are not art. I also gave some reasons which militate against the one conception of art which would be problematic for my account of aesthetic experience and outlined some alternatives to it. Note that my account of aesthetic experience is compatible with other accounts of aesthetic properties. So, the failure of *the artistic-value view* does not imperil my proposed account of aesthetic experience.

The Desiderata of an Account of Aesthetic Experience

We now have a complete account of aesthetic experience *simpliciter*. We can evaluate it using the desiderata listed in the Introduction. These were as follows:

- (i) It is instructive and offers the uninitiated practical guidance on how to have an aesthetic experience.
- (ii) It is amenable to experimental research, offering researchers a definition that can be used to conduct experiments.
- (iii) It is compatible with an established theme or strand of thought within philosophical aesthetics.
- (iv) It is extensionally adequate.
- (v) It implies a position on, or approach to addressing, the question of which sense modalities are capable of providing aesthetic experiences.
- (vi) It has something to say about whether certain borderline or indeterminate cases qualify as 'aesthetic experiences'.
- (vii) It amply accommodates the aesthetic experience of non-art (including the natural world, as well as human artefacts and practices).

Firstly, my proposed account (the hybrid account) is, I contend, (i) more instructive than either the content-oriented approach or mode-oriented approaches as it specifies the content, mode, and valence of aesthetic experience. So, like Carroll's content-oriented account, it directs people to attend to aesthetic qualities (either in their environment or in artworks). However, as we have seen, attending to the aesthetic qualities (of, for example, an artwork or a portion of the natural world) does not guarantee that one will have an aesthetic experience. So the content-oriented account is not maximally instructive. By comparison, the hybrid account additionally describes the type of motivation or intention which is conducive to having aesthetic experiences (i.e. attending to things for their own sakes). It also informs people to expect that their experiences will acquire a simple or complex valence and of the mechanisms by which this will occur. So, the hybrid account instructs people who are seeking aesthetic experiences about what they should attend to, how they should attend to it, and the effect doing so may have on their experience.

In the following chapter, I will hypothesise that mindfulness is conducive to having certain aesthetic experiences of nature and everyday life. This further enhances the pedagogical merit

of the proposal, as we can direct people to practice mindfulness which, in turn, if my hypothesis is correct, will enhance the frequency of (at least some kinds of) aesthetic experience.

As the hybrid account is instructive, it satisfies (ii), as it can be used in experimental settings when researchers are trying to initiate an aesthetic experience in their participants (I will discuss this further in the following chapter). In addition, it specifies conditions that are common to all and only 'aesthetic experiences'. A person who satisfies the conditions of the proposed hybrid account cannot fail to have an aesthetic experience and it is only by satisfying those conditions that she can have one (or so I am arguing). It is therefore more useful and informative than a loose characterisation of aesthetic experience, or an account which just provides a sufficient condition (or conditions) or just names a necessary condition (or conditions).

The hybrid account, being a hybrid of positions in the literature, is (iii) compatible with established themes in philosophical aesthetics. The fourth desideratum is that the account is extensionally adequate. I take the foregoing discussion to have illustrated some of the ways the hybrid account is (iv) extensionally adequate. My contention is that every aesthetic experience, and only aesthetic experiences, will satisfy the conditions of the hybrid account.

With regards to (v), the hybrid account implies a position on which sense modalities we can aesthetically experience through. Specifically, it implies that we can have aesthetic experiences through any sense modality with which we can discern aesthetic qualities, attend to experiential content for its own sake, and which can elicit affective responses and/or furnish us with experiences which we can finally (dis)value. Assuming the five-fold taxonomy of the senses, we can attend to experience for its own sake in every sense modality, as this just describes the motivation or intention one has in attending to sensations. I take it that experience through every sense modality is also capable of eliciting an affective response and/or of being an experience to which we can assign final (dis)value. Therefore, the question of which senses we can aesthetically experience through depends on which sense modalities we can discern aesthetic properties through. If we adopt the artistic-value view of aesthetic properties – which I think we should – then, given we can experience and evaluate art through vision, audition, olfaction, gustation⁵², and tactition, we can also discern aesthetic qualities through these modalities. In which case, it seems possible to aesthetically experience through all five sense modalities.

⁵² Recall I suggested the *artistic-value view* is most plausible when we adopt an inclusive notion of art which includes artworks we experience through olfaction and gustation, such as (some) gardens, flower-arrangements, foods, and drinks.

One might question whether we can experience and evaluate art through tactition. It should be noted that visually impaired people use touch to experience sculptures and ‘tactile pictures’ (these are three-dimensionally configured artworks designed to be experienced by touch) (Hopkins 2004: 157-8). Some art museums also produce tactile representations of paintings, so they can be experienced through touch by visually impaired visitors (see Reichinger et. al. 2011). There is no *prima facie* reason to think sculptures, tactile pictures and other plastic artworks cannot be evaluated on the basis of touch. In which case, according to the artistic value view, aesthetic qualities can be discerned through tactition and aesthetic experience is possible through this sense modality.

Note our aim here is just to show how the hybrid account meets desideratum (v) by providing an approach to answering the question of which sense modalities we can aesthetically experience through. One might take issue with the conclusion that aesthetic experience is possible through all five sense modalities (and more could be said about this). However, disagreement about this is good as it indicates that the hybrid account helps us gain traction on the issue.

The hybrid account does not focus exclusively on aesthetic experiences of art. It places no restrictions on the sorts of objects we can aesthetically experience (only that they have aesthetic qualities or lower-level properties the subject judges to be apt for description in terms of aesthetic properties). It therefore satisfies (vi) and amply accommodates aesthetic experiences of non-art.

The seventh desideratum states a good account of aesthetic experience should provide us with a way of deciding whether borderline cases qualify as aesthetic experiences. I now illustrate how the hybrid account meets this desideratum by applying it to borderline cases from the everyday aesthetics literature. This also helps to bring some clarity to a domain in which some of the experiences described as ‘aesthetic’ are not obviously so.

Sherri Irvin (2008a) states the following experiences have ‘aesthetic character’:

- (i) ‘I run my tongue back and forth on the insides of my closed teeth, feeling the smoothness of their central surfaces and the roughness of the separations between them’ (Irvin 2008a: 30-1).
- (ii) ‘In the middle of typing a sentence, when I am not sure what to say next, I turn to look out the window next to my desk, and I rest my right cheek on my cool knuckles while I

watch the ducks that are swimming around in the small patch of lake that has already thawed near the shore' (*ibid*: 31)

- (iii) 'While walking down my dirt road, I study the various colours of the dirt and the tyre tracks that weave along it, and I contemplate how nice it would be to have a suit made out of a fabric with these gradations, with a subtle pattern that varies in texture and does not run too straight' (*ibid*).
- (iv) 'When I am petting my cat, I crouch over his body so that I can smell his fur, which at different places smells like trapped sunshine or roasted nuts, a bit like almonds but not quite' (*ibid*).
- (v) 'I scratch my head with a mechanical pencil that allows me to part my hair and reach exactly the right spot on my scalp' (*ibid*).
- (vi) 'I move my wedding ring back and forth over the knuckle that offers it slight resistance, and I jiggle it around in my right palm to enjoy its weight before sliding it back on' (*ibid*).

Reading between the lines, it seems plausible that in all six cases Irvin **is attending to the content of her experience for its own sake**, and not exclusively for instrumental reasons (which means all six experiences satisfy condition [ii] of the hybrid account). So, whether (i)-(vi) qualify as 'aesthetic experiences' depends on whether they satisfy the remaining conditions which I have argued are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for aesthetic experience: that is, are they directed at aesthetic properties, or lower-level properties the subject judges to be apt for description in terms of aesthetic properties, or the relation(s) therebetween? And does this elicit an appropriate affective response and/or does Irvin assign final (dis)value to the experience she has?

Only three of the experiences Irvin describes could plausibly be said to be directed at '**aesthetic properties**'. These include: (i), in which she feels the 'smoothness' and 'roughness' of her teeth; (iii), in which she takes inspiration for a suit design from the colouring and patterning of a dirt track; and (v), in which she likens her cat's smell to 'trapped sunshine or roasted nuts, a bit like almonds but not quite'.

Taking these in turn, 'smoothness' and 'roughness' can be used metaphorically to evaluate art qua art. We might use them in describing a singer's voice, for example. However, Irvin seems to use these terms literally and in a non-evaluative sense. According to the account of aesthetic properties I have defended, used in this sense, 'smoothness' and 'roughness' do not name aesthetic properties. In which case, (i) is not directed at 'aesthetic properties', so is not an

‘aesthetic experience’⁵³. The hybrid account implies a distinction between mere sensory experiences which have a positive valence and aesthetic experience proper. The experience Irvin describes in (i) falls short of aesthetic experience and is better described as a positively valenced sensory experience.

In (iii), Irvin describes finding a dirt track inspiring as its colours and contours give her an idea for a dress design. The dress fabric would have ‘a subtle pattern that varies in texture and does not run too straight’. This constitutes an evaluative description of the dirt track: by saying the pattern she sees would make a good design for a dress, Irvin is evaluating it. She uses the term ‘subtle’ to describe the pattern. ‘Subtle’ is evaluative of art *qua* art, and Irvin seems to be using it in this sense. So (iii) could qualify as an aesthetic experience. However, this would depend on whether seeing the pattern in the dirt road elicits an appropriate affective response or is an experience Irvin assigns final (dis)value to, which we cannot say on the basis of the scant description she gives. However, if the pattern did move her, or if she finally valued the experience of attending to it for its own sake, then (iii) would qualify as ‘aesthetic’.

With regards to (v), I take it that to compare a smell to ‘trapped sunshine or roasted nuts’ is to express a positive evaluation of it. It could be used to describe and evaluate for example, olfactory artworks, food, wine or perfume. So, providing we adopt an inclusive view of ‘art’, (v) could also qualify as an ‘aesthetic experience’. This would, again, depend on whether discerning this olfactory aesthetic quality elicits an appropriate affective response for Irvin and/or whether it is an experience she finally (dis)values. If it meets either or both disjuncts, then (v) would qualify as an aesthetic experience.

In summary, of the six experiences Irvin describes as ‘aesthetic’, only two could plausibly qualify as such (though more detailed descriptions of the experiences are required to say more). Note the indefiniteness of the conclusions we have reached about whether these borderline cases are ‘aesthetic experiences’ is not due to a weakness of the hybrid account, but rather the brevity of the descriptions under consideration. If we were able to ask detailed questions about a subject’s experience (by conducting interviews, for example), then we could achieve more

⁵³ Note that we would here benefit from the testimony of a visually impaired art appreciator. The tongue has a high density of nerve endings so can provide fine-grained information about tactile qualities. Someone who is used to experiencing and evaluating art through touch could also plausibly discern aesthetic qualities in the roughness and smoothness of teeth. We should not discount this possibility. However, we cannot conclude this is true of Irvin’s experience, given the brevity of the description she gives and in the absence of information concerning her tactile appreciative expertise.

certainty whether an experience she has qualifies as 'aesthetic'. The hybrid account therefore satisfies the seventh desiderata as it provides us with a way of determining whether borderline cases qualify as 'aesthetic experiences' or not.

We have now developed and defended a comprehensive or 'hybrid' account of aesthetic experience which, put briefly, states aesthetic experiences are those which acquire a valence when the subject attends to the content of her experience for its own sake and discerns aesthetic properties. We then defended a plausible account of aesthetic properties. Finally, we saw how the hybrid account of aesthetic experience fulfils the desiderata. We can now recruit the hybrid account to investigate the relation between aesthetic experience and well-being.

5. Aesthetic Experience, Mindfulness and Well-being

'Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don't even recognize'

(Thich 1987: 11).

This chapter examines how one might recruit aesthetic experiences to enrich one's life and enhance one's well-being. I will first consider ideas expressed by William Wordsworth in *Tintern Abbey*. I will use Wordsworth's poem to help elucidate two effects aesthetic experience can have on one's well-being: firstly, an immediate effect by which aesthetic experience transforms one's occurrent mental state and; secondly, a long-term effect in which aesthetic experiences enhance one's overall sense of well-being in life. I will then develop the proposal that proficiency in mindfulness can furnish one with the propensity for having aesthetic experiences of nature and everyday life which exert these effects. I shall conclude by suggesting how this relation between mindfulness and aesthetic experience could be empirically investigated.

Percy Shelley describes poetry as, 'at the same time the root and blossom of all other systems of thought [...] which, if blighted [...] withholds from the barren world the nourishment and the succession of the scions of the tree of life' (Shelley 2004). He seems to be suggesting that, counter-intuitively, extensive prosaic analysis of a phenomenon – laying bare its innards – can inhibit one from arriving at (at least certain kinds of) profound and compelling insights about it. He suggests a prophylactic measure in the form of poetry: 'parts of a composition may be poetical, without the composition as a whole being a poem [...] a single word even may be a spark of inextinguishable thought' (*ibid*).

It might be too demanding to expect philosophers to infuse their writing with poetry. However, where appropriate, we can consult with the thoughts of poets who have reflected deeply on the subject at hand. For example, Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*, from which the following is an extract, offers us a study of the aesthetic experience of nature:

Five years have past; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! And again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft inland murmur.—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect

The landscape with the quiet of the sky [...] (Wordsworth 2008: 71-2)

In this first stanza, Wordsworth describes with lucid intensity the scenery and its qualities which comprise the content of his aesthetic experience. He then proceeds in the second to describe the wider significance of such experiences in his life:

These beautiful forms,
 Through a long absence, have not been to me
 As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
 But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
 Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
 In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
 Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
 And passing even into my purer mind
 With tranquil restoration:—feelings too
 Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
 As have no slight or trivial influence
 On that best portion of a good man's life,
 His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
 Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
 To them I may have owed another gift,
 Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
 In which the burthen of the mystery,
 In which the heavy and the weary weight
 Of all this unintelligible world,
 Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,
 In which the affections gently lead us on,—
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
 And even the motion of our human blood
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
 In body, and become a living soul:
 While with an eye made quiet by the power
 Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
 We see into the life of things (*ibid*: 72-3).

Wordsworth suggests a parity between 'little, nameless, unremembered, acts/ Of kindness and of love' and certain aesthetic experiences of nature. He is not saying they have similar value

considered from an objective point of view. Rather, his point is that experiences of 'beauteous forms' and certain acts 'of kindness and of love'⁵⁴ can exert comparable influence in enriching one's life or defining its character. Wordsworth suggests aesthetic experience can exert this influence by 'tranquil restoration', by evoking 'sensations sweet/Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart', by inducing 'a blessed mood', and by 'the deep power of joy'.

The significance of this should not be understated. Generally speaking, aesthetics enjoys less attention, and perhaps less esteem, than ethics. One reason for this may be that aesthetics is thought to have little to contribute to the fundamental philosophical questions of how we should live and of what makes for a good life. However, if Wordsworth is right and aesthetic experience can enhance the character of one's life to a similar degree as some acts of kindness and love, then aesthetics can make an important contribution to these questions: it tells us about a type of experience that can enrich our lives and instructs us in how to have it.

Wordsworth additionally makes the more enigmatic suggestion that certain aesthetic experiences lift 'the burden of the **mystery**', 'the heavy and the weary weight/ Of all this **unintelligible** world' by enabling one to become a 'living soul' who can 'see into the life of things'.

He seems to be suggesting that aesthetic experience can be remedial of the despondency which can arise from contemplating such intractable questions as the significance (or insignificance) of being alive. Alternatively, he might view it as a solution to – or at least a palliative for – the unsatisfactoriness of the human condition in which, as beings of finite capacities, we will only ever attain a partial or incomplete understanding of things. So perhaps he is responding to the same thought which prompted Pascal to write,

⁵⁴ Of course, some morally good actions might diminish (or just have no effect on) one's wellbeing or quality of life: for example, working in a refugee camp in a war-ravaged region might be morally praiseworthy, yet may leave one traumatised and so diminish one's wellbeing. I take it this is not the kind of act Wordsworth has in mind when he talks of 'little, nameless, unremembered, acts/ Of kindness and of love'. He describes these as 'unremembered pleasures' which positively affect the character of a good person's life. A further qualification is that ethics is not primarily concerned with how to improve one's *own* life. This might be one concern of an ethical theory (Kantians say we have duties to ourselves and virtue ethicists explicate moral virtue in terms of personal flourishing); yet, by and large, ethics is concerned with how we should treat others. We can take this as a given and read Wordsworth as just making the following point: insofar as 'little, nameless, unremembered, acts/Of kindness and of love' inadvertently enrich one's life, some aesthetic experiences of nature can be said to exert a similar effect.

‘[We are] incapable of certain knowledge and of absolute ignorance. We sail within a vast sphere, ever drifting in uncertainty, driven from end to end. When we think to attach ourselves to any point and to fasten to it, it wavers and leaves us; and if we follow it, it eludes our grasp, slips past us, and vanishes for ever. Nothing stays for us. This is our natural condition, and yet most contrary to our inclination; we burn with desire to find solid ground and an ultimate sure foundation whereon to build a tower reaching to the Infinite. But our whole groundwork cracks, and the earth opens to abysses (Pascal 1958: 19-20).

How, then, might aesthetic experience resolve, or at least be a palliative for, such states of despondency and unsatisfactoriness?

Clearly, aesthetic experience cannot provide us with propositional knowledge that will lay to rest life’s vexing mysteries. Nor does it seem capable of revealing the significance of being alive. However, aesthetic experience can arrest and transform deleterious mental states: it can disrupt goal-based processing and ruminative thought by redirecting attention away from goals or ruminations and toward the sumptuous, often fluctuating qualities in one’s immediate environment. These then occupy one’s attention and transform the character of one’s experiencing by eliciting positive affect and instilling a sense of being in the world as it is at the cusp of the present moment.

So perhaps Wordsworth’s point could be explained as follows: when one becomes absorbed by the way light silently dances on the surface of a body of water, for example, or with how it pours through a swaying canopy of leaves, one’s concerns about the significance of life or its unintelligibility become, as it were, unnecessary. The contentment felt in the moment supplants the unsatisfactoriness or despondency which may otherwise colour experience. One’s experience of the world then ceases to be haunted by the reflections of one’s fears, aims and desires. For a short time, one forgets that one is – or, perhaps, one ceases to be – an experiencing subject who is apart from the observed world and who has a private life with a catalogue of accomplishments and failings.

There is more we could say about *Tintern Abbey*. However, with Wordsworth’s help, we have now arrived at two hypotheses about the significance some aesthetic experiences can have in lived experience: (i) they can exert a positive influence on one’s life as a whole, comparable to the effect some acts of kindness and love have on a good person’s life; and (ii) they can

transform one's occurrent mental state by redirecting attention towards the aesthetic qualities in one's surroundings and by such qualities eliciting positive affect.

Note that (ii) may be a mechanism by which (i) operates: the beneficial, long-term effect some aesthetic experiences have on one's life may, at least in part, be attributable to the way such experiences can transform one's occurrent mental states. This makes the plausible assumption that the character of one's life as a whole consists, at least in part, in the aggregation of one's states. Therefore, if we achieve greater clarity about (ii), we strengthen the case for (i).

It is also possible that – as Wordsworth suggests – a profoundly moving, positively valenced aesthetic experience exerts a diachronic influence on one's life by eliciting positive affective states at various moments thereafter. These effects could be described as the converse of those which a traumatic event has: where a traumatic event can lead one to subsequently experience intermittent negative feelings in relation to it, a moving, positively valenced aesthetic experience might lead one to subsequently enjoy intermittent feelings of pleasure and contentment (which Wordsworth describes as 'sensations sweet/ Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart').

We have so far characterised (i) as the positive effect certain aesthetic experiences can have on one's 'life as a whole' or on 'the character' of one's life. I have no problem referring to this as one's 'subjective sense of well-being', providing this refers to a sincere belief or sense one has about how well one's life is going overall which is (a) relatively stable and enduring, (b) formulated with a significant degree of reflective self-awareness, and (c) in which one places a high degree of confidence. This excludes, for example, a belief one has about one's well-being that is hastily formed in frustration at the end of a bad day. What would qualify is a belief which is strengthened over time that one's life is going well (or badly) and which is arrived at by, for example, reflecting on changes in one's patterns of emotional reactions (to events or other people), or in one's resting mood, or in one's sense of purpose.

To be clear, not all aesthetic experiences positively influence the character of one's life or one's subjective sense of well-being (so understood). My proposal is that those which do will be positively valenced at least because of their affective character, if not also for being finally valued. I will now use the hybrid account of aesthetic experience to address the question of how we might have more of these experiences. This will, I hope, form the basis of a useful contribution to the fundamental questions of how we should live and of what makes for a good life. I will restrict my focus to positively valenced, moving aesthetic experiences of nature and of

everyday life. My reason for eliding experiences of art at this stage is because a satisfactory analysis of relations between aesthetic experiences of art (which is a very diverse category) and well-being will exceed the scope of this current investigation. Furthermore, I shall propose that developing proficiency in mindfulness enhances one's propensity for having certain kinds of rewarding aesthetic experience. Whilst I think mindfulness can enhance our capacities to have rewarding aesthetic experiences of nature and everyday life, I am sceptical about whether it can do the same for our aesthetic experiences of art. In fact, I shall suggest that mindfulness might inhibit some rewarding aesthetic experiences of art.

I will now explain what 'mindfulness' is. I shall then propose several mechanisms by which proficiency in it might furnish one with the propensity for having rewarding aesthetic experiences of nature and everyday life. This proposal could be said to fall within the domain of 'global philosophy', where this refers to the methodology of addressing a philosophical question by marshalling resources from beyond traditional boundaries of, for example, 'Western' and 'Eastern' philosophy (see Brooks 2013).

What is Mindfulness?

'Mindfulness' is a common translation of the Pali term '*sati*', which can also be translated as 'memory' or 'recollection' (Bodhi 2011: 22). *Sammāsati* or 'Right Mindfulness' is one of the eight factors of the noble eightfold path which the Buddha taught for the cessation of suffering⁵⁵. The *Satipatthana Sutta* (or 'Discourse on the Establishing of Mindfulness' [*ibid*: 21]) is the main text on *sati* in the Pali Canon (which is a collection of Buddhist scriptures). In it, the Buddha teaches a series of meditations for establishing mindfulness of the body, of feelings, of the mind, and of the mental qualities salient to enlightenment. The Buddha is reported to describe these as,

'the direct path for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and distress, for the attainment of the right method, and for the realization of unbinding [nirvana]' (Thanissaro 2008).

⁵⁵ The other factors are 'right understanding', 'right thought', 'right speech', 'right action', 'right livelihood', 'right effort', and 'right concentration'. 'Right mindfulness' is listed as the penultimate factor. These collectively comprise the fourth of the Four Noble Truths – that is, *The Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering*.

Bhikku Bodhi – who is one of the foremost contemporary Pali translators and Theravadin Buddhist teachers – characterises *sati* as ‘lucid awareness’ (Bodhi 2011: 21). He describes it as a ‘stance’ or ‘mental pose’ consisting of ‘*observation* or *watchfulness*’ of one’s own experience in the present moment (*ibid*: 25). Expanding on this, he writes,

‘One might even call the stance of *sati* a “bending back” of the light of consciousness upon the experiencing subject in its physical, sensory, and psychological dimensions. This act of “bending back” serves to illuminate the events occurring in these domains, lifting them out from the twilight zone of unawareness into the light of clear cognition’ (*ibid*).

Rupert Gethin helpfully distinguishes mindfulness proper from ‘simple observation’ on the grounds that the former requires both that one’s awareness of the object(s) of experience is continuous or sustained (which is surprisingly difficult to achieve) and that one’s underlying state of mind is ‘relatively still and peaceful’ (Gethin 2011: 274).

The successful practice of mindfulness makes the objects we apprehend ‘stand forth vividly and distinctly’ (Bodhi 2011: 25). Bodhi explains that, ‘[m]indfulness establishes the presence of the object and thereby makes it available to scrutiny and discernment’ (*ibid*). He describes two effects which mindfulness has on the object or content of experience: firstly, ‘it brackets the “objectification” of the object that occurs in our everyday interactions with the world, whereby we treat objects as things “out there” subservient to our pragmatic purposes’ (*ibid*); secondly, it ‘makes the objective field “present” to awareness as an expanse of phenomena exhibiting their own distinctive phenomenal characteristics, as well as patterns and structures common to all conditioned phenomena’ (*ibid*). He summarises, ‘[t]he net effect is to make the objective field clearly available for inspection’ (*ibid*)⁵⁶.

Thich Nhat Hanh, who is a Vietnamese Mahayana Buddhist monk and teacher, uses the expression ‘mindfulness’ to refer to ‘keeping one’s consciousness alive to the present reality’ (Thich 1987: 11). He describes the practice of mindful walking in the following:

⁵⁶ Bodhi’s description of the effects of mindfulness on experience is comparable to the qualities with Hume characterises ‘true judges’ (whose joint verdicts comprise ‘the standard of taste’). These include, ‘vivacity of apprehension’, ‘exactness of distinction’ and ‘clearness of comprehension’. Hume describes these as ‘essential to the operations of true taste’ (Hume 1995: 264). So, if Bodhi is right that mindfulness makes experiential content vivid and distinct and makes one lucidly aware of that content, then it could have a role to play in forming aesthetic evaluations that have a degree of inter-subjective validity.

‘When you are walking along a path leading into a village, you can practice mindfulness. Walking along a dirt path, surrounded by patches of green grass, if you practice mindfulness you will experience that path, the path leading to the village. You practice by keeping this one thought alive: “I’m walking along the path leading into the village.” Whether it’s sunny or rainy, whether the path is dry or wet, you keep that one thought, but not just repeating it like a machine, over and over again. Machine thinking is the opposite of mindfulness. If we’re really engaged in mindfulness while walking along the path to the village, then we will consider the act of each step we take as an infinite wonder, and a joy will open our hearts like a flower, enabling us to enter the world of reality [...] People usually consider walking on water or in thin air a miracle. But I think the real miracle is not to walk either on water or in thin air, but to walk on earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don’t even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the black, curious eyes of a child – our own two eyes. All is a miracle (*ibid*: 12).

Bodhi describes two applications of ‘mindfulness’: firstly, in a meditation context where mindfulness brings vividness and clarity to the object of meditation (which could be a walking meditation, such as described by Thich Nhat Hanh, or a meditation on, for example, the qualities of the Buddha, or on impermanence, or on loving-kindness [Bodhi 2011: 26]); secondly, to ensure that the other seven factors of the noble eightfold path are practiced correctly (*ibid*) – it can be used, for example, to discriminate a right from a wrong intention for doing something and to ensure one acts only on the former (*ibid*).

Recently, mindfulness has been isolated from Buddhist contexts and adapted for the treatment of a range of clinical and sub-clinical ailments including: stress, fatigue, anxiety disorders, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep disorders, irritable bowel syndrome, heart disease, and chronic pain (Cheisa and Serretti 2009) (Crowe et. al 2015).

Clinical definitions of ‘mindfulness’ used in empirical research typically emphasize two components (Bishop et. al. 2006: 232): firstly, the allocating of complete attention to the experience occurring in the present moment; secondly, non-judgementally accepting whatever is experienced – such as feelings, thoughts, sensations, and perceptions – without fixating on, engaging with, or analysing it. For example, Jon Kabat-Zinn, an early advocate of the therapeutic application of mindfulness, defines it as,

‘the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment to moment’ (Kabat-Zinn 2003: 145).

Some Buddhist commentators have objected to the inclusion of the second component viz. non-judgmentally accepting whatever is experienced. As mentioned, mindfulness is used by Buddhists to ensure the other seven factors of the noble eightfold path are applied correctly. Gethin states mindfulness is used to discriminate negative qualities of mind (such as craving, greed, attachment, and hatred) and to “uproot” them (Gethin 2011: 265). This requires that we make judgements about *what* we are experiencing mindfully, which is at odds with the clinical definition.

Gethin suggests that the non-judgemental component of clinical definitions of mindfulness is intended to help prevent patients/ practitioners from being judgemental of *themselves* on the basis of the thoughts or emotions to which they are mindfully attending; such self-reflexive judgements would only perpetuate the detrimental mental states which mindfulness is being used to remedy (*ibid*: 274). Gethin suggests that we can be discriminative or judgemental of experiential objects when practicing mindfulness, providing such judgements do not lead the mindful subject to apportion praise or blame to herself (*ibid*).

Thich Nhat Hanh elucidates what this might involve in practice:

‘While practicing mindfulness, don’t be dominated by the distinction between good and evil, thus creating a battle within oneself. Whenever a wholesome thought arises, acknowledge it: “A wholesome thought has just arisen.” And if an unwholesome thought arises, acknowledge it as well: “An unwholesome thought has just arisen.” Don’t dwell on it or try to get rid of it. To acknowledge it is enough’ (Thich 1987: 39).

Nevertheless, an unqualified version of the two-fold clinical definition of mindfulness (in which subjects are instructed to attend *non-judgmentally*) is standardly used to investigate the cognitive benefits of mindfulness. Such benefits include, notably: improvements in working memory capacity (Chambers et. al 2007); improvements in ability to sustain and regulate attention (Mrazek et. al. 2013); increased visual sensitivity (Brown et. al. 1984); reduced visual and auditory reaction time (Lohot 2017); improvements in mood (Khoury et. al. 2015);

improvements in cognitive flexibility⁵⁷ (Moore and Malinowski 2009); and improvements in creativity (Colzato et. al. 2012).

Additionally, neuroscientific research suggests mindfulness training effects changes in brain structure (Davidson et. al. 2003). Specifically, mindfulness practice is associated with increased concentrations of grey matter in the parts of the hippocampus, the cerebellum, and the brain stem which are associated with 'learning and memory processes, emotion regulation, self-referential processing, and perspective taking' (Hölzel et. al. 2011: 36-42).

If we were to trace the history of mindfulness in Western psychology, we might begin with the remedy for *ressentiment* given by the self-proclaimed founder of the field, Nietzsche⁵⁸. Nietzsche uses the term *ressentiment* to describe the pernicious hatred which the weak and powerless feel for those not so afflicted. He says we are most vulnerable to *ressentiment* at times of psychological 'sickness' or exhaustion (Nietzsche 2005a: 81). He warns that succumbing to *ressentiment* at such times will only make the condition more acute. As a prophylactic to *ressentiment*, Nietzsche prescribes '*Russian fatalism*' (*ibid*). This is, in his words,

'the fatalism without revolt that you find when a military campaign becomes too difficult and the Russian soldier lies down in the snow. Not taking anything else on or in, – not reacting at all anymore [...] Since any sort of reaction wears you out too quickly, you do not react at all [...] Annoyance, abnormal vulnerability, inability to take revenge, the desire, the thirst for revenge, every type of poisoning – these are definitely the most harmful ways for exhausted people to react [...] to accept yourself as a fate, not to want to 'change' yourself – in situations like this, that is *raison par excellence*' (*ibid*: 81-82).

Both contemporary clinical definitions of mindfulness and Nietzsche's *Russian fatalism* prescribe non-judgementally accepting one's experiences, rather than engaging with them, resisting against them, or attempting to change them⁵⁹. Astonishingly, Nietzsche says the Buddha understood this method for preventing *ressentiment*:

⁵⁷ Cognitive flexibility refers to, 'the human ability to adapt cognitive processing strategies to face new and unexpected conditions' (Moore and Malinowski 2009: 177) and includes the ability to switch back and forth between tasks that require different strategies or rules.

⁵⁸ As he writes in *Ecce Homo*, 'Psychology did not exist until I appeared' (Nietzsche 2005a: 148)

⁵⁹ Though Nietzsche's reasons for making this prescription are not, one imagines, based on compassion and care for the afflicted.

'Ressentiment should be what is forbidden most rigorously for people who are sick [...] This was understood very well by that profound psychologist, the Buddha. His 'religion', which could be better described as a *hygiene* [...] depends on conquering *ressentiment*: to free the soul of *this* – the first step to recovery. "Enmity will not bring an end to enmity, friendship brings an end to enmity": this is how the Buddha's teaching begins – this is not the voice of morality, this is the voice of physiology' (*ibid*: 81).

So, arguably, we find traces of Buddhist mindfulness influencing Western "psychology" as far back as Nietzsche. To turn now to its application to philosophical aesthetics, Sherri Irvin (2014) seems to be the only analytic philosopher to propose using mindfulness to enhance our aesthetic experiences. She hypothesizes that mindfulness training can reduce the influence aesthetically irrelevant factors⁶⁰ exert on our 'aesthetic responses' to artworks, whilst making those responses more fine-grained (Irvin 2014: 52).

Irvin's proposal should be qualified with the caveat that mindfulness might temper some of our most intense and rewarding aesthetic experiences of artworks. Sometimes we become absorbed or immersed in our aesthetic experiencing of an artwork and lose all (or almost all) second-order awareness of having the experience: think of being immersed in a gripping narrative (i.e. narrative immersion), or being captivated by a mesmerising painting, or uninhibitedly dancing to music. Such experiences might be prevented if one concurrently practiced mindfulness, so maintained a continuous second-order awareness of one's experiencing.

Irvin adopts the two-fold clinical definition of mindfulness which requires being non-judgemental of experiential content. She writes, '[t]he aim of mindfulness meditation is to maintain non-judgemental awareness of all aspects of one's experience, including perceptions, bodily sensations, thoughts, and feelings' (*ibid*: 48). This is problematic for her proposal that we recruit mindfulness in appreciating art, as some of our most meaningful experiences of artworks

⁶⁰ Irvin bases her conclusion that 'aesthetic responses' (which seems to include both 'aesthetic experience' and 'aesthetic judgement') are influenced by irrelevant factors on empirical research, which include experiments by: Cuttings (2003), which indicate our preferences for artworks are influenced by whether we have encountered them before; Nisbett and Wilson (1977) which suggest the spatial location of identical pairs of stockings affect people's judgements of their quality; Yamada (2007), which suggest that asking people to verbalise their preference for or against one artwork over another can make them biased in favour of artworks which are easier to describe; and McLaughlin et al. (1983) which suggest right handed people prefer paintings with visual interest on the right and left-handed people prefer those with visual interest on the left.

require that we make *judgements* of them, compare them to other works, discuss them, and revise our earlier judgements in light of critical discourse. A mindful spectator who *non-judgementally accepts* whatever artworks she experiences would not be fully engaging with and appreciating those works. Note, though, that this is less problematic if we adopt the qualification Gethin suggests which states that during mindful experiences we need not suspend judgements that are made just about the experienced objects and which are not self-reflexive.

Furthermore, I suspect Irvin is not proposing that we practice mindfulness *at the same time* as appreciating artworks (though she does not specify this). The cognitive benefits of mindfulness do not seem to be restricted to the periods in which it is actively practiced, but spill-over into the rest of our lives (as indicated by the structural changes in the brain it effects). So, Irvin may instead be proposing that we separate our mindfulness training from our time spent appreciating art (or at least some types of art) and reap the benefits of the former in the latter.

Even so, one might think that being too equanimous could render one's experiences of powerfully expressive artworks somewhat anodyne. A case could be made for thinking that a degree of emotional or psychological instability is required to fully appreciate some artworks (such as the bleak humour in Harold Pinter's plays). Van Gogh is reported to have said 'art is to console those who are broken by life' (Kirov 2015: 5). Perhaps the experience of consolation some artworks offer is only available to those who require it?⁶¹ Insofar as mindfulness training improves emotional regulation, mood, and is used to treat clinical and sub-clinical mental health ailments, might it not also curtail our capacities to fully appreciate those artworks which probe the darkest reaches of human experience?

An affirmative answer seems plausible. My proposal is to focus just on the relation between mindfulness and our aesthetic experiences of nature and everyday life but not of art. Specifically, I will examine on how mindfulness might enhance the propensity for having

⁶¹ John Berger's essay 'The Production of the World' describes how Van Gogh's work offers a solution to a kind of existential despair and associated feelings of anguish. Berger writes of Van Gogh,

'[H]e was compelled to go ever closer, to approach and approach and approach. *In extremis* he approaches so close that the stars in the night sky become maelstroms of light, the cypress trees ganglions of living wood responding to the energy of the wind and sun [...] he takes us as close as any man can, while remaining intact, to that permanent process by which reality is being produced [...] The "entire world" that Van Gogh offers as a reply to the vertigo of nothingness is the production of the world. Painting after painting is a way of saying, with awe but little comfort: it works' (Berger 2001: 463).

enriching (moving and positively valenced) aesthetic experiences in these two domains⁶². Firstly, though, we can consider what, exactly, we mean by an ‘everyday’ aesthetic experience.

Specifying the domain of ‘everyday’ aesthetics proves tricky. One reason is that people’s ‘everyday’ lives vary hugely (Saito 2017: 9): contrast the everyday life of a submariner with that of a shepherd, for instance. Kevin Melchionne suggests the following are near-universal dimensions of ‘everyday’ life:

- i. Food (preparing and eating),
- ii. Wardrobe (the clothes we wear and how we wear them),
- iii. Dwelling (‘cleaning, arranging, and rearranging the space each day, and resting and relaxing in it’ [Melchionne 2013]),
- iv. Social interactions (‘greetings, humor, story-telling’ [*ibid*]), and
- v. Going out (‘to work or run errands’) (*ibid*).

By comparison, Thomas Leddy circumscribes ‘everyday’ aesthetics negatively, as involving ‘objects which are not art or nature’ (Leddy 2012: 8-9), which raises arguably more challenging questions about the extensions of ‘art’ and ‘nature’. I am also sceptical about how precisely we can distinguish ‘everyday aesthetic experiences’ from aesthetic experiences of nature, given that we all invariably interact with ‘nature’ in some way each day. Surely, ‘nature’ includes the weather, natural light or its absence, birdsong, landscapes, plants, insects and various organic smells? Are these not (some of) the ingredients of everyday life?

Yuriko Saito (2017) names seven characteristic features of everyday aesthetic experiences (as contrasted with art-focused aesthetic experiences):

- a) They are unframed; we set the parameters within which they occur (Saito 2017: 18-19).
- b) There are no institutional or conventional norms governing the mode of the experience, which leaves us ‘free to engage ourselves literally in the aesthetic experience in any way we see fit’ (*ibid*: 20-21).
- c) They do not privilege the ‘higher senses’ of sight and sound over ‘smell, taste, and touch, as well as kinaesthetic sensations’ (*ibid*:21-22).

⁶² If mindfulness training can enhance our aesthetic experiences of nature and everyday life, and improve mental health, but at the cost of curtailing some aesthetic experiences of art, then it is up to the individual to decide whether this is a price worth paying.

- d) They are often experiences of objects that lack any author, or any single identifiable author, and so, unlike our experiences of art, the 'quest for authorial intention and the circumstances surrounding [their] creation [is] irrelevant' (ibid: 22-23).
- e) They are often experiences of objects which can permissibly be modified by, for example, 'cleaning, organizing, mending, rearranging, relocating, and eating on a daily basis' (ibid: 23-24).
- f) They are often experiences of objects that are transient or subject to change (so differ to the relative permanence and stability of most art) (ibid: 24-5), and
- g) They often involve values other than aesthetic value, such as usefulness.

We can add an eighth:

- h) Everyday aesthetic experiences are often experiences which we do not intend to have but which occur unbidden.

Saito does not present (a)-(g) as necessary or sufficient conditions for everyday aesthetic experiences, but just some of the ways they typically differ from art-focused ones.

For our present purposes, an approximation of the 'everyday' will suffice. We can pass-the-buck, as it were, by relativising the 'everyday' to the experiencing subject. The vast majority of people will be able to distinguish which of their activities are 'everyday' and which are not. Consequently, in what follows, we can assume that everyday aesthetic experiences are just aesthetic experiences which occur during activities the experiencing subject would herself truthfully describe as part of her 'everyday' life (where 'aesthetic experience' is, of course, experience as specified by the hybrid account). I now propose some mechanisms by which mindfulness might enhance our propensity to have rewarding aesthetic experiences of nature and everyday life. In what follows, I do not place too much emphasis on the distinction between these two domains (i.e. nature and everyday life) for several reasons: firstly, I am sceptical, as mentioned, about how clearly the distinction can be made, particularly given ambiguity about the extension of 'nature'; secondly, assuming a distinction can be adequately made, many aesthetic experiences would seem to straddle it; and thirdly, again, assuming that a distinction is possible, I intend the following remarks to be equally applicable to aesthetic experience in both domains.

The Effects of Mindfulness on Aesthetic Experience

In our daily lives, we may pass by a great many opportunities to have enriching aesthetic experiences. We may even be in a remarkably beautiful place and unwittingly forgo potentially rewarding aesthetic experiences of it. One reason we do this is because our attention is focused on the flow of thoughts which, as it were, overlays perceptual experience. This obscures our awareness of our immediate vicinity: if our finite attentional capacities are focused on thoughts (memories, plans, worries, fears, desires and so on), then we will only be vaguely aware of what is around us. So, the question of how we can have more enriching aesthetic experiences of nature and everyday life is, in part, a question about how we can become less absorbed with the thoughts and mental processes which diminish awareness of our surroundings. This is where mindfulness comes in to play. Frequently practicing mindfulness enables us to, firstly, recognize the extent to which we are distracted by thoughts throughout the day and, secondly, to arrest the habitual process by which we engage with them. Therefore, training in mindfulness may provide us with more moments during the day in which our attention is not directed at thoughts but can be fully allocated to the phenomenal character of the world around us as it is in the present moment. This, in turn, means we will have more opportunity to detect and engage with the aesthetic qualities that are discernible around us.

Recall that Bhikkhu Bodhi states mindfulness changes the phenomenal character of experience by increasing the vividness and distinctness of the experiential object(s). Note that there is empirical support for this: research indicates mindfulness improves perceptual acuity by increasing visual sensitivity (Brown et. al. 1984) and reducing visual and auditory reaction time (Lohot 2017). In which case, we would expect that a person who is successfully practicing mindfulness has a perceptually richer, more fine-grained experience than an “unmindful” counterpart. It stands to reason that having a more vivid experience of perceptual content will make one better able to discern aesthetic qualities in it.

Our critique of the content-oriented approach emphasised that just discerning aesthetic qualities in our environment is not sufficient for having an aesthetic experience; we also need to engage with or be moved by those qualities (and attend to the content of the experience for its own sake). Proficiency in mindfulness can enable one to achieve, in most circumstances, a quiet and still mental state. I take it a quiet and still mind (free from distracting thoughts and concerns) is the optimal state one can be in for noticing the affects which aesthetic qualities can

elicit. Hume makes a similar point in 'Of the Standard of Taste', though in a slightly different context:

'[T]hough all general rules of art are founded only on experience and on the observations of the common sentiment of human nature, we must not imagine, that, on every occasion, the feelings of men will be conformable to these rules. Those finer emotions of the mind are of a very tender and delicate nature, and require the concurrence of many favourable circumstances to make them play with facility and exactness, according to their general and established principles. The least exterior hindrance to such small springs, or **the least internal disorder**, disturbs their motion, and confounds the operation of the whole machine. When we would make an experiment of this nature, and would try the force of any beauty or deformity, we must choose with care a proper time and place, and bring the fancy to a suitable situation and disposition. **A perfect serenity of mind**, a recollection of thought, a due attention to the object; if any of these circumstances be wanting, our experiment will be fallacious, and we shall be unable to judge of the catholic and universal beauty (Hume 1995: 258-259 emphasis added).

Here Hume argues that the 'finer emotions' which artworks can elicit are best felt in the absence of 'internal disorder' and with a 'perfect serenity of mind' (among other factors). He is describing psychological preconditions for making intersubjectively authoritative judgments about art. However, his point has wider application, particularly if we adopt the *artistic-value view* of aesthetic properties defended in the previous chapter. If a quiet and still mind is an optimal state for being moved by the aesthetic qualities of artworks, then it stands to reason it is also optimal for being moved by aesthetic qualities we discern in nature and everyday life. I take it 'a quiet and still mind' and 'serenity of mind' do not refer to a positive affective state (such as relaxation, as might result from listening to relaxing music in a hot bath), but rather to the *absence* of intense, predominating thoughts and their corresponding affects (such as anxiety, impatience, stress, and uneasiness). It seems obvious that the absence of preoccupying thoughts and affects is conducive to being moved by the aesthetic qualities we encounter. In which case, mindfulness training may not only make the perceptual field clearer and more vivid but also, by helping to quiet the mind, may make one better able to engage with the aesthetic qualities which figure in it.

The prospect of having more aesthetic experiences in one's daily life might strike some as an encumbrance. Nietzsche writes 'only *peripatetic* thoughts have any value' (Nietzsche 2005b: 160): as we go about our day – walking from one place to another – we may be deep in productive thought and resent the intrusion of aesthetic experiences. One might think this is a reason not to acquire proficiency in mindfulness. However, the opposite is the case as mindfulness training has been shown to improve attention regulation (Mrazek et. al. 2013) and executive control⁶³ (Teper and Inzlicht 2012). We would therefore expect mindfulness to improve one's ability *not* to be distracted by aesthetic experiences at inopportune moments. We would also expect mindfulness training to improve one's ability to discern when one's thoughts are not productive and, at such moments, to bring one's awareness to one's perceptual experiencing. Furthermore, improved attention regulation may make us better able to reallocate attention away from perceptual content which would elicit a negatively valenced aesthetic experience.

Mindfulness training also improves cognitive flexibility (Moore and Malinowski 2009). This describes how well one can switch between tasks that require different rules or procedures: a very cognitively flexible person would be able to seamlessly switch between, for example, translating a poem and solving an equation. It stands to reason that improvements in cognitive flexibility resulting from mindfulness training might help one to switch from performing a given task in one's everyday life to having an aesthetic experience of a feature in one's perceptual field (and then, potentially, to refocusing back on that task). The aesthetic experiences which contribute to one's well-being may not all be profoundly moving 'peak' experiences: our daily lives are also enriched by pleasant, relatively fleeting aesthetic experiences. Developing cognitive flexibility through mindfulness training seems a promising strategy for seamlessly integrating more such fleeting moments of aesthetic reverie into one's daily life.

The previous section argued aesthetic experiences necessarily involve attending to an experiential object *for its own sake* and not as a means to something else. Now, one would be hard pushed to find a better example of what attending to something *for its own sake* involves than the activity of a proficient meditator who is attending mindfully to, for example, the

⁶³ Royall et. al. explain 'executive control', also referred to as 'self-control' and 'executive functions', as follows: 'The "executive functions" broadly encompass a set of cognitive skills that are responsible for the planning, initiation, sequencing, and monitoring of complex goal-directed behavior' (Royall et. al. 2002: 378). In addition, 'executive control allows people to overcome impulses and override automatic behavior' (Teper and Inzlicht 2012: 85).

sensations of her breathing. Indeed, some authors attribute the therapeutic benefits of mindfulness to a reduction in the prevalence of goal-based processing (Chambers et al. 2007: 305). By frequently practicing mindfulness, one begins, at various points throughout the day, to habitually attend to the content of one's experiencing for its own sake. In which case, mindfulness training is conducive to satisfying, what I argued above is, a necessary condition for aesthetic experience. Furthermore, according to Bhikkhu Bodhi, mindfulness helps establish the *presence* of the experiential object and inhibits the habitual analysis of it in terms of our 'pragmatic purposes' (as Bodhi puts it). If this is right, then we would expect that actively practicing mindfulness over a period of time will bolster our abilities during that time to attend to things as *ends*, rather than as means to something else.

Another point to consider is that some everyday aesthetic experiences are unpleasant: a dreary, concrete office block can evoke the desire to defenestrate oneself, or the architect, from its top floor! People's lives are aesthetically impoverished and made worse by such experiences. The best solution is, of course, to improve the quality of the environments in which we live. A more practicable and short-term approach is to change the extent to which the ugliness we encounter in the world affects us. It stands to reason that mindfulness training, which improves mood and emotional regulation, can curtail the negative affects we sometimes feel during aesthetic experiences.

To summarise, I have proposed the following mechanisms by which mindfulness might help one develop the propensity for having enriching aesthetic experiences of nature and in everyday life:

- i. Mindfulness can help to reduce preoccupation with thoughts that diminish one's awareness of one's surroundings.
- ii. When practicing mindfulness, the perceptual field appears more vivid and distinct thereby improving one's ability to discern aesthetic qualities which figure in it.
- iii. Mindfulness can help one acquire a quiet and still state of mind which is conducive to engaging with or being moved by the aesthetic qualities we discern.
- iv. Mindfulness training can enhance executive control and attention regulation which may make one better able to attend selectively to the aesthetic qualities in one's environment.
- v. Mindfulness training improves cognitive flexibility which may help one to seamlessly integrate moments of aesthetic experience into one's daily life.

- vi. Mindfulness training can help one develop the habit of periodically attending to the content of one's experience for its own sake or as an end.
- vii. Mindfulness training can improve emotional regulation which may help curtail negative affects felt during everyday aesthetic experiences⁶⁴.

The net effect of these is to enhance our propensity for having positively valenced, moving aesthetic experiences of nature and everyday life. If mindfulness does have this effect, then it can be recruited for the purpose of increasing those aesthetic experiences which can enhance the character of one's life or improve one's subjective sense of well-being. This proposed effect of mindfulness is, of course, hypothetical. However, it is amenable to experimental research. I now outline in broad strokes what form this research might take.

Psychologists distinguish state mindfulness from trait mindfulness. The former is an occurrent state of being mindful. The latter refers to an enduring, relatively stable tendency to frequently be in mindful states over time (Brown and Ryan 2003: 824). Trait mindfulness is thought to be a naturally occurring characteristic which varies between individuals (is an 'individual difference') (*ibid*), but which can be augmented by mindfulness training. The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) is a psychological instrument designed to test for trait mindfulness (that is, for 'individual differences in the frequency of mindful states over time' [*ibid*: 824]). It consists of the following fifteen statements which participants are instructed to rate the accuracy of by using a six-point scale from 1 (*almost always*) to 6 (*almost never*) (*ibid*: 825):

1. 'I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until some time later.
2. I break or spill things because of carelessness, not paying attention or thinking of something else.
3. I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the present.
4. I tend to walk quickly to get where I'm going without paying attention to what I experience along the way.
5. I tend not to notice feelings of physical tension or discomfort until they really grab my attention.
6. I forget a person's name almost as soon as I've been told it for the first time.
7. It seems I am "running on automatic" without much awareness of what I'm doing.

⁶⁴ Note that some of these mechanisms require that we adopt a mindful stance before and during the aesthetic experience ([i], [ii], and [iii]), whereas others only require that we are practicing mindfulness at some point ([i], [iii],[iv], [v], [vi], and [vi]).

8. I rush through activities without being really attentive to them.
9. I get so focused on the goal I want to achieve that I lose touch with what I am doing right now to get there.
10. I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I'm doing.
11. I find myself listening to someone with one ear, doing something else at the same time.
12. I drive places on "automatic pilot" and then wonder why I went there.
13. I find myself preoccupied with the future or the past.
14. I find myself doing things without paying attention.
15. I snack without being aware that I'm eating' (*ibid*: 826).

We can recruit MAAS to investigate the hypothesis that mindfulness increases the propensity for moving, positively valenced aesthetic experiences of everyday life and nature. One simple way to do this is by, firstly, testing a cohort of participants using MAAS. We would then, secondly, teach the participants what aesthetic experiences are so they would know when they were having one (we would use the hybrid account for this). The participants would then be set the task of recording, over a 48-hour period (or however long), the aesthetic experiences they have of nature and everyday life (including the valences of the experiences). If the hypothesised effect of mindfulness on aesthetic experience occurs, then we would expect participants who score high in trait mindfulness to record having more positively valenced aesthetic experiences than participants who scored lower in trait mindfulness.

In a separate experiment, we could instruct participants to try to have moving, positively valenced aesthetic experiences in a given context (in the context of nature or an everyday activity – for example, walking through a park or sitting on a bench outdoors). We could then ask them to rate how easy or difficult they found it to have a positively valenced, moving aesthetic experience (using a scale from *very easy* to *very difficult*). If mindfulness does exert the described effect on aesthetic experience, we would expect participants who score high on trait mindfulness to find it relatively easy to have aesthetic experiences in these conditions.

It would be useful to have a psychological instrument like MAAS which tested for individual differences in the frequency over time of positive aesthetic experiences of nature and everyday life (i.e. trait positive aesthetic experience of nature and everyday life). No such instrument

seems to have been formulated⁶⁵. Some very rudimentary suggestions about its possible content include:

- (i) I enjoy looking at the nature I encounter in my daily life (e.g., plants, birds, the sky, the sea, rivers).
- (ii) I rarely notice the façades or architectural features of the buildings that I walk past.
- (iii) I often stop to savour the scent of the fragrant plants I pass.
- (iv) I don't see the appeal of spending time in the wilderness (e.g. a forest or nature reserve).
- (v) I enjoy listening to the sounds produced by the wind and rain.
- (vi) I don't see the point in planting flowers in urban spaces.
- (vii) I relish the chance to gaze at the stars in the night sky.
- (viii) I rarely notice the interior design or decoration of venues I visit.
- (ix) I enjoy noticing how the lay-out of an urban environment affects its ambiance or atmosphere.

Participants would rate how much they agree or disagree with these statements (and others, once the instrument has been more fully developed). This would hopefully give us an insight into how frequently individuals have positive aesthetic experiences of nature and everyday life over time. We could then compare this data with the data gathered from the MAAS. If my hypothesis is correct, we would expect people who score highly in trait mindfulness to also score highly by this instrument's measure.

We could also test the effect which *state* mindfulness has on *state* aesthetic experience. This would help to answer the question of whether actively practicing mindfulness during a segment of time increases one's positively valenced, moving aesthetic experiences during that time. To provide a rough sketch of an experimental design, we would split a participant cohort into three groups: one which trains in mindfulness; one which trains in something else (e.g. improving memory or mental arithmetic); and a control group which undergoes no training. Once the training schedule is complete, we would instruct all participants to perform a designated activity (which would be selected on the grounds that it is characteristic of everyday life or of being in nature – walking through a park, for example) whilst simultaneously engaging in the skill which they acquired, if they acquired one, during the training schedule: the group which trained in

⁶⁵ However, there is a test for the *desire* for aesthetic experience (the Desire for Aesthetics Scale or DFAS) (Lundy et. al. 2010).

mindfulness would be instructed to practice mindfulness for the duration of the activity; the group which trained in improving memory or mental arithmetic would be instructed to practice their training tasks during the activity; the control group would just be instructed to perform the designated activity. We would want to measure whether the participants had aesthetic experiences during that period of time. One way is to ask them directly. Another way is to instruct them to write about the experience, then use independent judges to assess whether their written reports indicate that they had aesthetic experiences (the judges would apply the hybrid account for this and look for, for example, the use of aesthetic adjectives – they could even conduct interviews with the participants). The participants would be misinformed that the writing exercise was to test what effect their training, if they had any, had on handwriting or punctuation, so as not to inadvertently influence them to write about aesthetic experience. The reports written by the participants would be anonymised so the judges would not know to which group a person's report belonged.

If mindfulness does increase our chances of having positive and moving aesthetic experiences of everyday life and nature, then we would expect the independent judges to conclude that the mindfulness sub-group of participants had more positive aesthetic experiences than both the control group and the group who were trained in something else (such as memory or mental arithmetic).

These are only very rough sketches of some experimental designs. However, they at least indicate that the proposal I have motivated in this section is amenable to empirical research. Note that once one has acquired familiarity with mindfulness, it is relatively easy to test and explore the effect it has on one's own aesthetic experiences: simply visit somewhere pleasant (a park, riverbank, or woodland, for example), acquire a quiet state of mind, bring one's sustained attention to phenomenal experience in the present moment, then proceed to walk or sit mindfully in that place for a time.

To summarise, this section developed the idea that some aesthetic experiences can enhance the character of our lives (or our 'subjective sense of well-being') by transforming and enhancing occurrent mental states. It proposed that the aesthetic experiences which have this effect are positively valenced in their affective character (if not also for being finally valued). It then argued mindfulness enhances the propensity for having these experiences within the domains of nature and everyday life and hypothesised some of the mechanisms by which it

does so. Finally, it considered how we might empirically investigate the effect mindfulness has on those aesthetic experiences and, by extension, on the character of our lives.

6. Loose Ends

I began this investigation by stating that none of the accounts of aesthetic experience in the literature are satisfactory. I argued for this in chapters two and three. In chapter four, I motivated and defended an intensional definition of aesthetic experience and an art-based account of aesthetic properties and showed how the former satisfies the desiderata of an account of aesthetic experience. Then, in chapter five, I discussed how the proposed definition of aesthetic experience can be used in experimental research to test a hypothesised relation between mindfulness and enriching aesthetic experiences of nature and everyday life.

By achieving clarity about aesthetic experience, we have shed some light on the network of terms qualified by 'aesthetic' that, in Malcolm Budd's words, comprise the 'abstract heart' of the discipline⁶⁶. However, we have not yet discussed the relation between 'aesthetic experience' and 'aesthetic value'. Therefore, in concluding, I will consider some implications of the forgoing on how we can conceptualise 'aesthetic value'. I will then identify topics that require further research.

Stecker (2006) distinguishes two ways of conceptualising 'aesthetic value'. The first view – which we can call *the instrumentalist approach* – locates an object's aesthetic value in its capacity to produce an aesthetic experience (Stecker 2006: 2-5). The final value which aesthetic experiences (supposedly) have makes the objects or phenomena which elicit them instrumentally valuable. *The instrumentalist approach* identifies an object's 'aesthetic value' with its instrumental value as a means to providing an aesthetic experience. It can classify objects or phenomena as having more or less 'aesthetic (dis)value' according to how finally (dis)valuable the aesthetic experiences they afford are⁶⁷. An example of *the instrumentalist approach* is Beardsley's (1958) 'instrumentalist definition' of aesthetic value, which we discussed briefly in chapter three. This states the 'aesthetic value' of an aesthetic object is determined by the magnitude (that is, the unity, intensity, and attentiveness to complexity) of

⁶⁶ Specifically, 'aesthetic properties', which we discussed in chapter four, and 'aesthetic judgements' and 'aesthetic evaluations' which make claims to intersubjective validity, which we discussed in chapter three.

⁶⁷ Note that this is not equivalent to the view (sometimes termed 'aesthetic empiricism') that the aesthetic value of an object can only consist in the experience of its perceptible features. The aesthetic experience which two perceptually indiscernible objects (for example, Duchamp's *Fountain* and an ordinary urinal, or an original painting and an indiscernible forgery) afford may differ on account of, for example, beliefs one has about their authenticity or the points they make (Huddleston 2012 :712). Therefore, according to *the instrumentalist approach*, two perceptually indiscernible objects can have different aesthetic values as they elicit different aesthetic experiences.

the aesthetic experience it can produce, such experiences being valuable or worth having (Beardsley 1958: 531-3). In Beardsley's words,

“X has aesthetic value” means “X has the capacity to produce an aesthetic experience of some magnitude” (*ibid*: 533).

And,

“X has a greater aesthetic value than Y” means “X has the capacity to produce an aesthetic experience of greater magnitude (such an experience having more value) than that produced by Y” (*ibid*: 531).

Stecker also endorses *the instrumentalist approach*. However, he adds the following qualification:

‘Aesthetic value comes in two varieties. There is the intrinsic value of aesthetic experiences themselves by which I just mean that they are valuable in themselves. There is the instrumental value of objects capable of delivering aesthetic experience to those who understand them [*sic*]’ (Stecker 2006: 5).

However, in discussing Axiological Accounts in chapter three, we saw that some aesthetic experiences are not ‘intrinsically’ (or finally) (dis)valued by the person who has them. Some aesthetic experiences simply lack a valuing component (Levinson 2016: 39). Proponents of *the instrumentalist approach* therefore need to argue that those aesthetic experiences which are not finally *valued* by the experiencing subject are nevertheless finally *valuable* (from an objective point of view). According to the view I have defended, aesthetic experiences which are not finally (dis)valued by the person who has them will have a valence by virtue of their affective character. Proponents of *the instrumentalist approach* could adopt a hedonic theory of value and argue that experiences with net positive affect are finally valuable and experiences with net negative affect are finally disvaluable.

Making these adjustments, *the instrumentalist approach* implies:

‘X has aesthetic value’ means ‘X affords an aesthetic experience which is either finally valued by the person who has it or which qualifies as finally valuable because of its positive affective character (or both)’.

And

‘X has aesthetic disvalue’ means ‘X affords an aesthetic experience which is either finally disvalued by the person who has it or which qualifies as finally disvaluable because of its negative affective character (or both)’⁶⁸.

What of objects that produce aesthetic experiences which have complex valences, such as a negative valence due to a feeling of shock or disgust and a positive valence from being finally valued? A proponent of *the instrumentalist approach* might argue that the object which provokes this experience has both aesthetic disvalue (because of the negative affect it elicits) and aesthetic value (because of the final value placed on the experience of it). Alternatively, she might argue that, if the aesthetic experience has a net positive valence (once we factor in both the affect and the final value, assuming they are commensurable), then the object which elicits it only has aesthetic value. Whereas if the aesthetic experience has a net negative valence, then the object that produces it only has aesthetic disvalue.

Note that proponents of *the instrumentalist approach* would not identify the aesthetic *disvalue* of objects with their instrumental *disvalue* as means of producing aesthetic experiences (since an object which is instrumentally disvaluable in this sense would not produce *any* aesthetic experience). Rather, they would locate the ‘aesthetic *disvalue*’ of objects in their ‘instrumental *value*’ as means of producing aesthetic experiences which are finally disvalued or have a negative affective character (or both). There does not seem to be anything objectionable about this, but it needs spelling out – particularly given aesthetic disvalue seems to be something over and above (or below and beneath) the absence of aesthetic value⁶⁹.

An alternative to *the instrumentalist approach* states that objects have aesthetic value by virtue of their aesthetic properties (Stecker 2006: 5-9). This view – hereafter *the mereological approach* – states that aesthetic properties are evaluative⁷⁰ (or, at least, are those to which we refer using terms that are evaluative) and comprise the overall aesthetic (dis)value of the objects in which they figure (though their evaluative polarity may change depending on the

⁶⁸ This is to assume a hedonic theory of value.

⁶⁹ We can separate the question of what ‘grounds’ aesthetic value from the question of whether judgements of aesthetic value are entirely subjective or whether they permit of intersubjective validity. However, if such judgements are not entirely subjective, then proponents of *the instrumentalist approach* would need, at the very least, to say something about the ‘standard viewing conditions’ under which aesthetic experience of an object qualifies as an indicator of its aesthetic value.

⁷⁰ I defended the view that aesthetic properties and terms are evaluative in chapter four.

context⁷¹). A given aesthetic property ('elegance' or 'grotesqueness', for example) could, on this view, be described as *an* aesthetic value (and may have either a positive or negative evaluative polarity). In 'General Criteria and Reasons in Aesthetics' Frank Sibley seems to endorse *the mereological approach*. He writes,

'there are a whole host of properties that inherently possess a positive aesthetic polarity when applied to works of art [...] Similarly, there are a host of inherently negative properties, like garish, sentimental, bombastic, and ugly. If these properties are not themselves grounds of aesthetic value (positive or negative respectively) in the realm of the arts, I cannot conceivably see what could be' (Sibley 2001a: 105).

I will not here attempt to resolve the question of which conception of aesthetic value we should adopt. In order to answer this, we need to first resolve the contentious issue of whether the value things have *as* art (their 'artistic value') is distinct from their 'aesthetic value' (see Lopes 2011). I have argued aesthetic properties are analytically prior to aesthetic experience. I then defended, with qualification, the *artistic-value view* that 'aesthetic properties' are those which comprise the value artworks have *qua* works of art. Now, if 'artistic value' (the value things have *as* art) is not distinct from aesthetic value, then the *artistic value view* of aesthetic properties entails *the mereological approach* to aesthetic value (at least within the domain of artworks). The former states aesthetic properties are those which comprise the value of artworks *as* works of art; the latter that an object's aesthetic properties comprise its aesthetic value. If the value artworks have *as* works of art is not distinct from 'aesthetic value', then these two positions are equivalent (at least within the domain of artworks).

Furthermore, if 'artistic value' and 'aesthetic value' are not distinct, then we could not, without incurring the charge of circularity, adopt *the instrumentalist approach* to 'aesthetic value'. If we did, we would be explaining 'aesthetic value' in terms of 'aesthetic experience', 'aesthetic experience' in terms of 'aesthetic properties', and 'aesthetic properties' in terms of 'artistic value' (which, if Lopes is right, is not distinct from 'aesthetic value'). Put otherwise, if 'artistic value' is not distinct from 'aesthetic value' then it would be circular to adopt the hybrid account of aesthetic experience, *the artistic value view* of aesthetic properties, and *the instrumentalist approach* to aesthetic value. Note that if, as I have argued, aesthetic properties are analytically prior to aesthetic experience, then this circularity cannot be avoided by adopting an account of

⁷¹ As Sibley writes, 'where there is possible interaction in a complex whole, as in art-works, what *in vacuo* is inherently an aesthetic merit may *itself*, in conjunction with other inherently positive features in that complex, become a *defect*' (Sibley 2001a: 107).

aesthetic experience which does not advert to aesthetic properties (since there are no such plausible accounts).

Consequently, if artistic value and aesthetic value are not distinct, and if we want to adopt *the instrumentalist approach* to aesthetic value, then we would need to dispense with the *artistic-value view* of aesthetic properties in favour of an alternative. As mentioned, the hybrid account of aesthetic experience is compatible with other accounts of aesthetic properties, excluding the view that aesthetic properties are those which figure in aesthetic experience (which, as we have seen, is problematic in its own right⁷²).

The issue of whether artistic value and aesthetic value are distinct cuts right to the core of philosophical aesthetics. If we define terms qualified by 'aesthetic' ('aesthetic properties', 'aesthetic experience', 'aesthetic judgements' and so on) in relation to 'aesthetic value', either directly or indirectly, and identify 'aesthetic value' with the value artworks have *as* works of art, then we locate the network of terms qualified by 'aesthetic' firmly within the domain of art (or the arts). Some might regard this as problematic as the concept of *the aesthetic* is broader and more expansive than *the artistic*. As we have seen, aesthetic experiences are very pervasive and are not restricted to our experiences of art. Something similar could be said of aesthetic properties and aesthetic value (and other terms qualified by 'aesthetic'): these terms do not apply exclusively, or even primarily, to artworks or our engagement with them. Those who are in favour of reducing *the aesthetic* to *the artistic* must satisfactorily explain how the former can be defined in terms of the latter and yet comprise a more expansive domain.

In conclusion, we have achieved greater clarity about aesthetic experience and broached the important issue of how it might be recruited to enhance the character of our lives. In doing so, we have explored one way the intensional definition of aesthetic experience could inform scientific research. However, there remain unresolved questions about the relation between 'aesthetic experience' and 'aesthetic value' and whether the latter is distinct from 'artistic value'. More generally, it remains to be seen whether it is possible to adequately and non-circularly define terms that are qualified by 'aesthetic' without adverting to art (or the arts). My suspicion is that it is not: in order to adequately and non-circularly define terms qualified by 'aesthetic', we need to treat one of them as analytically prior and explicate it by reference to art (or the arts). This comprises one avenue of further research: is 'artistic value' distinct from

⁷² The problems it faces are: (i) that we can detect aesthetic properties outwith aesthetic experience, so they do not figure only in our aesthetic experiences; and (ii) that mode-oriented accounts of aesthetic experience, which do not advert to aesthetic properties, are unsuccessful.

‘aesthetic value’ and what implications does this have for how we can define other terms that are qualified by ‘aesthetic’?

Another avenue of further research involves using the intensional definition to experimentally investigate aesthetic experience. We have discussed this in the context of investigating a relation between mindfulness and enriching aesthetic experiences of nature and everyday life. Empirical research could additionally investigate the relation between aesthetic experience and well-being. In addition, given some aesthetic experiences seem to arrest ruminative thought, there may be a role for (positively valenced) aesthetic experiences to treat sub-clinical and clinical mental health ailments (either separately from or in tandem with mindfulness). Additionally, there is a burgeoning literature on the health benefits of experiencing nature (see Keniger et. al. 2013). Further research could establish whether these benefits result from the aesthetic experience of nature (or whether non-aesthetic experiences of nature yield the same benefits). The intensional definition of aesthetic experience could be used to investigate this.

Buddhist perspectives on aesthetic experience also require further clarification. Some Buddhist texts seem to strongly advise against having aesthetic experiences (though this term is not used). Consider the Fire Sermon (*Adittapariyaya Sutta*):

‘Monks, the All is aflame. What All is aflame? The eye is aflame. Forms are aflame. Consciousness at the eye is aflame. Contact at the eye is aflame. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the eye — experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain — that too is aflame. Aflame with what? Aflame with the fire of passion, the fire of aversion, the fire of delusion. Aflame, I tell you, with birth, aging & death, with sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, & despairs [...] Seeing thus, the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with the eye, disenchanted with forms, disenchanted with consciousness at the eye, disenchanted with contact at the eye. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the eye, experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain: With that, too, he grows disenchanted’ (Thanissaro 1993).

The Buddha is reported to describe the other four sense modalities (as well as the mind and mental states) in similar terms. The basic point seems to be that we should maintain a vigilance over all aspects of experience in order to avoid succumbing to psychological processes which, on a Buddhist analysis, perpetuate suffering. Further research is required to determine whether this proscribes all aesthetic experience or whether there is a role for mindfulness to modulate

those features of aesthetic experience which may be problematic from a Buddhist standpoint (if indeed there are such features).

To summarise, further avenues of research arising from this investigation are three-fold and include: firstly, establishing whether 'artistic value' is distinct from 'aesthetic value' and, if not, what this implies for how we can conceptualise 'aesthetic experience', 'aesthetic properties' and the network of other terms qualified by 'aesthetic'; secondly, using the intensional definition of aesthetic experience to conduct empirical research; and thirdly, clarifying Buddhist perspectives on aesthetic experience.

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