THE AESTHETIC BASIS:
A REENACTMENT ACCOUNT OF THE AESTHETIC

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Abstract

My thesis is concerned with the issue of defining the aesthetic as applied to works of art. The concept of "the aesthetic" can be applied to aesthetic items in different categories – they are, mainly, aesthetic judgments, aesthetic experiences, aesthetic properties, aesthetic values, etc. These items are thought to be inter-definable; accordingly, understanding one of them would be enough for understanding the aesthetic. My thesis aims at finding the aesthetic basis for the concept of the aesthetic. I closely focus on two aesthetic items – aesthetic properties and aesthetic experience – and defend the latter. I firstly explain how aestheticians should argue for the aesthetic basis; then I move on to explain the two aesthetic items as well as spelling out in detail how the two items be taken as the basis; finally, I argue that aesthetic experience is the most promising ground for the aesthetic, by bringing my own theory on the table.

Chapter One: The Aesthetic – An Introduction

Art critics and aestheticians usually use terms like 'aesthetically good' and 'aesthetically pleasing' to describe artworks – "Monet's paintings are aesthetically pleasing to look at." Of course, terms in the form of "aesthetically-something" can be used for non-art objects – the most common way might be for human beings. The concept of the aesthetic, however, is a thin concept like 'morally good'. The concept can surely be defined in a more specific way. The central aim of my thesis is to find a sensible way to define the aesthetic of art.

What is the aesthetic? In *Reflections on Poetry,* Alexander Baumgarten introduced the term 'aesthetic' – which comes from the word that means 'perceive' in Greek – to refer to "the science of perception."[1] Immanuel Kant picked up the term, and since then it has become widely used to designate the experience of the beautiful and the sublime. Contemporary aestheticians have extended the term to cover "unified", "balanced",[2] "graceful",[3] emotional states like "sad",[4] and even negative qualities like disgust.[5] What should count as aesthetic? It seems to be a question of how fine-grained we can understand the concept. Assuming that beauty and balance are aesthetic concepts, we still face a meta-question, namely: how to define 'beauty' and 'balance' – through our experience, by merely looking at the structural properties, or through other approaches? The same happens in defining 'the aesthetic'.

[1] Baumgarten 1735/1954: 78.
[2] See Sibley 1959; Levinson 2006.
[3] See Sibley 1974; Goldman 1995; Carroll 1999; Levinson 2003; Stecker 2005.
[4] See Scruton 1974; Zangwill 2001.
[5] See Korsmeyer 2011.

A starting point in defining the aesthetic is thinking of how we use the term. The term 'aesthetic' is usually applied to aesthetic items in different categories – for example, *aesthetic judgments, aesthetic attitude, aesthetic experiences, aesthetic properties, aesthetic values,* and etc. These items are thought to be inter-definable, so that defining one of them, roughly speaking, would be enough for understanding the concept of the aesthetic.[6] A seemingly plausible story of defining 'aesthetic' would be something like this. For example, when you are perceiving Hiroshige's Ukiyo-e painting, *Kameido Umeyashiki* (1857), it is, loosely speaking, fair to say that you are having an *aesthetic experience*. Based on the experience, you can make an *aesthetic judgment* that "the painting is beautiful". And if you are asked for the reason of your judgment, you can fairly say that because the painting displays *aesthetic properties,* say, properties of being unified and balanced. And finally, more importantly, we can define "unified" and "balanced" in non-aesthetic terms like having some particular shapes and colors.

The example shows the connection between aesthetic items from different categories; and that the aesthetic can be defined in non-aesthetic terms. It, nevertheless, does not tell you which item should be taken as basic. Why is that the painting is beautiful? Because of the *experience* we have, the *judgment* we make, or the *properties* the painting processes? Which one is the most basic item among all? We have at least three proposals in hand: we can either look at (1) our experience, (2) our judgment, or (3) properties the painting has. If we take aesthetic judgment as the basis for defining other aesthetic items, the proposal,

[6] See Goldman 2001, De Clercq 2002a, and Budd 2008 for the inter-definability.

according to Malcolm Budd, is like this:

> If [...] the basic status is assigned to the idea of aesthetic judgment, the other categories might be defined in terms of it just as easily:
>
> - An aesthetic value is a value of a kind ascribed by an aesthetic judgment.
> - An aesthetic pleasure is a pleasure taken in the apparent perception or imaginative realization of a value rightly or wrongly ascribed to the object of pleasure by a positive aesthetic judgment.
> - An aesthetic attitude is an attitude towards an item of a kind that is conducive to an aesthetic judgment about the item being well founded.
> - An aesthetic property is a property ascribed to an item by an aesthetic judgment.[7]

Treating aesthetic judgment as the basis used to be fashionable in the 18th century. Philosophers of that era tended to hold that we have a faculty for making judgment – the empiricist calls it 'taste' and the rationalist calls it 'reason'. Aestheticians nowadays, on the other hand, either go for aesthetic experience or aesthetic properties. However, the disagreement between philosophers is not as simple as I implied, and it needs to be spelled out in more detail.

In the following chapters I focus on the debate between two popular groups: aestheticians (1) who regard aesthetic properties as the basis; and (2) who regard aesthetic experience as the basis. For convenience I call them *properties-based theorists* and *experience-based theorists*. In chapter 2 I explain in detail the disagreement between the two groups, as well as the general direction of my argument. In chapter 3 I focus on the properties-based theory; I start with the recent criticism of this theory, pointing out the limitation of said criticism,

[7] Budd 2008: 18.

and then present my own worries. In chapter 4 I focus on experience-based theory; I first address the criticism against the experience-based theory, which I then reject. In chapter 5, I suggest a new way to look at the whole debate, which is, to look at the origin of aesthetic value. In chapter 6, the final chapter of my thesis, I present my own account, which is an experience-based account of the aesthetic basis. I argue that, after all, we should take aesthetic experience as the basis for defining the aesthetic. I explain why that is the most sensible and plausible choice among all.

Chapter Two: In Search of Aesthetic Value: An Introduction to the Direction

So what exactly is the debate between the properties-based theorist and the experience-based theorist? There are two kinds of conflicts. The first one starts from the claim that one of these items does not exist at all. Derek Matravers, for instance, argues against positing aesthetic properties can be based merely on looking at the non-aesthetic properties – "positing an "extra layer" of properties would be explanatorily redundant."[8] In my thesis I am not going to examine the first conflict. I assume that there are such things as aesthetic properties.

The second conflict, the conflict I want to settle, starts with an agreement – which is: a central aim of aesthetic investigation is searching for aesthetic value. Or, at least, aestheticians have to give an account of aesthetic value, if they want to talk about the relation between it and other values – like artistic value,[9] moral value,[10] and cognitive value.[11] However, aesthetic value is not considered a solid ground for understanding the aesthetic. For it itself is a mystical concept in the sense that we cannot describe it directly; and it seems there is no way to define it in non-aesthetic terms. So aesthetic value itself cannot be the basis for defining the aesthetic. In fact, all analytic philosophers seem to agree with my assumption here. Aesthetic value, accordingly, has to rely on other aesthetic items. In the context of this thesis, it either lies in aesthetic properties or aesthetic value. I will briefly present these two positions.

[8] Matravers 2005: 208. For those who are interested in this line of arguing, see Levinson 2005 for his criticism to Matravers. And also see Matravers 1996 and 2003 for his account of aesthetic experience.
[9] See, most famously, Danto 1964; see also Lopes 2011 and Hanson 2013, for recent debates.
[10] See, for example, Stecker 2005b; see also Sauchelli 2016 for more recent debates.
[11] See, for example, Aumann 2014.

2.1. Motivations for the properties-based theorist

Some philosophers – especially those who are not in the debate – simply take it for granted that aesthetic value should lie in aesthetic properties. It is seemingly a promising way to explain the aesthetic value of an object. For example, to think of, again, our evaluation of Hiroshige's Ukiyo-e painting, it seems that what we were doing was identifying the aesthetically valuable properties of the painting, and defining them in non-aesthetic terms (shapes and colors); the aesthetic experience and the aesthetic judgment play no role in explaining why the painting has aesthetic value.

This line of reasoning, as I shall say, has two motivations. The first one is a theoretical concern. Some philosophers tend to think that the debate in aesthetics is parallel to that of meta-ethics; and assume that aesthetic value lies in aesthetic properties, just like some received views in meta-ethics.[12] The second one has roots in the historical development of early analytic aesthetics. Frank Sibley, one of the earliest aestheticians in the analytic tradition, simply connected aesthetic value to aesthetic properties. He distinguished three types of evaluative terms: (1) *purely evaluative* terms, (2) *evaluation-added* terms, and (3) *descriptive merit* terms. And the later two are corresponding to different particular kinds of properties. For instance, *evaluation-added* terms are "both descriptive, as indicating that a thing had a quality, P, and evaluative, in indicating that the speaker values or disvalues

[12] For example, Hanson 2014's article for the *Encyclopedia of aesthetics* is meta-ethics-oriented; De Clercq told me his aesthetic theory is parallel to his moral system, and aesthetic value is identical to aesthetic properties in his account.

the quality P."[13] His idea became a central discussion among aestheticians.

2.2. Motivations for the experience-based theorist

A second approach in explaining the nature of aesthetic value consists in emphasizing the value of aesthetic experience. Monroe Beardsley, following Clive Bell's experiential theory,[14] agrees that aesthetic experience is valuable in itself; and influenced by John Dewey,[15] Beardsley holds that aesthetic experience is unified or coherent, and complete, in the sense that aesthetic experience is reliable for aesthetic evaluation – "each of us can test in his own experience," [16] as he puts it. One motivation for proposing such a theory is that it is intuitive that aesthetic experience is valuable – we look at Hiroshige's Ukiyo-e painting because it is pleasurable to look at. Another motivation is that, from the reasoning of the early Beardsley, the content of aesthetic experience is so rich that it explains aesthetic value well; also it is a reliable input for making aesthetic judgments.

The implication from above is that aesthetic value lies in aesthetic experience; and, in principle, we do not need to talk about aesthetic properties at all for explaining the value of an artwork. However, things might not be that easy. Aestheticians do love to talk about aesthetic properties; and they usually appeal to aesthetic properties when they come to explain the value of an artwork. More interestingly, the idea of appealing to aesthetic properties can be found also in the experience-based theorist – for instance, when

[13] Sibley 1974: 6.
[14] Bell 1958 [1914].
[15] Dewey 1934.
[16] Beardsley 1958.

Beardsley talks about aesthetic value, he seems to suggest that aesthetic value lies in the disposition of an object:

> Aesthetic value seems to me as equally legitimate (and much more important) concept, namely, the capacity to provide valuable experience of a certain sort.[17]

The above passage was written before George Dickie's criticism to his account of aesthetic experience; Beardsley changed his mind after that.[18] The above passage might be showing Beardsley in fact had it in his mind that aesthetic value also lies in the artwork. And actually, if we read through all of Beardsley's works, we can find some hints. Here, I think, is his proposal, as it can be found in his overlooked paper "Experience and Value in Moritz Geiger's Aesthetics".[19] Beardsley starts off with the discussion of Sibley's idea of aesthetic value[20] – which I mentioned in above – and introduces Geiger's phenomenologist approach. There are two features of Geiger's account of aesthetic value that are relevant to our discussion:

> They are phenomenally objective; that is, they appear as qualities of objects: it is the work of art itself (or the natural object) that is delicate or tawdry [...] They are grasped in "immediate" experience; that is, an aesthetic value is encountered in hearing, in looking, in reading.[21]

> [A]esthetic enjoyment is a good thing, is worth having, is desirable [...] Its goodness lies partly, [Geiger] says, in the aesthetic values that are enjoyed [...] But quite apart from this, aesthetic enjoyment can be intrinsically valuable (this is his second proposition) because of "the release from interestedness and selfish considerations;

[17] Beardsley 1962: 620. Note that the paper was written before Dickie's 1965 criticism.
[18] For George Dickie's criticism, see his 1965. And for Beardsley's revised version see his 1982.
[19] Beardsley 1985. But note that the paper was written around 1968 for the English translation of Geiger's aesthetics. However, it turned out the book did not materialize.
[20] *Ibid.*: 11.
[21] *ibid.*: 12; also see Geiger 1913 for the original text.

> and all deep aesthetic enjoyment simply because of the value of this depth for consciousness."[22]

In other words, for Geiger, first of all, aesthetic value lies in aesthetic properties; and secondly, aesthetic experience is also intrinsically valuable. Regardless of whether Beardsley agrees with Geiger's approach, both of them have to answer a couple of questions. Can value in aesthetic experience be aesthetic value? If yes, can aesthetic value lie in both aesthetic properties and aesthetic experience? There are contemporary aestheticians who seem also to propose a hybrid account of aesthetic value, and claim themselves to be experience-based theorist. Is it a desirable and workable approach to embrace? These questions, which I consider to be important and not widely discussed, will be addressed in the following.

2.3. Three assumptions of this thesis

The above can be summarized in three points: (1) contemporary aestheticians have to give a plausible account of aesthetic value, since it is one of the central aims of aesthetic investigation; (2) aesthetic value itself is a somewhat enigmatic concept in the sense that it has to lie in either aesthetic properties, aesthetic experience, or both; and, from (1) and (2), it will be fair to say (3) theories that fail to account for aesthetic value in terms of options offered in (2) should be regarded as flawed. In the follows the debate will only be centered on these three assumptions.

[22] *ibid.*: 10.

2.4. The limitation of the aesthetic

Before proceeding to the main debate, it is worth noting that it is not necessary to argue along with the above three assumptions. I must say there are limitations.

One worry for this approach is that we cannot directly talk about aesthetic value – as I mentioned before – and, more importantly, it seems that to talk about aesthetic value is question begging. Can we talk of aesthetic experience and aesthetic properties independent of touching aesthetic value itself? It might be questionable. Try to think of what Plato says in *Symposium* that beauty is an eternal good.[23] The pre-theoretical assumption of aesthetic value is that beauty is an eternal and unchanging Form; and aesthetic value, accordingly, must lie in the highest Form. So to ask if an object is beautiful/aesthetic becomes a question of asking if the object shares the Form. Following this pre-theoretical cornerstone, 18th century philosopher Lord Shaftesbury proposes the idea of the "internal" mind which is a faculty connecting us with the Form.[24] Since aesthetic value lies in the Form, to know what is the aesthetic becomes question of what does the "internal" mind judge – aesthetic judgment, naturally, is the most fundamental item.

Or consider what Pseudo-Dionysius says in *The Divine Names* that "the Good is also praised by the name 'Light'," [25] and the One, the Good, and the Beautiful are the same. [26] In the Middles Ages philosophy, God is the highest source of all value; aesthetic value,

[23] *Symposium* 211d, in J. M. Cooper & D. S. Hutchinson's edition: *Plato: Complete Works* (1997).
[24] For the claim that the beauty and the good are the same, see Cooper 1711/1999: 415; and for the "internal" mind, see *ibid.* 331.
[25] Pseudo-Dionysius 74.
[26] *ibid.* 77.

again, is inevitably discussed within this pre-theoretical framework. "Radiance", as being associated with God, becomes a kind of aesthetic value.[27] The implication is that "sadness", "melancholy" and "disgust" cannot be aesthetic at all.

A conclusion can be fairly drawn from the history is that we have certain assumptions on the nature of aesthetic value before theorizing the aesthetic. From the teaching of Plato and Pseudo-Dionysius we see that aesthetic value must lie in the highest Good; and technically we do not even have to speak of the existence of aesthetic experience and aesthetic properties – let alone the value in aesthetic properties, as many contemporary aestheticians propose. And what counts as a thick aesthetic concept, like "radiance" in the above, depends also on the pre-theoretical assumption. So the question that should be raised before going into the debate is: what is the common ground shared among contemporary philosophers?

In his relatively recent essay, "In Search of The Aesthetic", Roger Scruton addresses a similar concern. As he points out, if you are a Marxist like Pierre Bourdieu and Terry Eagleton, "the concept of the aesthetic is not even a piece of respectable philosophy [but] a piece of ideology, in the Marxist sense of that term [and therefore] aesthetic value [is] a particular ' moment ' in the unfolding of bourgeois culture, to be accounted for in terms of the transformations that produced the modern capitalist economy."[28] An implication is that aesthetic value can only be instrumental – as opposed to Plato and Pseudo-Dionysius's idea

[27] See also Eco 1988: 115, for Aquinas's commentary on *The Divine Names*.
[28] Scruton 2007: 234; also see Bourdieu 1984 and Eagleton 1990, for the original ideas.

that it is intrinsic.[29]

The implication from the above is that, if we want to define the aesthetic, we have to assume that aesthetics is an independent subject. And our assumption (3) that "theories that fail to account for aesthetic value should be regarded as flawed" should be understood as "theories that fail to account for our intuitions about aesthetic value should be regarded as flawed". In follows I will firstly explain how the properties-based theory fails to account for our intuitions about aesthetic value.

[29] See Stecker 2006: 2.

Chapter Three: Aesthetic Basis – Properties-Based Theory

The properties-based theorist suggests that we can define and understand the concept of the aesthetic by focusing on aesthetic properties that are in works of art – aesthetic properties is the basis for the aesthetic. One way to understand the aesthetic basis is that one of the aesthetic items can be defined by another, but not vice versa. So for the properties-based theorist, aesthetic experience can be defined from aesthetic properties but not vice versa. In this chapter I start off with a recent defense of the properties-based theory. Proponents included Noël Carroll, Peter Kivy, and Berys Gaut.[30] Gaut's approach is to define aesthetic value by artistic value; and what bears the artistic value is the artistic properties of an artwork.[31] This approach avoids certain kinds of problems but suffers from others. Since I do not want to commit myself to the view that aesthetic value is identical to artistic value, I set aside Gaut's approach.

Kivy and Carroll insist on drawing a distinction between the aesthetic value and artistic value.[32] In the following I will only focus on Noël Carroll's account. Kivy's account of the aesthetic is narrower than Carroll's – as Kivy puts it: "Carroll may not want to follow me here, that the aesthetic experience of an artwork just is the experience of its aesthetic properties"[33] – disputing Carroll's would be enough to reject Kivy's as well.

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[30] See Carroll 2000; 2002; Kivy 2011; and Gaut 2007

[31] Gaut wrote: "the aesthetic properties of *W* are *W*'s evaluative properties that have aesthetic value (that is, that give *W* its value qua work of art). And to adopt an aesthetic attitude towards *W* is to consider *W* qua work of art. To put it overly simply: the notions of (wide) aesthetic value and artistic value turn out to be one and the same" (2007: 34-45).

[32] Kivy 2011:14; Carroll 2012.

[33] Kivy 2011: 30.

As I said, one way to understand the aesthetic basis is that one of the aesthetic items can be defined by another, but not vice versa. So now I shall move on to the two aesthetic items – aesthetic properties and aesthetic experience – that we are interested in. Noël Carroll's definitions of the two items are as follows:

> [A]n experience of an artwork is aesthetic if it involves attention to the form of the work or to its expressive or other aesthetic properties.[34]

> Aesthetic properties emerge from [...] lower order properties; they are dispositions to promote impressions or effects on appropriately backgrounded creatures with our perceptual and imaginative capabilities.[35]

To know if aesthetic experience can be defined by appealing to aesthetic properties, we have to look at the meaning of 'attention to the form', which Carroll defines as:

> Attention to the form of an art work with understanding is a sufficient condition for having an aesthetic experience [...] Attention to the form of a work is attention to its design – to the way the work is intended to work.[36]

In Carroll's account of the aesthetic, the aesthetic value of an artwork can be explained solely by its aesthetic properties. Aesthetic experience is defined by aesthetic properties in the sense that it is merely an attention to the aesthetic properties of the work; and attention is a sufficient condition for having an aesthetic experience. An implication of his account is that, as a dispositionalist, what is disposed from a work is merely its content rather than any psychological states; therefore, Carroll concludes that "[a]esthetic experience can be identified in terms of its content, without reference to affective states such as pleasure,

[34] Carroll 2004: 414. Also see his 2000:198 for the basic idea; and his 2002: 164 for explaining his account of aesthetic experience in detail; and 2012 for his recent remarks.
[35] Carroll 2002: 166.
[36] *ibid.*: 165. Here Carroll follows his teacher, George Dickie's conception of attention, namely that there is no interested attention; see Dickie 1964.

disinterested or otherwise or to evaluative postures, such as finding experiences of said properties to be valuable for their own sake."[37]

Therefore, to show that Carroll's account of the aesthetic is wrong is to show that experience might include something else that is also aesthetically valuable. And if so, firstly, it shows that aesthetic experience cannot be solely defined by aesthetic properties; and secondly, it also shows that Carroll's account fails to account for the nature of aesthetic value, and hence that his account fails to take aesthetic properties as the basis for the aesthetic. The most common approach is to show that aesthetic experience includes pleasure.

3.1. Aesthetic experience is aesthetically valuable

Let me now pass to Levinson's criticism. I shall briefly present it, reject it on Carroll's behalf, and present my own criticisms to Carroll's view.

Levinson's criticism is that it is intuitive that "aesthetic experience is normally experience that is *rewarding*, *valuable*, or *worthwhile*".[38] In defense of Carroll let me say, firstly, that it seems that Carroll does not deny that aesthetic experiences can be valuable in some way; he merely holds that "pleasure or enjoyment is not a necessary condition for aesthetic experience."[39] Secondly, even if Carroll agrees that there is valuable aesthetic experience,

[37] *ibid.*: 167.
[38] Levinson 2016: 31.
[39] Carroll 2002: 149.

it does not mean that he has to agree that the value in aesthetic experience is valuable in an aesthetic way – the value can be merely an extra effect of some sort. An example that comes to my head is that, listening to Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* might bring about a religiously valuable effect; and, in fact, it was one Bach's purposes. According to a comment he left in his copy of the Bible in *I Chronicles* 25: "[t]his chapter is the true foundation of all church music pleasing to God."[40] And the effect might even be brought to those who are not religious. Nietzsche said to his friend Rohde that he listened to the *St. Matthew Passion* with "immeasurable astonishment"; and "[w]hoever has completely forgotten the meaning of Christianity hears it here truly as the gospel. This is the music of the negation of the will without any reminder of asceticism."[41] What Nietzsche tries to say is that music can be religiously valuable even if a person is not religious at all. Carroll can definitely take this line of thought.

Levinson might or might not have my above concern, but he has put forward another, which is: experiences of works of art are not merely rewarding, valuable, or worthwhile, but *aesthetically* valuable. To show that pleasure is aesthetically valuable and necessary for having an aesthetic experience, Levinson asks: "[w]hy should aspiring aesthetes *want* to have aesthetic experiences, if they involve no positive value or desirable affect? [...] Wouldn't it be more honest to just call such noting a *perceptual experience*, or even more simply, a *perception*, in which some property, formal or aesthetic, is being apprehended?"[42] Again, Levinson thinks that it is intuitively true and he thinks that it demands that Carroll

[40] Leaver 1985: 29.
[41] Bertram 2009: 52.
[42] Levinson 2016: 33.

give a justification for it.

3.2. Affect-neutral works of art

My opinion, however, is that Levinson does not realize Carroll's motivation. As Carroll points out, "not all aesthetic experiences are expected or intended to promote pleasure in any non-stipulative sense of the notion of pleasure. Some are expected to promote disgust and that is what connoisseurs expect of it."[43] Levinson's reply is that "experiences of the disorderly, the ugly, and the disgusting [can be] conceived as *kinds* of aesthetic experience,"[44] but they are still positively valuable and desirable in some way, and the value is what the artist wants to bring about. But it is fair to say that Carroll's motivation is to talk about artworks that bring no affect at all, rather than merely pointing out the importance of negative affects – as he puts it, Cubist paintings "are not necessarily connected to pleasure."[45] And we still call the experience of those works aesthetic experience.

The moral Carroll wants to draw from the example is that for those Cubist painters, bringing pleasure and affects is not their main concern; and therefore they can only experience the work in an affect-neutral way. If so, what Levinson can claim, at most, is that for some or most artworks, having pleasure or affect or satisfaction is necessary for having the aesthetic experience; but not for all. And if it were true, it would be fair to

[43] Carroll 2002: 149.
[44] Levinson 2016: 32.
[45] Carroll 2002: 149.

conclude that for some artworks, aesthetic value lies merely in the object, rather than in the pleasure or affects the work affords. And if there is such a kind of work, the best explanation is that the pleasure and affect are non-aesthetic – they might be religious, as I said before.

Of course, Levinson could say there is no work that brings no affect or satisfaction at all.[46] Levinson can say, since most of the works he has seen aim to bring valuable experience to the viewers, according to IBE, all works aim to bring aesthetically valuable experience. Carroll has to provide a counter-example to defend for his account. And I think Carroll does have some examples in mind, when he argues for his minimalist account of aesthetic experience. For instance, look at Carroll's treatment of what he calls non-perceptual artworks; as he points out, "one can experience the formal properties of works such as John Cage's *4'33"* on the basis of a reliable report without ever encountering—and, therefore, without perceiving—them directly."[47]

What exact kind of pleasure or affect do the four minutes thirty-three seconds of silence bring? It seems there is not much difference between being informed of, and actually attending to, the performance. If so, Cage's *4'33"* is a perfect example for illustrating the idea of affect-neutral works. Robert Stecker's criticism of Carroll is that "his conception of form is not obviously aesthetic [if] form *is* an aesthetic property that does not always require a perceptual experience for its appreciation."[48] What Stecker wants to say is that

[46] Levinson seems to take this line of thought, going along with Stecker's treatment of aesthetically relevant artworks; see Stecker 2005: 49.
[47] Carroll 2004: 415.
[48] Stecker 2006: 6.

Cage's *4'33"* might not be an aesthetically relevant artwork to begin with; rather, it is a non-aesthetic but artistic work. If Carroll, as I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, insists on drawing a distinction between the aesthetic and the artistic, he should be aware of this.

Stecker's analysis is a fair one – it demands Carroll to explain more. But then the discussion will become about the distinction between the aesthetic and the artistic, which is interesting, but beyond the reach of this thesis. Assuming Carroll is right that Cage's *4'33"* is an aesthetic work, I still do not think that he succeeded in showing that *4'33"* is affect-neutral. My criticism starts with an assumption that is held by Carroll, as well as most of the philosophers involved in the debate. Carroll holds that a prior condition for having an aesthetic experience is to know the authorial intention of the artwork; as he puts it: "the artistic form of the artwork is the ensemble of choices intended to realize the point or purpose of the artwork."[49] Let's assume *4'33"* is an aesthetic piece as Carroll says. My concern is that Carroll does not fully grasp the purpose and artistic choice of Cage's *4'33"*; and this is a point that neither Levinson nor Stecker take into account.

Carroll is right that the point of the work "is to deconstruct the privileged position of *music* in the music/noise couplet and to alert the listener to the aural richness that surrounds her at any given moment."[50] What Carroll fails to realize, however, is the affect Cage wants to bring about from his *4'33"*, which is, as Cage himself said, a Zen Buddhist tranquility:

> I was just then in the flush of my early contact with Oriental philosophy. It was out of that that my interest in silence naturally developed: I mean it's almost

[49] Carroll 2004: 415; also see his 1999: 143.
[50] Carroll 2004: 415. see also Kostelanetz 2003: 65.

> transparent. If you have, as you do in India, nine permanent emotions and the center one is the one without color—the others are white or black—and tranquility is in the center and freedom from likes and dislikes. It stands to reason, the absence of activity which is also characteristically Buddhist.[51]

So actually the expected affect of *4'33"* is the tranquility of Mind. Or, to put it in another way, the four minutes thirty-three seconds of silence should afford us a kind of meditational pleasure or satisfaction. This shows that *4'33"* is not an affect-neutral work. Carroll might respond that one does not have to have the meditational experience; what she has to do is just to realize the purpose of the work is to bring about meditational experience. However, in the case of *4'33",* the meditational experience is identical or at least a big part of the aesthetic experience of the work. The implication is that this forces Carroll to agree that one can have a meditational experience by merely reading the instructions on how to meditate – which is counter-intuitive to me.

Cage's example has two implications: first, it forces Carroll to come up with another counter-example; and second, it puts pressure on Carroll's positive argument for affect-neutral experience. In his 2010 book, Carroll proposes an example to show that, intuitively, we can have an aesthetic experience without having any sort of affect:

> For example, one might take note of the angularity of Katharine Hepburn's body, her gestures, her facial structure, and her way of speaking and, in addition, realize how this all "fits" with the "edginess" that her characters are meant to project; and yet one may take no pleasure, nor suffer any other affect while doing so. On what grounds would it be denied that this is an aesthetic experience? And if it is not an aesthetic experience, what sort is it?[52]

[51] Kostelanetz 2003: 66.
[52] Carroll 2010: 81.

Levinson's criticism is that: "[w]ell, it might be a cognitive experience, a perceptual experience, an analytical experience, an informative experience, and so on. It's not as if no other plausible labels are available."[53] The intuition behind Levinson's criticism can in fact be explained by my above example of meditational experience – we would not say we are having a meditational experience by merely reading instructions on how to meditate. In the example, Carroll wants to show that, for all cases, we can have an aesthetic experience without taking any affect from the experience.

Nevertheless, if Carroll's example was intuitively appealing, given his assumption that "the artistic form of the artwork is the ensemble of choices intended to realize the point or purpose of the artwork,"[54] he would have to agree with the following scenario as well:

> One might read Cage's interviews and instructions on how to meditate; and, in addition, realize how this all "fits" with the "tranquility" that Cage's *4'33"* meant to project; and yet one may take no pleasure, nor suffer any other affect while doing so. On what grounds would it be denied that this is a meditational experience? And if it is not a meditational experience, what sort of experience is it?

It seems intuitive to me that the experience mentioned above is not a meditational one. It demands Carroll to abandon this way of arguing.

I hope to have shown that Carroll fails to provide cases of affect-neutral works. And if

[53] Levinson 2016: 34. For the original text of Carroll's example, see his 2010: 81.
[54] Carroll 2004: 415.

there is no such thing as an affect-neutral work, it will be difficult for one to claim that aesthetic value lies in aesthetic properties, rather than in aesthetic experience. I have also shown that Carroll fails to give a possible argument for his minimalist account of aesthetic experience. And if the minimalist account is implausible, we have no reason to believe that aesthetic value lies merely in the aesthetic properties of the art object.

As I said earlier, Carroll's failure would also be Kivy's, since Kivy takes an even narrower view on aesthetic properties and aesthetic experience – it seems fair to say that my criticism against Carroll is forceful against Kivy as well. And in fact my criticism might also have a certain force against Gaut's account as well. As the latter would lead to a debate concerning the relation between aesthetic and artistic properties, I will not pursue it.

3.3. Some alternatives for the properties-based theory

In this section I try to provide some alternative ways of thinking. It seems to me that there is one way for the properties-based theorist to escape my criticism. It is fair to say properties-based theorists suffer mainly because they commit themselves to the assumption that the aesthetic value of an artwork is more or less determined by the intention of the artist and the purpose of the work. As Carroll puts it: "the artistic form of the artwork is the ensemble of choices intended to realize the point or purpose of the artwork;"[55] and the value of the artwork lies in its formal properties. What bothers the properties-based theorist is that the purpose of an artwork is experiential-related.

[55] Carroll 2004: 415; also see his 1999: 143.

The assumption seems to me intuitive; and most aestheticians take the line of thought that the artist's intention matters,[56] because it explains quite well our intuition that appreciating works of art is different from appreciating nature or human bodies – though the assumption might look non-commonsensical for those who are not aestheticians. This line of thought, actually, can be traced back to Kant who thinks that we have to appreciate artworks under some concept.[57] To go even further, some aestheticians hold that we perceive nature under a certain set of concepts[58] – they might even be concepts that art teaches us. For example, as Anthony Savile puts it: "when we judge a person's or a flower's beauty we are judging them within certain artificial canons, canons that we develop from our acquaintance with the arts."[59] And in fact the idea that art is prior to beauty can be found in Hegel as well.

Aestheticians, of course, do not have to go along with the Kantian tradition. Sibley has a somewhat overlooked paper, "Arts or the Aesthetic – which Comes First?" that might help those who want to reject the assumption above. He argues that the concept of the aesthetic is logically prior to that of arts; for "[i]t is impossible to have the intention to do or produce X, whatever X is, without already possessing some notion of X."[60] The implication is that the concept of the aesthetic is prior to that of arts, and if the aesthetic is affect-neutral in itself, there is no way for an artist to make it affect-oriented.

[56] For instance, Arthur Danto 2000: 66; Levinson 2011: 193-194.
[57] For more about concept-dependent beauty, see Stephen Davies 2006.
[58] For instance, Budd 2003.
[59] Savile 1982: xi.
[60] Sibley 2001: 136.

So after all a properties-based theorist can argue that the source of all sorts of beauty comes from natural beauty. The aesthetic value lies only in the natural object (say, a tree) rather than in the experience of the appreciator, for it seems fair to say that the beauty of nature would exist even if there were no human beings. And it seems to indicate that natural beauty is affect-neutral. Given that artistic beauty is determined by natural beauty, according to Sibley's thought, artistic beauty must be affect-neutral as well; and, therefore, the aesthetic value of an artwork would lie merely in the work itself – aesthetic experience is an extra concept for explaining the aesthetic.

However, it seems to me that this creates more problems than it actually solves. First, one has to argue why natural beauty is affect-neutral; secondly, one has to account for the intuition that there are differences between appreciating artworks and the nature; third, assuming the previous two are not problems at all, one still has to explain why artists could not transfer the affect-neutral natural beauty to affect-oriented artistic beauty.

Chapter Four: Aesthetic Basis – Experience-Based Theory

Before proceeding, let me remind the reader that an ideal theory we are searching for should be able to account for our intuitions about aesthetic value – it is an assumption we have committed to. The properties-based theory I examined above fails mainly because it fails to account for our intuition that art aims to bring aesthetically valuable effects. In this chapter I focus on the theory which claims that aesthetic experience can be taken as the basis for defining and explaining the aesthetic; the theory which claims that aesthetic value can be solely explained by aesthetic experience.

In contrast to the properties-based theory, the experience-based theory claims that aesthetic properties can be defined by aesthetic experience but not vice versa. Aesthetic value can only lie in our experience. Some aestheticians call this view aesthetic empiricism. As I want to emphazise the idea of aesthetic basis and I am concerned with how should we define the aesthetic, I use the term 'experience-based theory'; but 'aesthetic empiricism' and 'experience-based theory' are interchangeable in my thesis.

There are, in general, two kinds of experience-based theories. One claims that aesthetic value lies in the psychological effects of aesthetic experience; main proponents include Kendall Walton, Malcolm Budd, Robert Stecker, and Jerrold Levinson.[61] Another claims that aesthetic value lies in the understanding and appreciation of an artwork; Alan Goldman is the main proponent of this view.[62]

[61] See Walton 1993; Budd 2008; Stecker 2006; Levinson 1992, 1996, 2016.
[62] Goldman 1995, 2006, 2013a, 2014.

I start off with James Shelley's criticism of the experience-based theory. I shall firstly present Shelley's concerns; then I will try to defend the experience-based theory from them; after that I will move to my own concerns, as well as making room for a kind of experience-based theory.

4.1. The heresy of the separable value

In his 2010 paper "Against Value Empiricism in Aesthetics," James Shelley addresses a general criticism to all experience-based theorists. According to his definition, aesthetic empiricism is "the view that an object has whatever aesthetic value it has because of the value of the experience that it affords."[63] Shelley's criticisms are interesting and forceful against some forms of aesthetic empiricism; there are, however, some points that he makes that are unfair to the empiricist, and somewhat misleading.

Shelley starts off with Malcolm Budd's idea of "the heresy of the separable value", which claims that it is an error to separate the value of the experience that an artwork affords from the artwork itself.[64] Budd originally used this line of reasoning as a criticism to the traditional form of expression theory, which claims that the purpose of an artwork is to transmit certain sorts of feelings to viewers. But he thinks that art is not only that. For a drug can also produce the exact feelings that the artwork produces; as Budd puts it: "[i]f the experience is valuable to you only for this detachable reward [...] you are not finding

[63] Shelley 2010: 707. He also talks about artistic empiricism; but that is irrelevant to my thesis.
[64] Budd 1985: 123-124.

the work valuable *as a work of art*. You are valuing the work as you value a drug, for the effect it produces."[65]

Then Shelley goes on to point out that "the heresy of the separable value" is found in Stephen Davies and Jerrold Levinson's account.[66] Both of them use the term 'pleasure' to refer to the experience that is caused by, or somehow connected to, the work itself – the value of the pleasurable experience would not be aesthetically valuable if the viewer were not appreciating the work itself.

The problem with such accounts, according to James Shelley, is that if aesthetic value can only be realized by aesthetic experience, the experience-based theorist has to first explain "what gives the experience of the artwork the value that it has."[67] The answer, Shelley assumes, would be "that the pleasure is valuable because of its phenomenal character."[68] But the problem is then "there is no reason why some other experience, one afforded by something other than the artwork—a drug, perhaps—cannot have the same phenomenal character and so have the same value."[69] One way to get rid of the drug case is by claiming that "the experience has the value that it has because it is of the artwork."[70] However, as Shelley points out, "if this is what the empiricist has in mind, her theory is evidently circular: the value of the artwork derives from that of the experience and the value of the

[65] Budd 1995: 13-14.
[66] Shelley 2010: 708-709; for the original texts see Davies 1994: 315-16 and Levinson 1996: 22-23.
[67] Shelley 2010: 709.
[68] *ibid.*: 710.
[69] *ibid.*
[70] *ibid.*: 711.

experience derives from that of the artwork."[71] In other words, the empiricist faces a dilemma.

One thing is worth noting. Shelley's terminology of aesthetic concepts is different from that of other philosophers. He avoids using 'aesthetic properties' when he talks about the concept of the aesthetic; instead, as we can see above, he uses 'aesthetic objects'[72] – or, another essay of his shows that he does not even use either 'aesthetic properties' or 'aesthetic objects'.[73] The reason, I would guess, is that aesthetic properties are not necessarily in the artwork. For some aestheticians hold that aesthetic properties are phenomenal properties – an example is Goldman.[74] So please bear in mind that what Shelley calls 'the object theory' is basically identical to my 'properties-based theory'.

Shelley's argument, as I believe, can be reconstructed in this way:

(1) An artwork is aesthetically valuable because of the value of the experience that it affords.

(2) If an artwork is aesthetically valuable because the value of the experience that it affords is valuable, the value is either from the phenomenal character of the experience or from the capacity of the artwork to afford aesthetic experience.

(3) If it is from the phenomenal character, it will be counter-intuitive – because a drug

[71] *ibid.*

[72] See Shelley 2015.

[73] See Shelley 2013.

[74] As Goldman puts it: "[w]e can characterize basic aesthetic qualities in ways that do not explicitly refer to the category of the aesthetic. Such qualities are first of all phenomenal properties, those which appear in perceptual experiences, and relations among phenomenal properties" (1990: 26).

can afford the same phenomenal character.

(4) If it is from the capacity of the artwork to afford aesthetic experience, it will be circular – an artwork is aesthetically valuable because of the value of the experience that it affords.

Therefore,

(5) Aesthetic empiricism is either counter-intuitive or circular so it is not true.

4.2. The misunderstanding of the heresy of the separable value

Shelley's argument seems plausible at first sight, but in fact not quite so, if we take a deeper look at it – and it is partly due to an uncharitable reading of Budd and Levinson. Premise (1) is the central claim of aesthetic empiricism – unquestionable. Premise (2) does not target all forms of aesthetic empiricism and it seems Budd, Davies and Levinson would agree with that. Premise (3) and (4) seem to me problematic.

I agree that if the phenomenal character is constituted by simple psychological states like pleasure, premise (3) is plausible; for it is true that the experience of the "artwork" should not be counted as aesthetic if an ice cream can afford the same phenomenal character. But the content of the phenomenal character of an artwork is richer than that. Firstly, both Budd and Levinson do not take 'aesthetic pleasure' literally. As Budd points out – something that Shelley does not examine – in another essay:

> [T]he concept of pleasure is not a sound foundation upon which to build a broader and more usual conception of the aesthetic. For unless the idea of an experience in which we take pleasure is understood in an unnaturally wide sense, so that it is equivalent to an experience that we find inherently rewarding to undergo, it is not

> possible to elucidate the notion of artistic value—the value of a work of art as art—in terms of pleasure.[75]

According to Levinson, some music contains non-expressive aesthetic qualities which "include higher-order perceptual qualities such as grace, delicacy, charm, humour, menace, mystery, and so on, which do not, strictly speaking, connote psychological states capable of outward expression;"[76] and, by 'higher-order perceptual qualities', Levinson means aesthetic properties.[77]

Shelley does not deny the possibility of having a non-expressive aesthetic experience; as he says: "the empiricist does not always regard the experience to which she appeals as a pleasure."[78] But he thinks that it would not affect the strength of his argument, because an empiricist "still seems to understand the value of the experience on the model of the value of a pleasure, that is, she still seems to understand the experience as having an intrinsic (i.e., non-instrumental) value that is available only to those who undergo the experience; she still seems to understand the experience as worth having because of what it is like to have it."[79] In other words, non-expressive aesthetic experience is also valuable because of its phenomenal character; and, as Shelley would say, a drug can afford such a phenomenal character.

[75] Budd 2008: 28; Budd also points out that Levinson has discussed the issue in his 1996 book, *The Pleasures of Aesthetics*.
[76] Levinson 2009: 421.
[77] see Levinson 2005: 218.
[78] Shelley 2010: 710.
[79] *ibid.*

I agree that a drug might be able to afford the phenomenal character of delicacy and mystery, but I do not agree that it has the same philosophical implications as a drug which only affords pleasure does. For pleasure and emotions are clearly feelings; but delicacy and mystery are not – though they might be both sensory. The difference between the two drugs might direct us to different intuitions as well. And I would say that the richer the phenomenology the drug gives us, the less intuitive force the drug counterexample has. Actually, to me, the word 'drug' is misleading to begin with – we seem to have a conception that a drug can only be instrumentally valuable. Try to think of the difference between looking at a real painting in the gallery and a copy of the same painting from a photo album. Would you say the latter is merely instrumentally valuable? I doubt that. What about a drug that affords an experience of being in the gallery for the same painting for one minute? On what grounds is taking a drug necessarily instrumental? This is my first worry.

Another worry is that even if a drug can provide us with the phenomenal character that an artwork affords, it does not mean that premise (3) of Shelley's argument is plausible. The drug case is threatening to those who think that aesthetic experience is a kind of pleasure, because pleasure can be easily replaced. But try to think of an extremely rich account of aesthetic experience which claims that the aesthetic experience of a painting includes the experience of all shapes and colors, and the experience that is based on those shapes and colors. The drug that provides the experience described by such a rich account has to be different from the drug that provides the experience described by the account which claims that the phenomenology of aesthetic experience is merely pleasure. Therefore, the drug that can afford the same phenomenology of the painting would be like a drug that can bring us

to a hallucination of seeing the real painting. The moral is that if one wants to say the experience the drug affords is not aesthetic, she has to agree that the experience a photocopy affords is not aesthetic as well. But we probably wouldn't say so. Also, if one wants to say the drug can replace the painting, she has to agree that a photocopy can replace the painting as well. The idea I want to bring out is that, the richer the account of aesthetic experience, the less threatening the drug problem is to the account. In other words, premise (3) is not necessarily true; it depends on the content of the phenomenal character.

This is only one way to look at the argument. Another way starts with the question: "what do aestheticians mean by 'the art object'?" Is it that an object that is distinct from its experience? Or, the experience *is* the art object? Try to think of the case of music. What *is* the art object? The question concerning the status of being an artwork leads us to the problem of Shelley's argument that I want to point out – a problem due to Shelley's unfair reading of Budd's view. The question also leads us to premise (4) of Shelley's argument. First look at Shelley's text:

> This is clear in Budd's opening claim that '[t]he fundamental error . . . is [the] separation of what gives music its value . . . from the music itself'. But if in denying that the experience is separable from the artwork the empiricist means also to be denying that the value of the experience is separable from the artwork, then in affirming that the experience cannot be adequately described without reference to the artwork the empiricist must also mean to be affirming that the value of the experience cannot be adequately described without reference to the artwork.[80]

[80] Shelley 2010: 710.

Shelley's reading of Budd gives thr impression that "the artwork" is one thing and "the experience" is another. However, what Budd seems to hold is that the two concepts are the same, or, at least, they are closely connected in the sense that the artwork itself involves experience. The idea can be found in these two passages:

> [I]f someone's experience of a piece of music is a compound of two experiences, one of which is an experience of hearing the music in which the music is not related to a certain kind of emotion, for example, the other of which is an experience of that emotion—the first experience giving rise to the second experience—then either the person's experience of the emotion has the music as its object or it does not.[81]

> Hence what is needed from a theory of musical expression is a less external, a more intimate, connection between the experience of what music expresses and the experience of the music itself: it is necessary in some way to fuse the experience of the mood, feeling or emotion expressed by a musical work with the experience of the music which gives it expression, or to integrate the experience of what music expresses with the experience of the music. It is necessary to avoid the heresy of the separable experience.[82]

Throughout Shelley's essay, it is not difficult to realize that he avoids quoting the two passages above. It seems fair to say that Shelley intends to give a somewhat ambiguous reading of Budd for the sake of his argument. The two passages, however, are important. They show that on Budd's account a musical object can be seen as an experience. And actually Budd has written somewhere in the same book that "the fundamental appeal of a musical work is as a structure of sounds that is its own *raison d'être*: the experience in which the work is appreciated—the experience that realises its value as music."[83] Then Budd goes on: "the value of a musical work can be appreciated only by those capable of experiencing it with understanding."[84] Shelley has misinterpreted Budd's "heresy of the

[81] Budd 1985: 124.
[82] *ibid.*: 125.
[83] Budd 1985: ix.
[84] *ibid.*: x.

separable experience".

What does it mean then? First, it means Budd's account of aesthetic experience is very rich in the sense that to have an aesthetically valuable experience is to experience the *object itself*. Secondly, it means Budd's account might not face the problem of circularity – so premise (4) is inapplicable to it. To go back to Shelley's definition of the claim of aesthetic empiricism according to which "an object has whatever aesthetic value it has because of the value of the experience that it affords,"[85] it becomes unclear whether Shelley's objection can be an objection at all. The object itself is the appreciated experience in Budd's account – basically the object is identical to the aesthetic experience it affords. In this sense, Budd is not affected by Shelley's argument of circularity.

Shelley might say his argument can still apply to Budd, even if he misunderstood the original version of "heresy of the separable experience". For Budd still has to agree that the experience of the music as the artwork itself is constituted by some basic sound structures – Budd has to agree that the experience of the music itself is valuable because the form of the sound is valuable. As Budd himself puts it: "the value of music is inherent in the forms of sound that compose the music: it cannot be abstracted from the sounds in which it is located and considered without reference to them."[86] It requires Budd to commit himself to a very rich account of aesthetic experience that might not be attractive after all. For instance, why should we not call the perception of the form of the sound an ordinary

[85] Shelley 2010: 707. He also talks about artistic empiricism; but that is irrelevant to my thesis.
[86] Budd 1985: x.

perceptual experience? I will spell out this concern in detail when I come to present my account.

What about Levinson's account then? I explained earlier that, according to my analysis, he might be able to avoid the threat from the drug scenario. If the drug scenario is not a threat, he does not have the problem of circularity to begin with – for the drug problem is only one horn of the dilemma. But since he is committed to the view that the aesthetic value of an artwork is in the artwork, he still has to deal with the problem of circularity; as Levinson states:

> [I]f we examine more closely these goods [...] we see that their most adequate description invariably reveals them to involve ineliminably the artworks that provide them [...] the pleasure we take in the Allegro of Mozart's Symphony no. 29 is, as it were, the pleasure of discovering the individual nature and potential of its thematic material, and the precise way its aesthetic character emerges from its musical underpinnings [...T]here is a sense in which the pleasure of the Twenty-Ninth can be had only from that work.[87]

In his new essay, Levinson replies to problem of circularity without mentioning Shelley's paper. As he points out, philosophers keep asking this kind of question: "[i]s an artwork valuable in virtue of the valuable experience it can afford us or that it makes possible, or is the experience that the artwork can afford us or that it makes possible valuable because it is an experience of a valuable artwork or an artwork with valuable features?" He thinks that the question is actually "as old as that of the *Euthyphro* of Plato."[88] He responds to the problem of circularity by explaining more clearly what the two positions hold. Here are his definitions of the two views:

[87] Levinson 1996: 22-23.
[88] Levinson 2016: 47.

> The Objectualist holds that the experience of an artwork is valuable only because it is both *of* an object that is valuable and is *adequate* to that object; that is, an experience that is responsive to its distinctive properties, including formal, aesthetic, and artistic properties, and perhaps most notably, achievement properties. And if that is so, then it is the artwork's possessing those properties, the artwork simply being the way it is, that is the ultimate ground of its artistic value, and not the experience the artwork can afford.
>
> The Experientialist, by contrast, holds that an artwork's artistic value—or at least the major part thereof—resides ultimately in its capacity to afford valuable appreciative experiences, experiences whose focus is precisely the artwork as an object with distinctive properties, or its making possible valuable appreciative experiences of other artworks, actual and potential.[89]

Note that although Levinson used the term 'artistic value', since aesthetic value is a subset of artistic value in Levinson's language, his definition can be applied to aesthetic value as well. According to Levinson, the problem of circularity is not a problem at all because "the Experientialist and the Objectualist agree that it is the *artwork* that has such value, and *not* the experiences the artwork affords or makes possible. The Experientialist simply insists that the artwork *has* that value, ultimately, because of a connection, either direct or indirect, with rewarding appreciative experiences of some sort, of some work or another, on some occasion or other."[90] In other words, Levinson thinks that aesthetic value lies in the object, but this is not a problem for the experience-based theorist at all, because what we value is the capacity of the object that affords us valuable experience, rather than the aesthetic properties of the object.

[89] *ibid.*: 57-58.
[90] *ibid.*: 57.

It might be possible for Levinson to avoid the difficulty, if he is willing to endorse such a weak form of empiricism – or what he calls 'experientialism'. However, in the following I will explain why I think that Levinson's solution is not desirable. Before that I will first go through Shelley's criticism to Alan Goldman's account of aesthetic empiricism. For I think Goldman's account also faces the same undesirable condition as Levinson does.

Goldman's account is different from the ones we examined. We have looked at the empiricist's position, according to which aesthetic experience is valuable because of its phenomenal character; but as I mentioned at the very beginning of this section, there is another form of empiricism which claims that aesthetic value lies in aesthetic experience with understanding. As Goldman puts it:

> Aesthetic experience [...] is aimed first at understanding and appreciation, at taking in the aesthetic properties of the object. The object itself is valuable for providing experience that could only be an experience of that object [...] Part of the value of aesthetic experience lies in experiencing the object in the right way, in a way true to its nonaesthetic properties, so that the aim of understanding and appreciation is fulfilled.[91]

Goldman's account of aesthetic experience, according to Shelley, does not appeal to its phenomenal character, and thus does not face the drug scenario – for understanding and appreciation are not sensory feelings. Shelley's criticism is that aesthetic value cannot lie in understanding and appreciation without referring to the artwork itself, because "[t]he value of a good poem cannot consist in its capacity to afford an experience in which it is *understood*, since, all things being equal, a bad poem has this capacity in equal measure."[92]

[91] Goldman 2006: 339-341.
[92] Shelley 2010: 713.

In other words, Goldman's account fails to account for our intuition that a good poem is more aesthetically valuable. Shelley then concludes: "appealing to the feature of understanding and appreciating its object is no better than appealing to the feature of having value-conferring phenomenal character or to the feature of having an antecedently valuable object as its content."[93]

Shelley's criticism is fair; but I do think that there is a way for Goldman to avoid the it, albeit one which Goldman himself does not endorse. In fact, both Shelley and Goldman share a certain amount of beliefs in terms of what counts as aesthetic and what does not – both of them are Hutchesonian to a certain degree. In another paper, Shelley argues that there are aesthetic works of art that are not perceived by means of the five senses.[94] But they are still aesthetic rather than non-aesthetic, because they are perceived by Hutcheson's conception of the "inner sense".[95] The "inner sense" is a broad concept – as the later Hutcheson states, Joseph Addison's concept of the pleasure of imagination is also a consequence of the use of our "inner sense".[96] And as both Shelley and Goldman point out, according to Hutcheson, theorems and proofs can be aesthetic.[97] In this sense they both

[93] *ibid.*
[94] Shelley 2003.
[95] Hutcheson 1725.
[96] For Addison's idea see his 1712/1879; as Hutcheson puts it: "[t]o the senses of seeing and hearing, are superadded in most men, tho' in very different degrees, certain powers of perception of a finer kind than what we have reason to imagine are in most lower animals, who yet perceive the several colours and figures, and hear the several sounds. These we may call the senses of beauty and harmony, or, with Mr. Addison, the *imagination*" (1755: 15); also see Kivy 2003:33-36 for a summary.
[97] Shelley 2003: 377; Goldman 2013: 326; for the original text, see Hutcheson 1973/1725. But also note that it is not the only way to interpret Hutcheson's account – some philosophers, for instance, Peter Kivy, think that what is perceived by the "inner sense" is sensory, rather than cognitive (see Kivy 2003). Reasoning along with this interpretation, Kivy holds "the novel is a non-aesthetic art" (Kivy 2011: 37) – which is opposed to Shelley and Goldman's views on literary arts.

agree that literary works of art are aesthetic arts. As Goldman says, "there are formal aesthetic properties, such as those that characterize the broad structures of novels, which are grasped cognitively and not perceptually."[98] Shelley goes even further; he argues that if we agree that literary works of art are experienced cognitively, we should also agree that ready-mades – like Duchamp's *Fountain* – can also be experienced in a similar way; and they are, therefore, aesthetic.[99]

Shelley and Goldman might be right that those experiences are not perceptual, but it does not mean that they are non-phenomenal. And it also seems to me that they should not use the term 'perceptual' in the first place; rather, I suggest using 'sensory'. And if being cognitive is opposed to being sensory, it seems fair to say that cognitive perception is possible.

The implication is that Shelley and Goldman should not assume that cognitively aesthetic experience is not phenomenal; Shelley's analysis of some forms of empiricism would not be fair. For, firstly, understanding and appreciation can be phenomenal; and, secondly, the value of understanding and appreciation can lie in their phenomenal characters as well. The recent discussion of cognitive phenomenology in philosophy of mind,[100] in my opinion, can definitely contribute to the debate on aesthetic experience as well – if there is cognitive phenomenology in thought, it seems natural that there is cognitive phenomenology in understanding and art appreciation. In fact, the discussion about "understanding-

[98] Goldman 2013: 325.
[99] Shelley 2003.
[100] For example, see Bayne & Montague 2011; and for a general introduction, see Chudnoff 2015.

experience" traces back at least to Galen Strawson's 1994 book *Mental Reality*; as he says:

> Philosophers will ask whether there is really such a thing as understanding-experience, over and above visual experience, auditory experience, and so on [...] This question may be asked: does the difference between Jacques (a monoglot Frenchman) and Jack (a monoglot Englishman), as they listen to the news in French, really consist in the Frenchman's having a different experience? [...] The present claim is simply that Jacques's experience when listening to the news is utterly different from Jack's, and that this is so even though there is a sense in which Jacques and Jack have the same aural experience.[101]

And if so, even if aesthetic experience, in Goldman's account, aims at understanding and appreciation, it does not follow that aesthetic value does not lie in their phenomenal characters. In other words, If Goldman believed that there is cognitive phenomenology, he would have to face the drug scenario. My opinion is that, for the reasons I mentioned earlier, facing the drug scenario is better than facing the problem of circularity.

A difficulty of Goldman's account is that, even if Goldman believed that there is cognitive phenomenology, he would, seemingly, have to face the same difficulty – the problem of circularity – that Budd and Levinson's accounts face. As I said earlier, Shelley's circularity argument might not be forceful against the empiricist. Levinson, for example, proposes a way to avoid the problem by clarifying what the two views claim. However, I also mentioned that even if aesthetic empiricists can get away from the problem of circularity, they still face another difficulty – I call it the problem concerning the thesis of inter-definability.

[101] Strawson 1994: 5-6.

4.3. The problem concerning the thesis of inter-definability

Before proceeding to the problem concerning the thesis of inter-definability, it might be good to ask ourselves a question: "why should we care about the nature of aesthetic value?" One answer is that we want to know the concept of the aesthetic and that of aesthetic items. As I keep repeating, the discussion about the aesthetic basis aims at defining the concept of the aesthetic. As Budd notes, "aestheticians have been inclined to privilege one of these categories of the aesthetic, assigning to it a basic status and explicating the others in terms of it." And as he goes on "the various categories of the aesthetic are inter-definable, no matter which, if any, is taken as basic, how exactly they are related to one another.[102] Goldman and Shelley also reason along this line of thought.[103]

As I explained at the very beginning, aesthetic value cannot be taken as the basis; for aesthetic value itself is a somewhat enigmatic concept – it is almost impossible to talk about aesthetic value as such without appealing to other aesthetic concepts. Budd and other aestheticians know this very well. Though Budd holds that "[t]wo promising candidates for the status of the basic category of the aesthetic are the ideas of aesthetic pleasure and aesthetic value," he follows and modifies Walton's and Levinson's accounts which "propose definitions of aesthetic pleasure that do not presuppose a prior understanding of the aesthetic."[104] As far as I know, no aesthetician tries to take aesthetic value as the basis.[105]

[102] Budd 2008: 17.
[103] Goldman 2001: 181; Shelley 2013: 246.
[104] *ibid.*: 20.
[105]Actually Shelley has the same thought; see his 2013: 255.

Budd, Levinson, and Goldman think that an artwork is aesthetically valuable because it affords aesthetic experience. However, as Shelley points out, they cannot avoid appealing to the art object itself when they come to explain aesthetic value. And as I said, Levinson thinks that his definition of empiricism can avoid the problem that Shelley raises.

Even assuming Levinson really succeeds in avoiding the problem of circularity – and both Budd and Goldman can just follow Levinson's idea – I still do not think that their theories are going anywhere The fundamental problem is that they end up proposing two kinds of aesthetic value: one in aesthetic experience and another one in the capacity of an artwork to afford aesthetic experience. The idea can be seen more clearly in Goldman's account. In his 1990 book, he seems to have it in mind;[106] and recently, he explicitly states that aesthetic value lies in experience:

> We can define the aesthetic value of music as the value of the way in which music sounds when experienced with understanding. This is the value of the aural experience of music in itself, not that of any external effects such experience might have.[107]

And a bit more recently, he says that aesthetic value lies in a capacity that a work has:

> Aesthetic value lies in the capacity of a work to engage us in this broad and full way, not simply in the more superficial pleasure derived immediately from its surface sensuous or formal qualities.[108]

However, claiming that there are two kinds of aesthetic value – one is what some

[106] See Goldman 1990: 26.
[107] Goldman 2011: 155.
[108] Goldman 2013: 3.

philosophers call ‘phenomenal value’ that is in the experience, and another is dispositional value that is in the object – is theoretically unattractive. For it cannot be easy to make sense of the thesis of inter-definability. An experience-based theorist claims that the basic status is assigned to aesthetic experience; and the other categories are defined in terms of it. The proposal, based on Budd’s schema, is:

1. Aesthetic value is a value of a kind ascribed by an aesthetic experience.
2. An aesthetic judgment is a judgment that ascribes aesthetic experience to an item.
3. An aesthetic property is a property ascribed to an item by an aesthetic experience.

However, if an experience-based theorist wants to endorse two kinds of aesthetic value – one phenomenal and another dispositional – she has to modify (1). A proposal would be:

1’. Aesthetic value is a value of a kind ascribed by an aesthetic experience or the dispositional properties of the art object.

But then it will be incompatible with (3); for it is fair to say that the dispositional properties of the art object are also a kind of aesthetic properties, or at least the experience-based theory would like to agree with that. Thus, an experience-based theorist might want to modify it as:

3’. An aesthetic property of an item is any property of it that has aesthetic value.

But obviously this is not going to help. Not only (1) and (3), but (2) is problematic as well; for an aesthetic judgment is a judgment that is based on the aesthetic value of an artwork. Since the experience-based theorist insists on claiming that some aesthetic value lies in the disposition of the artwork, aesthetic judgment cannot be solely explained by aesthetic experience. I think these worries are hard to solve, and theories that cannot solve the worries should be considered as flawed.

The only way for those who want to insist on claiming that there are two kinds of aesthetic value is abandoning the whole idea of inter-definability of the aesthetic and the idea of aesthetic basis. But then what is the meaning of building an aesthetic theory? It seems to create more obscurities then answer questions if an aesthetic theory does not try to explain aesthetic concepts.

Chapter Five: A Redirection of the Aesthetic

In the previous chapters, I explained the general rationale of contemporary analytic aestheticians for defining the concept of the aesthetic – which is to build a theory that can account for our intuitions about aesthetic value. I explained that both the properties-based theory and the experience-based theory fail to account for aesthetic value in different ways.

The properties-based theory is not desirable, for it is intuitively right – especially for those who hold the functionalist account of beauty – that aesthetic experience is aesthetically valuable. If a properties-based theorist, as Levinson puts it, "holds that the experience of an artwork is valuable only because it is both *of* an object that is valuable and is *adequate* to that object,"[109] then she will face the problem concerning the thesis of inter-definability, as she has to propose two kinds of aesthetic value, and that is theoretically undesirable and clumsy. The experience-based theory, on the other hand, faces several problems as well: one is the problem of taking drugs; another is the problem of circularity. I explained that not all experience-based theories have to account for the first problem; I also explained that the problem of circularity is not a problem in itself – the fundamental problem is that an experience-based theorist usually presupposes that there are two kinds of aesthetic value: which makes a theory, again, undesirable.

[109] Levinson 2016: 57.

5.1. The echoes of Plato and Marx, and the 18th Century philosophers

So what should we do if both of the two sides are not so attractive? As I mentioned in chapter two, there is more than one way to do aesthetics. We can go along with the Platonic or Neo-Platonic lines which assume that aesthetic value lies in the highest Form or God – the question of aesthetic value becomes a theological question about value in this sense. Or, we can follow the modernist or post-modernist Marxist lines which hold that aesthetic value is merely instrumental for other values – like economic and political value. The nature of aesthetic value, therefore, depends on that of some ideological value. These two options might not be attractive for most analytic aestheticians. However, if the typical answers provided by analytic aestheticians are problematic in so many ways, why should we continue to reason along with this tradition?

Another way that an analytic aesthetician might accept is to claim that aesthetic value lies in aesthetic judgment – namely, a judgment-based theory. A problem, however, is that most philosophers nowadays think that the judgment-based theory fails to account for an epistemic concern – namely, that it seems we can make aesthetic judgments by looking at the evidence from experts without really experiencing the artwork. The implication is that aesthetic experience is hard to be defined by aesthetic judgment. Budd is one of the earliest aestheticians who points out this; as he puts it: "[we] can form a judgment on the merits of a work [we] are acquainted with, this involves trust in the judgment of someone who is acquainted with it."[110] An advantage of the judgment-based theory is that it can easily

[110] Budd 1995: 12; Robert Hopkins draws a distinction between judging beauty and savouring beauty; he holds that "[t]he notion of judging beauty is very thin", and it is "no more than forming a belief that something is beautiful, on the basis of some of its other features" (1997: p. 181) – also see his current essays (2000;

account for the concept of aesthetic properties. As Paisley Livingston points out, an aesthetic judgment does not have to be based on first-hand experience; rather, if someone's description of an artwork is so "accurate" and "good", why does it "never provide good and sufficient ground for a verdict?"[111] In other words, if an judgment-based theorist holds that an aesthetic judgment has to be based on first-hand experience, the theory can account for the aesthetic experience but fail to account for aesthetic properties (because of Livingston's concern). And, on the other hand, if she holds that an aesthetic judgment can be made by aesthetic testimony, she would fail to account for aesthetic experience. The judgment-based theory faces a dilemma. Besides, it also faces the worry I raised for the experience-based theory and the properties-based theory: it has to explain why aesthetic experience does not contain aesthetic value; and if it claims that aesthetic experience contains aesthetic value, it is, again, proposing two kinds of aesthetic value. After all, the judgment-based theory would not do better than the two other options.

In light of this, I present my account of the aesthetic, which is somewhat post-analytic. My theory shares most of the main assumptions that are agreed on by typical analytic aestheticians. I defend the experience-based theory for two reasons: first, it is fatal to claim that aesthetic experience cannot be aesthetically valuable, which makes the properties-based theory hopeless; and second, problems that face the experience-based theory are avoidable. My theory, as I would say, does not face all the objections I proposed earlier in chapters three and four – it is supposed to be a modified version of the experience-based

2007). Aaron Meskin also agrees that aesthetic testimony has epistemic value, but disagrees with Hopkins's solution (2004: p. 68) – also see his own solution (2006).

[111] Livingston 2003: 264; see also Tormey 1973 for the target of Livingston's criticism.

theory. I will argue that an analytic aesthetician should agree with my approach, if one wants to be analytic at all. I will present some difficulties and concerns that I can come up with; and give my responses to them.

5.2. The origin of aesthetic value

As an experience-based theorist, I claim that aesthetic value lies only in aesthetic experience. As I have kept repeating in my thesis, aesthetic value is a central item for building an aesthetic theory; and the theories that I have examined so far are implausible mainly because they fail to account for our intuitions about aesthetic value. I think, therefore, the problem is that aestheticians are reasoning on a path that leads nowhere. Aestheticians should ask themselves a simple question before talking about our aesthetic intuitions: where does aesthetic value come from?

The question can be put in another way: what/who determines the aesthetic value of a work of art? Answers vary from different accounts. But, as mentioned before, most analytic aestheticians, or, at least, the ones that I have been examining in this thesis, agree that artistic beauty is a kind of functional beauty which is determined by the intention of the artist and the function of it. So, they should agree that the artist is the source, or one of the sources of the work's aesthetic value. For instance, as Carroll writes:

> The point or purpose of Edouard Manet's *Woman Playing a Guitar* is to present the woman in the painting as an agent or doer [...] In *Woman Playing a Guitar*, Manet subverts the traditional approach by presenting his model with her back to the audience, thereby undermining her availability for ogling. She is intent on her task (guitar playing), rather than posing seductively for the male viewer. The orientation

> of the figure—with her back to the viewer— is a formal choice. It functions to realize the point of the painting—to portray women as doers.[112]

In the above we can see how aesthetic value can be connected to the intention of the artist, in the sense that one could not truly appreciate the aesthetic value of a work if she fails to recognize its purpose. However, even if now we know that there is a close connection between the aesthetic value and the authorial intention of an artwork, it is still not clear how the aesthetic value arises, and what/who determines the value. There are, I think, three possible answers: aesthetic value is determined either by (1) the so-called true judges/ideal critics, (2) the artist, or (3) both ideal critics and the artist. I think the answer should be (3); but for the aims of this thesis, showing (1) is wrong would be enough; I will only focus on the (1) and (2).

The idea of option (1) originates from Hume – if you are willing to interpret him, as many do, as a response-dependence theorist of aesthetic value.[113] According to such an understanding:

> *X* is aesthetically valuable if and only if a true judge has response *R* in an appropriate circumstances.

Some philosophers would like to argue that what is disposed to a true judge is an aesthetic belief or an aesthetic judgment; for instance, Crispin Wright.[114] Here, for simplicity, I assume that what is disposed is aesthetic value; and value can lie either in experience,

[112] Carroll 1999: 143; see also Levinson 2011: 194; and Carroll 2004: 415.
[113] See for instance De Clercq 2002b: 160. For Hume's original text, see his 1757/1958.
[114] Wright 1988; 1992.

properties, or judgment (Carroll, for example, claims that aesthetic properties can be disposed to "backgrounded creatures" without aesthetic experience being disposed).[115]

The next question is: how to read the biconditional? There are two options:

(1) Reading from the left hand side to the right hand side – a true judge has response *R* in appropriate circumstances because *X* is aesthetically valuable; and

(2) Reading from the right hand side to the left hand side – *X* is aesthetically valuable because a true judge has response *R* in appropriate circumstances.

The first reading might work with non-aesthetic responses, like our responses to colors and shapes. It might also work with aesthetic responses of non-artworks, like our responses to natural objects (e.g. a tree). But the treatment of artistic beauty, if it is dispositional at all, should be different from that of natural beauty, since these aestheticians have an assumption that the beauty of an artwork is based on the intention of the artist. Therefore, the reading from the left hand side to the right hand side would mean that aesthetic value is determined by the artist's intention – aesthetic value is disposed to a true judge because she is sensitive enough to recognize the intention of the artist; and, on the other hand, the reading from the right hand side to the left hand side would mean that aesthetic value is determined by a true judge, or more plausible, a group of true judges – it would be suggesting an institutional and constructivist account of beauty.

[115] Carroll 2002: 166.

The debate over response-dependence is huge; not all aestheticians agree that aesthetic value is response-dependent – for instance, Shelley and Levinson do not agree so.[116] But I am only borrowing the concept to illustrate the idea. The point I try to make is that aestheticians usually rely on the notion of so-called ideal critics too much, as if aesthetic value is solely determined by them. This kind of tendency drives those aestheticians to the view that the art object is important, because an ideal critic cannot have an aesthetic judgment without attending to the object. For example, though Levinson claims himself to be a realist – aesthetic properties, for him, are not dispositional properties but manifest properties – when he comes to talk about the value of art, he speaks as if the value of an artwork is determined by a group of ideal critics. As he puts it:

> Perceivers of that stripe are a sort of litmus test for good art, art with superior potential to afford valuable aesthetic experience. Thus, if one is interested in aesthetic experience at all, one should be interested in what such perceivers recommend to one's attention.[117]

The text above is not irrefutable evidence that he has such a view in mind; for it is logically possible for him just to mean that aesthetic value is recognized a true judge because she is sensitive enough to recognize the intention of the artist – similar to the reading from the left hand side to the right hand side of the response-dependence theory. However, as an hypothetical intentionalist, Levinson holds that the meaning of an artwork is determined by a hypothetical intention that the audience finds in it; 'the audience' means the ideal critics in Levinson's account. Here I am talking just about the meaning of an artwork, rather

[116] Shelley 2012; Levinson 2005.
[117] Levinson 2010: 266.

than its value. They are two different concepts. Technically speaking, there are two kinds of intentionalism: "meaning intentionalism" and "value intentionalism".[118] Levinson is an hypothetical intentionalist of the former one. However, some aesthetic value is related to the meaning of the work – for instance, if the hypothetical intention that the audience finds in John Cage's *4'33"* is not bringing a peace of mind but rather merely attending to the random sounds in a performance, we certainly experience the work in a different way and hence have a different kind of aesthetic experience which corresponds to a different sort of aesthetic value. And if so, the aesthetic value is partly determined by the meaning of an artwork; and it is, therefore, determined by the ideal critics to a certain extent in Levinson's account of hypothetical intentionalism.

Not only the hypothetical intentionalist, but partial intentionalists like Carroll and Stecker are in fact making a similar commitment.[119] Partial intentionalism, as Stecker puts it, claims that "[w]hen the artist succeeds in expressing his or her intention in the work, that is what we should identify with the meaning of the work, but when actual intentions fail to be expressed, conventions in place when the work is created determine meaning."[120] When it comes to evaluation of the artworks that we do not know that intention of the artist (like ancient cave paintings), aesthetic value would be determined, or some might say discovered, by the ideal critics.

[118] For instance, as Paisley Livingston puts it: "Intentionalism in the philosophy of art interpretation is, in general, a thesis about intention's determination of the meaning *or* the value of works of art [...] It is coherent to be an intentionalist about the meaning of works without also being an intentionalist about their value, and vice versa" (2010: 405).

[119] For Carroll's account of partial intentionalism see his 2000b; for Stecker's see his 2005a.

[120] Stecker 2013: 317; for a very detailed and excellent defense for partial intentionalism, see Livingston 2006.

I am not saying these philosophers are not right; their accounts can clearly explain some of our intuitions about aesthetic value – for it seems fair to say that the aesthetic value of some works of art is discovered by art critics. My concern, rather, is that this is not an exactly accurate picture of how aesthetic value emerges – aesthetic value is not solely determined by the ideal critics and option (1) is flawed. And the misconception leads the aesthetician to build a theory that fails to account for some of our intuitions about aesthetic value I mentioned in the previous chapters. When an ideal critic has to evaluate a work of art, the object is necessary. It gives us an intuition that aesthetic value is in the object; or, at least, to explain the aesthetic value that is in our experience, we need the object to be there. But let's try to think of the procedure of making art; that might help to explain the nature of aesthetic value, or help to explain some of our intuitions about aesthetic value. The procedure, very roughly, is:

(1) An artist has a rough idea/image in her head that she finds interesting/beautiful and wants to represent.

(2) She actualizes the mental idea/image.

(3) Assuming she succeeds in actualizing, the product is made.

(4) The art critic makes a value judgment of the product.

Now the question is: when and where does aesthetic value emerge? As I noted above, nowadays aestheticians go for (4), though they are also concerned with the intention of the artist. My view is that (1) is also important for understanding the nature of aesthetic value.

And, in fact, most problems that the experience-based theorist faces result from disregarding (1). Before proceeding to my view, I will explain why aestheticians should emphasize (4) rather than (1).

One reason is that for some artworks – or should I say for most artworks before the 20th century – the artist created art according to the taste of the art community. Therefore, the mental idea/image the artist wanted to represent can be explained by the value judgment of the group of ideal critics. An example would be 19th century French Academic Art – the Académie des Beaux-Arts determined what is "good", and artists made art according to the taste of the Académie des Beaux-Arts and the taste of the potential buyers in the Salon de Paris. Their intention of making art amounted more or less to satisfying this group of people. And the early Rembrandt was famous for being a rich and popular portrait artist at that time. From the history of Rembrandt, we learn that an artist can paint very differently when they are not painting for the buyers. The later Rembrandt, I would say, painted according to his personal aesthetic judgments and the way he found aesthetically good.

Another reason is that some artists and art critics think that there are natural laws of beauty and aesthetics. For example, Paul Signac, a neo-impressionist, reasoned along with the French Anarchists' idea that science can lead us to the truth.[121] He studied color theories of Charles Blanc, Ogden Rood; he made color illusions for a color theorist, Charles Henry.[122] He sent Van Gogh a letter, saying that he is teaching artisans how to apply

[121] See Herbert, R. & Herbert, E. 1960; Hutton 1994; and a more recent book, Roslak 2016.
[122] Henry 1890.

Henry's theory to make artifacts.[123] Signac had an idea that the right combination of color can please the viewers; and artists should be like scientists. The key idea is that to him questions about the aesthetic are scientific questions – what is in the artist's head is not important as long as they can somehow make "beautiful" things". Beauty becomes essences in the art object.

The two arguments above undermine the claim that what an artist does in making art is to present what she finds beautiful, as it would seem that the source of her personal taste is somehow identical or very similar to the institutional taste. However, it does not mean that institutional taste can explain the whole concept of aesthetic value. In fact, it is counter-intuitive to reduce aesthetic value to the institutional taste; for such a view might not be easy to account for art history – it is commonsensical, for example, that some artists have broken the rules and created something new. The value of those new works of art, as I would say, comes from the mentality of the artist.

If procedure (4) cannot account for our intuitions about aesthetic value, we should reconsider the remaining three procedures. In what follows I explain why (1) is important. The idea is simple. Try to think of some revolutionary works of art like Manet's *The Luncheon on the Grass* which was rejected by the Académie des Beaux-Arts. It got rejected because of the asymmetry between his personal taste and the institutional taste. Carroll seems to agree with my thought; as he puts it "[i]n *Woman Playing a Guitar*, Manet subverts the traditional approach by presenting his model with her back to the audience,

[123] Cachin 1971: 33.

thereby undermining her availability for ogling. She is intent on her task (guitar playing), rather than posing seductively for the male viewer."[124] It seems to suggest that aesthetic value originates in the head of the artist.

One might say we do not have to look at the mentality of the artist at all in Manet's case; for we only have to focus on what he made – the paintings are aesthetically valuable because of the paintings themselves, not of the artist. First of all, the aestheticians we are talking about – including myself – agree that artists' intention is important. There are two possibilities: the artist either fails or succeeds in expressing her intention. If she fails, even if the work looks good to some, the work would not be aesthetically good in an artistic sense; and, on the other hand, if she succeeds, she has to have a rough mental idea/image in the first place. The implication is that procedures (1) and (2) are necessary for (3); and procedure (1) is necessary for (2).

One might, then, say that aesthetic value might emerge in procedure (3); the previous two are merely necessary for the whole process. To argue against this, first we can look at Collingwood's idea of art making. He holds that the creator "need not be acting in order to achieve any ulterior end; he not be following a preconceived plan; and he is certainly not transforming anything that can be properly be called a raw material."[125] His idea basically relates to (1) and (2). Art is a kind of imaginative creation:

> I have already said that a thing which 'exists in a person's head' and nowhere else is alternatively called an imaginary thing. The actual making of the tune is therefore alternatively called the making of an imaginary tune. This is a case of creation [...]

[124] Carroll 1999: 143.
[125] Collingwood 1938: 129.

> Hence the making a tune is an instance of imaginative creation. The same applies to the making of a poem, or a picture, or any other work of art.[126]

The idea is that it seems intuitive to say an artist is having an aesthetic experience – or, at least, an aesthetically valuable experience – when she is imaginatively creating something in her head. You can try to think of Mozart creating a song in his head, and enjoying the "sound" of his mental creation. It would be intuitive that he was having an aesthetic experience. The implication is that aesthetic value lies in the artist's head even if there is no physical object at all.

A problem with the Collingwoodian account is that, given that aesthetic value is determined by the artist, it seems to imply that every mental images that an artist has would be aesthetically valuable; it is intuitively true that there are bad arts; it is also intuitively right that not all people are talented artists. However, this is not the problem only for my account. Other accounts also have to explain why it is that an artist is an artist, and that an artwork is aesthetically valuable. Some appeal to true judges; but then they have to explain why is that a true judge is a true judge (the famous criticism to Hume's solution of taste).

My opinion is that although the artist's mentality is important, and it can explain some of the aesthetic value of some works, if we want to have a plausible account of the aesthetic, we have to bring out the concept of ideal critics at some point. The issue, then, becomes the bridge that connects the artist and the ideal critics. This is another complicated issue that is worth investigating; but for the purposes of my thesis, showing that the mentality of

[126] *ibid.*: 134.

the artist matters for determining the aesthetic value of an artwork is enough. Please bear in mind that I do think that aesthetic value is determined both by the artist and the ideal critics, but for the purposes of the discussion, in the next chapter I will assume we are talking about art geniuses who do not need ideal critics to affirm the aesthetic value of their works.

Chapter Six: My Theory and Its Advantages

In the previous chapter I argued that aesthetic value emerges in the head of the artist; an artist can make art according either to the taste of art critics, or to her own. But either way, aesthetic value emerges in her head rather somewhere else. Following this line of thought, I argue that to appreciate the aesthetic value of an artwork is actually to experience the idea/image the artist experiences – assuming we are talking about visual arts. Normally we can achieve this by looking at the work of art the artist made, assuming the artist succeeds in actualizing her mental idea/image.

6.1. The mental idea/image

The concept of mental idea/image, however, needs to be explained. Mental idea/image is not shapes and colors; for otherwise it would be an ordinary perceptual experience – this is also why Carroll and Levinson talk about lower-order properties and higher-order properties. As Carroll says:

> Aesthetic properties emerge from [...] lower order properties; they are dispositions to promote impressions or effects on appropriately backgrounded creatures with our perceptual and imaginative capabilities.[127]

And as Levinson writes:

> [A]esthetic properties [...] are *higher-order ways of appearing*, dependent in systematic fashion on lower-order ways of appearing but not conceptually tied to them or deducible from them.[128]

[127] Carroll 2002: 166.
[128] Levinson 2005: 218.

They both hold that to have an aesthetic experience is to attend to the aesthetic properties.[129] My account follows the basic structure of theirs. What is different is that I allow that some kinds of aesthetic properties are similar to ordinary perceptual experience; for aesthetic experience aims at the artist's mental idea/image. Mental idea/image is a concept that is logically different from ordinary perception; for, roughly speaking, the artist can imagine things without really perceiving anything at all.

Also, the concept of mental idea/image should not be understood literally. It is a kind of mental state that cannot be totally reduced to language, images or sounds – it is like the concept of philosophical intuition. So maybe it is better to explain the concept by giving examples and showing how it applies. The concept of mental idea/image is abstract: it allows the possibility of two art forms sharing the same kind of mental idea. For instance, ideally speaking, James Joyce's novel *Finnegans Wake* and John Cage's musical piece *Roaratorio* share a certain kind of mental idea – though Peter Kivy and some other philosophers will disagree with me here.[130] Or, ideally speaking, a movie adaptation should share a certain kind of aesthetic value with the original work – that is why some movie directors would like to consult the author about the "right mood" and "right feeling". At an individual level, a mental idea can be shared among a set of artworks that are made by a single artist; similarly, at a group level, a mental idea can be shared among artworks that

[129] Though Carroll holds that attending to the aesthetic properties is sufficient for having an aesthetic experience – see his 2002: 165; while Levinson holds that it is merely necessary – see his 2016: 33, for it is a minor point for my discussion, I side the debate aside.

[130] Kivy thinks that musical arts and literary arts are very different. Also, he does not think the literary arts are aesthetic to begin with.

are made by different artists (this is how institutional taste works).

6.2. How are the problems solved?

My theory of the aesthetic can easily avoid the problem I brought out in the previous chapters. First, my account does not face the problem of circularity; for I do not have to appeal to the object when I come to talk about aesthetic value. The so-called art objects are merely vehicles for an artist to actualize her mental idea/image. So logically speaking if an artist is talented enough, she can express her sense of beauty by using two different art forms – say, novel and music – and the aesthetic value of the two works are similar or even identical: like Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* and Cage's *Roaratorio* are sharing a certain kind of aesthetic value. What about the problem concerning the thesis of inter-definability? My account does not face this problem either; for I do not have to propose two kinds of aesthetic value. Aesthetic value merely lies in aesthetic experience.

Now I shall move on to the problem of taking aesthetic drugs, which is more complicated and requires more space to spell out. As I have argued, drugs are not necessarily instrumental. Firstly, we can imagine that an artist who also studies medicine can make paintings and drugs according to the same kind of mental idea/image. It can be the case that two materials afford the same kind of aesthetic experience. If the two materials represent the same mental idea/image and they are made by the same artist, why should we value the painting higher than the drug? I see no reason. It seems to me that one can only say that the two works have different artistic, rather than aesthetic value. What if the drug is made by another person? The answer depends on the exact situation. If the drug maker

knows the mentality of the artist well, and the drug succeeds in representing the mentality, then I would say the painting and the drug are presenting at least a similar kind of aesthetic experience. However, it does not mean that the two works necessarily have equal aesthetic value. Aesthetic value, as some also argue, also depends on other factors: some hold that being original and being creative are aesthetically relevant. My view is compatible with both: if being creative is aesthetically relevant, than the two works share some aesthetic value; if being creative is aesthetically irrelevant, than the two works share more or even all aesthetic value.

Shelley's criticism is that a drug can afford pleasure or affects that a painting affords; and, therefore, aesthetic value does not lie in aesthetic experience; for what the work provides can be replaced by some other things, like eating ice-cream. I have argued that we should not take 'pleasure' literally – aesthetic experience is a richer concept. I mentioned that Shelley thinks that "the empiricist does not always regard the experience to which she appeals as a pleasure."[131] He holds that as long as the drug can afford the phenomenology that the work of art affords, we have to agree that the drug can replace the work; and it is a counter-intuitive consequence. I explained that the richer the concept of aesthetic experience, the lesser counter-intuitive the drug case would be. I spelt out the idea when I was examining Budd's account of the aesthetic. For Budd, aesthetic experience includes perceptual experiences like experiences of shapes and colors; the implication is that if there are aesthetic drugs of Budd's kind, the drug would be like a mental theater that brings us to a mental gallery. Logically speaking, the experience of seeing the real painting is

[131] Shelley 2010: 710.

phenomenally very similar or identical to the experience that the drug affords (it depends on how you understand the aesthetic significance of creativity). I would happy to say the drug can replace the painting as far as aesthetic value goes; for artistic value I remain silent.

The problem with Budd's account is that his concept of the aesthetic is so rich that it attracts other worries. For example, we would say experiences of shapes and colors are lower-level experiences – they are merely perceptual rather than aesthetic. My account does not face this problem; for, as I said, my account of aesthetic experience does not include perceptual experiences like shapes and colors. In other words, if there is such thing as an aesthetic drug, the experience it affords is something in-between pleasure/psychological affects and perceptual experience. There is a lot of space between the two experiences – for instance, emotions (including object-directed ones), cognitive states like understanding, imaginative states, introspections, and etc. The questions are: can they be reduced to the phenomenology that a drug can provide? If yes, would that be a problem?

Answers vary depending on how many of the above items are included. If aesthetic experience merely includes pleasure and simple emotions, then it seems we should not value art higher than ice cream. However, the issue seems to be more complicated than it looks. In a recently article Levinson talks about how some music aims to arouse shame. His examples are "Richard Strauss's study for strings *Metamorphosen* and Schoenberg's string sextet *Verklärte Nacht* ("Transfigured Night")."[132] The problem is that shame is conditional and object/event-directed. Can a drug produce the phenomenology of shame

[132] Levinson 2015: 97.

without producing any corresponding object or event at all? The similar question can be asked to the cognitive phenomenology of understanding.

It is an advantage for my view, as well as for some other experience-based theorists, that the drug cannot do that. But I will point out now that even if the drug can provide conditional phenomenology without providing the corresponding condition, it does not mean that conditional phenomenology is necessarily as cheap as ordinary pleasure that can be replaced by an ice cream – the phenomenology of James Joyce's idea of aesthetic epiphany must be unique. If we accept that a print of a painting can provide aesthetic experience, why cannot a drug also do so if it represents the artist's mentality well? If the drug is made randomly or it is made according to something other than the artist's mentality, then, of course, it does not afford aesthetic experience. A print of a painting does not face the problem of failing to represent, normally, only because it usually represents the artist's mentality well. We can think of a situation where the print is in black and white and the aesthetic significance lies in its colors – then it is intuitive that the print does not afford (proper) aesthetic experience. So the problem is not about if it is a drug or a print, it is about if the material can represent the aesthetic value well.

My account goes even a bit further. Aesthetic experience does not merely include object-directed emotions and understanding; for the mentality of an artist might be richer. I even allow introspections to be a part of it. The idea of introspective beauty originates from Locke, who holds that introspective sensation is different from external perceptual sensation; as he puts it: "[t]his Source of *Ideas*, every Man has wholly in himself: And

though it be not Sense, as having nothing to do with external Objects; yet it is very like it, and might properly enough be call'd internal Sense."[133] Of course, I am not saying all kinds of introspection are aesthetically relevant; but I think there are at least some, and it is intuitive to say one is having an aesthetic experience when she is introspecting something she finds aesthetic. Furthermore, as Locke and some other empiricists also believe, introspective sensations are sources for imagination; and it is intuitive, in many cases, that an aim of an artist is actualizing her imagined ideas or images. It is, similarly, intuitive to say that an artist is having aesthetic experience when she is imagining something she finds aesthetic. In this sense, Shelley's idea of aesthetic drug is not threatening to my account at all.

Assuming the drug can afford us a rich feeling of the mentality of the artist, it would be just like a printed painting affording us a rich image. Shelley might say: "but then the artist does not have to paint at all, if there is such a cheap way to produce aesthetic experience." There are two possible responses. First, if it is the artist who can paint and make the drug, it should not be a problem at all; for it would be like an artist who can paint and take photos – no one would condemn her taking photos for aesthetic purposes, if taking photos is enough for her to express her mental idea/image. Secondly, if it is not the artist who can make drugs, there are two possible cases: (1) if the drug-maker aims at presenting the mentality of the artist, and succeeds in doing so, it is like someone making a photo copy of a painting; (2) if the drug-maker aims at expressing another set of experiences that is unrelated to the artist, even if it turns out that the two experiences are textually speaking

[133] Locke 1689/1975: 105.

very similar, or even identical, the two experiences are still aesthetically different. The idea has been spelt out by Jorge Luis Borges's short story "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*" – a story about a 20th century French writer who wants to "re-create" but not merely copy *Don Quixote* word for word. Borges says that it is almost impossible for Menard to re-create the novel; for the mentality of Menard and Cervantes are so different. Borges thinks that Menard's version of the *Quixote* must be more valuable than Cervantes's version. For it is natural for Cervantes to write Spanish in a way he did in *Don Quixote*; but it is hard for a 20th century French writer to achieve that. The implication of Borges' story is that, given aesthetic value depends on the artist's intention, the two works have different aesthetic value, and hence, afford different aesthetic experiences. In other words, the drug (Menard's *Quixote*) and the original work (Cervantes's *Don Quixote*) are textually identical; but they afford different aesthetic experiences.

6.3. Some other advantages

My account does not face the problems that experience-based theorists face. But more importantly, it has certain advantages. My account emphasizes the mentality of the artist, and I think it explains some of our intuitions about art appreciation. For example, suppose an artist makes a painting according to her mental image, and she succeeds in actualizing it – in the sense that when she looks at the painting again, she says, "this is what I want." However, no one can see how she sees even if all so-called art critics think that the painting is good – they somehow misunderstand and see the painting in another way. Would you say those art critics are having an aesthetic experience? It seems to me not.

Following the same line of thought, it can explain some misjudgements in art historians. As John Berger points out in his *Ways of Seeing,* art historians misjudge Frans Hals's two paintings for they fail to see how Hals saw. As Berger states: "[t]he last two great paintings by Frans Hals Portray the Governors and the Governesses of an Alms House for old paupers in the Dutch seventeenth-century city of Haarlem. They were officially commissioned portraits. Hals, an old man of over eighty, was destitute. Most of his life he had been in debt."[134] Berger points out that the critics misjudged the painting; and if the art critic had tried to see in the way an old, destitute man would see it, the art critic would have had different aesthetic experiences.

So now I shall move on to my theory of aesthetic experience. According to my theory aesthetic value originates in the head of the artist, so that to perceive and appreciate a work, we have to access the mentality of the artist – we have to know how she sees and how she finds things beautiful; and ideally we have to reenact the mental state that the artist has. Some might say this is a very demanding account of the aesthetic; for we cannot access other people's mental states. My account does not require us to fully access to and precisely reenact the mentality of an artist. My theory only points out that the more we are like the artist herself, the more we can perceive and appreciate. Also, "being unable to feel the way the artist feels" should not be a criticism to my theory at all. For that only proves that not all people can appreciate some works of art. The reason is simple. I know I can never compose things that Mozart composed. I might think that the works he composed are aesthetically pleasing, but I also think that it makes a lot of sense to say that actually I am

[134] Berger 1972: 12-13.

not fully appreciating the works even if I am fully informed; the reason is that I am not a genius like Mozart, and what I perceive must be different from him. I can imagine he could have a much higher level of aesthetic experience than I have (that is why he is a genius and I am not). His aesthetic experiences must be rich.

My opinion is that aestheticians do not want to admit this; they want to say they know what art and proper appreciation is. For example, Carroll's minimalist account only requires us to attend to the aesthetic properties of a work; Levinson's account relies on the idea of ideal critics (who are usually not artists themselves) and the threshold of art appreciation is relatively low. But that is not a good motivation for an aesthetic theory.

Conclusion

An aesthetic theory should be able to explain the nature of aesthetic value. The properties-based theory might not be able to easily satisfy this requirement; for it fails to account for our intuition that aesthetic experience is aesthetically valuable. Some experience-based theories also fail to satisfy the requirement: they have either the problem of taking aesthetic drugs, or the problem of circularity. I explained that some of them might be able to get rid of these problems; and I also argued that they all face the further problem concerning the thesis of inter-definability. Then I moved on to my theory, which is a new approach that I think explains aesthetic value well. I have shown how my theory solves the problems, as well as its advantages. For all those reasons, I conclude that my theory makes room for the claim that aesthetic experience can be taken as the aesthetic basis.

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