

# Life Through a Lens: Aesthetic Virtue and Saliency vs Kantian Disinterest

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**Abstract:** Kantian disinterest is the view that aesthetic judgement is constituted (at least in part) by a form of perceptual contemplation that is divorced from concerns of practical action. That view, which continues to be defended to this day, is challenged here on the basis that it is unduly spectator-focussed, ignoring important facets of art-making and its motivations. Beauty moves us, not necessarily to tears or rapt contemplation, but to practical action; crucially, it may do so as part and parcel of its appreciation. This claim is defended via reflection on (i) the art of photography, (ii) the concepts of ‘attentional saliency’ and ‘experienced mandates’, and (iii) a virtue-based account of aesthetic value.<sup>1</sup>

## I. Introduction

Kant’s thesis of aesthetic disinterest casts a domineering shadow over contemporary aesthetics. According to Kant, aesthetic judgement entails pleasure in an object’s perceptual appearance. This pleasure is said to be ‘disinterested’ insofar as it is free from practical interests and desires. (Kant’s theory is most often discussed as a theory of beauty. I shall be rather liberal in my understanding of the view and take it as a theory of aesthetic judgement more generally.) For Kant, aesthetic judgement is a matter of contemplating perceptual form, with our sensory and cognitive faculties operating in complete absorption, to the exclusion of all else. In not being based upon personal interests or desires, this pleasure is not one of idiosyncratic preference or mere liking, what Kant calls ‘the agreeable’ (§3). Nor is it pleasure in a thing’s objective utility, its being fit for its function, what Kant calls ‘the useful’ (§4). Rather, aesthetic judgement entails pleasure in a thing’s looking good (or sounding good, etc.) purely for the looking at it (or the hearing of it, etc.), entirely, that is, for its own sake. Objects that occasion pleasure in this way are experienced as if made not just for the viewer’s perceptual gratification, but for everyone’s. Kant writes: “attached to the judgment of taste, with the consciousness of an abstraction in it from all interest, [is] a claim to validity for everyone” (§6).

Close cousins of Kant’s thesis are defended to this day. Edward Bullough (1912), Clive Bell (1914), Jerome Stolnitz (1960), Jerrold Levinson (1992) and Bence Nanay (2016) all defend views that draw inspiration from Kant in affirming that aesthetic judgement is, necessarily, free from personal interest and idiosyncrasies. It is therefore entirely non-practical in character. Aesthetic judgement, for these philosophers, entails experiencing objects and events in a uniquely detached way. Here is Bell, motivating his aesthetic formalism and, 100 years later, Nanay, demarcating aesthetic attention:

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“Those who find the chief importance of art or of philosophy in its relation to conduct or its practical utility... will never get from anything the best that it can give. Whatever the world of aesthetic contemplation may be, it is not the world of human business and passion; in it the chatter and tumult of material existence is unheard, or heard only as the echo of some more ultimate harmony.” (Bell 1914, p.26)

“[T]here is a very clearly defined difference between aesthetic attention and non-aesthetic attention—one of them is distributed across properties but focused on one object, whereas the other one is not... [T]hinking of aesthetic attention as distributed attention does capture the original Kantian importance of disinterest in our aesthetic experiences. Practical interest in an object... could be described as attention focused on a limited number of its features—the ones we are interested in from a practical point of view.” (Nanay 2016, p.26)

Kant’s concept of aesthetic disinterest contains idiosyncrasies of its own. If aiming to be accurate to Kant, then one should be careful to keep his notion of disinterest distinct from the views of others (Zangwill 1992; Crowther 2008, pp.70-72). Nonetheless, the above philosophers clearly do follow directly in Kant’s footsteps. We can therefore justifiably use the term ‘Kantian disinterest’ in a stipulative manner to cover all such views, and related ones, that distinguish what goes on in the mind of one who is considering an object or event aesthetically, with one who is considering that object or event in a more practical or engaged way, i.e. via the lens of their personal interests.

Kantian disinterest has recently been challenged from a number of directions. Judgements of sexiness may be thought to be at once aesthetic, yet partially constituted by the judge’s practical interests, i.e. sexual desires (Lintott & Irvin 2016). Moreover, some encounters with beauty are significant not because they cause one to shed one’s idiosyncratic interests, values and desires, but because they reveal and transform those interests (Riggle 2016). Kantian disinterest has also been challenged for its failure to acknowledge conceptual overlaps between the aesthetic, the moral and the social (Carroll 1996; Berleant 2010; Saito 2016).

All of the above challenges focus on the aesthetic judgements of spectators. I will explore a quite different problem for the thesis of Kantian disinterest, one that is fruitfully approached via the notions of perceptual attention and salience: that it pays insufficient attention to the psychology of creators of art, and so can be challenged from the point of view of art-making and not only art-viewing. As a preview: what is salient (broadly: attention-grabbing) in one’s perceptual experience on a given occasion is a function of one’s interests, values, desires, expectations and beliefs at that time. Crucially, I shall argue that aesthetic qualities may be experienced by artists as salient not merely in the sense of being attention-grabbing, but also as mandating action as part of an artistic response to those qualities. Beauty moves us, not necessarily to tears or rapt contemplation, but to practical action. Beauty may inspire deeds, and it may do so as part and parcel of its appreciation. Or so I shall argue. To help fix ideas, I focus on the art of photography, though I believe similar claims would hold for other art forms, e.g., poetry/literature, music and painting, though no doubt the details would need handling

differently. In addition, I will argue that a virtue-based approach to aesthetics supplies a useful background against which to address these matters insofar as the link between salience and interests is suggestive of a link between salience and character, one that has already been explored fruitfully in the moral domain (Chappell & Yetter-Chappell 2016).

## II. Art-Making vs Disinterest?

Theories of Kantian disinterest are unduly spectator-based in their analysis of aesthetic judgement. That will be the take-home message. By attempting to divorce aesthetic judgement from practical action, they view such judgement through the lens of passive observation, rather than active creation. Indeed, an underappreciated problem for such theories is that they rule out certain judgements on the part of artists as *bona fide* aesthetic. Berys Gaut (2007, p.31) has drawn attention to this problem. Gaut writes:

[I]f we insisted that a contemplative (non-practical) attitude is necessary for an attitude's being aesthetic, then any artist at all would count as not taking up an aesthetic attitude to her work while making it. For her attitude towards her work is certainly practical while she makes it: she is concerned to create it and to revise it in various ways so as to improve its quality. The contemplative criterion for the aesthetic attitude here reveals itself as rooted in the audience's perspective on the artwork and neglects the viewpoint of its maker, which has at least as good a claim to be an aesthetic one as does the audience's.

Gaut's idea is that at least two things are true of artists, when they create their works: (i) they make aesthetic judgements about those works and (ii) such judgement are made from a practical point of view; they are not made from a passive, disinterested perspective of calm contemplation, but from an interested perspective as to whether certain actions need performing, i.e. on the work currently being created. For instance, producing a still life, a painter may pause to judge the composition not dispassionately, but by way of deciding if further work is necessary and where. Finding the composition only somewhat balanced, they may be further prompted to judge whether the proportions are quite right and whether the colour scheme needs rethinking. The ensuing aesthetic judgements are practical in character, having a conceptual connection to action: the proportions *are* off a tad and require retouching; a darker shade of red *would* better accentuate the contrast between the objects; etc. Thus, artists' aesthetic judgement of their works pose a counterexample to Kantian disinterest.

No doubt artists are interested in modifying their works on the basis of their aesthetic judgements. But whether there is a compelling challenge here to Kantian disinterest is less clear. Defenders of Kantian disinterest can reasonably attempt to separate in these cases the artist's aesthetic judgement from the artist's interests. For in reaching a verdict on whether their work requires modification, the artist may consider the work from the point of view of a dispassionate spectator, thereby flipping between interested and disinterested perspectives and keeping the two separate. The (dis)pleasure taken by the painter in their composition need not be (dis)pleasure that is grounded in their idiosyncratic interests, e.g., to refine the work or make it better fit the vision they initially had in mind. That is, the interest and the (dis)pleasure need not in fact "mix" (§2) in the way that Kant thought problematic. Only if the (dis)pleasure in the object of creation is

partially constituted (or grounded, etc.) in the artist's idiosyncratic interests, while remaining intuitively aesthetic, will Kantian disinterest be challenged. But as the possibility of switching between disinterested/interested perspectives and thereby keeping them distinct shows, this way of understanding the cases Gaut has in mind is not mandatory.

So, if Gaut is right to highlight a clash between art-making and Kantian disinterest, then that clash requires a much fuller defence. This is the aim I set myself in this paper. I shall attempt to elucidate the tension between art-making and Kantian disinterest by considering the art of photography and works by one of its great masters: Henri Cartier-Bresson. But to do so will first require detours via the concepts of both salience and virtue.

### **III. Salience**

Philosophical discussions of the concept of 'salience' are few, but where they are found, they typically take their lead from a body of literature in perceptual psychology on the mechanisms of perceptual attention (Wu 2014; Chappell & Yetter-Chappell 2016; Watzl 2017; though see Greco 2003 and Lackey 2007 for discussion of 'explanatory salience'). By and large, discussion of what is salient for an agent is bound up, either implicitly or explicitly, with discussion of how perceptual attention alights on a region, object or feature in a non-involuntary, automatic way (sometimes called 'exogenous' or 'exogenously-driven' attention). This aligns with a very natural reading of the term 'salient' as referring to that which is attention-grabbing. Things that are salient for an agent are things which capture, divert or take command of the agent's attention. Such involuntary shifts of perceptual attention will be my focus and contrast with shifts of spatial-, object- or feature-based attention that occur intentionally (sometimes called 'endogenous' or 'endogenously-driven' attention).

First point: involuntary shifts of attention, while automatic and unwilling, are still causally responsive to idiosyncratic aspects of the agent's psychology (for some exceptions, see Wu 2014, pp.37-38). A crying voice may automatically draw attention your auditory attention away from a conversation only because you recognise the voice to be your child's. A water cooler may draw your visual attention only because you are thirsty. Focusing on the conversation, you weren't listening out for your child's voice. Not believing a water cooler to be located in the building, you weren't looking for one. Rather, these things struck you. They were salient for you, exerting an involuntary tug on your attention, but only given your particular background beliefs, desires, interests, etc.

An example from beyond the armchair: in experimental conditions, Yi Jiang and their colleagues (2006) found that erotic pictures either involuntarily capture or repel subjects' spatial attention, dependent on the sex and sexual orientation of the subject participant: the attention of heterosexual males was involuntarily captured by female nudes yet repelled by male nudes, while heterosexual females' and gay males' attention was involuntarily grabbed by male nudes (though not repelled by female nudes in quite the same manner). Similar patterns of attentional repulsion/capture were observed for bi-sexual and gay females.

A second point: to the extent that what an agent finds salient is a product of their particular psychology, salience patterns can imply facts about character. For instance, we may find others morally blameworthy to the extent that certain morally-relevant facts are not salient to them. Failing to have one's attention diverted by the surrounding poverty when visiting an exotic holiday destination seems to imply obliviousness to others' needs. But we also find people morally blameworthy to the extent that certain morally-relevant facts *are* salient to them, exerting a pull on their attention, and yet fail to provide any motivational influence. Having one's attention grabbed by the sound of one's child calling out in pain, but without being moved to check on the child, implies at best pitilessness and at worst malevolence. As Chappell & Yetter-Chappell put it (2016, p.452): "In cases where the needs of others are especially *salient* to an agent, any altruistic desires in that agent can be expected to function at full efficacy." Such an expectation is normative in character and not merely causal.

A third point: one way to understand episodes of perceptual salience, as a form of non-voluntary attention-grabbingness, is that they involve an experience of the world as attempting to solicit a response from you. Susanna Siegel (2014, pp.55-56) distinguishes among such soliciting experiences ones in which attention is grabbed by a stimulus and the agent fails to be moved by the solicitation, from cases where motivation to do what is solicited is present. Siegel calls the latter cases ones of "experienced mandates." For hopefully very many parents, hearing their child crying in pain involves an experienced mandate and is not a mere soliciting experience: the child sounds as if it is to-be-checked-on *and* the parent feels compelled to do so. Siegel (Ibid., p52) characterises the phenomenology of experienced mandates as follows: "From your point of view, the environment pulls actions out of you directly, like a force moving a situation, with your actions in it, from one moment to the next."

I will mark this distinction of Siegel's by talking of experiences where a stimulus is *weakly salient*, in contrast with experiences in which a stimulus is *strongly salient*. The parent whose attention is grabbed by the sound of their crying child, but is not moved to check on its wellbeing, has a *weakly salient* experience of their crying child. The parent whose attention is grabbed by that sound and, in hearing it, is motivated to check on the child has a *strongly salient* experience of their crying child. The first is a blameworthy agent. The second is intuitively more admirable.

Now, theories of Kantian disinterest claim that aesthetic judgements of, e.g., beauty, elegance, harmony, proportion, unity, etc. are partially constituted by a contemplative experience in which one sheds one's idiosyncratic interests and is perceptually absorbed in an object's appearance for its own sake, absent practical concerns. Insofar as attributions of strongly salient experiences imply both idiosyncratic interests of the agent, combined with motivational elements, Kantian disinterest entails that there can be no strongly salient aesthetic experiences of, e.g., beauty, elegance, harmony, proportion, unity, etc. A *strongly salient aesthetic experience* is had by an agent just in case they experience an object to be, e.g., beautiful, elegant, harmonious, proportioned, unified, etc. in an attention-grabbing way that implicates one or more idiosyncratic psychological features of that agent and where a high degree of motivation to act on that experience is present. Such experiences, of beauty and other aesthetic qualities, are conceptually tied to the agent and their peculiar interests in ways that Kantian disinterest says is incompatible with them being *bona fide* aesthetic in character. Yet strongly salient

aesthetic experiences are not only possible, but are plausibly attributed to aesthetically virtuous artists, photographers in particular.

#### IV. Virtue Aesthetics

In philosophical aesthetics, the locus of aesthetic evaluation has traditionally been taken to be objects. A shift away from this tradition has occurred in the shape of virtue-based approaches to aesthetics. Like virtue-based approaches in ethics and epistemology, these aim to direct evaluative focus onto agents, with emphasis on the skills, emotions, character traits, motives and intentions that manifest in artistic activity, where this includes the appreciation, performance and creation of works of art.

This approach has been developed in a number of ways (see Woodruff 2001; Goldie 2007; Lopes 2008; Kieran 2009; Ransom 2019). My focus will be the distinction drawn by Tom Roberts (2018) between faculty and trait aesthetic virtues, principally in relation to artistic creation. This distinction takes inspiration from a familiar one in epistemology at the heart of the dispute between reliabilism and responsibilism. According to reliabilism, intellectual virtue is constituted by mere *faculties* of the agent: a good memory, finely detailed powers of perception, keen powers of inference and reasoning, etc. (Sosa 2007) According to responsibilism, intellectual virtue is constituted by aspects of an agent's character: *traits* of open-mindedness, adaptability, carefulness, humility, fairness, etc. (Zagzebski 1996)

Roberts notes that we can, accordingly, consider aesthetic virtues of creation to be constituted by *faculties*, e.g., perfect pitch, a steady hand, a sense of harmony and rhythm, an eye for detail, a vivid imagination, a rich vocabulary etc. or by *traits*, e.g., that reflect a concern for the aesthetic, including the courage to push boundaries, receptivity to and open-mindedness about novel sources of aesthetic value, and a concern for honesty and authenticity in the expressive or representational properties of one's works.

Artworks that are the product of aesthetic faculty virtues instantiate *achievement value*, according to Roberts. For instance, hyperrealistic portraits by Chuck Close are finely executed, requiring a keen eye for detail and refined motor-skills. The song "Parakeet" by the band Faraquet is complex in terms of its individual riffs and its changes in time signature, requiring a dexterous memory to switch between such changes.

Trait aesthetic virtues, by contrast, are ones that the agent is more fully responsible for and constitute more deeply who the agent is as a person. Chiefly, this is through such virtues revealing core concerns, values and principles to which the agent is evaluatively committed. Attributions of these aesthetic virtues thus imply facts about the agent's motives in ways that attributions of mere faculty virtues do not. Such works have, according to Roberts, *motivational value*. The chief idea is that artworks can be aesthetically evaluated not simply for their intrinsic formal qualities, nor for how they are the product of an agent's remarkable aesthetic faculties or skills, but for being "shaped and crafted according to what she cares about." (Ibid., p. 443) Denis Dutton makes a similar point in discussion of the concept 'authenticity' in art:

It is more than just formal quality that distinguishes the latest multimillion-dollar Hollywood sex-and-violence blockbuster or manipulative tearjerker from the

dark depths of the Beethoven Opus 131 String Quartet or the passionate intensity of *The Brothers Karamazov*. These latter are meant in a way that many examples of the former cannot possibly be: they embody an element of personal commitment normally missing from much popular entertainment art and virtually all commercial advertising. (2003, p.271)

The concept of aesthetic trait virtues dovetails neatly with the concept of strongly salient aesthetic experiences. Recall: a strongly salient aesthetic experience is had by an agent just in case they experience an object to be, e.g., beautiful, elegant, harmonious, proportioned, unified, etc. in an attention-grabbing way that implicates one or more idiosyncratic psychological features of the agent and where a high-degree of motivation to act on that experience is present. For what an agent finds strongly salient in this aesthetic sense likewise reflects the agent's concerns, values and interests.

We saw in discussion of the parent who has a strongly salient experience of their crying child that they are morally admirable, to some extent, for being motivated to check on its wellbeing. The parent who is not so motivated, and who has a weakly salient experience of their crying child, is morally blameworthy. (Caution: do not think that all weakly salient experiences entail a deficit of virtue, nor that all strongly salient experiences entail its possession. Some attributions of strongly salient experiences, where an agent is motivated to act maliciously, entail viciousness and some attributions of weakly salient experiences entail commendable restraint.)

Likewise, I suggest, artists are sometimes *aesthetically* admired for their strongly salient aesthetic experiences; that is, for having their attention grabbed by a stimulus and being motivated to produce works of art as a result. When artists are so admired, they are thereby admired for their *trait* aesthetic virtues, aesthetic virtues that, unlike mere faculty virtues, imply motivational facts: that the artist was moved to produce *that*. To make this idea concrete, I now turn to photography, first discussing its relation to aesthetic faculty virtues before moving on to the manifestation in photography of aesthetic trait virtues.

## V. The Photographer's Eye

Consider talk of 'the photographer's eye' or of someone's having 'a photographer's eye.' These are terms of praise for an agent for having a relatively unique way of seeing the world, one that is manifest in their photographs. It might be thought that to have a photographer's eye is merely to possess certain aesthetic *faculty* virtues, e.g., to visually discern spatial forms or to imagine how a 3-D scene will appear in the 2-D surface of the resulting photograph, etc. We can also add here the practical skills to knowledgeably control certain variables, like shutter speed, focal length and lighting conditions. Consider as well how an agent with a photographer's eye may perceptually categorise objects in such a way that entails awareness of those objects' typical temporal dynamics, thus enabling such objects to be tracked through the viewfinder (Maynard 2008, p.203). This latter skill is especially important for capturing the scene in its full dynamics, what Henri Cartier-Bresson famously called 'the decisive moment.'

Cartier-Bresson's writings are a rich source of reflection on the nature of photography. Some of these seem to describe the act of photographing from the perspective of aesthetic faculty virtues. Consider the following:

[P]hotography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organization of forms which give that event its proper expression. (2004, p.42)

Sometimes it happens that you stall, delay, wait for something to happen. Sometimes you have the feeling that here are all the makings of a picture—except for just one thing that seems to be missing. But what one thing? Perhaps someone suddenly walks into your range of view. You follow his progress through the viewfinder. You wait and wait, and then finally you press the button. (Ibid., p.33)

After developing and printing, you must go about separating the pictures which, though they are all right, aren't the strongest. When it's too late, then you know with a terrible clarity exactly where you failed... Was it simply that you did not take into account a certain detail in relation to the whole setup? Or was it (and this is more frequent) that your glance became vague, your eye wandered off (Ibid., pp.25-7)

Memory is very important, particularly in respect to the recollection of every picture you've taken while you've been galloping at the speed of the scene itself. The photographer must make sure, while he is still in the presence of the unfolding scene, that he hasn't left any gaps, that he has really given expression to the meaning of the scene in its entirety, for afterwards it is too late. He is never able to wind the scene backwards in order to photograph it all over again. (Ibid., p.25)

[Photography] requires concentration, a discipline of mind, sensitivity and a sense of geometry. (Ibid., p.15)

For Cartier-Bresson, the photographer's eye involves a kind of flexibility of seeing, quick reactions, a keen memory, and, above all, a sense of space and form. Looking at some of Cartier-Bresson's best-known works of winding streets and alleys there can be no doubt that he is, as Gérard Macé (1996, p.11) put it, "a geometrician without a sliderule." (See Cartier-Bresson's *Aquila degli Abruzzi; Sifnos, Greece; and Hyères, France.*) Indeed, Cartier-Bresson's photographs merit admiration not just for their striking formal features, but for the achievement involved in skilfully capturing such fleeting geometrical patterns; Cartier-Bresson's photographs are not merely formally interesting, but *well-timed* (Cavedon-Taylor 2020).

But there is another strand in these, and other writings, of Cartier-Bresson and that point to the importance he placed on aesthetic trait virtues and the *motivational* value that may be possessed by the resulting photographs. Indeed, talk of 'the photographer's eye' can attribute not only certain remarkable faculties or skills. It can implicate aspects of the photographer's character, their concerns and motivation. Talk of 'the photographer's eye' is thus not always talk about a skill-based type, but something more trope-like: a particular, unrepeatable way of seeing the world. Cartier-Bresson's photographer's eye,



for instance, is not that of Nan Goldin's or Ansel Adams's. Some photographs are the product of agents who see the world in playful, absurd or ironic ways. Others are the product of agents who see things more seriously.

The photographic eye of Cartier-Bresson was a humanistic one. The above remarks are made by someone with patience for, and open-mindedness to, the beauty of human life. Crucially, they express Cartier-Bresson's concern to faithfully record the intricacies of human, lived experience, with all of its details, both messy and minute. Cartier-Bresson, in his own words, sought to accept humanity "in all its reality", reporting that his aim, above all else, was "to be attentive to life." (2004, p.66.) On visiting Moscow, he revealed his particular aesthetic concerns as following: "I explained that my main interest was in people and that I would like to see them in streets, in shops, at work, at play, in every visible aspect of daily life." Cartier-Bresson's photographs of crowds and persons appear evidence of his finding beauty in fleeting moments of ordinary life. (See his *Boy Carrying a Wine Bottle; portrait of Alberto Giacometti; On the Banks of the Marne.*) As E.H. Gombrich (1978, p.10) writes, Cartier-Bresson's photographs "will make us look at people and situations anywhere with a heightened sense of sympathy and compassion. He is a true humanist."

So, Cartier-Bresson thus possessed a photographer's eye that was not merely geometrically exacting, but also deeply humane. Accordingly, his photographs merit admiration, among other reasons, insofar as they were produced from the aesthetically virtuous motivations of open-mindedness to, and patience with, a certain kind of beauty: that of human life. Again in his own words: "In photography, the smallest thing can be a great subject. The little, human detail can become a leitmotiv." (2004, p.29)

Here, then, is the key claim: examining Cartier-Bresson's photographs and reading his thoughts on photography, it is natural to think that human life was *strongly* aesthetically salient for him. That is, the aesthetic aspects of everyday life did not take command of his attention, yet leave him unmoved; that would be to attribute mere *weakly* salient aesthetic experience of human life. Rather, it is plausible that he found beauty, serenity, and other aesthetic qualities in small details of human life in an attention-grabbing way that entailed a desire to faithfully and sympathetically record such details with his camera. For Cartier-Bresson, the beauty of human life may have been salient in the sense that it simultaneously called out to be photographed and moved him accordingly. The environment may have seemed to pull the act of photographing out of him directly, in the manner described by Siegel. So much the worse for theories of Kantian disinterest, since they analyse aesthetic judgement as necessarily free from personal concerns and practical action.

How far can these remarks be generalised? I suspect that they can be generalised quite widely, among both amateur and professional photographers. It is very natural to think that people are moved to take photographs of people, places and events because they find those people, places and events to be objects of aesthetic interest. A tourist may be concerned to capture the breath-taking beauty of their surroundings and, as a result, have their attention grabbed by the magnificence of particular natural scenes and vistas in such a way that these may, phenomenologically, call out to be photographed, thereby moving the tourist accordingly. A doting grandparent at their grandchild's nativity play may be unable to divert their eyes from their grandchild, due to their love for the child,

feeling compelled to snap away on their phone as a result. Both count as instances of strongly salient aesthetic experience. Photography is a case where beauty may at once grab and move. For an aesthetically virtuous photographer, like Cartier-Bresson, the appreciation of beauty is experience of a photo *opportunity*, making judgements of beauty and motivation to act entwined for them.

Now, these examples, including that of Cartier-Bresson, might be construed in a causal way that does not threaten Kantian disinterest. On the causal picture, the photographer's appreciation and judgement of the objects before them is one thing, their being moved to photograph those objects remains quite another. The disinterested judgement merely causes a motivation to act. Indeed, recall the earlier worry about Gaut's way of motivating a clash between Kantian disinterestedness and art-making by focussing on artists' judgements of their works. The worry was that while the artist may appear to be taking an interested, practical stance when judging their work aesthetically, as Gaut suggests, she may in fact be flipping between interested and disinterested stances, again keeping the two distinct.

So, we have two potential responses on the part of the defender of Kantian disinterest to consider. First, the photographer's appreciation of a scene and their motivation to photograph it may be connected, but only causally. Second, the two may not be connected at all; the photographer may simply switch at will between disinterested and interested attitudes.

The problem with these responses is in how they separate aesthetic judgement of O from the motivation to photograph O. Take the first response. Since it says the two are connected causally, this would entail that the photographer's aesthetic judgement of O and their motivation to photograph O can be understood in isolation from one another. The second response broadly agrees on this matter. For it denies that there is any connection *per se* between the photographer's aesthetic appraisal of the scene before them and their motivation to photograph that scene; instead, a higher-order state in the photographer is responsible for voluntarily switching between the two.

Are either views plausible? The key worry is that there appears little that can be understood of the motivation to photograph O, if fully characterisable in abstraction from an aesthetic judgement of O's qualities, something that both responses claim is the case. For how are we to understand a subject's being motivated at t1 to photograph O, with aesthetic judgement of O at t1 potentially absent? Where no aesthetic judgement of O is present, motivation to photograph O can be expected to not be present as well. Construing the connection between the photographer's aesthetic judgement and their motivation to photograph either as a mere causal one, as the first response does, or as not connected at all, as the second does, fails to give a plausible account of the strength of connection between the two. In the case of aesthetically virtuous photographers, like Cartier-Bresson, motivation to photograph seems closer to a criterion for the attribution of aesthetic judgement, rather than something that is at best connected contingently, i.e. via causation.

## **VI. Broader Concerns**

In claiming that (some of) the experiences of (some) photographers are fully salient aesthetic experiences, there is one respect in which I wish to depart from Siegel. Recall that Siegel calls the more general type of experience here, a felt solicitation from the world with accompanying motivational elements, an experienced mandate. What I wish to dispute is Siegel's claim that the object of such experiences are never represented as "a source of normative constraint." (2014, p.46) Siegel's idea appears to be that in feeling oneself answerable to the world in these experiences one does not simultaneously experience oneself to be under pressure or requirement to act in the relevant way. Siegel claims that this contrasts with how one may feel oneself, for whatever reason, answerable to another person.

Given the connection between salience and character, I think that this last claim is to be resisted. (Recall that having one's attention grabbed by a stimulus, in either weakly salient or strongly salient experiences, aesthetic or otherwise, implies psychological facts about one's interests and concerns.) The parent whose attention is grabbed by the sound of their crying child and is motivated to check on their wellbeing may well experience a "normative constraint" on the action of checking: it is experienced as *to be done*, morally. Similarly, given what we know about Cartier-Bresson's character via his photographs and writings, it is plausible that he experienced a normative constraint on the action of photographing human life, that photographing human beauty is *the thing to be done*, from the point of view of the aesthetic. Human beauty may have been experienced as requiring faithful documentation. Thus, an agent in either the ethical or aesthetic cases described, who is motivated to act but, for whatever reason does not, may well experience themselves as having failed to live up to normative demands. Inaction may be experienced as the wrong thing to have done. Regret and self-reproach may ensue.

These two cases are individually sufficient to put pressure on Siegel's claim that strongly salient experiences/experienced mandates never involve experiencing a stimulus as imposing a normative constraint. Clearly, the idea that we are subject to *aesthetic* demands is the more controversial claim. But all that I am claiming is that we sometimes *feel* that such constraints are present, either for ourselves or others. One may feel that, from the point of view of the aesthetic (and not simply as a matter of ethics, prudence or etiquette), Jim should have worn a tie, or that Isabelle ought to have updated the décor in her flat by now, or that a colleague is much too old for that hairstyle (see Archer and Ware 2018 for more examples). Likewise, an aesthetically virtuous photographer, who acts from care and concern for the aesthetic, may feel that they really ought to photograph an object, whether a scene in nature or tender moment between persons, that it would be an 'aesthetic crime' to leave it unrecorded and so allow the photo opportunity to wither away. Furthermore, such a photographer may feel it normatively required of them not merely to photograph some object, say, a particular person, but that, given the person's nature, aesthetic demands require they be photographed in a *specific* way, e.g., sympathetically, glamorously, grittily, etc.

## VII. Conclusion

This paper has many moving parts. In closing, I'll attempt to take stock.

Theories of Kantian disinterest claim that aesthetic judgement is partially constituted by pleasure in an object's appearance that is free from the influence of one's personal

interests, desires or values. Aesthetic judgement, on this view, is said to be a wholly contemplative, or non-practical psychological state.

I have first claimed that this view is incompatible with the existence of strongly salient aesthetic experiences; that is, experiences that form the basis of aesthetic judgement in which an object is found to be, e.g., beautiful, elegant, harmonious, proportioned, unified, etc. in an attention-grabbing way that (i) implicates one or more idiosyncratic psychological features of the agent and (ii) where a high-degree of motivation to act on that experience is present.

Second, I have claimed that we have good reason to think that there are, in fact, fully salient aesthetic experiences. A motivating thought here is that beauty sometimes inspires action rather than cool observation. Against the background of a virtue-based account, where the character and motives of artists are aesthetically assessable, my example of where we may find strongly salient aesthetic experiences is among the experiences of photographers. A particular case study is Henri Cartier-Bresson, whose photographs and writings suggest both an aesthetic interest in human life and in being motivated to authentically recording its minutiae as part of its appreciation. Human life appears to have been strongly aesthetically salient to him.

Many of these claims, about Cartier-Bresson in particular, remain speculative. But the idea that beauty, human or otherwise, may inspire artists to make art and that, second, artists are persons who have unique ways of seeing the world (i.e. in which certain things are salient to them which are not for others), are both familiar ones, however difficult to articulate or make fully precise. If what I have said here is along the right lines, then, at the very least, much more must be done by the defender of Kantian disinterest to show how the two are compatible with their analysis of aesthetic judgement.

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