

**Aesthetic Rationality**  
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Reflection on talk of reasons for action or belief suggests that reasons serve both normative and explanatory purposes. After all, reasons are cited in answer both to “why should he do it?” and “why is he doing it?”, as well as in answer both to “why should he believe it?” and “why does he believe it?”. These normative and explanatory functions are not distinct. To explain by citing someone’s reason is to state a factor in virtue of whose support the action was performed or the proposition believed. One might think that this normative-explanatory nexus, as Joseph Raz has labeled it, is at the heart of rationality.<sup>1</sup> That will, in any case, be our working hypothesis in this paper. We argue that the aesthetic domain falls inside the scope of rationality and, furthermore, that it does so in its own way.

We contend that just as a theoretical judgment is a stance on whether to believe *p*, and a practical judgment is a stance on whether to do *x*, an aesthetic judgment is a stance on whether to appreciate *o*. Aesthetic judgment, properly understood, is reducible neither to a judgment about what to believe nor to a judgment about what to do.<sup>2</sup> It is appreciation rather than belief or intention.<sup>3</sup> Correlatively, reasons supporting these different sorts of judgment operate in fundamentally different ways. The irreducibility of the aesthetic domain is due, we argue, to the fact that aesthetic judgment is a sensory-affective disclosure of,

and responsiveness to, merit: it is a feeling that presents an object, and is responsive to it, as worthy of being liked.

Our strategy is as follows. In the first section, we will sketch the view, exhibiting both what we take to be the analogies between the theoretical, the practical and the aesthetic—the normative-explanatory nexus that runs between these three domains of rationality—and the categorical differences between them. In the second section, we argue that our account succeeds at the task of accommodating the pressure to conceive of aesthetic judgment, on the one hand, as first-personal and non-transferable and, on the other hand, as registering the presence of a genuine aspect of the world. Our view will be shown to be superior to both subjectivist conceptions of aesthetic judgment, such as traditional Expressivism and Relativism, and the widely-held objectivist conceptions, according to which it is a species of (non-relative) belief.

I. We begin this section by sketching our view of the differences between the way reasons function in the theoretical, practical and aesthetic domains.

Reasons for thinking that a certain proposition is to be believed fall into the category of evidence, broadly construed. If you say, “the cat is on the mat” and we ask you why you think so, you satisfy us if you tell us that you can see him, or that you have checked everywhere else he might be, or that you have it on excellent authority.<sup>4</sup> These explanations reveal both what supports believing the proposition and what leads you to believe it. The theoretical question “why” demands something in the family of a proof of the proposition and an account of why you hold it to be true—demands that are not to be satisfied separately, but at

once. Normally, there is no rational step between viewing  $p$  as to be believed in virtue of  $q$  and believing  $p$  on the basis of  $q$ .

We do not have a catch-all word for the category of reasons for judging that an action is to be performed, but its rough contours are familiar. If you say, “I am marching on Washington”, and we ask you “why?”, we are not asking for the evidence that you are doing it. We do not take you to have answered our question if you tell us that the Washington monument is now coming into view among a throng of protesters. We are interested rather in what there is to be said in favor of your doing it—specifically, the favoring considerations or further project that motivates you. At issue is not support of a belief, but support of an action—practical justification. You satisfy us if you tell us that you are marching on Washington from boredom, because you support the cause, or for the exercise. The practical “why?” question demands an answer that gives at once both a justification of the action and an account of why one is performing it.

So far, we have given a rationale for thinking of belief and action as placed analogously in their distinctive normative-explanatory orders.<sup>5</sup> Now, to the aesthetic case. We also do not have a catch-all word for the category of reasons for judging that an artwork is to be appreciated, but we will argue—here intuitively, and in section two more rigorously—that they are neither evidence nor reasons supporting action. If you say, “*North by Northwest* is excellent”, and we ask you for your reasons, we are typically not asking about your evidence for believing that it is excellent. We would be nonplussed if you reply by telling us that Manhola Dargis finds the movie excellent. For we would have expected you to tell us why you like it. Dargis’s liking it may be really good evidence that

the film is good, and so a reason for believing that it is good, but it is not an answer to the question of why you appreciate it. And it is appreciation—which on our view just is aesthetic judgment—that a statement such as “*North by Northwest* is excellent” normally expresses (and is taken to express).

Aesthetic judgment, we contend, is a specifically aesthetic form of liking.<sup>6</sup> It is not a matter of what you happen to like, but what is worth liking—or, in any case, what seems worth liking from the point of view of the feeling. Aesthetic judgment is not a private, subjective feeling of pleasure, but (in the paradigmatic case) a feeling merited by the object. Accordingly, if you tell us that you like the film because Cary Grant reminds you of a favorite elementary school teacher, your liking is not aesthetic in the relevant sense. To aesthetically judge an object, your liking must be explained by those features of the object that (seem to) make it worth liking; those features that (seem to) explain why it is to be appreciated. These are aesthetic reasons. For aesthetic judgment to be aesthetically justified is for the liking to be in fact explained by those features of the object that make it worth liking. And so, the aesthetic “why?” question demands an answer that states at once both what led you to like the object and what makes it worth liking.

It follows that you have not given us the right sort of answer if you tell us merely that going to see the film would be a good idea. What we want to know is not what the film might do for us, but rather what makes it aesthetically great. That it will do something for us may give us a very good reason to go to see the film, but it does not necessarily portray it as having aesthetic merit. Thus, although it may support an action, such a reason does not support aesthetic judgment—it is a practical rather than an aesthetic reason.

The problem cannot be fixed by specifying that the promised outcome must bear on beauty or art. It might be thought that if the reason for going to see the film is obviously aesthetically irrelevant—say, that it cures baldness—then the reason and corresponding explanation is not aesthetic. But if, instead, the promised outcome is, say, that it will improve one’s taste, then this reason is both practical and aesthetic. However, this reason is still not aesthetic in the relevant sense—not the kind of reason required for justifying an aesthetic judgment.

Compare the proposal under consideration to an analogous doxastic case. If you are promised access to a long list of new truths in exchange for believing an absurd proposition, you have not been given a properly doxastic reason for belief—notwithstanding the fact that believing the absurd proposition would be a doxastic bonanza. Doxastic reasons explain someone’s believing something in virtue of the subject’s viewing those reasons as supporting the truth of the explained belief. When one infers, for example, one views the belief-worthiness of the premises as supporting the belief-worthiness of the conclusion. Similarly, aesthetic reasons explain someone’s appreciating an object in virtue of the subject’s viewing the appreciation-worthiness of the cited features as conferring appreciation-worthiness onto the object as a whole. These structural facts—and not facts having to do with the content of reasons—are what distinguish theoretical, practical and aesthetic reasons.

Thus, to take something as an aesthetic reason is not to believe a proposition, but to appreciate a part of an object. More colloquially, it is to like an object in virtue of liking something about it. And this is to see the aesthetic worth of the part as conferring aesthetic worth on the whole. So, for example, I

appreciate *North by Northwest* on the basis of its direction and acting, viewing these as aesthetically worthy—i.e., appreciating them—and as conferring aesthetic worth on the film as a whole.<sup>7</sup>

When we judge an object to be beautiful, we are (often at least) responsive to reasons for appreciating it. Like reasons for believing and reasons for acting, these reasons are both explanatory and normative: they explain why we in fact judge the object to be beautiful—which is to say, why we appreciate it—and also why one ought to so judge it. At the same time, aesthetic reasons are categorically different from reasons for believing and reasons for acting. The central distinguishing feature of aesthetic reasons is that they are reasons for feeling a certain way. And to be responsive to these reasons is itself to be in a certain affective state. Neither believing a certain proposition (not even the proposition that the object merits a certain feeling) nor doing something with regard to the object counts as responsiveness to aesthetic reasons *qua* aesthetic reasons.<sup>8</sup>

On this picture, aesthetic judgment is a positive affective attitude towards the object—a feeling of liking. The foregoing discussion suggests three respects in which (aesthetic) appreciation is a distinctive form of liking: First, unlike blind sensation, aesthetic liking is itself cognitive insofar as it is, in the words of John McDowell, “a feeling [constituting] an experience in which the world reveals itself to us.”<sup>9</sup> Second, unlike a subjective pleasure that is grounded in the appreciator’s idiosyncratic constitution and circumstances, and that presents an object merely as a source of one’s pleasure, aesthetic pleasure presents the object as meriting that very feeling. In aesthetically enjoying a good film, you view the film not only

as causing your pleasure, but as worthy of being enjoyed. Contrast this with your enjoyment of the wind driving sleet into your eyes. Although in finding the experience pleasurable, you view the sleet as the source of your pleasure, you do not view your enjoyment of it as in any sense justified—so that failing to take pleasure in it would be an error of some sort. Thus, although your enjoyment has an explanation—it reminds you of happy Pittsburgh days, perhaps—you do not view this enjoyment as a reason for anyone else to enjoy it. However, in appreciating the fine acting and direction of *North by Northwest*, you do view them as such reasons. In this case, you do think someone who fails to enjoy the film, and to enjoy it in part on the basis of the acting and direction, is failing *qua* film-appreciator. Third, and relatedly, the reasons for liking that you are responsive to in appreciating the work are universal, in the following sense: they are reasons for everyone to enjoy the object when appropriately engaging with it. The same cannot be said for your enjoyment of, say, your favorite team's victory in the championship game, which presents the victory as meriting enjoyment, perhaps, but only that of the team's fans.

Aesthetic appreciation has a fourth distinguishing mark. It is self-contained, in the following sense: to enjoy an object aesthetically is not to enjoy it in virtue of its suitability to some other purpose, as one might appreciate the design of a mop that made the mopper's job much easier in various ways. Perhaps such appreciation is indeed (1) cognitive (2) merit-attributing, and even (3) universal. However, it is not the liking of what merits liking simply because it merits liking. Rather, one likes it because it is elegantly conducive to some other end. Accordingly, if, when we ask you why you are delighted with the Jar Jar

Binks figurine we gave you for your birthday, you say that the shape of its head makes it a perfect pipe-cleaner, then we know that your appreciation is not aesthetic. Aesthetic appreciation has a characteristic structure: it is the kind of appreciation that expresses the universal pleasure that the object merits and that cannot be explained by reference to its suitability for some further purpose.<sup>10</sup>

Aesthetic judgment is not on this conception the sum of a belief (that the object is worthy of appreciation) AND a separable feeling (in which perhaps the belief is grounded). The logical form of appreciation is simple, not conjunctive. It is through the feeling itself that one both becomes aware of the merit of the object and is responsive to it as worthy of this specific feeling.<sup>11</sup> Aesthetic pleasure is both 'object-directed' and 'self-directed': by being conscious of what the object merits, the subject is conscious of her feeling's propriety.<sup>12</sup>

Before moving on to our defense, two clarifications are in order. First, it will be useful to distinguish our view from Sentimentalism in aesthetics, with which it might be confused. Second, insofar as our view relies on a claimed similarity between appreciation and perception, it is crucial (a) to establish the limits of this comparison, and (b) to do so in a way that does not undermine our reliance on their similarity.

Sentimentalism, at least as it is now generally understood, is primarily a view about aesthetic properties, concepts, or value. According to a Sentimentalist, for an object to exemplify a certain aesthetic property (for the concept to apply to it, for it to possess a certain value) is for it to be fitting to feel a certain sentiment with respect to it.<sup>13</sup> But Sentimentalists assume, along with most others, that an aesthetic judgment is a theoretical judgment concerning

aesthetic properties. Our goal is neither to offer nor refute an analysis of aesthetic properties, concepts or value, but rather to argue that aesthetic judgment is in fact distinct from theoretical judgment (and practical judgment). It is false, we argue, that an aesthetic judgment is a belief that an object merits a certain affective response (or any other response)—even if, as the Sentimentalist says, it is true that for an object to possess an aesthetic property is for it to merit a certain affective response.<sup>14</sup>

This difference in how aesthetic judgment is conceived ramifies into a crucial difference in how these views conceive aesthetic reasons. Here is why it might seem as if our view about aesthetic judgment and the Sentimentalist view of aesthetic properties converge on aesthetic reasons. Since we hold that aesthetic judgment is a feeling, reasons supporting such judgment are reasons for feeling. And since the Sentimentalist holds that to possess an aesthetic property is for a certain affective response to be warranted, reasons for believing an object to possess an aesthetic property are ipso facto reasons for feeling a certain way about it.<sup>15</sup> However, this commonality should not obscure the fundamental difference. As discussed above, we hold that responsiveness to an aesthetic reason is itself a matter of appreciating the work on the basis of appreciating a part of the work, one whose excellence (in the context of the whole) makes the work itself excellent. Merely registering that a certain affective response to a work is warranted in virtue of one of its parts, without actually appreciating it, is not responding to an aesthetic reason *qua* an aesthetic reason.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, we emphasize two crucial differences between aesthetic pleasure and perception. Aesthetic pleasure, we hold, is like perception in its power to

reveal the world, and to reveal it immediately rather than mediately (more on that below). But it is unlike perception in the following respects.

First, whereas questions about “truth” are applicable to perceptual experiences, questions about “merit” and about their *appropriateness* to their objects are not. But those questions do apply to our emotions and at least to some of our feelings, including aesthetic pleasures and displeasures. Correspondingly, unlike perceptible properties such as color, beauty (among other varieties of aesthetic value) is not simply a quality that, under proper conditions, is experienced in a certain way, but one that *merits* being experienced in a certain way—viz., through the relevant kind of pleasure.

Second, perception and aesthetic pleasure function differently in the practice of giving and asking for reasons. Perception (at least according to most accounts) is not based on reasons. But aesthetic pleasure, we argue, is. Recall that, on our view, aesthetic pleasure is no mere liking, but a liking of an object in light of the features that make it worthy of being liked. Aesthetic pleasure does not simply reveal the object to have a certain property—beauty—but (often, if not always) reveals the beauty of the object in relation to those features that confer beauty on it. Normally, we don’t simply like the object, but like it in virtue of liking something(s) about it. Thus, in experiencing a beautiful object, we appreciate both the aesthetic worth of the object and the various features of the object we would cite to justify the claim that it has this worth. We might put the point as follows: There is an isomorphism between the structure of the pleasure and the relation between the beauty of the object as a whole and those of its features that make it beautiful. In appreciating the object, we (in ideal cases)

take in both its beauty and what makes it beautiful. Hence, the rational “why?” question is applicable to aesthetic pleasure. And so, whereas perception is not based on reasons, aesthetic pleasure is.

Crucially, neither of these differences between perception and appreciation undermines the idea that appreciation makes beauty in the world manifest. On our view, then, while aesthetic pleasure reveals aesthetic value no less than perception reveals certain non-evaluative properties, it is a different kind of state and it belongs to a different domain of rationality.<sup>17</sup>

II. Now that we have sketched our positive view of aesthetic judgment, we will argue for it as a compelling way of resolving an apparent tension between its subjective and objective dimensions. On the one hand, there are features of aesthetic discourse that are best explained by viewing aesthetic judgment as a matter of the judger’s own experience of the relevant object. On the other hand, aesthetic judgments purport to be about their objects, in a sense that allows for the possibility that some fit their objects better than others. The latent difficulty here can be brought closer to the surface by considering the following two plausible yet seemingly inconsistent principles:

Autonomy: Neither the mere fact that everyone else makes a certain aesthetic judgment nor the testimony of experts can be adequate grounds for making the judgment oneself.<sup>18</sup>

Doubt: Doubts about one's aesthetic judgments can justifiably be based on the mere fact that everyone else disagrees or on the aesthetic judgment of an expert.

In this section, we will show how various positions in the literature fail to balance properly the subjective and objective dimensions of aesthetic judgment by showing that they cannot adequately explain the truth of both Autonomy and Doubt. We will call the difficulty of reconciling these principles *Kant's Problem*, as they are derived from *The Critique of Judgment*.<sup>19</sup>

Kant's Problem arises because there seems to be no space between the idea that a consideration can serve as the basis of a doubt and the idea that a consideration can serve as the basis of a change of mind. Even if the threshold for change of mind is higher than the threshold for doubt, the distance between them, one might expect, can be made up by the presence of more of whatever prompts doubt.

Robert Hopkins, who has formulated and discussed Kant's Problem with great insight, posits that ordinary empirical judgments (theoretical judgments about non-evaluative properties) are not autonomous because they are governed by 'cognitive command': "it is *a priori* that any [ordinary empirical] disagreement, if not due to vagueness in the terms deployed, must be put down to a *cognitive failing* on one side or the other."<sup>20</sup> The fact that others who are one's equals in the quality of the relevant perceptual faculties, expertise, vantage point, etc., all disagree with one's judgment can, according to this line of reasoning, constitute evidence that the failing is one's own, and hence that one's judgment is mistaken. Cognitive command explains and entails the *heteronomy* of empirical

judgment and it also, of course, explains and entails the fact that one can doubt one's own judgments on the basis of a contrary consensus.

Hopkins goes on to argue that without something analogous to cognitive command in the aesthetic domain, it is not possible to explain why the aesthetic judgments of others should lead me to doubt my own. The rationality of such doubt depends on the fact that aesthetic disagreement requires that someone be at fault. But if doubt can be legitimately prompted by evidence (in the form of contrary consensus) that the fault is mine, such evidence should also in principle be capable of legitimately leading me to change my mind.

Testimony generates the same problem. (Hopkins's discussion of Kant's Problem focuses on contrary consensus.) One might judge that the familiar-looking bird on one's birdfeeder is a downy woodpecker. But now suppose that a visiting ornithologist assures one that it is a hairy woodpecker. The visitor's superior expertise to one's own, together with the incompatibility of the judgments, constitutes a reason for one to doubt one's judgment. But it also constitutes a reason for one to change one's mind. It is not clear how the aesthetic domain could be different enough from the theoretical domain to block a testimony-based change of mind without also being different enough to block testimony-based doubts.

Two subjectivist strategies hold promise for resolving Kant's Problem: Relativism and Expressivism.

Relativism about aesthetic judgment is the view that although aesthetic judgments are truth-apt, their truth is relative to the sensibility of the speaker.<sup>21</sup> Were such a view correct, neither contrary consensus nor testimony could by

itself be a reason for one to change one's mind, since the judgment of the others may not be inconsistent with one's own. We all might be correct, since their judgment might be relative to one sensibility while one's own might be relative to another. Thus, Autonomy is explained.

But here's the rub: if neither consensus nor expert judgment provides reasons for one to change one's mind, how can they provide reasons for one to doubt one's judgment? A Relativist might try to thread the needle via the observation that doubt is easier than judgment. One may not know whether a group shares one's sensibility or not. Because one does not know for sure that they do, it would be wrong to change one's mind. Because one does not know for sure that they don't, it wouldn't be wrong to doubt whether one is correct. In a state of uncertainty about the sensibility of others, one can be justified in doubting without being justified in changing one's mind. Since such uncertainty arguably characterizes the normal situation, this provides a neat explanation of the plausibility of both principles.

However, the deeper problem with this approach is precisely that it leaves sensibility beyond the reach of these principles. Here is the supposed datum that Relativism exploits: Autonomy fits cases in which people do not share a sensibility, but not ones in which they do; Doubt fits the cases in which people do share my sensibility, but not in which they do not. However, neither principle is limited according to whether the relevant others do or do not share one's sensibility. Even if one knows for sure that a group shares one's sensibility, their judgment is still not sufficient reason for changing one's mind. So long as one experiences the film as contrived, badly acted and ineptly directed, the mere fact

that those with whom one shares a sensibility say it is good cannot put one in a position to express what is ordinarily expressed by statements such as “*North by Northwest* is a great movie”. Furthermore, even if one knows for sure that they do not share one’s sensibility, their judgment is still sufficient for one to doubt one’s judgment, for their judgment can lead one to doubt one’s own sensibility. Autonomy still applies even with regard to those who share a sensibility; and Doubt still applies even with regard to those who do not. Relativism cannot solve Kant’s Problem.<sup>22</sup>

One might resist this ‘deeper problem’ objection in various ways. Some might insist that contrary consensus or testimony among those who share one’s sensibility would make changing one’s mind perfectly reasonable. But someone who responds in this way is an unusual advocate of Autonomy. For it is often linked with:

Acquaintance: Aesthetic judgments “must be based on first-hand experience of their objects.”<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, it seems that Acquaintance provides the beginning of an intuitively satisfying explanation of Autonomy.<sup>24</sup> However, Relativism holds that Acquaintance is false: aesthetic judgments based on second-hand experience are fine, so long as the hands belong to someone with one’s own sensibility. At best, Relativism caters to a tiny audience: those who accept Autonomy but reject Acquaintance.<sup>25</sup>

Next, Expressivism: one might argue that what explains Autonomy is that an aesthetic judgment is a reflection simply of whether an object pleases one,

rather than of a belief that the object possesses a certain aesthetic property. A statement such as “North by Northwest is excellent” expresses a positive aesthetic feeling about the film, not a belief in a proposition.<sup>26</sup> Thus, neither the mere fact that most everyone else disagrees nor the fact that an expert testifies to a contrary verdict can provide me with the correct basis for changing my mind. For these cannot bestow upon me the feeling that an alternative judgment expresses.

But the Expressivist has problems with Doubt. Traditionally, Expressivism is motivated in part by irrealism about normative properties. The contemporary Expressivist project in metaethics is precisely to work out a semantics according to which disagreement, entailment, modality, etc., can be present in normative discourse despite the (supposed) fact that normative statements are not in the business of describing the world—are not ‘factual’. Thus, aesthetic disagreement could not, according to traditional Expressivism, be a matter of logically incompatible *descriptions* of a particular object.

But if contrary consensus or expert testimony justifies me in doubting my judgment, it must be because the correctness of one judgment comes at the expense of the correctness of the other. Can the traditional Expressivist explain Doubt? Such explanation seems to require, if not the reality of aesthetic properties, then something else that explains why, when two parties disagree, one must be wrong. This is the idea of cognitive command.<sup>27</sup> It’s important to see that an explanation of cognitive command requires more than an account of disagreement. Aesthetic disagreement might be explained by assigning to contrary aesthetic verdicts incompatible states of mind. But the fact that

someone else is (or even many others are) in a state of mind incompatible with my own cannot by itself explain why I should think mine is wrong.

We believe that contemporary Expressivism—even in its more sophisticated forms—cannot account for cognitive command, and so also cannot account for Doubt. But before we examine one such form, it is worth emphasizing that we do not think this is an objection to what is perhaps the core idea of Expressivism: that aesthetic judgment is a matter not of belief but of feeling—of a ‘pro’ or ‘con’ affective attitude towards the object. Indeed, we take this idea to be correct. We are thus, at least in this weak sense, Expressivists.<sup>28</sup> But we hold that the best understanding of the core idea liberates it from metaphysical anxieties about the reality of aesthetic properties and value. The upshot of our objection is not that Kant’s Problem can’t be resolved by utilizing this core Expressivist idea, but rather that it can’t be resolved within a framework that doesn’t take beauty to be real.<sup>29</sup> The solution requires a conception of the relevant feeling according to which it reveals (in ideal cases) genuine features of the world, and is thus, in that sense, cognitive. We will return to our version of Expressivism below.

Can a more sophisticated version of Expressivism account for Doubt? Allan Gibbard, in *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*, makes a special point of explaining the normative authority of the moral judgments of others. This is perhaps the most fully developed account of (the moral analogue) to Doubt that an Expressivist has given. His view, roughly, is that when we disagree about a moral judgment, you can claim normative authority over me and put me under rational pressure to reconsider my judgment by expressing your acceptance of a higher-

order moral norm that prescribes your judgment in this case. I will be rationally influenced by your claim either if I too hold the relevant higher-level norm (but failed to see its implications) or even if I don't, given the rationality of generally trusting the normative authority of others. This line of argument might serve to explain why, when we disagree, I have reason to doubt my judgment.

But even if Gibbard's account works for ethical normativity, it cannot be extended to aesthetics. First, for him, moral judgments do not express *feelings* at all, but only the acceptance of norms.<sup>30</sup> This would undermine the neat Expressivist account of Autonomy sketched above. Second, and more importantly, a Gibbard-style explanation of Doubt does not carry over to the aesthetic domain. It is not plausible, for example, that a film buff's insistence that *The Sacrifice* is a great movie leads me to doubt my own contrary judgment by expressing a commitment to a general binding norm that requires everyone to judge similarly. For it is not clear that there *are* generally binding aesthetic norms that are relevantly analogous to generally binding moral norms. The prospects for a principle or set of principles that could credibly claim to cover every artistic success and exclude every failure are dim.<sup>31</sup> And the relation between general aesthetic norms, if there are any, and aesthetic judgments is not analogous to the relation between general moral norms and moral judgments. One cannot prove, e.g., that *The Sacrifice* is good by appealing to true generalizations about the goodness of works with certain features. No matter how true those generalizations may be, they cannot serve as premises in an argument, but only as guides for appreciation—they can only guide the hearer to appreciate whether and how the property at stake in the generalization is *here*, in this work,

a merit.<sup>32</sup> Intuitively, it seems that when an aesthetic disagreement leads me to doubt a judgment, it does so by leading me to doubt *my own taste*, and so the judgments that flow from it. Aesthetic disagreements are not a matter of either a clash of diverging, high-level aesthetic norms or failures to apply general norms, but rather of clashing tastes—diverging capacities for appreciation—and the shortcomings of their exercises.

This does not prove, of course, that a different irrealist Expressivist cannot succeed where our imagined Gibbard-style aesthetician has failed. But it does show how an already difficult challenge for the moral Expressivist is exacerbated when she turns her attention to aesthetic normativity. It is thus unsurprising that Todd, in the most well-developed defense of aesthetic Expressivism, all but rules out Doubt. For him, the “normative demand” of aesthetic judgment is limited to “getting others to experience the relevant object in the same way, or to adopt the same attitude towards it,” while allowing that “there may be various incompatible, though equally 'valid' or appropriate, judgments concerning any aesthetic object.”<sup>33</sup>

We contend, however, that the very plausible, feeling-based Expressivist explanation of Autonomy *can* be combined with an account of Doubt that is sensitive to the specific character of aesthetic normativity and aesthetic disagreement. Before showing how, we will consider objectivist approaches to Kant’s Problem.

Whereas subjectivist approaches to Kant’s Problem exaggerate the differences between the aesthetic and theoretical domains, objectivist approaches

understate them. According to the traditional objectivist conception, aesthetic judgments are simply beliefs with aesthetic contents. The difficulty in explaining Autonomy will then be to say why what can perfectly well serve as a legitimate reason for holding a belief on a non-aesthetic topic cannot serve as a legitimate reason for holding a belief on an aesthetic one.<sup>34</sup>

Those objectivists who think heteronomous aesthetic beliefs are illegitimate are, following Hopkins's terminology, *Pessimists* (about the legitimacy of second-hand aesthetic judgments). A Pessimist holds that the problem with such a belief is that it violates a norm of some sort. Hopkins divides the Pessimists into two camps. According to the Unavailability Pessimist, aesthetic testimony as a rule violates a general necessary epistemic condition on the legitimacy of testimony as a source of knowledge.<sup>35</sup> According to the Unusability Pessimist, there is a non-epistemic norm that proscribes (under certain conditions) adopting a second-hand belief about aesthetic merit—even though such a belief, were it adopted, would constitute aesthetic knowledge.<sup>36</sup> Both Pessimistic strategies could explain why one ought not adopt beliefs under the conditions specified by Autonomy and Acquaintance.

Since these are would-be norms of belief, they would technically be consistent with Doubt. Second-hand aesthetic knowledge is unattainable or unusable; but nonetheless, doubt based on testimony or consensus might yet be OK. Of course, some explanation of this discrepancy would be owed.

But no matter how the discrepancy is resolved, neither form of Pessimism is adequate to the phenomenon. Consider a relatively ordinary context in which one is called upon to render an aesthetic judgment: what one might call the Ten-

Best-Films game. At the end of each year, professional film critics publish their lists of that year's best films. Often, they defend them in roundtable discussions with other critics. Non-professionals get in on the act too, in online film-related discussion groups, late night dorm-room arguments, and the like. Imagine someone who puts *Timbuktu* on her list despite not having seen it, or despite having seen it but only on account of the film's Rotten Tomatoes score. Here are two possible reactions: (a) although she has constructed a list of the relevant sort, it is a bad specimen insofar as she used inappropriate criteria; or (b) she has flat-out failed to construct a list of the relevant sort. We submit that the best answer is (b). If you were compiling the ten-best lists of each member of your department so as to construct a departmental ten-best list, you would be justified in excluding the submission of someone known to have arrived at her list heteronymously, just as you would be justified in excluding the submission of someone known to have constructed her ballot by throwing darts at a newspaper-listing of films currently showing in theatres.

Contrast these sorts of cases with someone who takes the pinnacle of film-art to be *The Human Centipede*, a film that he will, if called upon, defend with evident sincerity and relish. However reluctantly, one would be obliged to include his ballot no matter how loathsome and wrong his selections might be.

Why is the exclusion of the Rotten-Tomatoes-based list and that of the dart-thrower justified? Because neither one is playing the Ten-Best-Films game, which calls upon each player to rank films according to their own aesthetic judgment. In neither case is the ballot a reflection of the voter's aesthetic judgment. This is the best explanation of our reluctance to accept the imagined

submissions. We are justified in excluding these ballots because they fail to express the submitters' aesthetic judgments.

Compare this with what the Pessimist must say about these cases. Note that Pessimistic approaches to understanding apparently acceptable heteronomous utterances are likely to appeal to the thought that the norm that explains Autonomy and Acquaintance lapses in the relevant contexts. Hopkins suggests that it lapses "if one can neither stay agnostic, nor settle the matter for oneself."<sup>37</sup> But this claim both delivers the wrong verdict about the cases under discussion and, more importantly, does not supply the right sort of explanation of what goes wrong when someone violates these conditions.

Suppose a player of the Ten-Best-Films game says, (i) "I am sure that *Timbuktu* is a great movie—after all, Dargis said so—but I am not putting it on my ten-best list because I found it boring." The alleged norm is in effect (the speaker has seen the movie and is not agnostic about it) and violated (he is relying, in saying that it's great, on the testimony of an expert). However, the verdict is wrong. There's nothing amiss about this statement and the corresponding Ten-Best list. But even if there were, the statement would still not be problematic in the same way as: (ii) "I am sure that *Timbuktu* is a great movie—after all, Dargis said so—but I did not like it at all—so boring! However, since she knows way more about film than I do, I will put it on my ten-best list." (ii) is inarguably worse than (i). The (ii)-speaker's list should be excluded; the (i)-speaker's list should not. But since a governing norm is (supposedly) violated in both cases, something else must explain what has gone wrong with (ii). Yet this is precisely what the norm is supposed to explain. In contrast, we contend

that the problem with (ii) is that it purports to express an aesthetic judgment yet does not. And this is why we do not simply find fault with this ballot (as we do with that of the *Human Centipede*-lover); we disqualify it. This phenomenon is not explained by norm-violation. The Pessimist therefore cannot account for these cases and so is wrong.

How might a Pessimist respond to this line of objection? She might argue, first, that (i) is OK because it does not purport to express the speaker's own belief that the movie is great, but rather only appeals to the belief of the critic, to whom the speaker defers; and second, that (ii) is worse than (i) because the whole point of the Ten-Best-Films game is to produce a list that reflects the participants' own experiences.<sup>38</sup>

But the Pessimist's account of (i) is highly implausible. "I am sure that p, because S said so" does not amount simply to "S said so". The speaker expresses certainty that S is correct: mustn't the speaker then believe what S says? It is difficult to understand the relevant notion of deference in a way that does not entail that the one who defers accepts the judgment of the one deferred to. The use of expressions that include modals in this configuration (e.g., "it must be a good movie, after all Dargis thinks so") just is one of the conventional means of expressing beliefs about the value of artworks independently of the speaker's own experiences of these works.

This means that one benefit of our approach over the Pessimist's is that it explains the unproblematic character of those stretches of aesthetic discourse in which we do express (or certainly seem to express) aesthetic beliefs that plainly do not stem from our own experiences, and do so without running afoul of any

norms. To this we add that we act (or certainly seem to act) on the basis of beliefs thereby expressed: we go to see films on the basis of positive recommendations and avoid films on the basis of negative recommendations. A natural interpretation of this conduct is as follows: We go to see a film because it is good or avoid it because it is bad—or so we believe. In such cases, even if we do not have aesthetic knowledge, we certainly use aesthetic beliefs in a perfectly legitimate manner independently of experiencing the works for ourselves, which means, on our account, despite not being in a position to make an aesthetic judgment about the relevant work. This is further reason to doubt the Pessimist's conviction that one may not form any beliefs about the quality of artworks with which one is not acquainted. It is also reason to doubt her analysis of (i). The speaker's belief that *Timbuktu* is a good film can explain why, despite having found it boring on first viewing, she watches it again, keeping in mind what Dargis likes about it.

As for the Pessimist's explanation of why (ii) is worse than (i), we entirely agree: the point of the Ten-Best-List game is indeed to capture the players' experiences of the films. This follows from its being a game in which the players are called upon to make aesthetic judgments. But while our view has the internal resources to explain and justify the demand that the ballots reflect the participants' own experiences—resources that are part and parcel of our notion of aesthetic judgment—the Pessimist approach has no such internal resources. Furthermore, and for that very reason, while our explanation of the demand treats it as part of a unified phenomenon (i.e., of aesthetic appreciation as such), the Pessimist must argue that what goes on in this game is discontinuous with

what goes on in ordinary discussions and disputes about the qualities of artworks. But there is no reason to believe in such a discontinuity. This game is just a more regimented form of everyday discourse about art. The same considerations that bear on ordinary discussions and disputes bear equally on those playing the game. And the thought that heteronomous ballots should be disqualified is just a more regimented form of the dismissal that would greet the confession that one had not seen the film about whose merits one had been debating for the past hour.

The Pessimist might attempt to explain the requirement that participants express their own experiences by claiming that the purpose of the Ten-Best-Film game is simply to rank the amount of pleasure each voter took in experiencing the films made that year. But this is clearly wrong. For if this were the purpose of the game, then there would be no point in arguing about the rankings. The fact that there is such a point shows that what is at issue is not only pleasure but at the same time quality, which is to say pleasure in what deserves to be enjoyed. Our notion of aesthetic judgment makes the best sense of this phenomenon, and hence the best sense of what is wrong with (ii).

We conclude, then, that the problem with a supposed heteronomous aesthetic judgment is not that it is an aesthetic judgment that violates a norm, but that it is not an aesthetic judgment at all. Sibley was right: nothing that is not based on one's own experience of the work, and so nothing that is based on consensus or testimony, is an aesthetic judgment.<sup>39</sup> Although we have formulated Autonomy and Acquaintance as normative, they are thus better understood as metaphysical or formal. One cannot make aesthetic judgments

second-hand. Pessimism cannot adopt this explanation. For the Pessimist holds that aesthetic judgment is just a belief that an object possesses an aesthetic property. And there are no good reasons to think that it is impossible to hold such a belief on the grounds of consensus or testimony.

Of the approaches we have considered thus far, Expressivism is in the best position to explain the impossibility of heteronomous aesthetic judgments. For aesthetic judgment, according to Expressivism, is a matter of an affective response to the work itself. This would explain why a supposed heteronomous aesthetic judgment, which is by hypothesis not based on any reaction to the work itself, is not simply bad, *qua* aesthetic judgment, but is not one at all. Let us return, then, to Expressivism.

We argued above that it is difficult to square the Expressivist's traditional commitment to irrealism with Doubt. To explain Doubt, we need the idea that the reasons for thinking one judgment is correct are thereby reasons for thinking that a contrary judgment is incorrect. Even sophisticated forms of traditional Expressivism lack the resources to properly explain such correctness. But we contend that this problem does not arise merely from the core idea. One can explain such correctness even if one holds that aesthetic judgment is an expression not of belief, but of feeling. We embrace the core idea, but argue that the relevant sort of feeling purports to suit the object. When our capacity for aesthetic appreciation is exercised successfully, we judge (a judgment constituted by feeling) that an object is beautiful because the object *is* beautiful. If it is not beautiful or if one's judgment is not based in the right way on its beauty, one is exercising the capacity for judging aesthetically in a defective manner. We thus

have no special problem with accounting for the idea that some aesthetic judgments are correct in the sense of presenting the object as it really is, and thus that, necessarily, contrary judgments are incorrect.

It might be thought that this improvement in the prospects for explaining Doubt comes at the expense of the prospects for explaining Autonomy. After all, if it is a plain fact that a certain object is beautiful, then one can believe that it is beautiful and believe that it is beautiful on the basis of consensus or testimony. This is precisely the problem for the traditional objectivist. But we avoid this problem by distinguishing between aesthetic judgment and aesthetic belief. There is no insuperable obstacle to justifiably believing that an object is beautiful on the basis of consensus or testimony, but such a belief is neither an aesthetic judgment nor a proper basis for one.

According to our solution to Kant's Problem, Autonomy and Doubt can both be true because, whereas Autonomy pertains directly to aesthetic judgments, Doubt pertains to them indirectly via beliefs with aesthetic contents. Ours is a *dual explanandum* solution.<sup>40</sup> Hopkins contends that a dual-explanandum solution cannot in the end explain everything that must be explained. He charges, specifically, that this strategy amounts to a retraction of Autonomy:

What constraint am I subject to if there is a proposition, concerning the film's (lack of) beauty, which I can legitimately adopt simply on the basis that so many others express a judgment of taste at odds with my own? That proposition is, on

the current proposal, not a judgment of taste, but it is the next best thing. It is a proposition concerning the film's beauty. To suppose that such a thing is available to me is in effect to reject our original claim that I cannot on this basis legitimately change my mind.<sup>41</sup>

We contend rather that the changing of one's mind can be understood in two ways: as a change of aesthetic judgment (constituted by aesthetic feeling) or as a change of theoretical judgment (constituted by a belief about the aesthetic properties of objects). Autonomy applies to the former, but not the latter. Statements about the beauty of objects sometimes express one kind of judgment, and sometimes the other. In contrast to the objectivist accounts on offer, we hold that "O is beautiful" expresses an aesthetic judgment only when it expresses a distinctive kind of pleasure. The judgment that objectivists regard as aesthetic judgment—a belief about the aesthetic value of the object—is a theoretical judgment with aesthetic content.

Hopkins charges that the "dual explanandum" approach is "tinkering with the phenomenon."<sup>42</sup> To defend ourselves from this charge, we must explain why our semantic claims are "sensible things to say, rather than mere recitation of the view's commitments."<sup>43</sup> He asks: "what grounds do we have for thinking that claims of the form 'O is beautiful' in fact divide into two very different semantic types?"<sup>44</sup>

To reply to the 'tinkering' charge, let us go back to the Ten-Best-Films game. If, in defense of one's ballot, one participant makes a statement such as "*Timbuktu* is a great film," we take this to express an aesthetic judgment. In so

taking it, we understand it as autonomous. However, there are various ways that one can signal that one is not expressing an aesthetic judgment, but rather an aesthetic belief. We might say, “*Timbuktu* must be/ has to be/definitely is/surely is/certainly is a good film, it is on your list after all.” Here we are expressing an attitude towards the proposition that the film is good, and the simultaneously avowed heteronomy does not render the statement defective. So long as we do not offer this as a justification for putting the movie on our list—and so as a justification for our own aesthetic judgment—no one would object.

We hold that in most contexts, modally and epistemically uninflected statements of the form ‘o is beautiful’ and the like are aesthetic judgments, whereas those with modal or epistemic inflections are theoretical judgments. Such theoretical judgments are occasionally also expressed without any such inflection, but in those cases the context makes clear that the speaker is not expressing her own aesthetic judgment. The modally and epistemically inflected versions then show how to disambiguate such instances of ‘o is beautiful’ and the like from those that express aesthetic judgments. This is, of course, but one possible account of the difference between utterances of these sorts. But note that the other candidates (be they semantic or pragmatic accounts) will be alternative explanations of a genuine distinction among aesthetic predications, and not merely a distinction in which we believe because it is one of our view’s commitments.

It is also worth emphasizing that the value of the distinction between aesthetic judgment and aesthetic belief goes beyond its role in disambiguating occurrences of ‘o is beautiful’. As we have argued, the distinction also accounts

straightforwardly for the flagrant (and unproblematic) heteronomy of the modalized variations of such statements and the way aesthetic recommendations influence what art we choose to experience (without conferring on us the capacity to pass aesthetic judgment on it). Hopkins' charge that the dual explanandum approach depends on "tinkering with the phenomenon" is groundless. The distinction is an essential part of an account that enables us to understand the full range of aesthetic discourse and its surrounding practices.

The dual explanandum approach, we have now argued, provides just the right approach to Autonomy. But now it might again seem a poor fit for Doubt. For whereas it is plausible to limit Autonomy and Acquaintance to aesthetic judgment, Doubt cannot plausibly be restricted to aesthetic belief. The point of the principle—and this is exactly what threatens to bring it into conflict with the others—is that evidence and testimony do, in a sense, bear on aesthetic judgments. If *The Sacrifice* leaves me cold—"not a great movie," I say—but I later hear of the rapturous consensus of the critics whose judgment I most respect, what I doubt is not merely an affirmative attitude towards a proposition, but whether my own aesthetic judgment about the movie is correct. As a consequence, I might re-watch the film and try harder, guided by the appreciation of others, to see its merits. Yet it is not clear how, on the dual explanandum view, evidence and testimony bear at all on aesthetic judgment, since it is autonomous.

We can begin to assuage this concern by reminding the reader that, on our view, the aesthetic belief that an object is beautiful is the belief that the object merits the feeling constitutive of an aesthetic judgment, a feeling that (in ideal

cases) is (i) revelatory of the world, (ii) merited by the object, (iii) required from everyone else as well, and (iv) not grounded in the object's satisfaction of any ends.<sup>45</sup> To entertain doubt is thereby to suspect or even to believe, on evidential or testimonial grounds, that one is either enjoying what one should not or failing to enjoy what one should. Doubt thereby extends to aesthetic judgment itself, albeit from without.

We expand on this as follows. Aesthetic judgment (when all goes well) is a feeling in which the world reveals itself to us. It is, like a perception, a presentation of something in the world as being a certain way—of an object as beautiful. Because aesthetic judgment is a feeling, it is not the sort of thing that can be based on evidence or testimony. Still, an aesthetic belief that, say, *The Sacrifice* is good, perhaps based on the testimony of others, is in conflict with the aesthetic judgment that the film is bad. For the truth of the belief is incompatible with the correctness of the judgment. Thus, there can be no quarantining doubt about aesthetic belief from doubt about aesthetic judgment, even if such doubt, applies in the first instance to beliefs. Making an aesthetic judgment that a certain work is good while at the same time believing on the basis of evidence that it is not good is incoherent in much the same way as being frightened of x is in tension with believing that x poses no threat. For example, an airline passenger, panicking during severe turbulence, might scream “we’re all going to die!”, even though he knows—*intellectually*, as we say—that severe turbulence cannot bring a plane down. He is giving voice to his fear rather than his knowledge (or belief). Similarly, to express an aesthetic judgment, on our view, is to give voice to appreciation, to speak from the point of view of our appreciation.

When this clashes with an incompatible aesthetic belief, we have reason to doubt our aesthetic judgment.

The distinction between aesthetic belief and aesthetic judgment raises the question of how to understand the difference in their content. To work this out in detail would require a substantial essay of its own, so we will confine ourselves here to laying out the difference in broad strokes. Aesthetic belief is an attitude towards a proposition that contains an aesthetic predicate; to believe it is to take it to be true. To see the contrast with aesthetic judgment, consider again the example of fear. In being scared of *x*, one views *x* as dangerous. Fear presents an object as dangerous. Unlike belief, fear (we would argue) is not a mediating representation of a state of affairs that might or might not depict reality accurately. Rather, fear presents the object directly as bearing a certain property, in something like the sense in which—at least according to direct realist accounts—perception presents objects as bearing certain properties. (But, as we emphasized above, this analogy goes only so far.) Because fear presents an object as being a certain way, it can present the world in a way that it isn't, and it can conflict with belief. This is precisely how we view aesthetic judgment: it presents an object as beautiful, and therefore can conflict with an aesthetic belief regarding that same object. “*North by Northwest* is excellent” can express either an appreciation of the film—a feeling that presents the film as excellent—or a belief that the proposition “*North by Northwest* is excellent” is true.<sup>46</sup>

A full account of aesthetic judgment would have to say in detail *how* aesthetic judgment presents objects as beautiful. We have already begun to do so above in noting the distinctive characteristics of appreciation: part of what it is to

appreciate an object is to view it as meriting this very appreciation, as meriting appreciation from everyone, and as not being a matter of its fitness for some other purpose.

A different worry concerns the centrality of the notion of pleasure in our account. It will be observed that our judgment that an artwork is excellent may be grounded in part in our being shocked, unsettled, horrified, terrified, nauseated or depressed by it.<sup>47</sup> This might seem to undermine the idea that aesthetic judgment is a feeling of pleasure.

But we would argue that this objection is based on an unjustifiably narrow conception of pleasure. Consider for example someone who says, “*The Piano Teacher* is a great film; but I certainly did not enjoy it.” Let us stipulate that the first conjunct of this statement expresses an aesthetic judgment and not an aesthetic belief. On our view, in making the judgment, the speaker is expressing an attitude towards the film analogous (in certain respects) to what a masochist feels towards certain kinds of pain, viz., pleasure. On the one hand, what the masochist enjoys is by definition pain of various sorts. But on the other hand, the masochist, again by definition, enjoys the pain. The masochist, then, takes pleasure in the broadest sense in pain (in what must be a narrower sense of the term “pain”). Similarly, our Haneke-appreciator takes pleasure (in the broadest sense) in the unpleasant (in the narrow sense).<sup>48</sup> This is (clearly, we hope) not to say that she is a masochist, only that we are already familiar with a broad conception of pleasure such that it is not incoherent to describe someone as enjoying something that she finds unpleasant. To like an artwork in the relevant sense is not necessarily to be cheered, uplifted, reassured, warmed, etc.

Nonetheless, it is pleasure in the broadest sense that explains why the viewer of the *Piano Teacher* continues to watch the film, is annoyed at having to wait until tomorrow to finish it, and rushes home after work to do so. This would explain the Moore-like peculiarity of a statement of the form “o is beautiful, but I do not like it”. (Indeed, one might dub this “The Aesthetic Version of Moore’s Paradox”.) And so we hold that a judgment that is divorced from aesthetic appreciation—and therefore from pleasure—is not an aesthetic judgment.

Throughout our discussion in this section, we have simply assumed the truth of Autonomy and Acquaintance. We hold that our explanation of their consistency with Doubt constitutes a powerful consideration in favor of our view. Furthermore, the opposition to Autonomy and Acquaintance results, we would argue, in part from failing to distinguish between aesthetic judgment and belief, and so failing to see that a justified second-hand aesthetic belief does not refute these principles.

We thus make precisely the opposite point as Meskin, who diagnoses the appeal of a position like ours as follows:

Perhaps the neo-Kantian has confused what is required for aesthetic experience and art appreciation with what is necessary for making an aesthetic judgment. It is eminently plausible that the *appreciation* of a work of art requires experiencing it. So there are things that testimony may never provide—aesthetic experiences and artistic appreciation. But it does not follow from this that aesthetic judgment is essentially linked to experience.<sup>49</sup>

He holds that there is no internal connection between appreciation and aesthetic judgment. This is (we speculate) in part because McDowell's idea—that the world can reveal itself as being a certain way through appreciation—has simply gone missing. When it is missed, it seems as if appreciation can only be something that merely accompanies the formation of aesthetic beliefs in certain circumstances. But this separation of appreciation and aesthetic judgment blinds one to the best solution to Kant's Problem.

This point also bears on the following objection to our view. It might be charged that our solution to Kant's Problem is, at bottom, simply to re-label appreciation 'aesthetic judgment', which everyone agrees is a matter feeling. The dispute then becomes a purely verbal one about the meaning of a technical term. However, this is not the right way to describe what is at issue. In metaethics, the debate between the cognitivists and the non-cognitivists concerns what state of mind is expressed by moral statements. Similarly, the debate about the nature of aesthetic judgment concerns what state of mind is expressed by statements such as "*North by Northwest* is excellent" as they occur in paradigmatic contexts, e.g., in critical discussions of the value of artworks. The technical term 'aesthetic judgment' refers to whatever is thereby expressed. We have argued for a substantive thesis that it is appreciation. Insofar as appreciation is understood as mere sensation, it will not appear to be a plausible candidate. But understood as we have elucidated here, appreciation is a far better candidate than belief.

In the first section, we discussed three wrong ways of understanding aesthetic judgment: as theoretical judgment, as practical judgment, and as

private pleasure. Our argument in the second section is directed at the first and the third. We may therefore have seemed to overlook a central class of views: those that understand aesthetic judgment at least in part in practical terms. Among views actually discussed in the literature, the one that comes closest concerns aesthetic value: for an object to exemplify aesthetic value is for it to be appropriate (among other things) to act in certain ways with respect to it—to go see it, at least.<sup>50</sup> An aesthetic judgment would, on such a view, be the judgment that the object has the relevant value, and therefore that the relevant behaviors are justified. But—and here we echo the point made about Sentimentalism above—although this amounts to a reduction of aesthetic value to (among other things) reasons for acting, it is not a reduction of aesthetic judgment to (among other things) practical judgment. For aesthetic judgment on these views is just the belief that an object provides the relevant reasons for acting, and is thus the sort of thing that one can hold on the basis of consensus or testimony. Because these views take aesthetic judgment to be belief, they fall into the scope of the argument in this section. It does not matter, for the purposes of our argument, that these beliefs are taken to concern aesthetic value understood in practical terms. It is not clear to us that anyone actually holds the view that, in saying that a painting is good, one is making a recommendation to do something, a recommendation whose justification would therefore be a reason to do it. Our view is thus shown to be superior to the alternatives on offer.

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Raz, *From Normativity to Responsibility* (New York: Oxford, 2011), 2.5.

<sup>2</sup> As we shall discuss, it is widely assumed that an aesthetic judgment just is a theoretical judgment with aesthetic content. Even those who would explain aesthetic value in terms of practical norms (e.g., T. M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1998) and John Skorupski, “Sentimentalism: Its Scope and Limits,” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, XIII, 2 (2011): 125-136), view aesthetic judgment as fundamentally theoretical in the relevant sense.

<sup>3</sup> For the sake of rhetorical simplicity, we use the term ‘appreciation’ only for aesthetic appreciation. We introduce the characteristic marks of the aesthetic variety of appreciation in section I.

<sup>4</sup> The broad construal of the notion of evidence includes heterogeneous kinds: perception, testimony, memory and evidence in the narrow sense, e.g., paw-prints leading up to the mat.

<sup>5</sup> This picture of the structure of theoretical and practical rationality is developed in detail in Eric Marcus, *Rational Causation* (Cambridge: Harvard 2012).

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<sup>6</sup> We limit our discussion here to positive aesthetic judgment, but this view could be extended in fairly obvious ways to negative aesthetic judgment. See n. 12.

<sup>7</sup> The fact that the rational explanation of one's appreciation appeals to the aesthetically significant parts of the object does not imply that these parts are aesthetically significant independently of the character of the object as a whole. Whether or not the aesthetically significant parts of an object merit appreciation depends upon very specific facts about the work as a whole, on what it is trying to accomplish, aesthetically speaking. The method acting of a Kazan drama, for example, would destroy a Hitchcockian romantic comedy thriller. It might be an impressive display of acting talent, but, in the relevant context, it would not be good acting. Furthermore, elements of a work that, taken on their own, might be ugly can in fact be artistically satisfying in the context of the whole and thereby contribute to its beauty. The whole, then, supplies the standards by which the parts are judged. And the success of the parts relative to those standards, in turn, constitutes the basis for aesthetic judgment about the whole. This is another way of saying that, while objects are beautiful in virtue of having certain parts, and while the appreciation of their beauty as a whole is based on the appreciation of their parts, the beauty of the object as a whole (i) does not require that we appreciate each part *independently* of appreciating the whole, and (ii) is not reducible to the beauty of its parts.

<sup>8</sup> Here we leave room for the idea that one might respond to an aesthetic reason non-aesthetically, by registering its contribution to the aesthetic worth of the object—but without pleasure. More on such aesthetic beliefs in section II.

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<sup>9</sup> John McDowell, “Aesthetic Value, Objectivity and the Fabric of the World,” in *Mind, Value and Reality* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1998), pp. 112-130, 130. See also Mark Johnston. “The Authority of Affect,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, LXIII, 1 (2001): 181-214; and Ronald De Sousa “Emotional Truth,” *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume*, LXXVI (2002): 247–263.

<sup>10</sup> Our view is inspired by Kant’s account of aesthetic judgment. On his view, aesthetic judgment is constituted by a universal pleasure that is merited by the object and is not explained by anything other than the object’s meriting this pleasure. Additionally, at least on one way of reading Kant, this pleasure reveals aspects of its object as worthy of this pleasure. Kant is also the source of the ‘dual explanandum’ view we present in section II, the view that a judgment of aesthetic merit that is based on testimony is not an aesthetic judgment but a theoretical judgment (e.g., Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* [hereafter *CPJ*] (P. Guyer and E. Matthews trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), §33:164-65).

<sup>11</sup> Our view, then, is not a form of aesthetic hedonism, also known as *value empiricism* in aesthetics. (For critical discussion, see James Shelley, “Against Value Empiricism in Aesthetics,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, XVIII, 1 (2010): 1-14.) Aesthetic pleasure is not, we contend, the reason for appreciating an object, but rather the mode of responsiveness to reasons for appreciating that are themselves grounded in valuable qualities of the objects.

<sup>12</sup> Correspondingly, a negative aesthetic judgment is a feeling of dislike that (i) purports to reveal the object (i.e., is cognitive), (ii) presents the object as meriting

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that very feeling of dislike, (iii) presents the object as that which everyone should dislike (i.e., is universal), and (iv) does not depend on the object's failure to fulfill any end.

<sup>13</sup> See e.g., Justin D'Arms and Daniel Jacobson. "Sentiment and Value" *Ethics*, CX, 4 (2000): 722-748; John Skorupski, *op. cit.*; and Christine Tappolet, "Values and Emotions: Neo-Sentimentalism's Prospects," in Carla Bagnoli, ed., *Morality and the Emotions* (New York: Oxford, 2011), pp. 117-134.

<sup>14</sup> It is open to the Sentimentalist to regard aesthetic judgment as a responsive feeling, but the Sentimentalist theories actually on offer identify the judgment with a belief. This is evidenced by locutions such as "evaluative judgments are claimed to be judgments stating that certain emotional responses are required" (Tappolet, *op. cit.*, 123) and "to think a sentiment appropriate in the relevant sense is a normative judgment . . . in favor of feeling it" (D'Arms and Jacobson, *op. cit.*, 729).

<sup>15</sup> See John Skorupski, "The Unity and Diversity of Reasons," in Simon Roberson (ed.) *Spheres of Reason* (New York: Oxford, 2009), pp. 113-139. Our further disagreement with Skorupski concerns his claim that, in addition to aesthetic reasons, theoretical and practical reasons (with one class of exceptions) are also ultimately reasons for feeling.

<sup>16</sup> We would not deny that reasons for, say, preserving, curating, exhibiting, etc. works might legitimately be called "aesthetic reasons." But works merit preservation, curation and so forth in virtue of having properties that merit the affective response we call aesthetic judgment. Thus, these actions depend on

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aesthetic judgment in our sense, and so reasons for performing them depend on responding to reasons for appreciating as such. We hold then, that the former sorts of reasons are ‘aesthetic’ in a derivative sense.

<sup>17</sup> Kant was right about that too: aesthetic pleasure is neither sensation (e.g., *CPJ*, 207) nor perception (e.g., *CPJ*, 92). And it belongs to a different domain of rationality, that of the (reflecting) power of judgment (e.g., *CPJ*, 27).

<sup>18</sup> For ease of exposition, we have combined two ideas in Autonomy that have appeared separately in the literature—first, that one cannot base one’s aesthetic judgment on a contrary consensus and second, that one cannot base one’s aesthetic judgment on testimony. These separable ideas raise precisely the same issues in the context of our discussion here.

<sup>19</sup> Some, as we shall see below, would reject Autonomy. Although we begin by assuming the truth of Autonomy and Doubt and focusing on their reconciliation, we will ultimately argue that this reconciliation removes the chief obstacle blocking their acceptance.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Hopkins, “Kant, Quasi Realism and Aesthetics,” *European Journal of Philosophy*, IX, 2 (2001): 166-189, 172. He cites Crispin Wright, *Truth and Objectivity* (Cambridge: Harvard 1992), 102-104.

<sup>21</sup> See James Andow, “A Semantic Solution to the Problem with Aesthetic Testimony,” *Acta Analytica*, XXX, 2 (2015): 211-218. Our use of the term ‘relativism’ is intended to cover both contextualism (the view that a difference in sensibility corresponds to a difference in which proposition identical utterances express) and relativism in the narrow sense (the view that a difference in

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sensibility corresponds to a difference only in the truth-conditions of the identical proposition that those utterances express). We use the term broadly because the problems we raise apply equally to both.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Aaron Meskin, “Aesthetic testimony: What can we Learn from Others about Beauty and Art?” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, LXIX, 1 (2004): 65–91, 80-84.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge, 1980), 233.

<sup>24</sup> See Alan Tormey, “Critical judgments,” *Theoria*, XXXIX, 1-3: 35-49, for an example of someone who explains Autonomy in terms of Acquaintance.

<sup>25</sup> The connection between Autonomy and Acquaintance is close enough that some simply conflate them, e.g., Cain Samuel Todd, “Quasi-realism, Acquaintance, and the Normative Claims of Aesthetic Judgement,” *British Journal of Aesthetics*, XLIV, 3 (2004): 277-296, 289.

<sup>26</sup> See, e.g., Roger Scruton, *Art and Imagination: A Study in the Philosophy of Mind* (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 1974), primarily chapter 4, and Todd *op. cit.*

<sup>27</sup> Hopkins, *op. cit.*, envisages a Kant-inspired version of quasi-realism from which an aesthetic analogue of cognitive command could be derived. The key premise is that all judges, under ideal conditions, take pleasure in the same objects. This grounds cognitive command. We do not discuss this view, since (a) Hopkins himself shows, and the proponent of the only aesthetic quasi-realism we know of—Todd—agrees, that this view can explain Doubt only at the expense of

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explaining Autonomy, (b) no aesthetic Expressivist has defended a view along these lines (and the most prominent aesthetic Expressivist has explicitly rejected it as not properly Expressivist (Todd, *op. cit.*, 279-281) and (c) we hold that to the extent that Kant does endorse a form of Expressivism, it is along the lines of the positive view that we defend here.

<sup>28</sup> To be an Expressivist in what we here call a ‘weak’ sense is to hold a view according to which utterances in the relevant domain express ‘pro’ or ‘con’ attitudes towards the relevant objects. Some might not think that a cognitivist view (such as our own) can rightly be called Expressivist—even if it denies that the relevant utterances express beliefs (as we do). If that’s right, we will have to find alternative terminology (perhaps we are merely *quasi-expressivists* or *affective cognitivists*), but this does not affect the substance of our argument.

<sup>29</sup> It is worth mentioning that not every Expressivist is motivated by irrationalism. See, e.g., Seth Yalcin, “Bayesian Expressivism,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 112 pt2 (2012): 123-160.

<sup>30</sup> Allan Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings: A Theory of Normative Judgment* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 6. In subsequent work, Gibbard shifted to an Expressivism based on plans, rather than norms. But this difference does not affect our argument here.

<sup>31</sup> Whether there are such general norms has been the subject of a long-running debate in the field. Their proponents are in the minority. See, e.g., Monroe Beardsley, “On the Generality of Critical Reasons,” *Journal of Philosophy*, LIX (1962): 477-86. The most influential opponents of such norms are perhaps

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Arnold Isenberg, “Critical Communication,” *Philosophical Review*, LVIII (1949): 330-44, and Frank Sibley, “Aesthetic and Nonaesthetic,” *Philosophical Review*, LXXIV, 2 (1965): 135-159.

<sup>32</sup> The phrase “guides for appreciation” is inspired by James Shelley’s phrase “guides for perception” in “Critical Compatibilism,” *Knowing Art*, eds. Matthew Kieran and Dominic McIver Lopes (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007). Notice that, on our view, there *are* general or universal aesthetic reasons; the reasons we identified above are reasons for everyone to appreciate similarly. But they are not general norms that show a property always to be either a merit or demerit, and thus they cannot be used to prove that a work is aesthetically pleasing. Cf. Shelley, *op cit.*, and Hopkins, “Critical Reasoning and Critical Perception,” in the same collection.

<sup>33</sup> Todd, *op. cit.*, 283. We thank an anonymous referee for pushing us to discuss Expressivist views in more depth.

<sup>34</sup> This difficulty makes some optimistic about the possibility of legitimate second-hand aesthetic judgments, leading them to reject Autonomy. See Malcolm Budd, “The Acquaintance Principle,” *British Journal of Aesthetics*, XLIII, 4 (October 2003): 386–92; Paisley Livingston, “On an Apparent Truism in Aesthetics,” *British Journal of Aesthetics*, XLIII, 3 (July 2003): 260–78; Meskin *op. cit.*, and Jon Robson, “Norms of Belief and Norms of Assertion in Aesthetics,” *Philosophers' Imprint*, XV, 6 (2015).

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<sup>35</sup> See, e.g., Philip Pettit, “The Possibility of Aesthetic Realism,” in Eva Schaper (ed.), *Pleasure, Preference and Value: Studies in Philosophical Aesthetics* (New York: Cambridge, 1983): 17-38.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Hopkins, “How to Be a Pessimist about Aesthetic Testimony,” *Journal of Philosophy*, CVIII, 3 (2011): 138-157.

<sup>37</sup> Hopkins, “How to Be a Pessimist about Aesthetic Testimony,” 154.

<sup>38</sup> Thanks to a referee of this journal for pressing us to consider this response.

<sup>39</sup> Frank Sibley, *op. cit.*, 137.

<sup>40</sup> Dominic McIver Lopes, *Beyond Art* (New York: Oxford, 2014) also argues for a dual explanandum view in order to account for the impossibility of heteronomous aesthetic judgment (which he terms  $\alpha$ -judgment). Beyond this, our views are very different. For Lopes, such judgments are distinctive not because they are affective reactions to the work itself, but because they represent their aesthetic content inseparably from representing their non-aesthetic content. A detailed discussion of the relative merits of our dual explanandum view over his is beyond the scope of this essay.

<sup>41</sup> Hopkins, “Kant, Quasi Realism and Aesthetics”, 184.

<sup>42</sup> Hopkins, “Kant, Quasi Realism and Aesthetics,” 183.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>45</sup> Our philosophical elaboration of this feeling’s nature, though, need not be explicitly formulated by the believer.

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<sup>46</sup> Another question in this vicinity concerns what kind of speech act one performs in expressing an aesthetic judgment. If assertion is identified by its *fact-stating* function, then the expression of an aesthetic judgment will count as an assertion. However, if assertion is identified by its *belief-expressing* function, then an aesthetic judgment will not count as an assertion. In the latter case, we might say that it is a *sui generis* sort of speech act that is linked specifically to the expression of feeling. But however this taxonomical question is to be resolved, it will not affect the argument of this paper.

<sup>47</sup> Thanks to an anonymous referee for this way of putting the problem.

<sup>48</sup> One great difference between the cases is that: to appreciate a difficult but excellent film shows good taste; to enjoy being hurt is likely a symptom of mental illness.

<sup>49</sup> Meskin *op. cit.*, 76.

<sup>50</sup> See e.g., Scanlon *op, cit.* pp. 99 and 183.