Defending Aesthetic Internalism: Liking, Loving, and Wholeheartedness

In my view, Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* is one of the very best works of modern musical theater. When I learn that it will be performed nearby, I begin to look into buying tickets. That is not to say that I always end up going: in many cases, the tickets are too expensive; in others, I learn something disappointing about the casting choice or announced changes to the book or the songs; in others, I have other plans that make it impossible to attend. However, whether or not I end up attending, my immediate response to learning that *Sweeney Todd* is being staged is to be *moved* to try to attend. By contrast, I do not think very highly of Lerner and Loewe's *Camelot*. If I were to learn that *Camelot* was being staged near me, I would not bother to check ticket prices. I doubt I would see it even if it were free, unless there were some independent consideration moving me to do so, such as a desire to accompany a friend. It seems natural to explain the difference in my motivations in these two cases by pointing to the difference in my judgements of the merits of the two musicals. My high opinion of *Sweeney Todd* explains my motivation to see it again; my low opinion of *Camelot* explains my lack of motivation to revisit it.

Aesthetic internalism captures this idea: aesthetic judgements bring with them motivations to act in characteristic ways. Positive aesthetic judgements move one to engage with a work, and negative aesthetic judgements to avoid engaging with a work.[1] So we can predict someone's aesthetic motivations if we know their aesthetic judgements. If you think Sondheim's lyrical work is horribly pretentious and his music hackneyed, you will not feel the slightest inclination to go see *Sweeney Todd*.

[1] Of course, we can and do make aesthetic judgements about other things besides works of art, including natural places, other people, non-art artifacts, and so on. To keep things simple, I focus on the case of aesthetic judgements about artworks, but that fact does not do any work in the arguments that follow. Aesthetic internalism applies to any object or event about which an aesthetic judgement can be made.

Let's put things this way:

> **Belief**. I believe that *Sweeney Todd* is being performed nearby.
> **Aesthetic judgement.** Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* is one of the very best works of modern musical theater.
> **Motivation**. I am strongly motivated to buy tickets to the nearby performance of *Sweeney Todd*.

Aesthetic internalists believe that **Belief** and **Aesthetic judgement** jointly explain **Motivation. Aesthetic judgement** and **Belief** (conjoined appropriately) incline us towards or away from engagement with the object.

Aesthetic internalism has not received much philosophical attention. However, aesthetic internalism is modeled after *moral* internalism, about which a great deal has been written.[2] Moral internalism holds, roughly, that moral judgements, jointly with appropriate beliefs, explain moral motivation.[3] Aesthetic internalism similarly claims a connection between making an aesthetic judgement and being motivated to act on that judgement. The rough idea is that a person who sincerely judges that a work of art, natural scene, or other object of aesthetic judgement is aesthetically good will be motivated to put themselves in a position to engage with it. Aesthetic internalism is often thought to be important because its truth would lend weight to aesthetic non-cognitivism: the view that aesthetic judgements are not belief-like, but desire-like.[4] The argument goes like this: (1) If aesthetic internalism is true, then aesthetic judgements must be motivationally potent; (2) Only non-cognitive (that is, desire-like) states are motivationally potent; (3) Aesthetic internalism is true; (4) Therefore, aesthetic judgements are non-cognitive.

[2] Michael Smith's book *The Moral Problem* (1994) is the most-cited discussion of (and argument for) moral internalism. For a recent overview of the literature, see Connie S. Rosati (1994). Walter Sinnott-Armstrong is among the first to consider the aesthetic counterpart of moral internalism in his (2010).
[3] This account needs a bit of qualification, as we will see in Part II.
[4] In order for internalism to provide support for non-cognitivism, it must be the case that 'judgement' is initially understood in a way that is neutral between its being a cognitive, belief-like state, and a conative, desire-like state. One example of how one might do this comes from Jon Robson and Neil Sinclair (2022), who say that judgements are the mental correlates of assertion.

The aims of this paper are first to make a case for a version of aesthetic internalism and second to assess the extent to which this version of aesthetic internalism supports aesthetic non-cognitivism. In the first part of this paper, I review Alex King's argument against aesthetic internalism and offer a response that draws on the idea of a wholehearted aesthetic judgement. In the second part, I develop and defend this account of wholeheartedness. In the third part, I consider whether this revised version of aesthetic internalism can still offer support to aesthetic non-cognitivism.

One related problem that I do not explore here is the relationship between moral and aesthetic internalism. Some philosophers have argued that aesthetic and moral internalism rise and fall together, so, aesthetic internalism is true if and only if moral internalism is true.[5] Others see significant differences between the two, and think that it is possible to be an aesthetic internalist but a moral externalist (or *vice versa*).[6] While some of what I say here may seem to give weight to the latter view, a proper discussion of the differences and similarities between moral and aesthetic judgements, and the relevance of those differences and similarities to this problem, would require far more space than I have here.

I. The case against aesthetic internalism

Alex King's objection to aesthetic internalism is grounded in a simple but powerful insight: there is an important difference between merely liking something and judging it to be aesthetically good.[7] According to King, it is our likings, not our aesthetic judgements, that motivate us. This is an important point, and one that goes to the heart of the problem. If I am consistently motivated to see performances of *Sweeney Todd*, that is fully explained by the fact that I *like Sweeney Todd*, with no need to inquire whether I also judge it to be aesthetically

[5] For example, Alfred Archer (2017) and Alex King (2018).
[6] For example, Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (2010) and Caj Strandberg (2016).
[7] King (2018): 640.

excellent. While it is often the case that we like the same things that we judge to be aesthetically good, it is also quite common for the two to come apart: one can like things that one judges to be aesthetically poor, and fail to like things that one judges to be excellent. One will tend to be motivated to engage with the former and not the latter. (The former are often called 'guilty pleasures'; the latter don't have a label but are often marked by comments like 'I agree that *Sweeney Todd* is a good musical, but it's not for me.') What's more, as my likings change over time, my motivations do too, even when my judgements hold fast. Perhaps I retain my low aesthetic opinion of *Camelot*, but I gradually acquire a fondness for its retelling of the familiar Arthurian legends I enjoyed reading about as a child. Similarly, I might find that my passion for seeing *Sweeney Todd* wanes while my high opinion of its value stays intact. In that case, I might find myself being moved to attend a performance of *Camelot* but not *Sweeney Todd* despite my aesthetic judgements. King's point is that a person's aesthetic judgements do not do the motivational work that we might be tempted to attribute to them. **Aesthetic judgements** are neither necessary nor jointly sufficient (with **Belief**) to explain **Motivation**. Instead, something like the following is at work:

> **Liking**. Liking Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* directly motivates a person to engage with it.
> **Independence**. Whether one likes *Sweeney Todd* is independent of whether one judges *Sweeney Todd* to be aesthetically good.

Given these, we can show that **Aesthetic Judgement** is not necessary for **Motivation**. **Liking** does all of the motivational work by itself, and **Liking** has nothing to do with **Aesthetic Judgement**. There is simply no need to posit a role for **Aesthetic Judgement** to play in generating **Motivation**.

Further, King argues **Aesthetic Judgement** is not *sufficient* to produce **Motivation**, even with the correct **Beliefs** in place. For there are plenty of cases in which one judges that a work of art is aesthetically good, but feels no urge whatsoever to engage with it. By contrast, **Liking** produces **Motivation** quite reliably. Here is one of King's examples to

illustrate. She asks us to consider an artist whose aesthetic choices are determined by mercenary considerations, not by his judgements about what would be aesthetically best:

> Imagine an artist whose primary goal is to make money and so remains unmoved by concerns of aesthetic quality. Yes, leaving the cloying cottage out would make for a higher quality painting, and so, yes, he aesthetically ought to leave it out, but so what? The landscape with the cloying cottage will sell. (King 2018: 641)

King's painter is not moved *at all* by his aesthetic judgements. He makes a sincere aesthetic judgement – adding a cottage to the landscape makes the painting worse – but that judgement is not at all motivating for him.

The painter in her example is modeled on a familiar figure from debates over moral internalism: the amoralist.[8] The amoralist is a person who makes clear, sincere moral judgements, but their moral judgements have absolutely no effect on their motivations to act. There is considerable controversy in the literature over whether genuine amoralists could exist, and, if they could, whether such amoralists would be irrational or otherwise defective in some way. King's counterpart to the moralist, the mercenary painter, is an anaesthetic[9]: a person who makes aesthetic judgements, but whose judgements do not have any influence on their motivations to act.[10] The figure of the anaesthetic, she claims, is much more compelling than the amoralist. In King's view, it is certain not only that anaesthetics

[8] See, for example, Sigrun Svavarsdottir (1999).

[9] Strandberg calls this same figure an 'amasthete' to avoid confusion with the medical meaning of 'anaesthetic.' See Strandberg (2016): 34, fn. 15. Here I follow King and use 'anaesthetic,' but nothing turns on the choice of terminology.

[10] King offers a second set of examples involving 'inaesthetics,' people who are inversely motivated by their aesthetic judgements: those who are drawn towards works of art that they judge to be aesthetically poor, and away from those that they take to be good. These inaesthetics are like Svavarsdottir's 'moral subversives' (1999). One of King's examples is the ironic 'fans' of Florence Foster Jenkins, who famously sold out a concert at Carnegie Hall. Those who attended (or a large number of them, at least) believed her singing to be terrible, but they were drawn to it nonetheless. I think that this and other cases of 'inaesthetics' are less potent as objections to aesthetic internalism than the 'anaesthetic' cases. There are many plausible psychological explanations one could give for this kind of behavior, arising from independent motivations (like the *schadenfreude* that arises from watching a rich privileged person humiliate herself) that conflict with and override whatever motivations are caused by aesthetic judgements. So I focus here on the anaesthetic cases.

could exist, but that they do in fact exist. (Here King agrees with other skeptics about aesthetic internalism, such as Sinnott-Armstrong and Strandberg.)

King argues that the usual responses to the amoralist will not do as responses to the anaesthetic. Moral internalists tend to argue that apparent amoralists do not exist, because such apparent amoralists would not be making genuine moral judgements, but only inverted commas judgements. An alleged amoralist who claims not to care about morality at all might be best understood as saying, in a kind of Nietzschean manner, that they do not care about *other people's* ideas about 'morality', not as saying that they do not care about morality full stop. This may be adequate as a response to the amoralist; however, King thinks that no such response is available to the anaesthetic:

> But it does not seem to be similarly insincere or a confusion bordering on incoherence if someone says that she is not at all motivated to promote or pursue aesthetically good things, e.g., 'I'm simply not interested in aesthetics.' If someone said this, my first interpretation would *not* be that this was an inverted commas use of 'aesthetics.' I would think that they didn't care about aesthetics, at least in many salient cases. (King 2018: 644)

The key idea here is that there may be some sense in which it is natural or rational to care about morality, but there is no similar sense with aesthetics. So anaesthetics are people who are not motivated by their aesthetic judgements, because they feel no pull to do what is aesthetically better. Unlike (possibly, at least) the morally good or right, the thought of pursuing the beautiful (or similar) does not motivate them.

The argument against aesthetic internalism, then, is simple. The existence of anaesthetics shows that it is not **Aesthetic judgement** that brings about **Motivation**, but **Liking**. The fact that **Liking** and **Aesthetic judgement** often coincide makes it *appear* that **Aesthetic judgement** has motivational force. I judge that *Sweeney Todd* is excellent and I also like it, but the **Liking** is where the rubber meets the road. If I didn't like it, I wouldn't be motivated.

Some aesthetic internalists would respond to this argument by insisting that the 'aesthetic judgements' of the anaesthetic not sincere aesthetic judgements, and attempt to rebut King's claim that they are not 'inverted commas' judgements. Alternatively, some internalists might claim that, even for alleged anaesthetics, aesthetic judgements do have *some* motivational power, which power is simply overridden by other desires and urges. Thus, they might argue, there are no *true* anaesthetics.

In this paper, I accept that there are true anaesthetics, and that such aesthetic judgements can be sincere and at the same time fail to be motivationally potent. This paper responds to King's argument in a different way: by developing a notion of a special subclass of aesthetic judgements: *wholehearted* aesthetic judgements. While the distinction between liking and aesthetic judgement has wide acceptance, there is little agreement about what a positive aesthetic judgement in the absence of a 'liking' amounts to.[11] The task that matters here is to describe a *kind* of aesthetic judgement that an anaesthetic cannot make.

In other words, we can respond to King's argument by defining a special subset of aesthetic judgements, *wholehearted* aesthetic judgements. **Wholehearted aesthetic judgements**, I will argue, are jointly sufficient (with **Belief**) for producing **Motivation**, and are immune to objections from anaesthetics.

Before saying what **wholehearted judgements** are, we first need to get clear on how to define aesthetic internalism. It is through an examination of the central idea of aesthetic internalism that our account of wholeheartedness will become clear. King defines aesthetic internalism this way:

> **'Aesthetic (motivational) internalism**: Necessarily, if someone judges that she aesthetically ought to φ, then she is (at least somewhat) motivated to φ.' (King 2018: 634)

[11] One account is Matthew Strohl's distinction between liking and judging good in his (2022), pp. 176-181. Strohl's account of judging something to be aesthetically good is judging it to enable the valuable activities of engagement of some person, but what counts as a valuable activity varies from person to person.

This definition, however, is too strong – much stronger than the traditional definitions of moral internalism. There is no reason that aesthetic internalism should be formally stronger than moral internalism. Moral internalism normally includes an additional clause, which allows for the possibility of error or defect on the part of the agent. Michael Smith, for example, defines moral internalism this way:

> **Moral internalism**: 'If an agent judges that it is right for her to φ in circumstances C, then either she is motivated to φ in C, or she is practically irrational' (Smith 1994: 61)[12]

The possibility that some agent may be practically irrational allows that people who fail to be appropriately motivated might indeed exist, but that such agents suffer from defects in their rational characters.

If we were to apply this approach directly to aesthetic internalism, we could modify King's definition this way:

> **Rational aesthetic internalism**: Necessarily, if someone judges that they aesthetically ought to φ, then they are either (at least somewhat) motivated to φ, or they are practically irrational.[13]

However, this might not be the most promising version of aesthetic internalism.[14] First, there are reasons to doubt whether aesthetic judgements are rationally required in the way that ethical judgements are – in other words, whether it is possible to be aesthetically irrational. This is especially true for those working in the Kantian tradition, of course, but skepticism about whether aesthetic judgements can be rationally required is not limited to Kantians. Ted Cohen, for example, has argued that aesthetic judgements are rationally

[12] Smith also credits Simon Blackburn (1984) and Mark Johnston (1989), among others, with similar accounts.
[13] Compare to Caj Strandberg's formulation: 'Necessarily, if a person S judges that an object is aesthetically valuable, then she is at least somewhat motivated to acquaint herself with it, *given that she is practically rational*' (Strandberg (2016): 39, emphasis in original). Alfred Archer's version includes not only a rationality condition but also *aesthetic competence* (Archer (2017): 660).
[14] I am grateful to an anonymous referee for pushing me to revise and expand this discussion.

unconstrained, and each person is free to express themselves aesthetically, even to contradict themselves.[15]

But even those who accept that aesthetic judgements can be rational or irrational often see an important difference between the ways that moral judgements are governed by rationality and the ways that aesthetic judgements are. According to Sibley and Isenberg, for example, aesthetic judgements do not conform to any general principles. This view nonetheless need not deny that that certain judgements are rationally required and others rationally prohibited – they simply have a particularist view whereby what is rational is not given by a set of fixed rules.[16] (When *moral* particularists have argued, *contra* standard moral theories, that morality is not a matter of following strict rational rules, they have tended to invoke an analogy with aesthetics.[17]) But it is not easy to describe the rational (or irrational) character of aesthetic judgements. For this reason, it may be more perspicuous to formulate aesthetic internalism not in terms of rationality, but in terms of something more specific (which might or might not be characterized as part of 'rationality'). The dedicated anaesthetic, I suggest, is best characterized by their lack of *wholeheartedness*.[18]

I borrow the term 'wholehearted' from Harry Frankfurt's famous paper, 'Identification and Wholeheartedness,' though I will be using it in an importantly different way.[19] In his paper, Frankfurt was talking about how we can say which of one's desires is expressive of one's identity. For example, perhaps I desire to smoke, and I also desire not to have the desire to smoke. What, if anything, makes the second desire more authentically my

[15] Ted Cohen (1998). See also Stuart Hampshire (1954) for a similar view.
[16] See Arnold Isenberg (1949) and Frank Sibley (1959).
[17] See, for example: Jonathan Dancy (1983), David McNaughton (1988), esp. 58-59 and 158-159; Margaret Olivia Little (2000), esp. 281 and 295); and David Barkhurst (2000), esp. 170-171).
[18] A similar move in the moral internalism debate can be found in Christian Miller's account. Miller (2008) argues that only *virtuous* agents will be properly motivated, rather than *rational* agents.
[19] Frankfurt (1988) uses 'wholeheartedness' to characterize the exclusivity of one's identification with a particular mental state. My use of 'wholehearted' refers to a process of identification and commitment similar to Frankfurt's account, but leaving aside the exclusivity that marks out wholeheartedness for Frankfurt.

own than the first? Frankfurt's answer is that a desire is only more expressive of the self if one has identified wholeheartedly with that desire. In identifying wholeheartedly with one of their desires, the agent endows that desire with *authority*. They commit to that desire, and they do so without conflict with any other judgements that are also granted such authority. So the agent who wholeheartedly identifies with her desire not to desire to smoke commits to that second-order desire, that that desire has authority over their first-order to desire to keep smoking. This wholehearted identification does not mean that they will in fact quit smoking – the first-order desire might still prove stronger – but it means that only their second-order desire should be seen as an expression of *who they are*.

The idea here is that wholeheartedness can play a similar role in aesthetic internalism to that which rationality plays in moral internalism. I'm not sure that the issue of conflict is so pertinent in the case of aesthetic judgements: it is difficult to say whether aesthetic judgements ever conflict in the relevant respect.[20] But I think that the ideas of authority and commitment may be helpful. The agent commits to judging the object in a certain way, and in so doing, they grant that judgement a certain authority.

Therefore, the more promising formulation is this:

> **Wholehearted aesthetic internalism (WAI)**: Necessarily, if someone judges that they aesthetically ought to φ, they are either (at least somewhat) motivated to φ, or the judgement is not wholehearted.[21]

The suitability of this version of aesthetic internalism needs both explanation and support.

II. Aesthetic Wholeheartedness

[20] See Cohen (1998).

[21] I argue below that if one's aesthetic judgement is wholehearted, one will be appropriately motivated. So one might simplify WAI like this: 'Necessarily, if someone judges wholeheartedly that they aesthetically ought to φ, then they will be (at least somewhat) motivated to φ.' Thanks to an anonymous referee for pointing this out.

In order to assess WAI as a response to King's argument, we need to establish two things. First, we need to say clearly what exactly a wholehearted aesthetic judgement is; and second, we need to show that agents have a reason to want that at least some of their aesthetic judgements be wholehearted. In ethics, it is generally presupposed that being ethical involves being rational and so those who fail to be rational also fail *qua* ethical agents. We need to establish, similarly, that in aesthetics, being wholehearted is important, and so those who fail to be wholehearted will incur some loss as proper aesthetic agents, and thus will not function as counter-examples to WAI. There may well be, as King says, real-life anaesthetics, but the lives of such anaesthetics would be impoverished, and they would be better off if they made some wholehearted aesthetic judgements.

Let us think of *wholeheartedness* as a commitment to a judgement characterized by stability and attention, which grants that judgement authority. Wholehearted aesthetic judgements tend to be sustained for a long period of time, unless they are altered by new experiences or information, and they claim a significant share of our mental attention and focus over that time. Consider King's mercenary painter. His judgement that the cloying cottage is aesthetically bad may well be sustained over time, but it is not likely to consume much, if any, of his attention. Once the painting is done and sold, it is unlikely that he will think of it again. Wholehearted aesthetic judgements, by contrast, occupy our attention in a powerful way. This does not mean that we think of them frequently (though we might), but that, when we do, they occupy a significant amount of mental space. When I learn about *Sweeney Todd* being staged nearby, my mind is flooded with thoughts about specific elements of the musical, like the second part of the barber's contest – the tooth-pulling – which is often cut from productions for pacing reasons, about which I have mixed feelings, or the various elements of stage business that can be performed during 'The Worst Pies in London.' Whenever I think of *Sweeney Todd*, I can think of little else but these kinds of details.

To say that wholehearted aesthetic judgements are stable is not to say that they never change. Judgements of works of art can and often do change, but that change can come about either as a result of reflection on and experience of the art, or as a result of a change in one's temperament or likings. Wholehearted aesthetic judgements, however, should *only* change as a result of the former. I once preferred *Sunday in the Park with George* to *Sweeney Todd*, but, on reflection and repeated experience, I found the second act of *Sunday in the Park* significantly weaker than the first. This in turn lowered my opinion of the work as a whole. Such a change in judgement is consistent with wholeheartedness, because it proceeds from reflection on the work. If, however, my judgement of Sondheim's musicals were susceptible to change simply because I had lost my taste for Sondheim's lyrical density, then my judgement cannot have been wholehearted.[22]

When the agent judges wholeheartedly, they grant that judgement a certain authority. This authority is what protects it from being blown around by changing desires. As on Frankfurt's account, the authority comes from an action of the agent's, not from any property of the object being judged. My judgement of *Sweeney Todd* is wholehearted, but yours need not be. However, the judgement can still be altered by reflection and experience, because reflection and experience can draw my attention to features of the work I had not previously noticed.

The most important feature of wholehearted aesthetic judgements is that they are in fact motivationally potent. Anyone whose aesthetic judgement meets these criteria will feel at least some psychological tug to move towards (or away from) the object of that judgement. One might worry that what I have been calling wholehearted aesthetic judgements are really just 'ordinary' aesthetic judgements plus **Likings**. The **Liking**

[22] Compare this to Hume's famous remark that a person prefers Ovid at twenty, Horace at forty, and Tacitus at fifty. He attributes such changes to 'mirth or passion, sentiment or reflection' (Hume 1965): p. 291. If Hume is right that one's judgements of these poets can easily be changed simply by changes in one's mirth or passion, then such judgements cannot be wholehearted.

provides the motivation towards the object, and it just happens to coincide with one's opinion of the work. But a wholehearted aesthetic judgement is not a mere conjunction of judgement and **Liking**. It is not that some preexisting motivation attached to a **Liking** explains the wholeheartedness; the wholehearted commitment, and the sustained attention it produces, explains the motivational role that wholehearted aesthetic judgements play in our lives. Consider again King's painter. Suppose that he were to survey the art market, and conclude that the cloying cottage would, after all, reduce the market value of the painting. So he decides that he likes it better without the cottage. Now his **Likings** and his **Aesthetic judgement** are conjoined, but nothing about this conjunction is wholehearted. His judgement is not grounded in the same considerations as his liking. So he does not have a **Wholehearted aesthetic judgement**.

So much for what aesthetic wholeheartedness is. Let's now move to the more difficult question. I haven't yet given any reason for thinking that a wholehearted aesthetic judgement is preferable to a half-hearted one. For **WAI** to be successful as a response to King, it must be the case that we have good reason to want at least some of our aesthetic judgements to be wholehearted ones. Why would we want this? I think that the best answer has to do with the difference between **Likings** (which King thinks are the source of aesthetic motivation) and a certain type of love. Once we can see what the difference is, we will be able to see why the anaesthetic's life without aesthetic love – i.e., without wholehearted aesthetic judgements – is relatively impoverished.

The kind of love that I am interested in is not merely a stronger version of **Liking**. **Liking** can be understood in terms of a leaning or inclination towards something. To love something, however, is to make a commitment to that thing and to get to know it intimately. This commitment is made possible by the judgement's authority.[23] This authority secures

[23] I am grateful to anonymous referee for requesting clarity on the connection between commitment and authority.

stability for one's judgement. So loving is not merely to inclining towards something. One point that Plato makes over and over in his discussions of *eros* is that the best kind of love is conducive to understanding, and results in a stable attachment to something we see as important and deserving of our interest.[24] A life without this kind of love is, I argue, inferior to one with it.

When we judge a work of art to be good with our whole hearts, we lose ourselves in the details of the work. Our attention is absorbed in it for a sustained period of time. We discover and rediscover elements of the work that were at first hidden. We often learn something about ourselves in the process – why it is that we were first drawn to the object, and what that says about who we were then and who we have become. Sustained attention to an aesthetic object challenges us; it involves probing the object more deeply and with greater care than we otherwise would. It allows us to be vulnerable, to be surprised, to see things that we might not otherwise have noticed.[25] This is a valuable experience that that anaesthetic cannot have, and so we have a reason not to want to be an anaesthetic.

However, just because one judges wholeheartedly does not require that one also judges that wholeheartedness itself has this kind of value.[26] One need not consciously recognize the reasons why wholeheartedness is important in order to see it as important. The fact that wholehearted aesthetic judgements offer us all of these benefits is not always recognized by the wholehearted judger. Wholehearted aesthetic judgements are not typically made instrumentally – we do not typically set out to attend to *Sweeney Todd* carefully *in order to* understand ourselves better. One can simply attend to *Sweeney Todd* with one's whole heart, and later, emerge with greater self-understanding.[27]

[24] See, for example, *Symposium* 206c-212c and *Phaedrus* 250e-252c.
[25] Compare with C. Thi Nguyen's defense of the value of aesthetic trust in his (2021).
[26] Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this point.
[27] There is a further question of whether one can have a negative aesthetic judgement that is wholehearted. For example, can I hate *Camelot* so wholeheartedly that it reliably motivates me to avoid seeing it, even with my family? While it is certainly possible to hate a work of art intensely, it is

One objection to this account is that one does not need one's aesthetic judgements to be motivationally potent in order for them to have value. For example, John Dyck argues that aesthetic judgements are merely evaluative, not normative – no 'ought' is suggested by them (Dyck 2021).[28] However, such judgements can still be characterized by stability and attention. The fact that such judgements offer stability and attention make them valuable. So one might say that there is another kind of aesthetic judgement that is just as fulfilling, as important, as wholehearted aesthetic judgements. Consider someone who sits down to a performance of *Sweeney Todd* and finds it, as I do, to be an absolutely stunning work of musical theater, one of Sondheim's best. However, this person, after the performance ends, simply moves on to *Assassins*, *Passion*, and so on. They never feel motivated to return to *Sweeney Todd* in any way. At the same time, they never relinquish their judgement, either: if someone asks them whether their opinion has changed, they object strenuously. But they are simply never motivated to revisit the play, and would not care at all if it were being staged again nearby – would not even care to listen to the cast recording, or to reminisce about their experience of seeing it. Could such an aesthetic judgement, while not wholehearted, still serve as the foundation of a meaningful aesthetic life? And if so, do we really need wholeheartedness?

There are two responses to this objection. First, one can raise doubts about whether such a judgement is genuinely free of motivational power. It is certainly the case that some people's motivation drives them to re-experience art. Some of us are perpetual re-readers of favorite novels, for example, and others are not. But desiring to re-experience is not the only way to be motivated by one's judgements. Aesthetic motivation takes many forms. One can

hard to imagine that such hatred can give us the full rich character of engagement that we get from wholehearted love. (For a discussion, see Strohl 2022, pp. 121-123.) This is another reason to think that not all aesthetic judgements are wholehearted. Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this question.

[28] Dyck speaks of aesthetic 'reasons', not aesthetic 'judgements.'

also be motivated, for example, to recommend the work to others, to reflect on it in memory, or to write and talk about it.[29] Perhaps this agent is in fact motivated by their aesthetic judgement (and so it is wholehearted), but their motivation moves them to different kinds of actions. They don't desire to see *Sweeney Todd* again, but they are moved to discuss it, to recommend it to others, or the like.

Second, if the judgement truly does lack motivational power, there is good reason to think that it will not make a good foundation for the best kind of aesthetic life. An aesthetic judgement characterized by stability and attention but not motivation will be limited in its ability to exercise our attentional capacity. If this person does not revisit *Sweeney Todd*, even in reflection or memory (or even discuss it) they cannot have the opportunity to delve deep into the rich details of the work or discover new ways of engaging with it. Sustained engagement with aesthetic objects of the kind required by wholehearted aesthetic judgements focuses our minds on ideas, details, our own emotional responses, and other elements of experience that reward close attention. Without wholehearted aesthetic judgements, we would miss out on such experiences.

It is also important to recognize that the claim here is not that that *all* of one's aesthetic judgements could or even should be wholehearted. Because of the amount of time and attention involved in making a wholehearted aesthetic judgement and the commitment that implies, in order for all of a person's aesthetic judgements to be wholehearted, they would need to have a very small circle of aesthetic interests, which seems rather restrictive and perhaps incompatible with a good aesthetic life. While I have tried to show that a life that includes *some* wholehearted aesthetic love is better than one without, I do not think that such a life cannot *also* include half-hearted aesthetic judgements. This means that some of our aesthetic judgements will be motivationally potent, and thus WAI will be true of them,

[29] I am grateful to Aaron Meskin for suggesting this response. See also Robson and Sinclair (2023): 9.

but others will be motivationally inert, and aesthetic internalism will not necessarily be true of them. The thoroughgoing anaesthetic is ruled out, but one can act like an anaesthetic with respect to some (perhaps even most) of one's aesthetic judgements. WAI only covers a subset of our aesthetic judgements, though that subset is an important one.

Perhaps the most serious objection to the foregoing is that there are other things that one could and should value in aesthetic life, which do not require wholehearted aesthetic judgements.[30] I have argued that aesthetic love gives us a reason to want to judge wholeheartedly, but the landscape of reasons is quite wide. Recent years have seen a number of different accounts of what makes a good aesthetic life, including Mohan Matthen's defense of aesthetic hedonism, Dominic McIver Lopes' network theory, Nick Riggle's communitarianism, Thi Nguyen's game-like account, and Anthony Cross' social account.[31] While I do think that a case could be made that aesthetic wholeheartedness is at least compatible with many of these accounts, it is far from clear that aesthetic wholeheartedness is *required* for living a rich aesthetic life. Making the case that it is would be the project for another paper.

If we instead assume the modest conclusion that wholehearted aesthetic judgements contribute to *one* way of living a good aesthetic life, we can still endorse the conditional claim: to extent that the goods of wholeheartedness contribute to a rich aesthetic life, wholehearted aesthetic judgements are worth having. So, again, we should reject the life of the anaesthetic.

An important advantage of WAI is that it strengthens one of the traditional arguments for internalism: the *fetishism* problem for externalism. Michael Smith argues that moral externalists will need to fetishize morality in order to explain the regular connection

[30] Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this.
[31] See Matthen (2018); Lopes (2018); Nguyen (2023); Riggle (forthcoming); and Cross (forthcoming).

between moral judgement and moral motivation. [32] Smith begins by noting that in the vast majority of cases, those making moral judgements do in fact feel motivated to act on those judgements. This regularity calls out for an explanation, and moral internalists are well-positioned to provide it: the judgement itself provides the motivation. Externalists need to point to something else, such as a standing desire to do whatever one judges to be morally right. But then the desire that motivates someone to do what is morally right is read *de dicto*, not *de re*. The moral agent thinks to themselves: 'Whatever it is that is morally right, I want to do that thing.' But, Smith argues, the morally good agent should be motivated by the particular thing that is right to do, and so effectively fetishizes the desire to be moral. Hallvard Lillehammer answers Smith, claiming that 'A concern for what is right, where this is read *de dicto*, has a role to play in the psychology of good people beyond this special case.' (Lillehammer 1997: 192)[33] Lillehammer argues that a concern for what is morally good (read *de dicto*) is in fact a morally worthy and valuable attitude. It can help people do what is morally right even when the particular action is not attractive. For example, we should not want parents to desire (*de re)* to do what is right when what is right is to turn in their guilty children to the police; we should want them to desire (*de dicto*) to do what is right, and so to turn in their guilty children with a heavy heart. The externalist response to the moral fetishist depends, in part, on the moral importance of caring about morality in the abstract.

When we take the argument about fetishism to aesthetics, it becomes apparent that no such response is available to the fetishism problem in this case. Here we would worry about an aesthetic fetishist: a person who wants to engage with whatever art is aesthetically excellent, where 'aesthetically excellent' is read *de dicto*. The aesthetic fetishist, might, for example, hear that *Sweeney Todd* is good, go to see a performance, decide that it is in fact aesthetically excellent, and so desire to continue to engage with it. The aesthetic fetishist,

[32] See Smith (1994), pp. 60-91.
[33] See also (Copp 1997).

however, will be unable to commit to *Sweeney Todd* in a wholehearted way. Since the fetishist's real interest is not in *Sweeney Todd* in particular but in the idea of aesthetic excellence, they will be not be immersed in the work with the love and attention that characterizes a wholehearted judgement. And one cannot just offer a version of Lillehammer's response to the aesthetic fetishist. For while there may well be considerable moral value in being motivated to do what is right even when the particular right action seems odious, how could there be any aesthetic value in engaging with the beautiful when it seems ugly? Aesthetic engagement focuses attention on the particulars of individual objects, not on abstract ideas of what aesthetic excellence is.

So let us turn now to aesthetic internalism and the argument for non-cognitivism.

III. Aesthetic internalism and aesthetic non-cognitivism

WAI says that a special class of our aesthetic judgements are motivationally potent, and that this class of aesthetic judgements has an essential role to play in a good life. So it follows that, in some cases, our aesthetic judgements will reliably move us in important ways. But aesthetic internalism has been thought to be important because of its role in making an argument for aesthetic non-cognitivism, and it is not clear that WAI can do that. Here is the modified argument:

(1′) If WAI is true, then wholehearted aesthetic judgements must be motivationally potent.

(2′) Only non-cognitive (that is, desire-like) states are motivationally potent.

(3′) WAI is true.

(4′) Therefore, wholehearted aesthetic judgements are non-cognitive.

This argument does not show that aesthetic judgements as a class are non-cognitive, much less the corollary that often follows – that aesthetic properties are projections or

expressions of agents rather than mind-independent qualities. All it can show is that one important subclass of aesthetic judgements are non-cognitive, leaving the rest in doubt.

There is, however, an important worry about this argument, given the foregoing account of wholeheartedness.[34] Some philosophers regard the second premise, and the Humean picture of motivation upon which it rests, as fundamentally mistaken.[35] Anti-Humeans maintain that certain kinds of belief-like states can in fact motivate without the need for any desires or desire-like states. The worry here is that (2′) may be *particularly* vulnerable to this anti-Humean worry. WAI itself, that is, can be taken to undermine (2′). A wholehearted aesthetic judgement, an anti-Humean might claim, is exactly the type of psychological state that is both thoroughly cognitive while at the same time possessing an affective character. As Keren Gorodeisky and Eric Marcus put it, 'aesthetic judgement 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.'(Gorodeisky and Marcus, 2018: 114) In other words, aesthetic judgements involve a work's being presented to the mind as meriting our judgement, and this presentation must be cognitive. Recall that a wholehearted aesthetic judgement involves a kind of love: when we make a loving commitment to some work of art, we need to understand that thing as being worthy of our love. To understand something as being worthy of our love is to make a cognitive judgement. So, wholehearted aesthetic judgements *must* be at least partly cognitive, and so WAI cannot be used as an argument in favor of non-cognitivism.

However, this objection relies on an assumption that we should not accept. The objection says that, in order to commit to something wholeheartedly, we must first present the object to mind in a way that merits our committing to it. But this is not the case. A wholehearted commitment can also come about when an agent commits to a work of art

[34] Thanks to Keren Gorodeisky for raising this objection.
[35] For example, see McDowell (1979) and Shafer-Landau (2003).

because of something about *themselves* that they want to express. I might love *Sweeney Todd* because of what it expresses about my own aesthetic sensibility and personality. The dark humor and romantic subversions of the musical align with ways I like to see myself and facets that I like to explore. I do not need to present *Sweeney Todd* as meriting my positive judgement before I even make that judgement; I can merely feel the attraction between the object and my own character. Of course it is true that I must form beliefs about some of *Sweeney* Todd's properties – that it is dark and comic, for example. But I do not need to form the belief that this dark comedy merits my attention. I can form the judgement on the basis of a desire to express my own sympathy for dark comedies. So it is not correct to say that WAI presupposes a cognitive (or cognitive-affective) account of aesthetic judgement.

It follows from this that wholehearted aesthetic judgements need not require prior judgements that the work is good.[36] One can wholeheartedly love art that one has not judged good at all. It is only in forming the wholehearted aesthetic judgement that I can see it in a way that makes its goodness clear to me. And so different people can wholeheartedly judge different works good. I am not sure that there are any limits on what works can be engaged with wholeheartedly. The ability of fans to find features worth engaging with in the most apparently banal and misguided artworks is a continual source of amazement. Some people might even love *Camelot* wholeheartedly, improbable as that may sound.

WAI, then, leaves us with an argument for a partial aesthetic non-cognitivism. This result, while at first disappointing, is nonetheless valuable. There seem to be at least three possibilities that one could explore, each of which would have different ramifications for aesthetic non-cognitivism. First, one might argue that half-hearted aesthetic judgements are not really aesthetic judgements at all, but merely 'inverted commas' judgements.[37] This

[36] I am grateful to an anonymous referee for raising this point.
[37] This is a strategy that I had suggested earlier and dismissed. But others might be tempted to go this way.

would allow one to claim that all aesthetic judgements are non-cognitive, since all truly aesthetic judgements are wholehearted. Second, one might say that the term 'aesthetic judgement' is polysemous. Wholehearted aesthetic judgements belong to one class of judgement and halfhearted ones to another, so one might be non-cognitive and the other cognitive. This would lead to a disjunctive account of aesthetic cognitivism. Third, one might claim that half-hearted aesthetic judgements, while sincere and not 'inverted commas' judgements, are nonetheless parasitic on wholehearted ones. That is, to make a half-hearted aesthetic judgement would be to claim that one *would be* justified in making a wholehearted aesthetic judgement with the same content. Then one could try to show that aesthetic judgements are still, at bottom, non-cognitive. Each of these possibilities suggests different conclusions about which aesthetic judgements we would say are non-cognitive. But further research promises to enrich recent discussions about the prospects of aesthetic non-cognitivism.[38]

When I bore my friends and family with my views about *Sweeney Todd*, I speak out of a wholehearted aesthetic judgement. That judgement may very well be grounded in my desires rather than in my beliefs, but that does not make the judgement any less important.[39]

[38] See, for example, Robert Hopkins (2001), Cain S. Todd (2004), James Harold (2008; 2020); Jon Robson and Neil Sinclair (2022).

[39] Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the Southern Aesthetics Workshop IV and to my colleagues in the Department of Philosophy at Mount Holyoke College. I am very grateful for the comments and questions I received, which led to significant revisions in the paper. I am especially grateful to John Dyck and to Keren Gorodeisky for their detailed input and thoughtful objections. I also want to thank the anonymous referees for this *Journal* for their careful and insightful feedback.

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