

The Aesthetic Enkratic Principle

Irene Martínez Marín
Uppsala University

There is a dimension of rationality, known as structural rationality, according to which a paradigmatic example of what it means to be rational is not to be akratic. Although some philosophers claim that aesthetics falls within the scope of rationality, a non-akrasia constraint prohibiting certain combinations of attitudes is yet to be developed in this domain. This essay is concerned with the question of whether such a requirement is plausible and, if so, whether it is an actual requirement of *aesthetic* rationality. Ultimately, this paper defends the view that aesthetics is no different from other domains in that it requires coherence between a subject's mental states (in our case, between what is judged and what is aesthetically liked).

Keywords: rational requirements, structural rationality, aesthetic akrasia, aesthetic rationality, aesthetic appreciation.

1. The Structure of Aesthetic Rationality

There is a dimension of rationality according to which a paradigmatic example of what it means to be rational is not being akratic. Call this structural rationality.¹ Structural rationality involves mental coherence² and is associated with a set of distinctive principles or requirements that prohibit certain combinations of attitudes, for instance, inconsistent beliefs, failures to intend the means to one's ends, and, of interest to us here: various forms of *akrasia* (Worsnip 2021, p. 1). Importantly, it is when these rational requirements are violated that a subject exhibits irrationality.³ Although it is

¹ It is common for philosophers working on rationality, to make a distinction between substantive and structural rationality (for recent discussion of this distinction, see Fogal and Worsnip (2021)). According to a substantive rationality view, to be rational is to respond correctly to the reasons one has. Structural rationality, on the other hand, is a matter of having the right relations hold between one's mental states, independently from the reasons for having those states. Exactly how the relationship between the two is to be understood is a contentious issue. Note that this essay is primarily about structural rationality and how it connects to aesthetics, although I will say something about the relationship between rational requirements and aesthetic reasons in the final sections of the essay.

² For a recent analysis on the property of coherence and what it might mean for proponents of structural rationality, see Daoust (2022).

common for philosophers to claim that aesthetics falls inside the scope of rationality (Kivy, 1975; Gorodeisky and Marcus, 2018), a non-akrasia constraint is missing in this domain. Does this mean that aesthetics is not connected to this form of rationality understood as coherence? This paper is concerned with the question of whether or not we can develop a similar rational requirement in aesthetics and, if so, whether it is an actual requirement of *aesthetic* rationality. This paper can be seen as the first contribution to this debate.

Aesthetic akrasia, I will argue, arises when a subject's aesthetic judgement and her liking of the same item fail to conform. In what follows I will speak of an aesthetic judgment as those value-ascribing judgements by which we determine the overall presence or absence of aesthetic merit or demerit in an object (e.g., 'x is aesthetically worthy', 'x is beautiful'). I will understand the aesthetic (dis)liking of an object as an attitudinal state involving a positive or negative affective orientation towards those features of the object of experience for which the question whether or not x is aesthetically valuable is relevant. It is our aesthetic likings what conform our aesthetic personality by being expressive of one's taste (Melchionne 2010). There are two caveats to keep in mind. First, for it to be considered a case of aesthetic akrasia, the subject needs to have formed a judgement about an object's aesthetic value autonomously. This *autonomy requirement* aims to exclude cases where the subject has not engaged with the aesthetic object in question by bringing her own appreciative faculties and arriving independently at conclusions about the aesthetic value of the object.⁴ Second, the (dis)liking involved needs to be responsive to particular aesthetic features of the object in question. That is, the nature of this response must be aesthetic for it to be considered a case of akrasia. Likings that arise from non-aesthetic considerations (moral, political, personal, ...) are to be discarded in this context.

³ This claim is most notably defended by Broome (2013a).

⁴ Note that the *autonomy requirement* in this context is not intended to ensure that the subject's aesthetic judgement is well grounded. Assessments of structural rationality are supposed to be independent of the assessment of the credentials of individual mental states. Rather, I insist on the importance of autonomy to ensure that the judgement is truly or properly aesthetic.

To get a better idea of what we might mean by aesthetic akrasia, let us compare the phenomenon of akrasia in different domains. Consider the following situations:

- a) A visits a Pollock exhibition. A judges the selected works to be aesthetically valuable. Yet, A does not like the paintings.
- b) B forms the aesthetic judgment that *The Intern* is bland and terribly cast after attending a screening of the film. Yet, B likes it.
- c) C believes that she ought to stay in the library to study for an exam. Yet, when her friend invites C to a party, C accepts the invitation and decides to leave the library.
- d) D sees in her diary that she has a meeting at 2 p.m. She checks with a colleague that this is correct. Yet, D cannot shake the thought that she might have got the time wrong.⁵

These are all cases that seem to represent some form of disunity or mismatch between one's attitudinal mental states. The interesting thing about the aesthetic cases (a) and (b) is that it is often implied, or explicitly remarked, that there is nothing wrong with judging that something is beautiful and not liking it (a)⁶ or, inversely, with liking something even though one judges it to be aesthetically unworthy (b). This is an important difference with the practical and theoretical realm, for which (c) and (d) are perceived as problematic, since they represent the violation of an established coherence requirement. This requirement is known as the Enkratic Principle (EP).

(Practical EP): One is rationally required to intend to φ whenever one believes that one ought to φ . (Broome 2013b).

(Theoretical EP): One is rationally required not to believe something that one believes to be unsupported by the evidence one possesses. (Horowitz 2014).⁷

⁵ These are to be read as cases in which agents believe that, all-things-considered, they ought to favor what they evaluate as good and disfavor what evaluate as bad. For example, someone like agent B does not have higher-order reasons to believe that there is nothing wrong with guilty pleasures.

⁶ See, for instance, Hanson (2018), pp. 52-3.

⁷ It is worth noting that the plausibility of a theoretical EP is under discussion. See, for example, Reisner (2016); Field (2021); Lasonen-Aarnio (2020). Note that some authors, such as Lasonen-Aarnio (2020), still acknowledge epistemic

So, just as we think that one should *either* revise one's first-order attitude *or* one's higher-order attitude to conform to structural requirements (e.g., C should either try to stay in the library or revise the idea that she ought to stay in the library, D should either not believe that the meeting is at 2 p.m. or not believe that her colleague and diary might be wrong), why not also concede that the same is true in the aesthetic cases? Shouldn't we agree that A either needs to like the Pollock paintings or revise her aesthetic judgement of the paintings? And that B should either stop liking a film that she knows has little aesthetic value or judge the film to have some aesthetic merit?

Whilst it is common to understand akrasia as a conflict between first and higher-order attitudes, the same is not true in the aesthetic case. Here what we find is two first-order attitudes of different nature (judging/liking), with different valence, and directed towards the same object. Thus, one could think that we should not assume precise analogues of the principles of structural rationality in the aesthetic domain.⁸

Presumably, another reason which could explain why aesthetics does not operate with an enkaptic principle is that the object of rational evaluation in this domain is a subject's *appreciation*. That is to say: aesthetic appreciation is neither reducible to a judgement about what to *believe* or what to *do* (see Gorodeisky and Marcus, 2018, pp.113-4). To be aesthetically rational is a matter of having the right mind to properly appreciate aesthetic value. So, one might think that precisely because aesthetics is not about 'belief' or 'action' but about 'appreciation', that aesthetic akrasia is less problematic. Still, one would expect similar discussions about akrasia as an obstacle for proper appreciation, or debates about how to formulate structural appreciative requirements modelled upon the particularities of aesthetic engagement.

akrasia as a problem, even though they argue that the badness of a subject holding mismatched evidence can be explained without resorting to rational requirements. For a discussion of whether rational requirements cannot ultimately be reduced to evidence-responsiveness, see Wornsip (2018).

⁸ Nor the same kind of criticism as the one's referred to in footnote 7.

In connection to this last point, I will argue, that the main reason behind the striking fact that aesthetics fails to recognize a non-akrasia constraint is that the two main views regarding aesthetic appreciation, the affectivist view and the perceptualist view, reject the need for it—albeit for different reasons. On the one hand, according to the affectivist, aesthetic value is revealed through affect, so that what is judged and what is liked cannot diverge. Thus, akrasia never occurs. On the other hand, for the perceptualist, akrasia is possible. Yet it does not interfere with proper aesthetic engagement, because it is an agent's judgment, and not their liking of what is judged, which constitutes proper aesthetic appreciation. If akrasia is neither a possibility (affectivist) nor a problem (perceptualist) then it seems like there is no reason to prevent it.

The discussion is structured as follows. In Section 2, I further develop the concept of aesthetic akrasia and suggest what an enkratic principle in aesthetics might look like. In Section 3, I present the different challenges that the affectivist and the perceptualist would put forward against an aesthetic enkratic principle. I then show why both positions are wrong, at least *prima facie*, in ruling out aesthetic akrasia as either a possibility or a rational concern. I do this by showing that they misunderstand the nature and functions of the perceptual-affective relations that underlie our appreciative engagements. Section 4, aims to show why the aesthetic enkratic principle is a true requirement of aesthetic rationality. I do this by presenting a scenario in which the misalignment between one's aesthetic judgement and one's aesthetic liking for an object prevents successful aesthetic engagement. I also address some immediate objections about such a view. Section 5 concludes.

2. Aesthetic Akrasia

In accounting for an EP in aesthetics, the first thing one needs to do is to get clear about what it means to be aesthetically akratic and why this phenomenon leads to a problem of rationality. The aim of this section is therefore to find a distinctive kind of aesthetic akrasia, one which involves the violation of a coherence requirement.

2.1. *Is the aesthetic akratic weak-willed?*

Akrasia has traditionally been understood as involving weakness of will. Aesthetic akrasia is a largely unexplored area, but in the few discussions of it, we find it is characterized in the same way:

Aesthetic judgment commits us to evaluative principles with respect to which our preferences potentially conflict—principles with which we may, in a given instance, fail to be in accord. If these principles are important enough, if our adherence to them is deep enough, we may find ourselves in a situation where the pull of aesthetic preference is properly characterized as weakness of will. (Herzog 2000, p. 41)

But just as we feel pity for the morally incontinent individual, who must confront his own incapacity to display moral virtue, so too should we feel sorry for someone who is unable to enjoy what he recognizes as good art, someone who suffers from aesthetic akrasia. (Silvers 1972, p. 234)

Both authors take akrasia as a phenomenon that involves judging that the relevant object is aesthetically valuable, but experience a ‘pull’ that moves them away from endorsing it. This is because—to be weak-willed is in an important sense a matter of being deficient in resisting certain physical and psychological pressures that tend to tempt agents into giving up certain ends.⁹ One might think, however, that the pleasure that characterizes aesthetic engagement is not comparable to the sensory pleasure that leads one to get carried away and not abide by one's best judgement.¹⁰ So, if aesthetic akrasia is not a matter of a lack of will power, what is it exactly and why might it be a problem for aesthetic rationality?

Against the general trend of identifying akrasia with weakness of will, some authors have pointed out that these two phenomena are not the same, although they tend to interact (Rorty,

⁹ For discussion see Yao 2017, pp. 15-20.

¹⁰ Indeed, it is common place to demarcate aesthetic pleasure as a form of disinterested pleasure (independent of the existence of the object or its relation to practical ends) from other forms of pleasure which are more directly related to gratification and stimulation of the will.

1980; Holton, 1999; Holton and May, 2012). I think this distinction can help us understand what is at stake in aesthetic akrasia. For Richard Holton and Joshua May (2012), a good way of distinguishing akrasia from weakness of will is to identify the latter with a violation of an ‘executive commitment’, and the former with a violation of an ‘evaluative commitment’.¹¹ From here, the central cases of weakness of will are best characterized as cases in which agents fail to voluntarily act on their intentions.¹² To be more specific, one is weak-willed when one is too ready to reconsider one’s plans and intentions; that is, when one’s reconsideration exhibits tendencies that it is not reasonable for one to have. These reconsiderations are normally motivated by desire, temptation, or even fear. Now, for Holton, akrasia is not a matter of not being able to maintain one’s intentions, but about being unmoved by one’s evaluative judgements. Akrasia, we could say, is prior to any form of intended resolution. I.e., akrasia occurs prior to the formation of the intention which is then violated in weakness of will. From here, I propose that we start understanding aesthetic akrasia as a failure to make cohere one’s aesthetic value judgements with one’s aesthetic likings for the same object.

2.2. *Reality-TV David*

Drawing on Holton’s distinction and inspired by an example provided by Matthew Strohl (2018), I propose that we differentiate what it means to be weak-willed and akratic in the aesthetic domain in the following way.

Imagine someone like David who only likes to watch Netflix reality TV, although he judges it to be aesthetically bad and believes he has good reasons to watch less of it. But, night after night, he ends up binge-watching episodes of *Love is Blind* and *Selling Sunset*. David believes that he would be a better aesthetic agent if he were to consume less reality TV and more sophisticated shows and

¹¹ Here they are using Alfred Mele’s terminology. However, Mele (2010) defends a disjunctive notion of weakness of will, where one is weak-willed when violating one of the two commitments. For Holton one is akratic only when violating the first commitment.

¹² See also Bratman (1987).

films. In liking what he judges to be aesthetically bad, David is conflicted. The conflict has to do with the lack of coherence or agreement between his doxastic and affective attitudes. David's behaviour is to some degree irrational, but he is not weak-willed. Rather, David is being aesthetically akratic.

Now imagine that David makes a New Year resolution to only watch aesthetically valuable films. In doing so he cancels his Netflix subscription and joins the film-curated platform MUBI. He also makes his friends aware that he is committed to watching less reality TV. If we were now to find out that David has not watched a single film from MUBI, but rejoined Netflix on the 2nd of January so as to start watching the latest season of *Selling Sunset*, we would say that he is weak-willed. As Holton puts it: 'It is the failure to persist in the resolution that makes all the difference' (Holton 2012, p.82). Only when David voluntarily decides to broaden his aesthetic horizons by joining MUBI, but hastily revises his resolution (moved by his aesthetic liking of reality TV), does he become weak-willed.

Although I think Holton's picture is enlightening with respect to intentions to act, I am not sure there is something clearly aesthetic in David's failure to be resolute in his intentions that would allow us to talk about an 'aesthetic weakness of will'. The only aesthetic dimension that we find in this example has to do with the object (broadly construed) of David's violation-resolution. But I think this does not seem enough for it to merit the 'aesthetic' tag. What David might be more likely to realize when being weak-willed is not that he missed a chance to watch Louis Malle's *Le souffle au coeur*, which was only available for a limited period of time for him on MUBI, but that he was unable to stick to his plan in doing what he thought was best for him. However, I do think there is an important form of akrasia that is distinctively aesthetic and that has to do with the nature and relation of the judgment and affective attitudes involved in cases like David's when there is a dissonance between what is liked and what is judged as aesthetically valuable. A dissonance that is prior to him being or not weak-willed. The question now is how can agents like David stop or prevent themselves from being akratic.

2.3. *The Aesthetic Enkratic principle*

On the view I am proposing, it is the case that one is aesthetically akratic (AA) when:

AA: one's aesthetic value judgment and aesthetic liking about the same item fail to cohere.

What we have here is a mismatch between two key appreciative mental states. Given that to be structurally rational one must have attitudes that are not jointly incoherent and aesthetic akrasia is precisely a case in which certain attitudes collide, there is reason to think that the phenomenon of aesthetic akrasia also represents a violation of a rational requirement. But, a violation of which requirement exactly? I propose that one can avoid aesthetic akrasia by conforming to this principle:

Aesthetic Enkratic Principle (Aesthetic EP): One is rationally required to aesthetically like what one judges to be aesthetically valuable.

Expressed in logical form:

AR requires of you that [(if you judge x is beautiful) \rightarrow you aesthetically like x]¹³

What I am proposing is that the phenomenon of aesthetic akrasia is better understood as a mismatch or incoherence between a subject's aesthetic judgement and their aesthetic liking, and that subjects must satisfy the above requirement in order to avoid having an akratic combination of attitudes. But there is more to be done to show that being aesthetically akratic is something we should avoid in the context of appreciation, and thus that an AEP is a requirement of *aesthetic* rationality. Next, I suggest that we look more closely at how aesthetic judgement and aesthetic liking interact in our main accounts of appreciation. Only by getting a clearer picture of how these two attitudes relate to each other can we understand the constraints and pressures they might generate when combined, and work out whether a requirement like the one suggested above is to be preferred.

¹³ In its negative formulation: Aesthetic EP [(if you judge x is aesthetically unworthy) \rightarrow not (you aesthetically like x)]

3. Two Challenges

To claim that aesthetic judgement and aesthetic liking are two distinct appreciative states constrained by some kind of matching attitude requirement is controversial. On the one hand, affectivist views about the nature of appreciation reject any such constraint because they do not concede that these are two distinct attitudinal mental states.¹⁴ On the other hand, perceptualist views go on to suggest that the valuing of an aesthetic object involves an objective attitude akin to perceptual judgments of non-evaluative facts; and thus, is only contingently linked to aesthetic liking.¹⁵ Hence there is no problem in maintaining an opposite aesthetic judgement or aesthetic liking towards what is valued or liked.

If these accounts prove to be correct, then it would seem that aesthetics does not operate with a non-akrasia constraint. And if there is no AEP, then it follows that either (i) there is a significant dissimilarity between aesthetic rationality and rationality in the practical and theoretical realms, since a subject can never be *aesthetically* akratic (the affectivist), or (ii) aesthetic akrasia is not an obstacle to aesthetic appreciation (the perceptualist) and thus an AEP is not a true requirement of aesthetic rationality. In what follows I will consider the challenges posed by each view. In doing so, I argue (contra the affectivist) that akrasia is possible, and (contra the perceptualist) I show that it prevents full-blown acts of appreciation and that an AEP is ultimately true.

3.1. *The Affectivist Challenge*

An affectivist approach to appreciation holds that the aesthetic judgement of an object is constituted, roughly, by the aesthetic liking or disliking of the object in question. A recent influential affectivist view refers to this liking as aesthetic pleasure. What is of most importance to this view is that:

¹⁴ See, for example, Gorodeisky and Marcus 2018, 2022; Gorodeisky, 2019; Ginsborg, 2014.

¹⁵ Some proponents of this view are: Sibley, 2001; Carroll, 2016; Danto, 1997; Gilmore, 2011; Hopkins, 2006; Lord, 2019.

[t]he 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. 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. (Gorodeisky and Marcus 2018, p. 119)

For the affectivist, the only way one can make a *proper*¹⁶ aesthetic judgement is *in* and *via* feeling, so only if one has liked and experienced pleasure one can form a judgment. To be more precise, aesthetic liking provides: (i) an immediate form of epistemic access to the value and aesthetic features of an aesthetic item¹⁷ and (ii) self-awareness of the judgement's appropriateness. For Gorodeisky and Marcus: 'In appreciating the object, we (in ideal cases) take in both its beauty and what makes it beautiful' (p.121). This would explain why aesthetics does not operate with a rational requirement aimed at imposing coherence among aesthetic judgement and aesthetic liking, because, by definition, these cannot diverge.

One way to argue for the relevance of an aesthetic enkratic principle is to put pressure on this simple structure of appreciation on which this view is based. In what follows I make three related points in this direction.

Two-States. We think that to judge or to cognize an object does not seem to be the same as to be pleased or displeased by it: 'a judgement is a proposition, that is, it consists of concepts that stand in a certain relation whereas a feeling is neither a concept nor a relation of concepts, but rather a momentary, qualitative inner state of the subject' (Berger 2021, p.5). If this is the case, judging and liking are intuitively better understood as representing two different attitudes: one of perceptual discernment and another of emotional receptivity.¹⁸

¹⁶ By proper they mean a judgement that is worthy of the term aesthetic judgement/appreciation.

¹⁷ This point has been recently further developed in Gorodeisky and Marcus (2022).

¹⁸ For more on this point, see Martínez Marín & Schellekens (2022).

Derived Intentionality. Rather than conveying information about what is valued through representational content, some emotion theorists have argued that aesthetic feelings are about ourselves and the state of one's agency (Mueller, 2018).¹⁹ It is just that, 'our feelings are the result of the fact that the world affects us, which gives us the impression that they are about the world' (Cohen, 2020, p.55). What is key for these views is that aesthetic feelings do not apprehend aesthetic value. Rather, they are modes of approval/disapproval. For instance, to aesthetically like an artwork is to approve it, i.e., to find it concordant with one's aesthetic cares and concerns. But this is different to take such feeling as disclosing axiological properties of the world. This is because emotions, more generally, are thought to be relatively indiscriminate and to not have epistemic powers to disclose the world, at least not in the same way that perception does (Brady, 2013). At most, they are 'useful stand-ins or surrogates for genuine reasons for evaluative beliefs, but lack that status themselves' (Brady, 2013, p. 129). This suggests that we do not actually 'grasp the *object's* value by enjoying it' (Gorodeisky, 2019, p.270; emphasis added), but rather our *relation* to this value. And, that we can do this only after careful attention and reflection, since the mere fact that one experiences a feeling in appreciating an object is no direct evidence of the object's merit.

Liking comes last. There is good reason to think that one's affective experience seems to be preceded in time by (and dependent on) how things appear perceptually to the subject. Whilst aesthetic judgements are warranted, partly, in virtue of a subject properly apprehending the relevant aesthetic features (based on non-aesthetic ones) of an object²⁰, aesthetic likings depend on how those same perceived features are experienced. In order to have an aesthetic liking we need first something that can be liked. Only if this was the case, we would be able to make sense of the idea that when a subject doubts about her aesthetic judgement it is by perceptually re-experiencing the

²⁰ For a view of aesthetic perception that leads to establishing the grounds of aesthetic judgements by pointing out the connection between the non-aesthetic features and the aesthetic features of the object under appreciation, see Schellekens (2006). Note that the point here is not that perception itself warrants aesthetic judgement, but that it leads to that that warrants it.

object in question that we come to form a new judgment. After that, changes in one's aesthetic perception invite for a modification in one's likings. But not the other way round. This is because what counts as evidence that something is aesthetically worthy, or not, is not primarily connected to one's feeling, but to the perceived aesthetic features that also make aesthetic liking seem appropriate, or not.²¹

These three points when combined, and if convincing, gives us reason to explore the idea that a person's aesthetic assessments and likings can differ in principle. But are these challenges sufficient to convince the affectivist of an aesthetic enkratic principle?

Interestingly, the affectivist concedes that some kind of incoherence can arise in our aesthetic engagements. Thus, do not reject the constraint or possibility of akrasia, but rather hold that this constrain should apply not to the components of appreciation (aesthetic judgement/liking), but rather to the conflict between appreciation and aesthetic belief (theoretical judgements of the aesthetically good).²² On their view, it is conceivable that a subject could judge that an object is aesthetically good, hence, like it, but then acquire a distinct belief about the object not meriting such response (for instance, through testimony). I agree that this is a possibility where we find an akratic-like mismatch.²³ However, I think that this it is not a genuine case of *aesthetic akrasia* since one of the states involved (a belief) is not a proper appreciative state. For it is commonly assumed, first, that having a belief about an object's aesthetic value is not sufficient²⁴ reason for appreciating it and, second, goes against the *autonomy requirement*.

²¹ This does not mean that aesthetic feelings have no say at all in our knowledge and justification of aesthetic value. See Martínez Marín (2020), for an account of aesthetic feelings viewed as motivations to search for the reasons that justify one's aesthetic judgements.

²² Thanks to Keren Gorodeisky for comments on this point.

²³ There is a similar scenario which the affectivist could present as an akratic one: A subject judges that X is aesthetically valuable hence, likes X, but then also judges that their initial judgement is ill-grounded. According to my view, this would not qualify as a genuine cases of aesthetic akrasia, since the mismatch in this case is not between the subject's aesthetic judgement and aesthetic liking, but between an aesthetic judgement and a higher-order judgement about its credentials.

²⁴ For discussion about how appreciation requires more than believing valuable, see Scheffler (2011).

Still, we could think of the akrasia suggested by the affectivist as a non-intra-aesthetic disunity between the theoretical and aesthetic parts of the person doing the judging.²⁵ Although this is an interesting disunity to take into consideration, my main point is that this mismatch in not being an intra-aesthetic one would not amount to *aesthetic* akrasia. Moreover, even if we were to accept the hybrid aesthetic version of akrasia proposed by the affectivist, it is some version of an enkaptic principle what would ultimately explain the disunity. And that is all I am after in this paper.

3.2. *The Perceptualist Challenge*

Perceptualists (or non-affectivists²⁶) hold that aesthetic judgments are epistemic exercises aimed at tracking the relevant aesthetic properties of an object via perception²⁷. For some versions of this account, in an artistic context, what makes an instance of putative appreciation be appreciation proper is not the way a subject responds affectively to a work of art, but whether it arises from a judgment of the way the work's aims are realized based on aesthetic perception²⁸. In a slogan, to appreciate is to 'size up' the value of an aesthetic item (Carroll, 2016).

Importantly, these 'sizing-ups' can be detached from aesthetic liking. The ideal appreciator is here understood as someone who can occupy an impersonal stance towards the object under scrutiny. This is because for the perceptualist, 'it is neither logically nor psychologically deviant to be indifferent to something one understands, even something that is highly rated' (Carroll, 2016, p.7). It is this strong divide between evaluating the worth of aesthetic object and liking it that explains why the perceptualist is not serious about akrasia being a problem of aesthetic rationality. If this account is right, then, for example, aesthetically disliking what is judged to be aesthetically

²⁵ Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this comment.

²⁶ Note that one can be a non-affectivist without being a perceptualist, e.g., if one thinks that aesthetic judgement is based on a belief.

²⁷ To be more precise, by perceptually experiencing the non-aesthetic features that the aesthetic features depend upon.

²⁸ Note that the working notion of perception in this context tends to be quite broad so as to include literary or musical aesthetic features.

worthy first-personally does not prevent one from being aesthetically rational. So, there is no need to have an aesthetic enkratic principle.

One might worry that this view of aesthetic appreciation is too reductive in equating appreciation mainly with an assessment based on a subject's perceptual abilities and leaving little or no place for aesthetic liking. Because of this, Carroll still counts statements such as: 'I understand what Stephen Sondheim is doing and I can see why he's doing it, but his music is not to my taste' (Carroll 2016, p.7) as communicating full-blown acts of appreciation. The liking, or not, of what is judged is irrelevant. But as Ted Cohen noted, statements like these seem to require some explanation.

'[...] that the speaker has chosen to say 'x is good', seems to require of the speaker either that he likes x or that he has some story about why he does not despite being willing to say that x is good' (Cohen 1998, p.108).

Similarly for Susan Wolf:

[m]eaningful activity and self-interest cannot psychologically stretch too far apart. Activity is meaningful only if one can engage with it, be attracted to it, be in love with it or with the object around which it revolves (1997, p.208).

As shown above, there are good reasons to keep aesthetic judgement and aesthetic liking separate. To like an object and to make a judgement about its value are not the same thing. But accepting this perceptual-based account presupposes the rejection of a certain kind of intuitive role for liking in the engagement with aesthetic value and to the more general idea that aesthetic experience is valenced. The question here is not only whether one should endorse what one judges to be worthy and reject what one understands to be unworthy. But also, how we can best understand the role that liking plays in aesthetic engagement (regardless of the fact that it can help us form judgements), so that we find it odd to have a mismatch between what is aesthetically judged and

what is aesthetically liked. Only if we can acknowledge the relevance of liking for *proper* appreciation can we prove the importance of developing an aesthetic enkratic principle. In what follows, I offer two responses along these lines.

The 'self' in valuing. Aesthetic appreciation is a form of valuing, and valuing is commonly described as a hybrid and complex phenomenon that encompasses both doxastic and affective states (Scheffler 2011). Among the affective states, awareness of the significance of the object for the person making the judgement is often mentioned as part of what it means to value something (Seidman 2009). Aesthetic liking seems to be a good candidate to capture such partial relationship between subject and object in an aesthetic context. If this is the case, there is a possibility for aesthetic liking to have a more fundamental role in aesthetic appreciation than the perceptualist claims.

Overall aesthetic evaluations. Whilst it is common for the perceptualist, especially in artistic contexts, to focus on how well certain aims are realized by perceptually responding to the choices made by an artist, this view has difficulties making sense of *overall* aesthetic evaluations (an all-things-considered judgment about which artistic goals are worth realizing)²⁹. It is in overall evaluations that aesthetic liking appears to have an important role. This is because a subject's (dis)likings can be understood as an expression of their evaluative position or standpoint towards the object under appreciation (which can be positive or negative).

To sum up: To appreciate the aesthetic value of an object, then, is not a matter of disclosing its value via affect, as the affectivist thinks, nor to perceptually track the relevant aesthetic features of

²⁹ As Carroll notes, this is the kind of evaluation we engage with when we judge that “the dramatist who succeeds in disclosing the deep secrets of resentment produces some thing of greater value than the New Yorker cartoonist who captures perfectly the quaint foibles of a Greenwich Villager complaining about out-of-town bagels” (2008, p. 220). Or, when, for instance, we acknowledge that *Beetlejuice* succeeds in being a great horror-comedy, and even admit that it's among the best works in this category, and yet judge it not to be an aesthetically valuable film. This happens because an agent might not find the work's aesthetic achievement (the neat horror-comedy blend) to be very valuable (2008, pp. 220-22).

an object in an emotionally detached manner, as the perceptualist holds, but to take a stand and attach value to what is aesthetically perceived as aesthetically valuable. If this characterization of aesthetic appreciation is attractive, then it seems somewhat problematic to say that one is correctly assessing the overall aesthetic value of an object when their judgement and liking do not match. Thus, it would seem, again, that an AEP is needed if we are to avoid such situations.

The counter-arguments I have put forward in this section against the affectivist and perceptualist have been based on a questioning of the characterization of the perceptual-affective relations underpinning our appreciative mental activity offered by these two accounts. In doing so, I have argued (*contra* the affectivist) that *aesthetic* akrasia can arise as a possibility, and (*contra* the perceptualist) I have shown how it prevents full-blown acts of appreciation. I think that is all the theoretical ground we need for the moment to show that aesthetic rationality might be no different from other domains in that it requires mental coherence between a subject's attitudinal mental states and thus the importance of conforming to an Aesthetic EP.

4. Appreciation as Alignment

In the previous section, I motivated the view that aesthetic appreciation is neither identical with aesthetic liking nor completely detached from it. This establishes that there can be situations in which a subject judges that an object is beautiful but does not like it and, more importantly, that such situations are not to be dismissed. In this last section, I would like to address what I think is an interesting point that arises from this but has not been made explicit in the literature: appreciation itself is a form of seeking alignment between our aesthetic judgments and affective responses to aesthetic value.

Ideal appreciation can be best articulated as a bidirectional form of alignment between one's aesthetic judgement and one's aesthetic likings. From here, it makes sense that one of the requirements one must satisfy to engage rationally with objects of aesthetic value is the Aesthetic EP:

Aesthetic Enkratic Principle (AEP): One is rationally required to aesthetically like what one judges to be aesthetically valuable.

4.1. *Some Considerations about Aesthetic EP*

There are three important considerations to take into account when analyzing the Aesthetic Enkratic Principle (AEP).

1. The AEP is a wide scope requirement in the sense that it governs the entire conditional. That is, the conditional prohibits certain combinations of attitudes, but does not as such require of the subject that she adopt a specific attitude, such as judging or liking x.
2. There are degrees of incoherence between misaligned appreciative states. For instance, “S aesthetically judges object X to be beautiful, but detests X” is more problematic than “S aesthetically judges object X, but dislikes X”. While a subject simply satisfies or fails to satisfy the AEP, the contribution of failure to a subject’s total degree of (ir)rationality will depend on the character of the failure in question.
3. I do not assume the requirement to be normative in a strong sense. I take it that it remains neutral as to whether an Aesthetic EP can generate specific aesthetic reasons for modifying one’s liking or judgment about X.

I now turn to an example in order to illustrate how proper aesthetic appreciation requires us to avoid being akratic. I also respond to two possible objections about how to satisfy my proposed Aesthetic EP.

4.2. *Dry-eye Grace*

Imagine the following scene:

Grace is an art critic specialized in post-war American abstract art. Given her expertise she has been asked to write a book on Jackson Pollock, but she is unable to finish it. Grace has great knowledge³⁰ of his paintings, and of what makes his art worthy of aesthetic admiration. But even if she is able to judge Pollock's work to be of great aesthetic value, she does not like his paintings.

According to my proposed view, Grace is being aesthetically akratic in judging something to be aesthetically good and yet disliking it. Instead, one could imagine Grace being more sensitive to Agnes Martin's work and because of this she prefers to devote her time and expertise to write about her. Possibly the reason for this aesthetic liking is that there is something specific about Grace's emotional sensibility which allows her to positively respond to the vulnerability and austerity of Martin's ritualistic ruled pencil lines with a depth that is missing in Pollock's vigorous paintings. In being more attuned to Martin's work, Grace feels she is in the right relation to what she perceives as beautiful; in favouring her work she is able to coherently relate to what she also perceives as valuable.

By drawing a contrast between Grace's relation to Martin's and Pollock's works, we can see that there are some problematic consequences in the Pollock case. One consequence of the aesthetic akrasia affecting Grace's appreciative encounter with the Pollocks is her struggle to finish the book. It is her aesthetic dislike for Pollock's work which prevents her from spending time reflecting and writing about a series of paintings that, nonetheless, she judges to be valuable. Instead, we can imagine Grace being able to engage in the more 'cognitive acts', like providing

³⁰ I am aware that the assessments of structural rationality are supposed to be independent of any substantive support that any attitudinal state might independently possess. The appeal to expertise and aesthetic knowledge in this example is intended to show (against the perceptualist) that being able to track the main aesthetic properties of an object is not sufficient to appreciate it aesthetically.

detailed critical reading about the paintings, making comparisons between Pollock and other abstract expressionists, or understanding his importance in modern art history. But we can think of a number of things that Grace is unable to do, besides finishing the task of writing a book, like wanting to re-experience the paintings, or curating an exhibition about Pollock, things that we could imagine Grace to feel motivated to do with Agnes Martin's work. This is because aesthetic liking plays an important motivational role in helping one to keep exploring and engaging with what is experienced as aesthetically valuable.³¹ Thus, a violation of the Aesthetic EP can result in Grace's inability to treat certain considerations (which she believes to be true) as aesthetic reasons for appreciation or in not having a disposition to experience a range of emotions considered to be fitting to its object.

An important question is how can Grace make her aesthetic judgement and aesthetic liking cohere. One option is to try and make herself like the Pollocks (note that this is not the only way to satisfy the Aesthetic EP, as I explain below). The problem is that a change in one's aesthetic liking, which is necessary for Grace to have the affective responses that she believes are right, is an arduous task since these are thought to be intimately connected to our perceived aesthetic identity (Fingerhut, Gomez-Lavin, Winklmayr and Prinz 2021). Moreover, these attitudes are thought to be less controllable than others, although they are not incompatible with the possibility of exercising some degree of voluntary control (Zamuner 2015: pp. 24-32; Elgin 2007: pp. 37-47). Part of this control can involve emotional feigning, regular exposure to the object of appreciation, focusing on those aesthetic properties that one may more easily respond positively to, or rigorously following the critics' recommendations on how to engage with the object of appreciation.³²

For Grace, properly appreciating Pollock will take perseverance, practice, time, and virtuous habits of emotional agency. This process will end the moment Grace comes to perceive Pollock's paintings as valuable and to like them, that is, to both grasp its aesthetic value and to find it

³¹ See Gorodeisky and Marcus (2022, Section 3.2) for a defense of this point.

³² See Goldie's (2011) notion of aesthetic bootstrapping as a strategy for voluntarily cultivating our aesthetic likings.

affectively concordant with the things she aesthetically cares about. This scene is meant to show how violating an Aesthetic EP endangers a subject's very capacity for achieving this sort of mental harmony between what is judged and what is liked.

4.3. *Two Objections*

I would like to end the paper by responding to two possible objections against my proposed view.

First, there seem to be various ways in which an agent can satisfy the Aesthetic EP. However, some of them look problematic. The Aesthetic EP formulated as a wide-scope requirement prohibits a certain *combination* of appreciative attitudes rather than a particular one. Thus, Grace can satisfy this EP by *either* (i) giving up her judgement that Pollock's abstractions are aesthetically good, *or* (ii) making herself like Pollock's work by changing the way she feels about it. But (i) and (ii) do not seem on a par. (ii) seems better than (i), since it is commonly thought that it is better to arrive to correct aesthetic judgements than wrong ones. The worry is that it looks like it is rationally permissible to maintain an incorrect judgement. Does this mean the Aesthetic EP is false after all?

I do not think this concern is a limitation of the Aesthetic EP, it just shows the level at which rational requirements operate. If we are to avoid Grace renouncing what she considers is a correct judgement, I take it that we must also have a theory of what it means to respond appropriately to reasons in forming aesthetic judgements. This is the task of substantive rationality. For instance, it could be that it is the aesthetic features of Pollock paintings, which Grace takes as justifying reasons about her aesthetic judgement, that shield Grace's decision to conform to the Aesthetic EP by *not* revising her judgment and modifying her dislike instead. This does not mean that the Aesthetic EP plays no significant role in telling us about what is the rational thing to do for Grace, since the Aesthetic EP is what informs us in the first place that there is some attitude that Grace needs to revise. So, although an AEP does not answer the normative question about which specific attitude one ought to revise (judgement or liking?), we can still understand it as a

guide in helping us structure our aesthetic engagements—by treating certain combinations as off-limits.³³ Whilst it is our aesthetic reasons which favour holding specific reasons for judging or liking the object under appreciation.³⁴ I think that what this kinds of objection shows is how important it is to make a distinction between the ought of aesthetic structural rationality and the ought of aesthetic reasons.

Second, one might worry that since the Aesthetic EP is framed as a synchronic requirement (it asks agents to be a certain way at a specific moment in time), it might end up ascribing irrationality to the process by which an agent works to align its mismatched attitudes. If Grace decides to revise her aesthetic dislike to overcome her misalignment, this is a process that takes time. But if we were to ask whether Grace is not being aesthetically rational at some point in this process, we would have to say that she is, at least to some degree: akratic. This may sound counterintuitive, since we want to distinguish the appreciator who does not work towards alignment from the one who does. What is crucial here, however, is that the alignment process in which Grace is engaged is driven by what we might call a ‘diachronic basing permission’ (Broome 2016) that informs Grace about how she can fulfil the requirement. So when Grace revises her dislike and tries to match it with her judgement, she is engaged in an active rational form of reasoning, even if we can detect some local incoherent combination of states during the process. In other words, Grace is trying to reconcile her liking for Pollock with her judgement about the work’s aesthetic value by revising her dislike for it. This mismatch, though temporary, is nonetheless incoherent and renders Grace akratic and incapable of appreciating Pollock. But my final point is that Grace, in trying to reconcile her attitudes towards the aesthetic value in question, seems more rational than someone who refuses to make any changes. Though, we would still consider her less rational than someone who both perceives Pollock’s aesthetic worth and responds

³³ This is inspired by a ‘Reason-to-Structure-Deliberation-model’ as proposed in Worsnip (2021).

³⁴ For a detailed overview of what aesthetic reasons are and what they favour, see King (2021).

positively to it. Because ultimately all it means to not be aesthetically rational is to hold a set of misaligned states that prevent one from appreciating the aesthetic value of an object.

5. Conclusion

By focusing on aesthetic akrasia as a mismatch between a subject's aesthetic judgement and aesthetic liking, we have seen how the main theories of aesthetic appreciation on offer fail to provide us with a rational requirement about the relations of a subject's appreciative mental states by overlooking or dismissing this phenomenon. In failing to do so, they cannot properly account for the idea that aesthetics is concerned with rationality, at least construed as coherence. I have also specified how and why such a requirement is to be articulated in aesthetics, and I have gestured toward a new view of appreciation in line with such requirement. With this paper, I hope to have sparked some interest in the importance of developing theories of rational requirements in aesthetics. There are still many interesting conversations to be had. Especially those that have to do with how we are to understand the connection between rational requirements and aesthetic reasons. As Peter Kivy (1975) said, "the rational man and the aesthetic man are one man, not two" (p. 51). Let's keep working to bring them together.³⁵

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³⁵ For their comments and inspiring discussions, I'm grateful to Elisabeth Schellekens, Andrew Reisner, Maria Alvarez, Lisa Bastian, Alex King, Jeremy Page, Nick Wiltsher, Jessica Pep, Paisley Livingston, James Lewis, Rob Hopkins, Keren Gorodeisky, and Jonathan Gingerich. I am also thankful to audiences at the ASA annual meeting 2021, the Scottish Aesthetics Forum Postgraduate Workshop 2021, the Uppsala Higher Seminar in Aesthetics, the ARESMUR seminar, and the Uppsala Aesthetics Work-In-Progress group. Special thanks to Daniel Whiting and two anonymous referees for this journal for feedback that helped improve this paper.

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