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Aesthetic peerhood and the significance of aesthetic peer disagreement

Quentin Pharr[1] | **Clotilde Torregrossa**[2]

[1]Independent Researcher

[2]Department of Philosophy, University of St Andrews, United Kingdom

Correspondence
Quentin Pharr, Department of Philosophy, University of St Andrews, 38 Buchanan Gardens, St Andrews, KY16 9LX, UK.
Email: qparkerpharr@hotmail.com

Abstract

Both aestheticians and social epistemologists are concerned with disagreement. However, in large part, their literature has yet to overlap substantially in terms of discussing whether there are viable conceptions of aesthetic peerhood and what the significance of aesthetic peer disagreement might be as a result. This article aims to address this gap. Taking cues from both the aesthetics and social epistemological literature, it develops several conceptions of aesthetic peerhood that are not only constituted by various forms of cognitive peerhood and affective peerhood, but which are also framed by a specific model of ordinary peer disagreement. For each of these conceptions, it suggests what the significance of ordinary aesthetic peer disagreement might be and how future discussions about it might proceed for both aestheticians and social epistemologists alike.

1 | INTRODUCTION

In disagreeing on aesthetic matters, we often think that a response is called for.[1] However, how can we or should we respond? For instance, if we find *Smiles of a Summer Night* (1955) to be a beautiful film, while you find the opposite to be true, can we reasonably agree to disagree—is our disagreement faultless, so to speak? Maybe.[2] But, perhaps, answers to the initial question will depend on our standings, aesthetically speaking, in relation to one another—and, although we might more readily agree that we should defer to whoever the aesthetic expert might

[1]For commenting, discussing, and ultimately making this article better, many thanks are due to Derek Ball, Daniel Whiting, the University of St Andrews Philosophy Society, and an anonymous reviewer for this journal.

[2]Like Arnheim (1979) and Todd (2012), we expect that the literature on the significance of disagreement can be furthered when the significance of disagreements within the aesthetic domain are also considered.

be, what if our circumstances are different? And, in particular, what if we are *aesthetic peers*? How might this affect the significance of our disagreement?

Overall, these questions sit at the intersection of the recent literature in aesthetics where disagreement has been used as a way of exploring and semantically modeling the boundaries of faultless aesthetic disagreement in relation to different positions on the autonomy of aesthetic judgments, as well as social epistemology where both the nature of epistemic peerhood and the significance of epistemic peer disagreement have been discussed. In principle, it seems that they can be brought to bear on each other and can subsequently give rise to further discussions between aestheticians and social epistemologists.

However, can they? Because, from the start, there is an obvious hurdle to overcome: moving away from conceptions of epistemic peerhood, how might agents even *be* or, at the very least, *be able to reasonably claim* that they are *aesthetic peers*? On the one hand, it could very well be the case that there is no way of fruitfully construing aesthetic peerhood, let alone aesthetic peer disagreement, and thus no use in discussing the significance of such disagreement any further. But perhaps there are working conceptions that can be developed for the aesthetic domain and can lead to further discussions about which positions on the significance of such disagreement are rationally superior. In other words, be they aesthetic experts or not, what *should* aesthetic peers who happen to disagree aesthetically do in response – for instance, might those disagreements have some significance that will guide, benefit, or diminish them in some aesthetic regard? Again, maybe. But, before we can determine whether such questions have any substance, we will first need to develop working conceptions of aesthetic peerhood and aesthetic peer disagreement, in light of the various ongoing debates about the ontology and normativity of the aesthetic domain.

Accordingly, the primary aim of this article will be to develop such conceptions. But secondarily, it will also anticipate some of the consequences that certain sorts of conceptions may have for future discussions about the significance of aesthetic peer disagreement. Overall, the conceptions to be developed will seem to deviate from standard epistemic conceptions in suggesting that aesthetic peerhood is potentially peculiar because of the role that our affective engagements with an aesthetic object might play in it. However, in thinking as much, two questions will complicate these efforts: (1) to what extent, if at all, does our affective engagement with an aesthetic object influence or justify our aesthetic judgments about that object, and (2) how might we even characterize a corresponding conception of affective peerhood, given differing views about whether there are fittingness conditions on our affective engagements with various aesthetic objects? To date, both of these questions are still open ones within aesthetics literature. Still, the hope is to show that, even with these important questions being open, conceptions of aesthetic peerhood involving affective peerhood are still available, and corresponding cases of aesthetic peer disagreement will still be worthy of discussion.

Here is how the article will proceed. Section 2 will briefly introduce the primary aesthetic components of aesthetic disagreement—namely, aesthetic judgment and experience—in order to situate various views about them for nonaestheticians. Then, Section 3 will introduce and motivate the conceptions of epistemic peerhood and epistemic peer disagreement, which will likely best guide theorizing into aesthetic correlates—namely, *ordinary* conceptions of *broad* epistemic peerhood. It will subsequently formulate an ordinary conception of broad aesthetic peerhood that will capture cases involving both expert and nonexpert aesthetic peers. After, Sections 4 and 5 will suggest three more specific sorts of conceptions. Section 4 will suggest how we might characterize and be able to reasonably claim broad aesthetic peerhood when, assuming fittingness conditions, (1) only our cognitive engagements with an aesthetic object might matter to our aesthetic judgments and (2) our cognitive and affective engagements might matter to such judgments. It will subsequently suggest where discussions about the significance of ordinary aesthetic peer disagreement might go as a result. Then, Section 5 will do the

same for conceptions that incorporate both our cognitive and affective engagements with an aesthetic object, but that only assume fittingness conditions for our cognitive engagements.

2 | AESTHETIC JUDGMENT AND EXPERIENCE

As the primary component of aesthetic disagreement, though, a natural starting place for our discussion is with some consideration of aesthetic judgment. Broadly, an agent makes such a judgment when they attribute an aesthetic property to an object, for example, "these curtains are *garish*" or "Delacroix's paintings are *magnificent* and *statuesque*." Such judgments are often taken to be the result of an *aesthetic experience* of the object by an agent and are the expression of a more general appreciation, depreciation, or ambivalence about its aesthetic features.[3,4] Accordingly, in explanation of their aesthetic judgments, agents will typically appeal to features of their aesthetic experiences which, in cases of aesthetic disagreement, will presumably diverge in some regard. And so, for our purposes, it will help to briefly note what such experiences might contribute to our aesthetic judgments.

The philosophical literature about aesthetic experience and related phenomena has grown beyond any quick summary. So, in trying to position our discussion within this literature, we hope that readers will forgive our brevity.[5] But, minimally, we take it that such experience is a "distinctively aesthetic state of mind," following Iseminger (2005, p. 99), and that it might involve two general sorts of engagement, cognitive and/or affective, in line with Mastandrea's suggestion that it is a "general process associated with an individual's cognitive and affective response to an object belonging to a particular class of artefacts called art" (Mastandrea, 2014, p. 500). Ultimately, we think that it is these sorts of engagement that are key to how conceptions of aesthetic peerhood and peer disagreement might be formulated.

When we experience something aesthetically, our cognition is engaged quite extensively. Perceptually, we receive visual stimuli, auditory stimuli, and so on from all our senses, which seem to, then, be analyzed, categorized, or attended to, either explicitly or implicitly. Importantly, it is often remarked in psychological and neuro-aesthetics that the type of perceptual stimuli, or the type of attention we give to such stimuli, is often unlike those in ordinary perception or attention (see Cupchik et al., 2009; Leder et al., 2004; Leder & Nadal, 2014). Whenever we encounter something and experience it *aesthetically*, we deploy complex combinations of cognitive processes that make the episode distinct *as an aesthetic episode*—at least, cognitively speaking. And overall, in such episodes, the thought is that we are alert to the fact that we are experiencing something unusual and adapt accordingly. Here we can also look to Beardsley who expressed the thought as follows: "the experience of listening to a song has more in common with the experience of looking at a piece of sculpture than it does, say, with that of

[3]It seems that aesthetic appreciation, depreciation, or ambivalence is a *byproduct* of aesthetic experience, and *involves* aesthetic judgment, be it the mere *expression* of such appreciation, depreciation, or ambivalence, the *alignment* between our aesthetic judgments and our affections, as Marín (2023) suggests, or so on. Following Larsen and Sackris (2020), it also seems that aesthetic experience of an object can, given the experience's valence, generate overall aesthetic appreciation, depreciation, or ambivalence.

[4]For the purposes of this article, we are not taking a stance on whether aesthetic judgments are possible/justified in the absence of a direct aesthetic experience, as in cases where bare aesthetic testimony from others is all that we have available to us. This discussion is a further substantive one, which we think will bear deeply on the consequences of aesthetic peer disagreement's significance in such cases and, thus, requires a separate, more in-depth crossfertilization between the literature on aesthetic testimony and peer disagreement, once it is clearer what aesthetic peerhood might even amount to. To start on such work, we would suggest the works of: Meskin (2004), Hopkins (2011), Nguyen (2017), Hills (2022), Robson (2022), and Ranalli (2023), among others.

[5]A variety of views have been held about the nature of aesthetic experience and how aesthetic judgments are formed in light of such experiences. In Sections 4 and 5, we will address some of the differences in the available views. But, for better acquaintance with these discussions, see among many others: Bell (1913), Dewey (1934), Beardsley (1958, 1969, 1982), Walton (1970), Danto (1981), Dickie (1988), Zangwill (2001), Carroll (2002), and Shelley ([2009] 2017).

walking in a picket line or that of driving down the Schuylkill Expressway" (Beardsley, 1969, p. 4).

Relatedly, during an aesthetic episode, we may also have to process or use language which, in turn, engages a plethora of cognitive processes such as attention and memory as well. Again, some of these processes occur implicitly, while others require explicit effort. Further, some of these processes might also be more demanding than others, depending on the object of the experience. Consider, for instance, the differences between experiencing one of Yves Klein's IKB monochrome paintings and experiencing a large, highly detailed painting by Eugène Delacroix, say, his *Combat of the Giaour and Hassan*. Even short of designing our own fMRI study to compare the cognitive processes engaged in the experience of each painting, we can hopefully agree that, when observing the Klein painting, an agent will not be engaging in the relevant processes for analyzing its perspective (or lack thereof) to the same extent as when they are observing the Delacroix painting. However, given the intensity of the IKB hue used by Klein, we might reasonably assume that the color-sensing mechanisms in an agent's brain will be particularly active—or, at least, active in such a way as to presumably be different from their observation of the Delacroix painting.

All-in-all, cognition matters to our aesthetic experiences. There are still open questions as to which parts of our cognition matter most for such experience (e.g., attention, imagination, and so on) and whether our cognition is authoritative, if not the sole influence, in the formation of our aesthetic judgments (for the first, see Scruton, 1974; Stolnitz, 1960; for the second, see Stokes, 2018; Zemach, 1997). But, given the extent of this literature and the ongoing discussions within them, we will simply have to defer to future work to resolve them and rely on the few illustrative points that we have provided so far. Ultimately, they will be sufficient for the reader to broadly understand what we mean when we later introduce the notion of "cognitive peerhood" in discussing aesthetic peerhood and peer disagreement. But, what we will suggest will also be readily adaptable for future work as these discussions unfold.

The relation between our affections and our aesthetic experiences and judgments, on the other hand, is much more controversial to characterize. We have just mentioned that some researchers have accepted that the cognitive is the primary, if not the only, component of our aesthetic experiences that matters when it comes to making aesthetic judgments. But, there are other researchers who have accepted that, in combination with our cognitions, our affections are also essential, if not primary, to both our aesthetic experiences and judgments (see Goffin, 2019; Gorodeisky & Marcus, 2022; Johnston, 2001; Prinz, 2011). After all, it would seem that our aesthetic experiences are not just of shapes, colors, smells, sounds, words, and so on. They also seem to be of elegance, garishness, monotony, and so on. When we ascribe the property of elegance or garishness to an aesthetic object, we do not merely *describe* the object, we also assign a certain kind of *value* to it, positive in the case of elegance and negative in the case of garishness. How we get from a specific physical property like a shade of red to the aesthetic property of garishness is a very interesting metaphysical question that we will set aside for now—but, we will come back to it in Sections 4 and 5 when we discuss nearby conceptions and consequences of differing accounts of aesthetic peerhood and peer disagreement.

We can also experience various emotions, like pleasure, satisfaction, awe, disgust, and so on, in the face of aesthetic objects. Psychologically speaking, this picture is a notoriously difficult one to draw—perhaps, even harder than the cognitive picture. But, it is still largely accepted within the literature that emotions not only correlate with aesthetic experience, but perhaps even shape it as well.[6] Further, aesthetic emotions also seem to play a justifica-

[6]See Mastandrea (2014) for an overview of how emotions shape aesthetic experiences according to the psychological literature and Prinz (2011) for a philosophical take on that literature.

tory role in the formation of aesthetic judgments, as in: the curtains are ugly and should not be hung in the living room, not merely because they are garish, but *because their garishness disgusts us*. As such, when faced with a disagreeing party—for example, you might find the curtains elegant and are calmed by their features, while we might find them garish and are disturbed by their features—it is hard to deny that our respective affective engagements often seem to play some role in the story that we tell to each other in order to rationalize our respective judgments.

3 | FROM EPISTEMIC PEERHOOD TO AESTHETIC PEERHOOD

Turning now to the social epistemological literature, our next step is to set out some of the basic conceptions of epistemic peers and cases of peer disagreement that have been developed in order to, then, formulate aesthetic correlates.

In general, epistemic peers are agents who are *in some sense* equals in their epistemic resources—so, equals in some sense with regard to resources such as: the reliability of their cognitive capacities, the extent to which they are familiar with the best information or arguments related to any subject matter, the extent to which they are intellectually virtuous, and so on. Overall, there are a number of different conceptions of epistemic peerhood available. However, for our purposes, we will suggest one in particular: an *ordinary* conception of *broad* aesthetic peerhood.

Following Matheson (2015), conceptions of "broad" epistemic peerhood are to be contrasted with conceptions of the same that are "narrow."[7] Narrow epistemic peers are agents with cognitive capacities that are equivalent in quality, intellectual virtues that are equivalent in quality, and so on, for each of their corresponding epistemic resources. However, although simpler and clearer to understand, social epistemologists have worried that such conceptions do not appear as if they will ever bear on actual agents, given how much cognitive and epistemic diversity we, as humans, ordinarily display. And, as such, these conceptions have largely been investigated for purely theoretical reasons.

Conceptions of broad epistemic peerhood, on the other hand, allow for agents to be epistemic peers, even if there is variability in their epistemic resources. For instance, we might have slightly more evidence than you do, while you might be slightly better at inductive reasoning than we are.[8] Even still, the thought is that such differences do not always result in either one of us being less likely to arrive at the right answer to a question or the right response to an object. We might all still be in an equally good epistemic position, *broadly speaking*, regarding either.

Accordingly, when it comes to a workable conception of epistemic peerhood for actual agents, the following conception from Matheson appears to be a step in the right direction:

> (*Broad Epistemic Peerhood*): Two (or more) agents are epistemic peers, say, regarding a question or an object just in case they are in an equally good epistemic position regarding their responses to that question or object. (Matheson, 2015, pp. 2–3, online)

Again, this conception allows agents to have different cognitive capacities, different amounts of the best information, or different arguments available to them, and so on. The key is that, so

[7]For more conceptions and discussions about the sufficiency of these sorts of epistemic peerhood, see, for example, Gutting (1982), Kelly (2005), Christensen (2007), Elga (2007), Conee (2009), King (2011), Lougheed (2020), and Piñeiro (2021).

[8]In this sense, "broad" conceptions will be inclusive of both peers that meet a narrow conception (e.g., perfect equals), but also for peers that, given their variability, would not meet a narrow conception.

long as these resources—in combination—are equally likely to produce the correct responses to a question or an object, then epistemic peerhood regarding either of them will be secured.

However, even with Matheson's conception of Broad Epistemic Peerhood, social epistemologists have also worried about whether we will ever be able to *acknowledge* more ordinary peer disagreements, considering our epistemic limitations in determining whether two (or more) agents are *in fact* in an equally good epistemic position regarding their responses to some question or object. As a result, even further easing on the conditions for peerhood have been suggested.

One prominent option from Lackey (2010) has been to accept a weaker overall conception of peer disagreement. To illustrate, here is what she thinks would be a more *ordinary* peer disagreement:

> *Time Piece*: Jack and Jill are trying to figure out the time. For fun, they have decided to use the sun in the sky. Both of them accept that they are, roughly speaking, epistemic peers when it comes to telling the time with the sun. The results: Jack claims with a fair amount of confidence that it is 2:00 p.m., while Jill similarly claims that it is 2:15 p.m.

Now, for this case, it is important that no mention has been made of whether Jack and Jill are, in fact, broad epistemic peers. All that is highlighted is that Jack and Jill are willing—prior to their disagreement—to accept that, roughly, they are broad epistemic peers. Of course, if they were aware of a number of good reasons to suspect otherwise, then perhaps they should not and would not treat each other as such. Or, alternatively, if they were adamant about accepting the correct thing when it came to whether or not they *are* epistemic peers, then perhaps they should not and would not acknowledge each other as such. But, without such reasons or such stringent aims, then at the very least, their treating each other as roughly broad epistemic peers seems to be rationally permissible.

So, taking on Lackey's suggestion, we might accept the following:

> (*Ordinary Conception of Broad Epistemic Peerhood*): Two (or more) agents can reasonably claim epistemic peerhood just in case they are unaware of any good reason to deny—or, alternatively, are aware that, by their own rational lights, they have good overall reason to accept—that they are broad epistemic peers regarding the question or object under discussion. (Adapted from Lackey, 2010, pp. 303–304)[9]

Mirroring Jack and Jill's situation in Time Piece, this conception of peerhood does not require that putative peers be genuine broad epistemic peers for them to reasonably claim as much or to regard each other as such. Instead, it only requires that, given minimal rational conditions, they can accept—by their own rational lights—that they are broad epistemic peers regarding whatever question or object is under discussion. And, agreeing with Lackey, it seems to us that it is this sort of conception of epistemic peerhood that can ultimately do justice to the sorts of peer disagreements that we ordinarily have with each other.

Still, even with this ordinary conception of broad epistemic peerhood on the table, the question is: How might this conception translate to the case of aesthetic peerhood and peer disagreement? And, in particular, how might we conceive of such things, given the possibility (if not the likelihood) of there being not only cognitive/epistemic components involved, but also affective ones?

We take it that the following conception of broad aesthetic peerhood is a good start:

[9]Lackey (2010) does not embed a conception of broad epistemic peerhood into her characterization. However, for our purposes, we have adapted it in order to make the most plausible conception of how actual subjects might be peers.

(*Broad Aesthetic Peerhood*): Two (or more) agents are aesthetic peers, say, regarding an aesthetic object *just in case* they are in an equally good overall aesthetic position regarding their aesthetic judgments of that object, in virtue of their cognitive and/or affective engagements with it.

So, to clarify, there is *engagement* with an aesthetic object, and such engagement is equally good overall, *cognitively* and/or *affectively* speaking. By "engagement," we are thinking of both explicit and implicit interaction, be it cognitive or affective (or both), with the object in question. We use "engagement" instead of "resources" as in the epistemic cases, because it seems to us that subjects in the aesthetic cases will sometimes be more actively involved in processing their aesthetic experiences of an aesthetic object in order to make an aesthetic judgment about it than seems to occur in, for instance, perceiving an object and forming a belief about it.

By "cognitive and/or affective engagement," we are thinking of two sorts of things. For cognitive engagement, we are thinking of such things as:

1. The agents' perceptions of and available information about the aesthetic object
2. The agents' abilities to describe, analyze, and categorize the properties of that object, given their attention to it (see Walton, 1970, pp. 354–363)
3. The agents' understanding of how that object might tend to be judged, in virtue of the agents' understandings of the artist's intentions (or achievements), and how the artworld or audiences tend to or might tend to judge it (see Carroll, 2008, pp. 48–83; Danto, 1964, pp. 581–584)
4. The agents' biases (be they, moral, prudential, or what have you) about any aspect of that object (see Arnheim, 1979, pp. 18—20; Hume, [1757] 1987, pp. 239–240)

And, for affective engagement, we are simply thinking of:

4 | THE AGENTS' AFFECTIVE RESPONSES TO AND/OR EVALUATIONS OF THAT OBJECT

Importantly, while we think that what we have listed for agents' affective engagement is exhaustive, albeit vague as of now, we are ultimately torn about what we have listed for agents' cognitive engagement, given the discussions surrounding various claims in Section 2. Still, for the purposes of this article, we only want to suggest what things might be aesthetically relevant to our cognitive engagement, whatever they might happen to be.

We also envision agents' cognitive and affective engagements as having corresponding notions of peerhood for both of them—namely, ordinary conceptions of broad cognitive and affective peerhood. Overall, we take it that it is these sorts of engagement that might make up our aesthetic engagement, so, correspondingly, we also take it that aesthetic peerhood might be constituted by one or both of these underlying forms of peerhood.

However, taking these thoughts as a baseline, we submit that *ordinary* conceptions of broad aesthetic peerhood are ultimately the most apt at capturing the sorts of aesthetic peer disagreements that we actually engage in. And, in particular, we think that a conception like the following is best:

(*Ordinary Conception of Broad Aesthetic Peerhood*): Two (or more) agents are able to reasonably claim broad aesthetic peerhood regarding an aesthetic object and treat each other as such just in case they are unaware of any good reason to deny—or, alternatively, are aware that, by their own rational lights, they have good overall reason to accept—that they are broad cognitive and/or affective peers regarding that object.

As can be seen, this conception builds upon the previous conception of broad aesthetic peerhood presented above. Notice, though, that it is not only weaker in that it primarily focuses on agents' rational standings, and not just the bare facts, when it comes to their being able to reasonably claim that they are broad aesthetic peers (and to treat each other as such), but it is also more refined in specifying that broad cognitive and/or affective peerhoods will make up broad aesthetic peerhood.

This account is also able to capture ordinary aesthetic peer disagreements for both aesthetic experts and nonexperts. For instance, consider the following aesthetic disagreement between two ordinarily-conceived, broad *expert* aesthetic peers:

> *Michelin* (*Ordinary Expert Aesthetic Peer Disagreement*): Jack and Jill are Michelin critics who can reasonably agree that they are broadly aesthetic peers. Today, they are going to eat at a Korean steakhouse to determine whether it is worthy of a one star-ranking. Given their experiences, Jack claims that the steakhouse is unworthy of this star-ranking because he has judged both its food and drinks to be aesthetically inferior to their portfolio of other similar star-ranked restaurants, while Jill claims that it is worthy of a one-star ranking because she has judged the same dishes and drinks to be aesthetically on par with those other similar star-ranked restaurants.

And, as for a case involving ordinarily-conceived, broad *non-expert* aesthetic peers, consider the following:

> *Movie* (*Ordinary Non-Expert Aesthetic Peer Disagreement*): Hill and Bill are good friends who are going to see the latest Bond film, *No Time to Die*, and who can reasonably agree that they are broadly aesthetic peers. After the screening, they discuss the film. Hill says he found it to be aesthetically worthwhile. Bill, on the other hand, found the film to be aesthetically worthless.

Neither of these cases seem farfetched to us. No doubt, more is probably involved in how Michelin critics go about comparing notes or in the way that many of us discuss shared film experiences. But, insofar as these cases seem plausible enough, despite being pared down for the sake of simplicity, it would seem that an ordinary conception of broad aesthetic peerhood is more than adequate for characterizing many of our *actual* aesthetic peer disagreements.

The ordinary conception also allows us to set aside cases where all one shares with another agent is a taste, or preference, for certain aesthetic objects. Two agents might share a taste for opera without being peers if they are not equal in their aesthetic standing toward opera. But equally, an opera aficionado can share peerhood with a Country lover under the right circumstances. Consider the following cases:

> *Opera*: Eddie and Freddie are both opera lovers and frequent readers of *The Telegraph*'s online opera reviews. They often use the comment section to debate the merits of the production and the critic's assessment. Particularly, they disagree about the latest review of an unconventional production of John Adams's *Nixon in China*, where among other things Nixon is adorned in cowboy wear. Unbeknownst to Eddie, Freddie is a professor of Opera at the Royal Academy of Music and a retired opera singer; Freddie claims that the production was original and displayed some excellent performances from the young cast. Eddie, who does not share the cognitive and affective engagement of Freddie, argues that the production is bizarre and ultimately poor.

> *Country*: Dolly and Holly are good friends who like to share their musical discoveries with each other, even though they do not have the same tastes. Dolly is a dedicated outlaw country fan and listens to little else, while Holly is a committed opera afficionado. Dolly insists that Holly listen to Townes Van Zandt's *Waiting Around to Die*. Holly admits that this is not to her taste, but given her love and understanding of opera, she is able to appreciate the tragic themes and rich vocals of the song.

It seems clear to us that in *Opera*, the agents are not aesthetic peers *despite sharing preferences* precisely because they are not equal in their standing toward the object insofar as they do not share the same degree of cognitive and/or affective engagement. On the other hand, the agents in *Country* could reasonably claim to be peers given their respective cognitive and/or affective engagement, *despite not sharing preferences*. Ultimately, we do not think that taste, understood as preference, is a deciding factor in whether two agents can be peers. It might play a role in an agent's dedication in developing their cognitive and affective engagement in certain objects, but it does not by itself determine peerhood.[10]

Admittedly, with *Country*, peerhood status is achieved partly because Holly is able to cognitively/affectively engage with a work that is not usually to her taste, but also importantly because she is able to deploy those resources toward a sufficiently similar object. Country and opera might be radically different musical genres, but they still share a medium and potentially similar themes. We do not wish to claim that peerhood is necessarily bound by the aesthetic category of the object, but reasonably there will be limitations, especially regarding one's cognitive aesthetic peerhood. For instance, an expert in the carved helmet masks of the Mendé peoples might not be able, on that basis alone, to be peers with an expert in *musique concrète*.

5 | AESTHETIC PEERHOOD WITH COGNITIVE AND/OR AFFECTIVE FITTINGNESS CONDITIONS

Still, having clarified an ordinary conception of broad aesthetic peerhood and, broadly, what might constitute it, there are ultimately several options for how we might more specifically characterize the underlying conceptions of cognitive and/or affective peerhood that might be at play. For instance, some thinkers might maintain that only cognitive peerhood will be at play, while other thinkers might maintain that both cognitive and affective peerhood will be. But even further, in deciding upon the second, some thinkers might maintain that both forms of peerhood have associated fittingness conditions, while other thinkers might maintain that, although cognitive peerhood has associated fittingness conditions, affective peerhood ultimately does not.[11]

Such debates about fittingness are indirectly related to debates over how to model aesthetic disagreements *semantically*, given the possibility of faultless aesthetic disagreement. However, that discussion is undecided in at least two regards. Firstly, even if aesthetic disagreements can be or are faultless, it is still an open question which sort of semantics best captures such disagreements. For instance, contrary to initial impressions that either a relativist or contextualist semantics will be the most apt, Schafer (2011) has maintained

[10]A reviewer also suggested that age, temperament, or other nonpreference-based factors might be obstacles to peerhood—an example being a teenager refusing to meaningfully engage with their parents about the music they enjoy. We contend that these factors are not direct obstacles, but rather that they might correlate with certain cognitive and/or affective abilities that might not be shared with someone of a different age, temperament, etc.

[11]By "fittingness conditions," we are following Scruton (1974) and Howard (2018) in thinking of them as conditions that state when, if ever, some response or attribution to a feature of the world is either merited or worthy in light of that feature's properties.

that a realist semantics will be equally, if not more, apt, while Baker and Robson (2017) have maintained that an absolutist semantics might do the job. Ultimately, for reasons of space, we are not in a position to decide this matter in this article. But secondly and more importantly, it is also still undecided, given discussions within the metaphysics of aesthetic properties and the nature of aesthetic judgment and experience, whether aesthetic disagreements are faultless after all—perhaps they are not (see again Todd, 2012; Zemach, 1997, among others). But again, given the depth and breadth of the literature, we are not in a position to decide this matter. And, it is for this reason that we have decided to present options for each of the corresponding metaphysical views on the fittingness conditions that our cognitive and affective engagements may or may not have.

For the rest of this section, then, we will map the terrain for those thinkers who either accept that cognitive peerhood constitutes aesthetic peerhood or who accept that both cognitive and affective peerhood constitute such peerhood, although both underlying forms of peerhood will have associated fittingness conditions.

Overall, it is fairly straightforward to discern how two (or more) agents might be ordinarily conceived as broad aesthetic peers when their cognitive engagement, and, thus, their broad cognitive peerhood is taken to be constitutive of such peerhood. Clearly, broad cognitive peerhood will have associated fittingness conditions for whatever aesthetic features an object might possess. But, the key is to recognize that, given the quality of their cognitive engagements regarding any object, disagreeing broad aesthetic peers will be in an equally good position to correctly judge an object aesthetically. The following seems to best capture as much:

> (*Ordinary/Cognitive/Fittingness Conception of Broad Aesthetic Peerhood*): Two (or more) agents are able to reasonably claim broad aesthetic peerhood regarding an aesthetic object and to treat each other as such *just in case* they are unaware of any good reason to deny—or, alternatively, are aware that, by their own rational lights, they have good overall reason to accept—that they are equally likely to correctly judge that object aesthetically, in virtue of their broad cognitive peerhood regarding it.

So, to illustrate: all else being equal, we might be able to reasonably claim that we are better at describing a film's music, but worse at describing the film's set design, while your friend and you might be able to reasonably claim the opposite. Or, perhaps, all else is equal between us, but your friend and you can reasonably claim to be better at discerning the intentions of the film's director, while we can reasonably claim to be better at discerning the intentions of the film's producers. Regardless, given an ordinary conception of broad aesthetic peerhood, such differences are not necessarily going to be sufficient to undermine the reasonability of our claims to cognitive peerhood and, consequently, the reasonability of our claims to broad aesthetic peerhood. Again, so long as we can reasonably claim that we are equally likely to be correct cognitively speaking in aesthetically judging an object, then regardless of our minor differences, we will be able to reasonably claim broad aesthetic peerhood.

For many thinkers, though, we suspect that this conception of broad aesthetic peerhood will ultimately appear far too sparse, in denying any role to our affective engagements with one or another aesthetic object. But, as we have already mentioned, we also suspect that some of these thinkers might accept that, despite appearances to the contrary, affective engagement and its corresponding form of peerhood do have fittingness conditions associated with them, be they bound by the object itself (see Joad, 1953; Levinson, 1994; Pettit, 1983; Scruton, 1974; Zemach, 1997), the nature of a particular type of aesthetic judgment (see Hopkins, 2001), or a particular type of aesthetic sensibility and the reasons that it can detect (see McGonigal, 2006). So, for affective peerhood, it might be the case that:

(*Fittingness Conception of Broad Affective Peerhood*): Two (or more) agents are broad affective peers regarding an aesthetic object *just in case* the agents are equally likely to arrive at the correct or most fitting affective engagements that the object, type of aesthetic judgment, or aesthetic sensibility/reasons call for.

And, as a result, the following would also appear to be apt:

(*Ordinary/Joint/Fittingness Conception of Broad Aesthetic Peerhood*): Two (or more) agents are able to reasonably claim broad aesthetic peerhood regarding an aesthetic object and to treat each other as such *just in case* they are unaware of any good reason to deny—or alternatively are aware that, by their own rational lights, they have good overall reason to accept—that they are equally likely to correctly or fittingly judge that object aesthetically, in virtue of both their broad cognitive and affective peerhood regarding it.

Again, for the purposes of this article, *we* are not committed to there being fitting or correct affective engagements to be had toward aesthetic objects. But, insofar as either might be the case, it appears to us that something like the previous conception will be best suited to capturing the relations between what might be called for in our affective engagement with an aesthetic object and what affective engagements peers are likely to have toward it.

So, perhaps, there are more or less fitting types of affective engagements toward different aesthetic objects. Now, thinking of cases like *Michelin* and *Movie*, where there are agents who seem to reasonably claim that they are equally likely to arrive at the most fitting cognitive and affective engagements, but happen to arrive at different aesthetic judgments, the question is: To what extent is this scenario possible, let alone likely?

Without a doubt, two (or more) agents being equally likely to arrive at the correct or most fitting affective engagement does not rule out their actually having different affective engagements with a given aesthetic object and, thus, arriving at different aesthetic judgments. But, to be even more explicit, consider: we might be equally likely as you to feel a gentle sadness when we all look at Edward Hopper's *Automat* together, which, let us say, is the most fitting affective reaction, but you might very well end up actually feeling nothing, while we might simply feel a sense of social alienation and loneliness. In such a case, it still seems reasonable for us to claim broad affective peerhood before our actual affective engagement, even though the actual results might consequently be our judging the painting to be aesthetically worthwhile because it makes our senses of social alienation and loneliness salient, while for you, it is to judge the painting to be aesthetically ambivalent because it does not make anything particularly affectively salient to you—or in other words, it ends up "speaking" to us, but not to you. All the same, further scrutiny appears to be called for insofar as we either might reveal why our judgments diverged (e.g., different aesthetic sensibilities and conditions under which we should evaluate an object in one way or another, given our reasons) or even determine what sort of engagement (or sensibility) is nondeficient and might ultimately be correct or most fitting.

And so, returning to the significance of aesthetic peer disagreement, there appears to be two routes. Assuming fittingness conditions overall, we can either take broad cognitive peerhood to constitute broad aesthetic peerhood, or we can take broad cognitive and affective peerhood to constitute it. Regardless, though, discussions about the significance of any corresponding aesthetic peer disagreement will still seem to largely mirror those within the social epistemological literature. At the very least, they will mirror it in having the following to consider: How should ordinarily-conceived, broad aesthetic peers rationally respond to their aesthetic disagreements, for instance, should they conciliate in their judgments in some regard, simply hold steadfast to them, or perhaps should they downgrade their

confidence in each other's peerhood after all?[12,13] But further, in presenting or defending any one of these positions, aestheticians (particularly Hopkins, who seems to endorse conciliation and McGonigal, who seems to endorse steadfastness) will also mirror social epistemologists in placing themselves squarely within a debate that, as it has unfolded, has yet to reach a stable consensus.[14] As far as we can tell, there are no substantive differences to note between epistemic and aesthetic peer disagreements when either of the suggestions above are accepted.

6 | AESTHETIC PEERHOOD WITH COGNITIVE, BUT NOT AFFECTIVE, FITTINGNESS CONDITIONS

However, unlike the previous accounts, a different account seems needed insofar as some thinkers might not only accept that our aesthetic engagements with an aesthetic object are constituted by both our cognitive and affective engagements, but might also accept that, whereas our cognitive engagements have fittingness conditions, our affective engagements do not. The difficulty, then, is in how to formulate such a conception so as to neither trivialize the role our affective engagement might play in a conception of aesthetic peerhood nor to render our aesthetic disagreements wholly uninteresting, given whatever role our affective engagements might play. No doubt, there will be constraints in the type and degree of affective engagement that we must have in order to reasonably claim the relevant form of affective peerhood. But, if we can chalk most of our aesthetic disagreements up to our differences in affective engagement for which there is no fact of the matter about which is correct or most fitting, then clearly we can reasonably agree to disagree in those cases because such disagreements are ultimately nonsubstantive. However, might there be more to be said? We think so. And in particular, we think that agents' standings when it comes to a form of "aesthetic empathy" might provide for further discussions if, as it seems, it is a good indication in ordinary aesthetic disagreements of when agents are likely to have broadly equivalent affective engagements with an aesthetic object.

In general, we think that the ordinary conception of broad aesthetic peerhood is apt. Again, nothing will change for the conditions on agents' cognitive peerhood and, in total, the thought is that agents will be able to reasonably claim an equally good overall aesthetic position, as is suggested by the formulations from Section 3. But, when it comes to their affective peerhood, we take it that something like the following will be called for:

> (*Empathy-Based Conception of Broad Affective Peerhood*): The agents are in a position to *broadly empathize* with each other's affective engagements toward the aesthetic object in question.

So, in the context of ordinary aesthetic peer disagreements like *Michelin* and *Movie*, what we are suggesting is that, in order to reasonably claim broad *affective* peerhood for the sake of reasonably claiming broad *aesthetic* peerhood, agents will need to be reasonably positioned regarding the above conception of affective peerhood.

[12]For discussion of this issue in the social epistemological literature, see, for example, Feldman and Warfield (2010), Lackey (2010), Christensen and Lackey (2013), Frances (2014), and Matheson (2015).

[13]The source of the normativity for disagreement in these questions appears to be a mix of correctness-based rationality and aesthetic normativity if, for instance, the aim is a correctness-based form of aesthetic appreciation, depreciation, or ambivalence. For more discussion, see, for example, Wedgewood (2017), McGonigal (2017), Dyck (2021), Kubala (2021), Pearson (2021), and Whiting (2021).

[14]For support for this claim, see the literature in note 11.

There are several points to clarify, though. Most importantly, by "*empathizing with each other's affective engagements*," there are several things that might be referred to here, insofar as empathy has been taken to differentially involve the following:

> (*Affection*): Empathy often involves feelings—in an aesthetic case, a broadly similar feeling being prompted in entertaining certain aesthetic objects as if one were another.
>
> (*Evaluation*): Empathy also often involves *evaluations*—in an aesthetic case, a broadly similar evaluation being prompted in entertaining and in coming to understand why another might deem some aesthetic objects as aesthetically valuable from their perspective.[15]

Although they may not be exhaustive, we maintain that either of these variants of empathy, and even their interplay in some cases, are key to how we empathize with each other in aesthetic contexts.

Crucially, though, it is not the case that both variants must be present in order for aesthetic empathy to occur. We can empathize in different ways, depending on our particular cognitive and affective make-ups (see for example Farrow & Woodruff, 2007; Maibom, 2017). In this way, both of the previous variants can be and often are sufficient for empathy in different cases. But, in order to motivate this picture and why empathy should not be exclusively tied to our affections or evaluations, we will briefly provide some indication of how they might come apart and why, nevertheless, empathy still seems to occur and be salient for affective peerhood in aesthetic contexts.

In alignment with "affective" accounts of empathy, considering (Affection), the thought is that, if agents can and do largely share a type and degree of *feeling* in response to an object as a result of being prompted to consider each other's affective engagement and subsequent judgments about the object under discussion, then as it seems, they can and do empathize with each other about that object in a substantive regard.[16] At face value, there is a tension in suggesting; we can broadly simulate and feel the feelings that each of us has when viewing Brueghel's *Tower of Babel*, but we do not empathize with each other about our affective engagements with it.

Alternatively, in alignment with "cognitive" accounts of empathy, considering (Evaluation), there is also room for thinking that, if agents can prompt each other's evaluations about some aesthetic object as a result of their entertaining and coming to understand why each other might respond affectively to the object as they do, then they will also empathize with each other's affective engagements about that object.[17] On this variant, the agents do not need to genuinely have the same type and broadly similar degree of feelings toward those objects—as some agents might have affective disorders that make having certain feelings difficult or nearly physically impossible for them to feel (see, e.g., di Giacomo et al., 2023). No, they only need to understand in either some epistemic or immersive sense, as in, for instance, Elgin (1996) or Kampa (2018), where each other is "coming from," so to speak. At face value, there is also a tension to treating (Evaluation) as insufficient for empathy—consider: I understand why you feel the way you do about Hopper's *Automat*, but I do not empathize with your affective engagement with it.

[15]Both of these variants correspond to a tradition of how philosophers and psychologists have thought about empathy. We agree with Scarantino (2016) that both of them indicates something about its nature.

[16]For conceptions of affective empathy, see, for example, de Vignemont and Singer (2006), Coplan (2011), and Jacob (2011).

[17]For conceptions of cognitive empathy, see, for example, Stueber (2006), Goldman (2011), and Cox et al. (2012).

Still, while both variants of empathy seem sufficient when we take empathy at face value, a good explanation for why those tensions arise, despite not being contradictory, is precisely because the variants of empathy under discussion can be different from the one underlying the use of "empathy" in the respective statements. For (Affection), if we take the reference of "empathy" in the second clause of its statement to be affective empathy based on (Affection), then that statement will be strictly contradictory. But, if we take "empathy" in that second clause to refer to cognitive empathy based on (Evaluation), then it will not be. So, these types of empathy can come apart, despite their sufficiency for empathy at face value. Accordingly, in appealing to empathy for a conception of affective peerhood, we must be careful about which type is under discussion, and we must also consider: Which of those types is proper to aesthetic empathy for the sake of reasonably claiming broad affective peerhood?

In response, we maintain that both cognitive and affective empathy are relevant to aesthetic empathy and affective peerhood. We accept that both types are distinguishable on a conceptual level and might correspond to different things on a physical level. But, given our concern with the reasonability of claiming broad affective peerhood, we take it that either of them can be at play, be it separately or together. This allows for a bit of flexibility when it comes to what shape empathy has to take for the sake of affective peerhood. For instance, perhaps we can cognitively empathize much better than we can affectively empathize, while you can affectively empathize much better than you can cognitively empathize. Regardless, we still think that, so long as we have good overall reason to accept or no reason to deny that our *overall empathetic* responses to our affective engagements with an aesthetic object are broadly equivalent in virtue of either of these types, or some combination of them, then we will be in a position to have a reasonable standing when it comes to our affective peerhood toward the object in question.[18]

A last point to note, though, concerns the output of our empathetic responses. We might very well be able to affectively or cognitively empathize with others, but this does not necessitate an equivalence in what we will be motivated to do or judge as a result. We might, for example, empathize with X's being angry for a slight by feeling an anger similar to theirs in entertaining the slight as X, and understanding their anger and evaluating the slight as worthy of anger from X's perspective, but still not endorse X's judgment about needing to take revenge. Relatedly, in aesthetic contexts, we might empathize with X's being moved by Ryan Gosling's performance in *Blade Runner 2* by also being moved in entertaining his performance as X and understanding and evaluating it as such from X's perspective, but still judge the performance to be mediocre, despite X judging it to be Oscar-worthy. One might be further *motivated* to reassess one's own judgment in light of one's empathy—which might be an additional virtue of trying to determine whether peerhood holds or even striving for peerhood—but it does not follow that one must endorse another's judgment in order to empathize.

If those thoughts are granted, then to all appearances we have gone some way in making sense of aesthetic peerhood where it includes both cognitive and affective peerhood and where our affective engagements with an aesthetic object do not have associated fittingness conditions. So, looking back to cases like *Michelin* and *Movie*, the thought is that Jack and Jill, as well as Hill and Bill, are in a reasonable standing regarding their aesthetic peerhood in those disagreements, so long as they have a reasonable standing when it comes to being in an equally good overall aesthetic position regarding their aesthetic judgments of the aesthetic object, in virtue of their reasonable standings when it comes to both their cognitive and affective engagements with it. Again, for their cognitive peerhood, we refer back to the various aspects that we have listed in Section 3. And, for their affective peerhood, we refer back to this section's discussion of cognitive and affective empathy and the resulting conception when embedded in an ordinary conception of

[18]For discussion of how to measure or compare cognitive and affective empathy, see, for example, Hogan (1969), Mehrabian and Epstein (1972), Davis (1983), and Decety and Jackson (2004).

broad aesthetic peerhood: that they be in a reasonable standing regarding their ability to *broadly empathize* with each other's affective engagements toward an aesthetic object.

However, the last thing to consider is: What significance does ordinary aesthetic peer disagreement have, if any at all, given the previous conception? Already, it might seem as if calls for conciliation might be rendered null because disagreeing peers might simply produce disagreeing aesthetic judgments that are both equally fine, despite their reasonable claims to aesthetic peerhood. They can simply and reasonably, so it seems, agree to disagree. But admittedly, if that much is all that can be said, then negatively it is not exactly clear whether, given no fittingness conditions for our affective engagements, aesthetic peerhood and disagreement are all that interesting, theoretically speaking.

In response, what we will say is that, yes, those who can reasonably claim broad aesthetic peerhood in ordinary aesthetic disagreements—as we have characterized them—can reasonably agree to disagree with one another and hold steadfast to their judgments about an aesthetic object (as it seems, in alignment with McGonigal). So it goes, they will have broadly equal aesthetically rational judgments toward that object and, further, broadly equal amounts of aesthetic appreciation, depreciation, or ambivalence toward it.[19] Strictly speaking, there are no rational grounds forbidding them to hold steadfast, rather than conciliate, because there will be no rational grounds for either of them to think that the other is more mistaken, in light of the reasonability of their claims to be broadly equal in their cognitive and affective engagements.

However, this finding is not necessarily the end of discussion. Whereas the conceptions in Section 4 called for further discussion insofar as peers might want to discover the causes of their disagreement or discover the correct or more fitting judgments regarding the aesthetic object in question, it seems that here the broad aesthetic peers can rationally hold steadfast to their judgments, but might also consider other ends as well. Clearly, little will be gained if they scrutinize which of their affective engagements is correct or more fitting toward the aesthetic object in question. But, more likely than not, they will consider: If they had a reasonable standing regarding their being broad aesthetic peers, then why is it that they came to disagree about this or that aesthetic object nevertheless? And moreover, they might also consider: What might their distinct affective engagements with the object and resulting judgments tell them about the object's impact?

The first question will likely lead to their discussing and questioning the reasonability of their standing to broad aesthetic peerhood, mirroring one position that was presented in Section 4 regarding the significance of aesthetic disagreement. The thought is that, whereas previously they might have had good overall reason to accept or no good reason to deny that they could broadly empathize with each other's affective engagements when it came to the object in question, they might now need to consider whether their affective engagements were, in fact, attuned to the same things and were similar enough and whether their empathizing was accurate enough or nuanced enough to accurately represent each other's affective engagements. And, given further consideration, what might result is either that they will lose their reasonable standing to agree to disagree as a result of losing their reasonable standing to broad aesthetic peerhood or, perhaps, it will be corroborated.

But, pertaining to the second question, if they do not end up losing the reasonability of their standing to broad aesthetic peerhood or it happens to be corroborated, then another discussion that they might pursue is: Given their disagreement and their reasonable standing to agree to disagree, to what extent might their affective engagements and—all else being equal in terms of their cognitive engagements—might their aesthetic judgments be treated as authoritative nevertheless? That is, to what extent might others treat their affective engagements and judgments as deserving of deference, even though there is no fact of the matter about which of their affective engagements is better or best? On one line of thinking, the answer is simple: neither their engagements nor their

[19]For conceptions relying wholly upon fittingness conditions, the same thinking applies about the agents' aesthetic appreciation, but there is still an open question regarding whether peers should conciliate or hold steadfast.

judgments should be treated as authoritative, seeing as there is no fact of the matter involved. But, at the very least, there is still a discussion to be had regarding whether one of their affective engagements *will* end up being treated as authoritative. And, on this line, the disagreeing parties might look to others like themselves to see how many of them engage affectively with the object as either of the disagreeing parties do and which of those parties they can aesthetically empathize with more. If resolved, the disagreeing parties might be able to add to both their own and others' cognitive engagement with the object by enhancing everyone's knowledge of how certain types of audiences—namely, those like themselves—tend to respond. And, in this regard, they will also subsequently enhance their aesthetic standing toward the object as well.

Finally, drawing on Hopkins (2001) again and John (2020), it also seems that such disagreements between such aesthetic peers are broadly indicative of just how complex or protean some aesthetic objects are to affectively engage with and, in that regard, might ultimately call for the disagreeing parties to engage with those objects more and, potentially, even to change their aesthetic standings toward the object (e.g., from ambivalence to depreciation or from depreciation to appreciation, and so on). Their disagreement seems to call for this reaction because, as John claims, agreement seems to indicate the opposite:

> The conditions under which people would agree in their appreciation of every artwork (to the same degree, for the same reasons) are hard to imagine; my speculation is that in these conditions both art and people would be much simpler and more rigid, and less demanding of our attention and appreciation. (John, 2020, p. 280)

In her discussion, John does not think about aesthetic disagreement in terms of aesthetic peers or those with a reasonable claim to broad aesthetic peerhood, so much as the convergence of ideal aesthetic critics. But, given disagreement between those with a reasonable claim to broad aesthetic peerhood, her above point seems even more acute.

In such cases, the expectation is that the agents will come to agree, rather than disagree about an aesthetic object—and yet, even still, when they do engage with it, disagreement ultimately follows rather than agreement. So, if John's point is acknowledged, then perhaps disagreement might just indicate something about the object's complexity or versatility which, perhaps, was not initially discerned, even given the agents' previous engagement with other objects that they deemed to be relevantly similar. We can imagine: two agents with a reasonable claim to broad aesthetic peerhood might have all of the same cognitive standings toward Bob Dylan's music and be able to broadly empathize with each other's affective engagements toward one of his more recent albums, *Rough and Rowdy Ways*, but while one of them might judge it to be a beautiful album, the other might disagree—they might judge it to be maudlin. In this case, John's point seems to hold: it would seem that *Rough and Rowdy Ways* is ultimately not as simple or straightforward in its impact as might have been thought initially. Accordingly, it would also appear to require more attention and engagement in order for the fullness of its complexity or versatility to be better understood and evaluated and, perhaps, even judged differently. If so, then not only would cases like the previous one seem to call for agents to pay more attention and engage further with whatever object is in question, but equally the same would also seem to apply for cases like *Movie* and *Michelin*.

7 | CONCLUSION

Overall, there is much more that needs to be discussed about both the nature of aesthetic peerhood and the significance of aesthetic peer disagreement. But, having reached something of a stopping point, we will now finish by briefly reiterating what this article has offered.

Firstly, it has offered various avenues where aestheticians and social epistemologists might be able to crossfertilize their work and produce new lines of thought that incorporate elements from both areas. In this article alone, we have drawn from the literature on aesthetic experience, judgment, appreciation, depreciation, and ambivalence, the metaphysics of aesthetic properties, emotions, empathy, epistemic peerhood, peer disagreement, aesthetic faultless disagreement, expertise, and even varieties of normativity. And, in doing so, we have tried to develop and explore less familiar terrain associated with the interpersonal aspects of aesthetics. A potential next step will be to consider and develop the interplay among this literature even further in light of new work on how affection bears on various traditional epistemic phenomena, including epistemic risk aversion, epistemic trust, evidence, and more (see, e.g., Candiotto & Slaby, 2022).

But, more substantively, we also take ourselves to have developed several working conceptions of aesthetic peerhood and peer disagreement. We have considered their epistemic counterparts and have posed a general conception for aesthetic peerhood, namely, an ordinary conception of broad aesthetic peerhood. Also, given existing debates within aesthetics about what underlies our aesthetic judgments and whether they have fittingness conditions, we have developed three conceptions for consideration. Firstly, we have developed an ordinary conception of broad aesthetic peerhood, which is constituted solely by agents' cognitive engagement with an aesthetic object. Secondly, we have developed such a conception that is constituted by agents' cognitive and affective engagements toward an aesthetic object and that also assumes fittingness conditions for both sorts of engagement. And lastly, we have developed such a conception that is constituted by agents' cognitive and affective engagements toward an aesthetic object, but that only assumes fittingness conditions for their cognitive engagements and, instead, assumes an empathy-based conception of broad affective peerhood, which does not have fittingness conditions.

Subsequently, we also considered what the results might be for the significance of ordinary aesthetic peer disagreement when we abide by these conceptions. For the conceptions that relied completely upon fittingness conditions, what resulted is that aestheticians will have to engage further with the sorts of discussions and debates that social epistemologists have had and continue to pursue about disagreement's significance. And, for the conception that only partially relied upon fittingness conditions, what resulted is that, although agents might be able to reasonably agree to disagree in their ordinary aesthetic peer disagreements, there are still several questions and discussions that they might pursue in order to better either their understanding or their aesthetic evaluations of any given aesthetic object. Of course, we suspect that there are many more related questions and discussions that they might pursue and which need to be explored—and, in fact, are already beginning to be explored.[20] But altogether, we are not surprised to find that more work is needed on this topic from both aestheticians and social epistemologists alike.

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[20]In particular, see *The British Journal of Aesthetics ed. Whiting* (2023) "Special Issue on Higher-Order Evidence in Aesthetics."

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Quentin Pharr is an independent researcher based in St Andrews, Scotland. His primary areas of interest are in epistemology, social philosophy, and ancient philosophy. He is also a project lead for the Diversity Reading List in Philosophy's Re-Categorization Project.

Clotilde Torregrossa is an associate lecturer in philosophy at the University of St Andrews, Scotland. Her primary areas of interest are in aesthetics, metaphilosophy, epistemology, and social philosophy. She is also a co-organizer of the Scottish Aesthetics Forum, and co-project manager of the Diversity Reading List in Philosophy.