**A Consideration of Carroll’s Content Theory**

Recently, the following theses have been proposed regarding the nature of aesthetic experience: that aesthetic experience is underpinned by discrete emotions such as wonder, awe, and marvel; that aesthetic experience is underpinned by a range of emotional and cognitive reactions but still constitutes a distinct kind of experience; and that aesthetic experience involves a special kind of valuation.[[1]](#endnote-1) We will call theories that attempt to account for what is distinct about aesthetic experience by invoking valenced emotional states “valuationist theories”.

In his 2015 article, Noël Carroll argues that valuationist theories of aesthetic experience are untenable.[[2]](#endnote-2) He denies that aesthetic experience can be boiled down to a single emotion, such as awe or the valuing of an experience for its own sake.[[3]](#endnote-3) Because art can be viewed for a number of purposes, thereby being valued in a number of ways, and because it may well invoke negative emotions, Carroll argues that such theories will not be able to fully account for what has traditionally been taken to make up aesthetic experience.

As a result of these arguments, Carroll advocates a very different kind of approach to accounting for aesthetic experience, and opens his 2015 article with the following question:

So, with respect to artworks, what is the content of aesthetic experience? Looking at the sorts of things that people have most frequently cited as the objects of aesthetic experience, I think these include formal properties, expressive properties, and aesthetic properties.[[4]](#endnote-4)

Here Carroll makes clear that he is not going to focus on the *psychological* effects of interacting with an aesthetic object in the way that the valuationist does, but instead focus on the objects and properties that are believed to *cause* aesthetic experiences. By accounting for how aesthetic properties are attended to, Carroll claims to have thereby explained aesthetic experience. Carroll calls his view a “Content Theory” (CT). According to Carroll, an experience is aesthetic insofar as the perceiver *attends with understanding* to the (1) formal or (2) aesthetic or (3) expressive properties (of an artwork). By defining the content of aesthetic experience, Carroll posits that we can thereby define what an aesthetic experience is. As Carroll states: “This approach begins with the observation that inasmuch as aesthetic experience is an experience, it has content. Thus, a straightforward way to begin to characterize that experience, it would appear, is to specify its content.”[[5]](#endnote-5)

In this paper, we argue that a key problem with CT is that it can be interpreted in two distinct ways: (1) as a *descriptive* theory of aesthetic experience (i.e. an account of *what* aesthetic experience is), and (2) as a normative *prescriptive* theory (i.e. *how* to successfully have an aesthetic experience). CT is initially presented as a descriptive theory of experience: Carroll states that he aims to “characterize” aesthetic experience. However, much of what Carroll says implies that CT should be understood in way (2): as a prescriptive theory about *how one ought* to go about having aesthetic experiences of certain objects. We argue that no matter how we interpret CT, we will not be meaningfully informed about the nature of aesthetic experience. When we interpret CT as a descriptive theory, we are not meaningfully informed because CT doesn’t tell us anything about aesthetic experience *per se*; that is, Carroll fails to tell us how aesthetic experience differs from other experiences. Under the prescriptive interpretation, we are also not meaningfully informed by CT: for if Carroll’s aim is to instruct the perceiver on how to have an aesthetic experience, then he thereby abandons the goal of characterizing the nature of said experience, and any prescriptions will thereby become arbitrary. Supporting this argument, we hold that a successful prescriptive theory is dependent on a successful descriptive one, insofar as we need to know *what* aesthetic experience is before we can give valid normative prescriptions for *how* to have an aesthetic experience. Unless Carroll can give a meaningful account of what distinguishes aesthetic experience from other experiences, he cannot give us a recipe on how to achieve the state in question. We conclude by arguing that the main flaw in CT is Carroll’s approach: we cannot meaningfully characterize an experience by enumerating the properties that supposedly cause said experience, and any theorist that takes such an approach is likely to be unsuccessful for that reason.

**1.  Carroll’s Content Theory**

Artworks, like all artifacts, are intentionally made. As a result, such objects have purposes. According to Carroll, it is these purposes that are essential in facilitating aesthetic experience. Carroll states: “The form of the work and the qualities with which it is invested are the means by which the purposes of the work are realized. In this regard, aesthetic experiences involve focus upon the how of the work.”[[6]](#endnote-6) Thus, by paying attention to what Carroll classifies as aesthetic properties and the way those properties serve thepurpose of the work, the perceiver will, according to CT, come to have an aesthetic experience. For instance, if Picasso’s *Guernica* was created with the intention to induce a reflection on the horrors of war, then *how* effectively this mental state is brought about by the various aesthetic properties of the work will thus count toward the aesthetic appraisal.

On CT, aesthetic properties by themselves do not cause aesthetic experience. The properties must be attended to with an aim to understand the purpose of the work:

So, it seems that at the very least, we can say that an aesthetic experience of a work of art is a matter of attending with understanding to the formal and/or the aesthetic and/or the expressive properties of a work of art. In other words, if an experience of a work of art is focused with understanding upon at least one of these dimensions of the work in question, then that is sufficient to call the experience in question an aesthetic experience.[[7]](#endnote-7)

Though Carroll tends to speak mostly of typical art objects and events, it is central to CT that any man-made object or event can in principle be aesthetically appreciated. What matters is that we attend with understanding to the key properties identified by the theory: “When we attend to expressive properties of a fishing hook with respect to the menacing appearance of its claws, we are having an aesthetic experience of the hook. Yet the menace embodied in its claw-like structures is not what makes the artifact a hook. We identify the hook by other means.”[[8]](#endnote-8) Carroll is here also making clear that CT does not constitute a definition of art. Just because an object is capable of offering an aesthetic experience it does not follow that such an object is an artwork. We can identify the fishing hook through other means than the aesthetic experience that may result from attending with understanding to certain properties of the hook; artworks are similarly defined through other means, that is, their purposes.[[9]](#endnote-9)

Since on CT aesthetic experience is defined as a disjunctive set of properties, Carroll admits that the skeptic may view his theory as merely a grocery list of elements and wonder what unifies the “formal and/or the aesthetic and/or the expressive properties” of a work.[[10]](#endnote-10) However, Carroll maintains that his proposition is not arbitrary in this way: what unifies these elements is that all three categories play a role in the *how* of an artwork; they are the ways in which the purpose of a work is realized. The claim that it is *these* properties that cause aesthetic experience is further validated by “the traditional account of the objects of aesthetic experience in the evolving tradition from the eighteenth century onward.”[[11]](#endnote-11) Carroll takes great pains to root his identification of these properties within the aesthetic tradition.[[12]](#endnote-12) Carroll interprets Beardsley as offering a kind of content theory, and sees himself as identifying the very same properties that have been similarly identified by Beardsley, Sibley, Kant, and Hutcheson.[[13]](#endnote-13) Given that it is these properties that have historically interested philosophers of aesthetics and art, and that it is these properties that have been taken to cause aesthetic experiences for roughly 250 years, it must be these properties that make up the nature of aesthetic experience.

As a final point of clarification, Carroll does not believe that artworks can only be experienced aesthetically. Instead, experiencing an artwork aesthetically is just *one way* to experience an artifact:

Artworks, on my view, may legitimately invite a wide range of other kinds of experiences, including moral, cognitive, religious, political, and sexual ones. My point is rather that when we speak of *aesthetic experiences*, it is experiences of the aforesaid sort [of properties] that we have in mind.[[14]](#endnote-14)

So on this view, attention to the *content* of an artwork may well not, strictly speaking, constitute an aesthetic experience. Carroll admits that there are other valuable or important ways to experience the work. However, an aesthetic experience is the experience that results from attending with understanding to the aesthetic, or formal, or expressive properties of the work. So, for Carroll, there are several distinct kinds of experiences that may be elicited by an artwork, and aesthetic experience is one of them. The key question we shall address in the following is this: what exactly is Carroll telling us about the *kind* of experience that aesthetic experience is, and how does it differ from other types of experiences *as an experience*? In other words, if an artwork can be experienced in a number of ways, what exactly qualitatively differentiates the aesthetic experience of the work from other kinds of experiences?

**2. Objections**

Although Carroll claims that he aims to theorize about the “nature of aesthetic experience” and sees his theory as rivaling valuationist theories that seek to do just that, it is nonetheless unclear what kind of account CT is supposed to be. In this section we aim to draw a distinction between offering (1) a descriptive theory of a discrete kind of experience and (2) a prescriptive theory of how to attend to an object. We argue that as a descriptive theory of a kind of experience CT is unsuccessful because it is unable to meaningfully characterize the experience in question or even demonstrate that aesthetic experience constitutes a distinct kind of experience (e.g., one that is meaningfully different from moral experiences) that needs to be independently theorized about. However, if we interpret CT as a prescriptive theory of attention, then Carroll fails to fulfill his promise to the reader: he is no longer characterizing aesthetic experience. Carroll has put the proverbial cart before the horse: unless his theory can characterize what is distinctive about the experience of objects that have aesthetic properties, he cannot meaningfully give instructions on how to bring the state in question about.

George Dickie draws a useful distinction for the purposes of our investigation:

There seem to be two main kinds of things described as aesthetic experience […] In [some] cases “aesthetic experience” refers to the way in which certain objects are attended to […] The other theorists use “aesthetic experience” to refer to something (a certain kind of experience) that is produced by looking at paintings, listening to music, and so on. I shall call this latter kind of view “the causal conception of aesthetic experience.”[[15]](#endnote-15)

We use this selection from Dickie to raise the following question: of these two kinds of attempts to characterize aesthetic experience, which is Carroll engaging in? By “aesthetic experience”, does Carroll mean “the way in which certain objects are attended to”, or does he mean a certain kind of experience that is “produced by looking at paintings, listening to music, and so on”, namely, a theory that aims at characterizing the experience *caused* by said objects?

It is the latter that seems like the proper focus for a theory called “Content Theory”: it sounds like such a theory would tell us about the content of a person’s experience that is caused by perceiving an art object. This, for example, is the aim of Jesse Prinz, whom Carroll interprets as an account that rivals his own.[[16]](#endnote-16) Prinz argues that the content of aesthetic experience is the feeling of awe, that is, proper aesthetic objects *cause* a feeling of awe. Similarly, Iseminger argues that aesthetic experience is marked out by a special kind of valuing, i.e., a distinct psychological process that is intimately related to the experience of art.[[17]](#endnote-17) As a further example, Alan Goldman suggests that aesthetic experiences are a kind of all-encompassing state that constitute “brief periods of escape from our ordinary affairs.”[[18]](#endnote-18)

However, Carroll makes no attempt to describe psychological states. Instead, as we have seen, he tells us about the characteristics of objects that cause the experiences in question when attended to in the right way—*with understanding*; that is, CT would appear to be a theory of the former kind in Dickie’s taxonomy (i.e. a claim about the way that the properties of certain objects are attended to). Yet, on CT any man-made object or event is capable of offering an aesthetic experience if one attends to it in the right way. Indeed, this follows trivially since *every* man-made object will necessarily have “formal and/or the aesthetic and/or the expressive properties”. This leaves the reader rather puzzled: how is it that CT constitutes a descriptive account of a distinct kind of experience? Carroll explicitly states that CT is *not* about a specific human activity—say, the construction and appreciation of art. If every object can be experienced aesthetically because every object in fact has aesthetic properties (e.g., Carroll’s fish hook), then Carroll is not telling us anything in particular about the experience of art objects, for he has not successfully singled out a distinct kind of experience. Carroll seems to have merely identified a specific way of looking at certain properties. In this light, CT is hardly a theory about a distinct kind of experience.

It appears that CT boils down to something like the following circular claim: a person is having an *aesthetic experience* just as long as she is attending with understanding to *aesthetic properties*. To put the problem more bluntly, Carroll seems to be saying that one is having an aesthetic experience because one is perceiving aesthetic properties. But how does Carroll know these properties are aesthetic? Because they are eliciting an aesthetic experience. So, how does Carroll know the experience is aesthetic? Because the perceived properties are aesthetic ones.

To avoid this circularity, either use of “aesthetic” in “a person is having an aesthetic experience just as long as she is attending with understanding to aesthetic properties” must be independently described in a meaningful way by the theory on offer. Carroll erroneously presupposes that we have a pre-existing, firm grasp of what an aesthetic property is. On CT, we are further required to have some independent method for identifying aesthetic properties. Yet there is significant debate in the literature as to how aesthetic properties are to be identified, even within the historical tradition that Carroll traces.[[19]](#endnote-19) Given that there is significant uncertainty over what counts as an aesthetic property and how to recognize them, to describe aesthetic experience as the experience of aesthetic properties is to cast very little light on the subject. A circular account is problematic precisely because circular accounts are uninformative.

Furthermore, when we note that on CT every man-made object has aesthetic properties, and every object can be appreciated aesthetically when given the right kind of attention, the emptiness of CT as a descriptive account of aesthetic experience begins to sink in. Suppose that a fishing hook can in fact be appreciated aesthetically. If Carroll does not tell us how the experience of appreciating a fishing hook aesthetically differs in kind from appreciating a fishing hook’s utility, he has not told us anything about the distinctiveness of the experience of aesthetic objects. In the case of a fish hook, I might very well attend to some of the exact same properties in both my aesthetic appreciation and in my utilitarian appreciation (e.g., the shape of the barb—a formal property—at the end of the hook). So how then do these experiences differ? If the experiences are not qualitatively different, than Carroll has failed to give an account of a distinct kind of experience.

So far, we have established that if Carroll is offering a descriptive theory, he does not seem to meaningfully pick out a distinct kind of experience. However, as we have seen, Carroll makes certain remarks that indicate that he is not really characterizing an experience, but instead theorizing about a *way* of looking at things. At one point, Carroll even states that a merit of CT is that it explains how “we *can* instruct others in the ways of having aesthetic experiences by telling them what to attend to in the pertinent artworks (along with informing them about the background necessary for attending to those artworks with understanding).”[[20]](#endnote-20) It is remarks such as these that encourage a prescriptive reading of CT. Perhaps, then, it is a mistake to attempt to interpret CT as a theory *of* the experience of art; that is, we should not interpret it as an attempt to characterize what typically happens when some ordinary individual views an aesthetic object. This may well solve some of the problems that have been raised. Yes, every object can be attended to in the way Carroll describes, but only certain objects *should* be attended to in this way, namely the objects created with the intention that they be experienced aesthetically. When we attend to this special class of objects in the prescribed way, we can call that an “aesthetic experience.” On this reading, CT is more like an instruction manual than a theory focused on accounting for the ordinary experience of looking at art. On this reading, we should not be interpreting CT as accounting for a specific *kind* of experience.

The problem with understanding CT as a normative, prescriptive theory is that on this reading it is no longer a theory of a distinct kind of experience. On such a reading, Carroll perhaps aims at instructing one on how to have a certain kind of experience, but he fails to inform us about the nature of the experience allegedly induced. We believe that an account that characterizes itself as a theory of a distinct experience type should be a causal, descriptive theory: it should tell us about the experiences that are *caused* in the subject by the properties in question.[[21]](#endnote-21) For example, moral psychologists seeks to describe the mental states individuals experience when confronted with moral issues. However, moral psychologists do not seek to tell people *how* they should think, feel, etc. about moral issues; that is the role of normative ethical theories.[[22]](#endnote-22) Therefore, if interpreted as a normative theory, independently of whether it is a good one, CT is not a theory of aesthetic experience; similarly, utilitarianism is not a theory of moral experience. So if CT should be interpreted in this way, then Carroll has not challenged the valuationists he seeks to criticize, since on this reading they are simply offering different kinds of theories (i.e. descriptive vs. prescriptive). In addition, we may also notice that normative moral theorists are not blindly asserting their prescriptions, but typically seek to explain the correlation between moral psychology and moral normativity. That is, while they give prescriptions for how to make moral judgments, these prescriptions are carefully linked to the ordinary psychological experiences we associate with judging human behavior, experiences readily described by moral psychologists. Viewed in this way, it would make for a strange moral normative theorist who paid no attention at all to ordinary moral experience. Indeed, when normative theories are rejected, it is often because they do not fit with their descriptive counterpart.

The question now is this: How does Carroll want us to interpret his theory, as a descriptive theory that seeks to account for the nature of an area of experience, or as a prescriptive one? Is CT about how individuals *ought* to attend to art in order to bring about some (as of yet unspecified) experience, or is it a definition of distinct experiences typically *caused* by attending to artworks? Given the way that Carroll situates his theory in the literature, he seems confused regarding the job of his theory. On the one hand, Carroll does seem to take himself to be providing a *descriptive* account of the experience one has when one inspects an artwork, as he states in one of his contributions: “Thus, a straightforward way to begin to characterize [aesthetic] experience, it would appear, is to specify its content.”[[23]](#endnote-23) On the other hand, he often presents CT as a *prescription* for how to achieve proper aesthetic appreciation, as when we read him saying: “To experience the artwork aesthetically then is to attend with understanding to the how of the artwork—to contemplate how the artwork works.”[[24]](#endnote-24) We believe this confusion is partly responsible for the difficulties facing CT, namely, that its task is rather unclear. In the next section, we argue that CT’s task is unclear because the theory has a flawed foundation: it is unlikely that any kind of experience can be meaningfully characterized by reference to the properties that supposedly cause it.

**3. The Fly in the Ointment**

Based on what we have argued thus far, we believe that Carroll fails to characterize what constitutes an aesthetic experience and thereby distinguish it as a distinct kind of experience; in this respect we cannot meaningfully interpret CT as descriptive theory. Interpreted exclusively as a (normative) prescriptive theory, we can no longer view Carroll as aiming to account for a distinct kind of experience, but instead must interpret him as telling us what we should do, for instance, “this is how one should look at an abstract work to fully appreciate it”, and so forth. On this second reading, CT is simply not a theory of aesthetic experience, as Carrol claims it to be. Further, it may also be argued that on a prescriptive reading of CT, Carroll fails to capture the important link between description and prescription, namely, in order to give a successful prescription, it seems, one ought first to describe what exactly the prescription is about; reversing this hierarchy seems unphilosophical.

However, we believe that there is a more fundamental problem for CT as a descriptive theory: there is little reason to believe we can meaningfully characterize an experience by referring to the properties of the objects that constitute that experience. This is because a single property may elicit a variety of qualitatively different experiences, with each experience depending in part on the make-up of the person having said experience. Even if said property is attended to “with understanding” as Carroll’s theory requires, we cannot be sure that understanding leads to a uniform experience, and what exactly Carroll means by “understanding” is not clearly spelled out, as the degree to which, as well as the way, an object is understood will likely still vary with the perceiver. One way to demonstrate this point is to ask whether we could successfully describe or account for “sexual experience” by disjunctively listing the properties that cause “sexual experiences”.

From the armchair, such an approach may appear promising: superficial observation seems to indicate that certain properties of women reliably elicit sexual experiences from men and vice versa. But as a descriptive theory of the phenomena, such an approach is inadequate for the prime reason that there really is no universally reliable properties of objects or events out there that induce sexual experiences across the populace, and it would do little good to tell people what they *should* be attracted to; that is, offer a prescriptive theory of sexual experience. Some people are sexually attracted to certain hair colors, others to certain body types, and some people are sexually attracted to certain properties of animals, shoes, pain, and leather. There is very little information to be derived about the experience of sexual arousal by focusing on the properties that may give rise to sexual experience because it potentially includes everything out there. Instead, the most reliable way we have to tell whether someone is having a sexual experience is to monitor their physiological and psychological responses. It is only because of these kinds of responses that we are able to say⎯reliably⎯that someone is having a distinctly sexual experience and *not* because we think we know what the their attention is focused upon. What makes it the case that there is a genuine class of experiences called “sexual experience” is the commonality of physiological and psychological responses; e.g., it is via the measurement of these responses that we would be able to tell that someone is sexually attracted to the actual content of his or her experience.

Even if the theorist of sexual experience sought to modestly give a descriptive account of “attraction to the human body”, it would be very difficult to give a meaningful account through a reliance on bodily properties: as we know, different people find different elements of the human body attractive. Such an approach would be highly uninformative and stipulative: the account would have to either include every single element of the body, thereby becoming uninformative; or simply leave out some body parts, thereby becoming stipulative—we would be left asking why someone *cannot* be sexually attracted to well-formed fingernails if they were left off the disjunctive list of properties, or why they *should* be attracted to brown eyebrows if that was part of the disjunction.

One might be concerned that this is an unfair analogy for Carroll: For example, the objector might posit that there are no “classics of sex” that exist in a comparable fashion to artistic masterpieces, which typically elicit universal praise from critics. Therefore, there can be “no disputing” about sex. We take a different perspective. There are, as we see it, “classics of sex” that have stood the test of time in terms of their sexual appeal, for example, Marilyn Monroe, Carey Grant, Jane Seymour, George Clooney (and the like). That we regard these individuals as such (i.e. sexual objects) is, of course, partly a result of our cultural conditioning. Nonetheless, there appear to be certain human features that have seemingly always been ruled generally attractive: having a symmetrical face; having hair; having straight teeth, etc. Such individuals are typically found to be sexually attractive by wide swaths of the populace. For all that, however, we cannot straightforwardly infer that any given person with knowledge of our culture is having a sexual experience just because that person is looking at a photo of Marilyn Monroe and attending (with understanding) to the properties that constitute her sexual attractiveness.[[25]](#endnote-25)

Surprisingly, one sees in Carroll something of this very concern: he seems to admit that his account of aesthetic properties is essentially arbitrary. In explicating his use of the term “aesthetic properties,” he says that he uses the term in a restricted sense to refer to “qualitative dimensions of the artwork.”[[26]](#endnote-26) To call a work “brittle” or “garish” would be to remark on its aesthetic properties. In addition, in a footnote in an earlier article, Carroll further explicates the term:

The notion of the aesthetic does not have a determinate meaning in ordinary language. It is a term whose pertinent extension, for our purposes, belongs to the conversation of the philosophy of art. And with respect to that conversation, these properties have recurred as the ones germane to discussions of aesthetic experience.[[27]](#endnote-27)

So, on Carroll’s own view “aesthetic property” is a kind of fiat, or conventional, concept: it subsumes whatever properties philosophers of art have typically said it subsumes. These are the properties that, in the history of philosophy, people have thought *should* be appreciated: they are the prescribed properties. But if these aesthetic properties are arbitrarily demarcated, why think that there is any distinct kind of experience that coincides with the experience of these arbitrarily demarcated properties? If aesthetic properties are whatever properties we tend to label “aesthetic” in artworks, is aesthetic experience *whatever* experience we tend to have when we look at said properties of artworks?

If drawing this parallel makes sense, then CT really does look like a grab-bag: the only thing uniting the disjunctive properties is a historical tendency or convention to group certain kinds of properties and *not* that these properties cause a genuinely distinct kind of experience that deserves its own special account. On CT, there is nothing more to aesthetic experience than seeing, hearing, touching, or smelling whatever items we claim (for historical reasons) have aesthetic properties and so should be focused upon. We approve of this use of “aesthetic experience” if we can simultaneously grant that this is a mere conventional use of *the aesthetic*—and that this convention tells us very little about the content of any person’s experiences.

1. Notes:

   1. See Jesse Prinz, “Emotion and Aesthetic Value,” in E. Schellekens & P. Goldie (eds.), *The Aesthetic Mind: Philosophy and Psychology* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), 72-89; Alan Goldman, “The Broad View of Aesthetic Experience,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* Vol. 71(2013): 323-333; Gary Iseminger, “The Aesthetic State of Mind,” in M. Kieran (ed.), *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 98-110; Jerome Stolnitz, “The Aesthetic Attitude,” in J. Hospers (ed.), *Introductory Readings in Aesthetics* (New York: Free Press, 1969), 17–27.

   [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. 1. Noël Carroll, “Defending the Content Approach to Aesthetic Experience” *Metaphilosophy,* Vol. 46 (2015):171-188.

   [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. See Prinz op. cit., and Goldman op. cit. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Carroll, op. cit., p.172. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid., 171. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. 1. Noël Carroll, “Recent Approaches to Aesthetic Experience,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* Vol. *70*, (2012): 165-177, p. 174

   [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid., 173. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. See Carroll 2015 op. cit., p. 182. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Ibid., 182. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. See Carroll, “Defending the Content Approach to Aesthetic Experience,” p. 173 [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Ibid., p. 175. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Ibid., 172. Goldman, op. cit., takes issue with the historical lineage Carroll offers for his understanding of these properties. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. 1. See Monroe Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, 1958); Frank Sibley, “Aesthetic concepts,” *Philosophical Review,* Vol. *68* (1959): 421-450; Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. J.C. Meredith (Oxford: OUP, 1911); Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, ed. Wolfgang Leidhold (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2009).

    [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. See Carroll, “Recent Approaches to Aesthetic Experience,” p. 174. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. 1. George Dickie, “Beardsley’s phantom aesthetic experience. *Journal of Philosophy, 62*, (1965):129-136; p. 129.

    [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. See Prinz, op. cit. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. See Iseminger, op. cit. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Goldman, op. cit., p. 332 [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. 1. For the historical dispute, see for example Goldman, op. cit. Beyond questions of historical accuracy, we can simply note the extensive debate in the literature concerning the very nature of aesthetic properties. For the dispute concerning whether certain knowledge is required to perceive aesthetic properties correctly, see for example Kendall Walton, “Categories of Art,” Philosophical Review, Vol. 79 (1970): 334-367 and Nick Zangwill, “Feasible Aesthetic Formalism,” Noûs, Vol. 33 (1999): 610-629. For the dispute over whether food and drink have aesthetic properties, see for example Carolyn Korsmeyer, “On the ‘Aesthetic Senses’ and the Development of Fine Arts,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* Vol. 34 (1979): 67–71; Daniel Burnham and Ole Skilleås, *The Aesthetics of Wine* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1979); Edward Bullough, “‘Psychic Distance’ as a Factor in Art and as an Aesthetic Principle,” *British Journal of Psychology,* Vol. 5 (1912): 87-117; George Santayana, *The Sense of Beauty* (New York: Scribner, 1896); and Kant op. cit. If the philosophical community disagrees over both how to identify aesthetic properties and over which objects are even capable of having aesthetic properties, this suggest that there is great confusion over what counts as an aesthetic property. So to say that an aesthetic experience is the experience of aesthetic properties is to say almost nothing at all. We could go on enumerating the degree of confusion surrounding what exactly an aesthetic property is, but for the sake of space, we will stop here.

    [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Carroll, “Defending the Content Approach to Aesthetic Experience,” p. 173. The emphasis is Carroll’s. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Goldman, op. cit. pp 327-328, appears to agree with us. He states: “an account of a particular kind of experience in terms of its intrinsic subjective nature or structure is preferable to one that appeals only to objective content, if the former is available.” [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. 1. See for example Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Vintage Publishing, 2013). This is a popular press overview of Haidt’s research, but we cite this because Haidt admirably makes clear that he is not attempting to theorize about what sort of moral views people should hold; instead he seeks to simply describe actual moral decision making processes.

    [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Carroll, “Defending the Content Approach to Aesthetic Experience,” p. 171. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Ibid., p. 174 [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. We owe this objection to an anonymous reviewer. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Carroll “Defending the Content Approach to Aesthetic Experience,” p. 171. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Carroll, “Recent Approaches to Aesthetic Experience.” [↑](#endnote-ref-27)