**Why We Don’t Perceive Aesthetic Properties**

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**Abstract**

This chapter examines whether there are genuine cases of aesthetic perception, and hence whether aesthetic judgements depend on the perception of aesthetic properties. My response will be negative. Specifically, I will argue that although our access to aesthetic ‘properties’ does appear to resemble perception in certain respects, it differs in two key ways from cases of ordinary everyday perception: i) in its opacity (i.e. its lacking transparency) and ii) in its partly non-attributive phenomenology.

**Introduction**

It might seem obvious that we perceive aesthetic value, or more specifically aesthetic properties such as beauty, elegance, ugliness, gracefulness, and so forth.[[2]](#footnote-2) Paradigmatic aesthetic objects such as artworks (including music, literature, film, and dance) and natural objects just *look* or *sound* beautiful, harmonious, sublime, gaudy, or clumsy. Of course, there is some debate about just what counts as an aesthetic property (is ‘clumsy’ an aesthetic property?) and perhaps some doubt too about whether aesthetic properties can be the object of all the sense modalities. What would it be for something to *feel* or *smell* beautiful or elegant?[[3]](#footnote-3) But these subtleties can be left aside for current purposes. Focussing on putatively obvious cases of aesthetic perception – the beautiful look of a picture, the elegant sound of a melody, the sublime appearance of the mountains – I will be concerned to establish whether our aesthetic judgements really do depend on cases of genuine aesthetic perception. My response will be negative. Specifically, I will argue that although our access to aesthetic ‘properties’ does appear to resemble perception in certain respects, it differs in two key ways from cases of ordinary everyday perception: i) in its opacity (i.e. its lacking transparency) and ii) in its partly non-attributive phenomenology.

**1. Aesthetic Perception & Cognitive Penetration**

Commonsense, one might think, suggests that we have something like simple perceptual access to aesthetic properties. We just look and see the elegance of the dancer, the ugliness of the face, the daintiness of the vase, and the beauty of the landscape. We hear the beauty of the birdsong and the gracefulness of the melody. What else could such properties be, other than perceptual? Naturally, as with all appeals to supposed commonsense, philosophical difficulties creep in quite quickly, but philosophers too have defended the idea that aesthetic judgements are fundamentally perceptual in nature.

One influential voice here has been that of Frank Sibley, who argued that the application of aesthetic concepts required ‘taste’, a particular sensitivity to aesthetic qualities that is somewhat rarer than our normal perceptual capacities. (2001: chs. 1 & 3) Whereas everybody (more or less) possesses the capacity to perceive non-aesthetic features – which are just ordinary sensory-perceptible features – apparently not just everybody has the taste required to detect aesthetic features. This is evident in, and at least partially explains, why there is so much and such fundamental disagreement in matters of aesthetic judgement, and hence why the discernment of aesthetic properties might depend upon individual capacities, and/or require practice and expertise. Sibley’s remarks on aesthetic concepts and judgements thus resemble those of David Hume, who held that aesthetic judgement required, amongst other things, a particular kind of delicacy of sentiment, a delicacy which could be improved with practice, and which trained experts could be relied upon to exhibit.

Although Sibley does not talk explicitly of aesthetic *perception*, his view can plausibly be construed in this way. One of the important and peculiar features of aesthetic properties and concepts, according to Sibley, was that although aesthetic properties depend upon or supervene on non-aesthetic properties, no necessary and sufficient conditions can be provided for articulating this relation. As Kant held, aesthetic judgements are not ‘rule-governed’. Amongst other things, this might explain why the detection of aesthetic qualities is delicate and requires either expertise or at least a naturally refined sensibility. Alternatively, the explanation might be reversed. In any case, if our access to aesthetic properties is in some form perceptual, it involves a different type of perception to ordinary everyday sensory perception.

The view that aesthetic perception is different from ‘normal’ non-aesthetic perception, and requires certain additional features that may be subject to the possibility of refinement and expertise has been widely accepted by philosophers of art under the form famously articulated by Kendall Walton (2004). He argued that in cases of the aesthetic appreciation of artworks, what we perceive and experience is not anchored solely in basic ‘un-interpreted’ perceptual properties, for it is contoured and coloured by a range of background factors (henceforth ‘subject-relative factors’) including education, knowledge, practice, culture, imagination, categorisation, comparison, evaluation, interpretation, intention, and so on. In general, what we aesthetically ‘perceive’ depends on how this compendium of background knowledge and capacities affects the sensory perceptual experiences of ordinary everyday non-aesthetic properties. More specifically, Walton showed that what aesthetic properties a work of art is perceived to have depends on which of its non-aesthetic properties are *standard*, *variable*, and *contra-standard* relative to the categories in which it is perceived.

In other words, aesthetic perceptual judgements are exemplars of what has become known as *cognitive penetration*. Put simply, this involves our perceptual states (and hence what we perceive) being affected (penetrated) by higher-order ‘cognitive’ states, such as beliefs, desires, imaginings, thoughts. More formally, Susanna Siegel (2012) has characterised one version of the claim for visual experience as follows:

**CP**: If visual experience is cognitively penetrable, then it is nomologically possible for two subjects (or for one subject in different counterfactual circumstances, or at different times) to have visual experiences with different contents while seeing the same distal stimuli under the same external conditions, as a result of differences in other cognitive (including affective) states. (204)

Indeed, this kind of penetration seems to be required for the perception of what are called ‘higher-order properties’, which are any properties over and above the uncontroversial basic properties of visual perception, such as shapes and colours. Standard examples include the property of ‘being a pine tree’, or moral properties. There is currently some debate about whether we do have access to such higher-order properties in perception, and also whether, indeed, cognitive penetration happens, or is even possible. It is not the point of this paper to address this debate here. But one particular objection to cognitive penetration does bear on the following discussion. For all that the above formulation says, when the penetrating states influence the content of visual experience, they do so by affecting what parts or aspects of the distal stimuli the subjects *fixate on* or *covertly attend to*. For instance, as Siegel herself points out, the following would count as a case of cognitive penetrability:

“Before and after X learns what pine trees look like, pine trees look different to her, and the visual experiences she has under the same external conditions differ in their content. But this is because gaining pine-tree-expertise makes her fixate on the shapes of the leaves on the trees. If a novice fixated the way the expert did, then her experience would have the same contents. The expertise influences experience content, by influencing fixation points.” (205)

So, the objection is that supposed cases of cognitive penetration are really just cases of differences in attention, differences that can be explained by, amongst other things, certain forms of expertise. Such cases, then, would indeed involve differences in the phenomenal character of experience, but this would be due solely to the role of attention in changing the representational content of the experience. Alternatively, one might also argue that such cases then involve a judgement allied to the perception which may affect the phenomenal character of your *overall* experience (judgement + perception) without this amounting to a case of cognitive penetration.

Whatever the force of this objection in non-aesthetic cases, it seems to me that aesthetic experiences resist this kind of analysis. On the one hand, appealing to the attentional capacities and foci of aesthetic experts seems insufficient to explain cases in which the expert tells the non-expert to examine in as much details as possible all of the non-aesthetic features of an object on which the aesthetic features supervene, without the non-expert thereby coming to see the aesthetic features. Attention is insufficient because specific background knowledge, imaginative comparisons, categorical and intentional information might also be required to see, for example, the gracefulness of the line in the Matisse canvas. Moreover, one partial explanation of this would be that, as Sibley and Kant maintained, aesthetic judgements are not rule-governed; that is, the relation of dependence between non-aesthetic and aesthetic features cannot be inferred but has to be perceived. No amount of attention to the non-aesthetic features will be sufficient to guarantee the discernment of aesthetic features.

On the other hand, the objection does not seem phenomenologically accurate, since once you have acquired all of the necessary conditions of expertise it seems that the very character and content of your perceptual experience will be different from what it was before, however your attention is directed. Just as the pine tree *looks* different to the expert, so the landscape *looks* different once you are able to appreciate its beauty. The nature of your experience has changed, in part because it is now valenced in a way that ordinary sensory-perceptual experiences are not. But this need not result from a change in attentional focus. That is to say, its phenomenal character is valenced, and it has partially evaluative content, in addition to its straightforward non-evaluative perceptual content. Or more precisely, its strictly sensory-perceptual content has taken on an evaluative dimension.

So, I contend that aesthetic experiences often, or even always involve, cases of cognitive penetration, and that they are nonetheless perception-like for all that. Indeed it is important to note that even if one is an anti-realist about aesthetic properties, one still has to explain the perception-like phenomenology of aesthetic experience, and one can still appeal to the cognitive penetration of perception in order to account for it. Yet, however much aesthetic experience resembles everyday cases of cognitively penetrated higher-order perception, there are two key respects in which it differs from such non-aesthetic everyday perception: opacity and non-attributive phenomenology.

**2. Evaluative Content & Opacity**

Philosophers who defend (strong) intentionalist theories of perception – namely, that the phenomenal character of perceptual experiences is fixed by (and perhaps reducible to) their representational content – often appeal to the so-called *transparency* of perceptual experience, in the sense that they appear to us to have no intrinsic properties that are not representational properties. (Tye 2008: pp. 25ff)[[4]](#footnote-4) When attending to our visual experiences, it is claimed, all we find are the objects and properties in the world that are thereby represented. The experience is transparent to the world that constitutes its representational content.

Unfortunately, not all aspects of the complex phenomenal character of aesthetic experiences play the right kind of representational role even if we acknowledge that they have some bearing on the nature of the content represented. I am not concerned here to decide the merits of strong intentionalism, but rather to note that aesthetic experiences lack transparency in virtue of the fact that they represent *evaluative content* (i.e. evaluative aesthetic properties) whereas the kind of representational content possessed by perceptual states comprises what we might call value-neutral content. Moreover, insofar as aesthetic ‘perceptions’ involve the kind of subject-relative factors manifested in their cognitively penetrated nature discussed above, including evaluation and interpretation, and insofar as this may result in equally appropriate but different construals of one and the same set of non-aesthetic features, it cannot be that such experiences involve the straightforward *attribution* of (aesthetic) properties to the world in the way that, say, the perceptual experience of colours and shapes does.

To see this, compare our belief in the response-dependent nature of redness, for example, which does not normally affect the way in which the redness of objects appears to us in perception. It merely appears as straightforwardly a property of objects. When we see the red tomato, its redness and roundness seem to us in our visual experience to belong to the tomato, to be properties of the tomato itself and not properties of our experience. That is, we attribute such properties to the object in our visual experience. The phenomenology of such states is in this way essentially *attributive*, a characteristic that naturally accompanies transparency.

In contrast, I suggest, the evaluative importance attributed to the world in aesthetic experience is lent partly by the subject-relative factors on which it is in part based. We play a role in the construal such that the evaluative ‘property’ attributed in the content of the aesthetic experience is not simply ‘to the world’ as though the world were transparently represented as possessing such a quality. Both the relevant background factors and the phenomenal features of aesthetic experience play a role in colouring the way in which the features of the world are represented and hence in determining the *evaluative content*,the way in which the non-evaluative features are (evaluatively) experienced. Indeed, this is why it can be so difficult to prise apart the non-evaluative features from their evaluative seemings, and to list the non-aesthetic features in virtue of which the aesthetic features are applied. Most importantly, the lack of transparency in such experiences is evident to the extent that we are aware of the role that subjective phenomenal character plays in aesthetic evaluative content.

Of course, value-neutral content too is obviously a part of aesthetic representational content since it relies on the perception of non-aesthetic features for its input. Moreover, there may be certain constraints on evaluative content imposed by this non-evaluative perceptual content – not just anything can be aesthetically construed in any way whatsoever. There may be, as a matter of psychological or physical fact, some limits on what can be construed as, say beautiful, by human beings as such, or by some subset of them. There may be more or less ‘appropriate’, or more or less natural, or conventional ways of aesthetically valuing certain states of affairs. Nonetheless, there may be various incompatible but appropriate ways in which some set of non-aesthetic features can be aesthetically ‘perceived’. Let me explain.

Recall Walton’s view about the category-relative nature of aesthetic ‘perception’. In this light, he argued further that in some cases it is *correct* to perceive a work in certain categories, and *incorrect* to perceive it in others; that is, our judgements of it when we perceive it in the former are likely to be true, and those we make when perceiving it in the latter false.

On this picture it seems clear that there can be cases where incompatible but equally appropriate aesthetic judgements can be made of the very same object, given the possibility of equally appropriate but different evaluative standards or categorization. The picture that emerges is akin to the idea, championed in particular by Roger Scruton (1974), that aesthetic judgements lend themselves to being understood as ‘construals’. Construals are articulated in terms of the familiar phenomenon of aspect-perception or ‘seeing-as’. They are essentially experiential states – and hence not reducible to mere beliefs or judgements – involving a way that things appear to the subject, and because they involve a relationship in which one thing is seen in terms of something else, they are interpretive or constructive in a way that mere sense perceptions are not. They are, as Robert Roberts (2003) says in the context of defending a construal theory of emotion, a ‘hard-to-specify structure of percept, concept, image, and thought’.(77)

In this light it is worth quoting what Roberts has to say about the issue of voluntary control, which sometimes emotions are subject to and sometimes not; which is a question of degree; which involves ‘the terms in which a subject “sees” the world including changes in the subject’s desires and concerns’; and which involves changing patterns of attention regarding the organization of the features of the relevant object or situation. As such, there may be certain constraints, natural or conventional, on how any given object or state of affairs can be construed emotionally.

“A person at whom I am inclined to be angry may be regarded, quite at will, in various ways: as the scoundrel who did such-and-such to me, as the son of my dear friend so-and-so, as a person who, after all, has had a pretty rough time of it in life, and so forth. If these construals are all in my repertoire, and in addition are not too implausible with respect to the present object [e.g. seeing the young-old woman as an odd-shaped pizza], then the emotions that correspond to them, of anger, affection, and pity, are also more or less subject to my will… In some situations an emotion may be so compelling that we are…virtually helpless in the face of it. The therapist of friend, by suggesting and fostering other possibilities of construal, may be able to liberate us from it by contributing to our emotional repertoire. Or she may not” (81)

These observations strike me as right about the emotions, but they can also be applied more generally to the case of aesthetic experience. Given the subject-relative conditions to which aesthetic construals are subject, it is more helpful to think of the conditions grounding aesthetic ‘perception’ in terms of ‘appropriateness’ rather than truth.

Scruton makes much of the fact that aesthetic appraisal, and aspect perception more generally, centrally involves an imaginative capacity, and I think that a further feature affecting the opacity of aesthetic experiences is the extent to which they – in particular those involving fiction, and arguably the appreciation of pictorial depiction as well as abstraction – involve and depend upon the imagination.

The subjection of imagination to the will, at least in principle, is a familiar claim and a feature commonly taken to be one of the essential demarcating features of imagination. Is this voluntariness reflected and manifested in the phenomenal character of imagining, of forming images? Such questions are difficult to decide, more difficult than most philosophers generally assume. Colin McGinn (2004), for example, seems ambivalent about the issue. He say: “This is hard to articulate with any precision, but the lability and fleetingness of images is suggestive of their willed character; their “lightness” goes with the vagaries of volition.” (167: n.19) Yet, he also suggests that voluntariness may not be part of the phenomenal character of imagery *per se* but rather part of the overall awareness that comes with reflection on our first order mental state. At least, that’s how the following claim might be interpreted:

“[There is some sense in which the phenomenology of images is affected by their voluntariness: what it is like to have them seems affected by the fact that they are products of will; their causation is somehow imprinted on their phenomenology…So what it is like to have an image incorporates the fact that images are subject to the will, but this character of consciousness does not intrude on the intentional properties of the image)” (16-17)

The difficulty here resides in deciding what counts as registering in the phenomenology of a particular state, as opposed to the overall phenomenology of being in that state and perhaps simultaneously other states. For instance, how do we separate out clearly the phenomenal character proper to a visual perception, from the overall phenomenology of the same moment incorporating perhaps various other thoughts and feelings about the objects perceived?[[5]](#footnote-5) I can see no easy answers to such questions, but luckily we do not need to attempt them here, because all I wish to claim is that the role that features such as imagination, interpretation, evaluation, expertise and so on play in determining the evaluative content of aesthetic experiences is thus very unlike the objective attributive phenomenology that comes with the transparency of perception. Once these factors are so centrally involved, and once it is acknowledged both that they may differ between subjects and that these factors may allow an indeterminate number of incompatible but appropriate construals, aesthetic ‘perceptions’ cease to look very much like visual perceptions in their attributive content.

Thus, to the extent that we are more or less aware of the evaluative, subject-relative nature of our aesthetic responses, to that extent the less transparent and hence perception-like our aesthetic experiences will seem to us to be.

**3. Non-attributive Phenomenology**

Where there exists a more or less straightforward causal connection that structures perception, providing its truth conditions and ensuring its transparency, attributive phenomenology and mind-to-world direction of fit, the complex make-up of subjective factors involved in the partly interpretive nature of aesthetic construals undermines any direct analogy here. To see this, we need to turn to the recent flurry of discussion about the role of attention in perception and certain problems that it poses for strong intentionalist views of perception.

Recall that such views deny that experiences have intrinsic phenomenal properties that are not representational properties, holding that all phenomenology supervenes on representational content in the following strong way: necessarily, if two *mental events* differ in phenomenology, then they differ in content (Speaks 2010; Byrne 2001). Some philosophers, however, have given examples which appear to show that attention can make a difference to the perceptual phenomenology of two visual experiences without any difference in representational content, thereby directly undermining the strong intentionalist claim. (MacPherson 2006; Speaks 2010; Block 2010) There may be possible replies open to the intentionalist, but my aim is not to adjudicate this dispute, for I wish merely to borrow some apparent features of the phenomenology of attention that emerge from it in order to cast light on the nature of emotional evaluative content.[[6]](#footnote-6)

The most convincing of these examples, to my mind, and the most pertinent for our topic, is that provided recently by Ned Block (2010). He examines the case of perceiving two Gabor patches, the one on the left having a 22% contrast, the one on right a 28% contrast and the 6% difference in contrast easily detectable by simply looking at both, with the focus of attention in the centre between each or evenly distributed over both patches. However, when attention is paid to the 22% patch the contrast is increased to the point where it looks identical to the 28% patch. The point is that focal attention changes certain perceptual qualities, like perceived contrast, such that in the two cases (attention to the left, attention to the centre) there are two different phenomenal experiences of the same item with the same relevant instantiated property, i.e. 22% contrast, yet the experiences are different.

In describing the role of attention in his example, Block convincingly claims that attentively seeing and less attentively seeing the same thing—the 22% patch—are experiences that differ phenomenally but not in the item seen or in its instantiated properties. Borrowing a phrase from Tyler Burge, he claims that attention lacks the ‘phenomenology of objectivity’: “The change invoked by changing attention does not look like a change in the world. There is something phenomenally different between the way the attended 22% patch looks and the way the unattended 28% patch looks, even if they are the same in perceived contrast”. (53)

It certainly seems to me that the kind of prominence or salience added to perceptual experience by attention is indeed – and appears to us, at least on reflection, to be – a feature of experience rather than a property of the object perceived. Using a similar example, Sebastian Watzl (2011) has recently also argued that the prominence that is characteristic of an attended object is, unlike colour, *not* experienced as a property of that object, which it has *independently* of our attending to it. He characterises the nature of attention in the following way: “consciously attending to something does not just consist in being conscious of a certain way the world appears to be (it has a partially nonattributive phenomenology)”. (153)

One consequence that might be drawn from these observations is that attention has its own *sui generis* partially non-attributive phenomenology. One of the salient marks of this phenomenology, I suggest, is its being, like imagination, subject to some extent to the will. (Cf. Speaks 2010) Indeed, arguably this voluntariness is a natural concomitant of the partially non-attributive nature of attention’s phenomenology since this latter is made apparent partly in virtue of the fact that we ourselves contribute, with voluntary shifts of attention, to the salience, prominence or determinateness that objects in the world ‘take on’ when they become the focus of attention. Yet it is important to note that this voluntariness is, and can appear or not to us to be, a matter of degree. Sometimes we can deliberately focus on one feature at the expense of another; we can perhaps attend to two things simultaneously; we can switch and oscillate between objects of attention; but we can also have our attention drawn, accidentally or deliberately, to features we had not noticed.

It is this notion, that attention involves voluntariness and has a ‘partially non-attributive phenomenology’ that, I suggest, we can appeal to in order to understand and perhaps even explain the phenomenology and intentional content of aesthetic ‘perception’.

Aesthetic experiences can be thought of as having a partly non-attributive phenomenology, like attention. Indeed, it may be that there is more than mere resemblance here and that aesthetic experience borrows this aspect of their phenomenology from the role that attention plays therein. It has, after all, been noted by a number of writers that aesthetic experiences serve to capture and consume attention. It would also explain the way in which aesthetic construals can be subject to some degree to the will, by virtue of attending to different features and configurations of features, and in virtue of the role played by imagination in aesthetic experience more generally. I do not want to commit myself here, however, to any one picture of the exact relation between aesthetic experience and attention and wish merely to point to the salient similarities between them.

Having an aesthetic perception of the beauty of X does not just consist in being conscious of a certain non-aesthetic set of features in X, it is to construe X as beautiful and this construal, I contend, is partly non-attributive. The object X certainly has a range of non-aesthetic features in virtue of which we attribute to it the aesthetic features that we do. It is beautiful because, say, of the way its colours and shapes fit, and its lines are elegant in virtue of the fact that they have this particular shape and curve. But, given the non rule-governed nature of this relationship, the way in which these perceptible properties are aesthetically coloured that constitutes the evaluative content of the experience is not guaranteed purely by the non-aesthetic features of sensory perception. Insofar as this colouring is partly a result of and determined by those subject-relative factors already discussed, the construal depends on us, we are doing some of the colouring of the world ourselves, even if some aesthetic perceptions will appear to us to be more constrained by the non-evaluative features (and other factors) and hence more natural or more appropriate than others.

Aesthetic perceptions, I contend, thus have a two-fold content, evaluative and perceptual, and the phenomenology of the former is non-attributive while the latter is attributive. That is what makes the overall phenomenology of aesthetic experience *sui generis* and *partially* non-attributive; at least, on reflection, for how non-attributive any particular experience will appear to us to be will be subject to a number of variables.[[7]](#footnote-7) One particular variable I have already mentioned is the role that imagination plays in some or all aesthetic experiences. And the imagination also has a partly (or perhaps even wholly) non-attributive phenomenology. When visualising something we are aware (in the standard case) of the fact that this object and its properties are not part of the ‘fabric of reality’ and hence are not attributed to something independent of our mind; rather, when in this state it is phenomenologically evident to us that imagining lacks what Rob Hopkins (2010) refers to as ‘directness’:

**Directness** (Hopkins) = A mental state is direct IFF its phenomenology is as follows: (i) one seems to be related to things that exist independently of one’s mental state; (ii) those things seem to be constituents of one’s mental state; (iii) the nature of that state seems to be almost entirely constituted by the nature of those things.

If, as I maintain, this lack of directness is imprinted on the phenomenology of imagining, that imagery has an essentially (and not merely partially) non-attributive phenomenology, it is also far from obvious that imagining can be transparent, for when we turn attention to our images, we find some awareness of this feature.

One possible objection to this line of thought would be to argue that we cannot actually pay attention to this lack of directness, and thus we are not aware of it in an attentive way. That is, one might hold that we cannot pay attention to the non-representational features of images, even if their lack of directness and voluntariness is somehow imprinted on their phenomenology. The relevant phenomenological features are not themselves intentional objects of consciousness; they’re not intrinsic features of the experience that can be attended to. Rather, awareness of them is peripheral or cognitive – a bit like in perception.

As with all such claims about what is or is not imprinted on the phenomenology of a given state, it is hard to see a persuasive way of resolving the issue, other than by further phenomenological claims. However, I think a more plausible view of both imagery and perception is what Amy Kind (2003) calls ‘weak transparency’, namely the view that it may be difficult but not impossible to attend to the relevant phenomenal features. On such a view, the imagery presented in visualisation would be transparently weaker than the equivalent perceptual states, since the features of voluntariness and non-attributiveness seem like just the kinds of things that mark out the state as one of imagining rather than perceiving and hence are characteristics which can be phenomenologically present and hence which we can attend to.

Of course, to demonstrate this convincingly we would need to be confident of our ability to differentiate the phenomenal characteristic proper to the state from those features proper only to the overall phenomenology and which might not belong to the state. An important part of this task would be to differentiate perceptual from non-perceptual attention, for the latter could arguably be seen as a type of mere cognitive awareness of, say, the non-attributive nature of imagining and not an intrinsic property of the phenomenal character of imagining per se.

Without settling these difficult issues here, however, I just want to claim that i) the more we are aware of our own subjective contribution to the aesthetic construal of the world, the more opaque our experiences, and ii) the less constrained the construals seem to us to be by the relevant non-evaluative features, the less perception-like our aesthetic experiences will be prone to appear to us to be, and the more the non-attributive nature of their evaluative content will be evident. For these reasons, we should not think of aesthetic judgements as involving some special type of aesthetic *perception* in any but the broadest, and least useful, sense of ‘perception’.

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2. Perhaps also we can also sometimes see just that something is aesthetically good, without knowing in virtue of what. Such cases complicate matters and fall beyond the scope of the present discussion, though see the view of Sibley discussed below. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See for example Scruton (2007) for a scepticcal view about the capacity of tastes and smells to be of aesthetic value. For the contrary view see Sibley (2001: ch. 15). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Although strong intentionalism does not strictly speaking require transparency (Byrne 2001), its proponents argue that it is best placed to account for it, so any reasons for doubting the transparency of emotions are at least *prima facie* reasons to doubt the plausibility of the view. See also Speaks (2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The difficulty is multiplied when the possibility of cognitive penetration is taken into account. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See Nanay (2010) for one line of response open to the intentionalist. For criticisms of other possible intentionalist replies to such examples see Speaks (2010), Block (2010) and Watzl (2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. I intend the phenomenology of the experience to be understood very broadly, encompassing cognitive reflection on the nature of our experiences, and on the nature of their relation to the world. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)