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# The Acquaintance Inference and Hybrid Expressivism

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**Abstract:** Sentences containing predicates of personal taste (for example, ‘tasty’, ‘funny’) and aesthetic predicates (for example, ‘beautiful’) give rise to an acquaintance inference: They convey the information that speakers have first-hand experience with the object of predication and they can only be uttered appropriately if that is the case. This is surprisingly hard to explain. I will concentrate on aesthetic predicates, and firstly criticize previous attempts to explain the acquaintance phenomena. Second, I will suggest an explanation that rests on a speech act theoretical version of hybrid expressivism, according to which, in uttering ‘X is beautiful’ speakers perform two illocutionary acts simultaneously: an expressive and an assertive one. I will spell out this suggestion in detail and defend it against objections. Considering puzzles related to the acquaintance inference will lead to a new argument for a promising version of hybrid expressivism in meta-aesthetics.

**Keywords:** acquaintance phenomena, aesthetic statements, speech acts, hybrid expressivism, illocutionary pluralism

## 1 Introduction

It is widely accepted that utterances of simple sentences containing predicates of personal taste (for example, ‘tasty’, ‘funny’) and aesthetic predicates (for example, ‘beautiful’, ‘moving’) give rise to an acquaintance inference: they usually communicate that the speaker has firsthand experience with the object of predication. Take a look at the following examples:

- (1) Orange juice is tasty.
- (2) The new movie by Sofia Coppola is beautiful.

An utterance of (1) or (2) conveys that the speaker has tried orange juice (s. (1)) or has seen the movie (s. (2)). This is why uttering (1) or (2) while explicitly denying that you have experienced the object in question sounds very odd:

- (1') ?? Orange juice is tasty, but I have never tried it (Ninan 2014).
- (2') ?? The new movie by Sofia Coppola is beautiful, it is such a shame that I have never seen it (Robson 2012).

If you have not experienced the object in question, uttering the following modified versions of the sentences would be more appropriate:

(1<sup>o</sup>) Orange juice *must/will/is supposed to* be tasty, but I have never tried it.

(2<sup>o</sup>) The new movie by Sofia Coppola *must/will/is supposed to* be beautiful, it is such a shame that I have never seen it.

Thus, (1) and (2) give rise to the acquaintance inference and are also subject to an acquaintance norm—they can only be uttered appropriately if you have experienced the objects in question. Why do these principles hold? Different answers have been suggested in the literature. These suggestions have interesting consequences, for example, with respect to mechanisms about how evidentiality is encoded in language (Anand and Korotkova 2018; Ninan 2020), with respect to norms governing assertions and other speech acts (Willer and Kennedy 2022; Franzén 2018), or with respect to the epistemology and metaphysics of the properties we ascribe to objects by using those predicates (Ninan 2014; Dinges and Zakkou 2021).

Besides the differences in terms of the consequences, the suggestions also differ in their focus of attention. Some set out to give a general explanation covering all predicates that give rise to the acquaintance inference (taste predicates, aesthetic predicates, appearance predicates, etc.; Korotkova and Anand 2018), others have considered aesthetic predicates as well as predicates of personal taste (Franzén 2018; Ninan 2014), and still others have restricted their focus solely on predicates of personal taste—either in their non-relativized (Ninan 2020; Willer and Kennedy 2022) or their explicitly relativized form (for example, ‘tasty *to me*’, Dinges and Zakkou 2021).

In this paper, I will focus on aesthetic predicates. I will restrict my attention to utterances of simple sentences containing the non-relativized predicate ‘beautiful’, such as:

(3) X is beautiful.

I will use the term ‘aesthetic sentence’ to refer to sentences of this form, and I will use ‘aesthetic statement’ to refer to sincere and literal utterances of the sentence.

The main reason for this focus is that there are interesting differences between aesthetic predicates, predicates of personal taste, and other predicates that give rise to the acquaintance phenomena (McNally and Stojanovic 2017; Briesen 2019). In the face of these differences, I am unsure whether we should presuppose from the outset that a unified explanation of the phenomena is possible. At any rate, in the present inquiry, I am not striving for a unified explanation. Instead, I am aiming for an explanation of the acquaintance phenomena with respect to aesthetic statements that explains the relevant linguistic data and is not in conflict with plausible views concerning the semantics of aesthetic predicates as well as the metaphysics of aesthetic properties. I will simply leave the question—whether my explanation can be transferred to other sentence-types—open.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The reasons why I also do not consider explicitly relativized aesthetic statements (such as ‘X is beautiful to me/her/Sarah etc.’) are twofold. First, just like the sentences mentioned above, explicitly relativized aesthetic sentences also show a different behaviour from non-relativized aesthetic statements, so that I am not inclined to presuppose a unified explanation of acquaintance phenomena here either. Second, unlike relativized taste statements (‘X is tasty to me/her/Sarah etc.’), explicitly relativized aesthetic statements are rare and sound somewhat odd (McNally and Stojanovic 2017: 31; for an early example of a comparable observation, see Kant 1790: § 7). Thus, I do not think that our intuitions with respect to these statements are stable and trustworthy enough to bare much theoretical weight.

My suggestion will build on the expressivist account suggested by Nils Franzén (2018). Franzén adopts an expressivist theory with respect to aesthetic statements and taste statements. According to expressivism, those statements do not belong to the illocutionary act of assertions, but to the illocutionary act of expressives (2018: 676). In contrast to assertions, expressives do not express beliefs, but non-doxastic, non-propositional attitudes. I agree with Franzén that by pointing to certain sincerity conditions, expressivism has the resources to explain the acquaintance requirement. However, expressivist views with respect to aesthetic statements face well-known and serious problems. If these problems are not adequately addressed, the expressivist explanation is not a serious contender to the other explanations of the acquaintance phenomena offered in the literature.

In this paper, I will argue that with regard to aesthetic statements the problems of expressivism can be avoided by adopting a hybrid theory. The version of hybrid expressivism that I am going to develop claims that, in uttering an aesthetic sentence, we perform two speech acts simultaneously: an assertive and an expressive one. Through recourse to the *expressive* aspect, the acquaintance phenomena can be successfully explained, and through recourse to the *assertive* aspect, the problems of simple expressivism can be solved. Thus, focusing on the acquaintance requirement will lead to an interesting and well-motivated hybrid expressivist theory with respect to the meaning of aesthetic statements.<sup>2</sup>

In section 2 I will clarify some terminology and preliminaries of the discussion. In section 3 I will assess different attempts to explain the acquaintance phenomena and show why they are wanting. In section 4 I will elaborate on the suggested hybrid expressivist explanation and the resulting theory of aesthetic statements. I will discuss remaining problems with the account in section 5 and end the discussion with a short summary in section 6.

## 2 Terminology and Preliminaries

The acquaintance inference with respect to aesthetic statements says:

### **Acquaintance inference (AI)**

Uttering a sentence of the form ‘X is beautiful’ conveys the information that the speaker has first-hand experience with X.

This goes along with an acquaintance norm:

### **Acquaintance norm (AN)**

Uttering a sentence of the form ‘X is beautiful’ is appropriate only if you have first-hand experience with X.

To what types of objects does the variable ‘X’ refer, and how is the notion ‘experience’ understood in these principles? It is important to realize that it is nonessential that ‘X’ refers to artwork. AI/AN also hold for aesthetic sentences that refer to objects of nature or daily use:

- (4) This mountain panorama/her bike/his voice is beautiful.

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<sup>2</sup> For a structurally different variant of hybrid expressivism in meta-aesthetics that is also differently motivated, see Marques 2016. For a discussion of Marques’ approach, see Hirvonen, Karczewska, and Sikorski 2019. At the end of their discussion, these authors hint at an alternative that shares some similarities with the variant of hybrid expressivism that will be developed here. A detailed comparison of the different variants of hybrid expressivism in meta-aesthetics will have to be provided on another occasion.

- (4') ?? This mountain panorama/her bike/his voice is beautiful. It is such a shame that I have not seen/heard it.

This illustrates two things. First, all explanations of AI/AN that can only explain the principles with respect to statements that refer to artwork will be unsatisfying (see, for example, Robson 2015). Second, because (4) and (4') refer to visible as well as audible objects, the term 'experience' covers perceptual experiences of different sense modalities. Furthermore, sometimes seeing a photograph of X might be enough to appropriately utter 'X is beautiful', and sometimes 'X' might refer to an abstract object that is not experientially observable at all (for example, a mathematical proof). Thus, 'experience' in the formulation of the principles should also cover *indirect* perceptual-experiences (of different sense modalities) as well as *non-perceptual* forms of acquaintance.<sup>3</sup>

However, there is an important sense in which AI and AN have to be restricted. Predicates of personal taste and aesthetic predicates have an autocentric and an exocentric reading. In the following conversational context, an exocentric reading is triggered:

- (5) A: How is Saba's trip to London?

B: Great, she has seen a beautiful play.

B's statement does not convey that B has seen the play. It is natural to assume that the play in question was one that Saba judged to be beautiful (perhaps by calling it 'beautiful'), and B is tying her statement to Saba's judgment. Thus, B's statement is appropriate even though she has not experienced the object in question herself. This is commonly known as an exocentric reading (Lasersohn 2005: 670). AI/AN does not hold for exocentric readings of aesthetic sentences. I will, therefore, concentrate on autocentric readings in what follows.

### 3 Previous Explanations and Their Shortcomings

#### 3.1 The Implicature Account

In aesthetics, the norm AN is well known (Mothershill 1984: 160) and often explained on the basis of Grice's theory of implicatures (Grice 1989). On this account, uttering (3) conveys the information that the speaker has experienced X, because it is a conversational implicature of (3) that the speaker has first-hand experience with X (s. Budd 2003: 391; Hopkins 2000: 217, 2011: 145).

However, as many authors have noticed, this account is unconvincing (Ninan 2014: 297; Franzén 2018: 67; Dinges and Zakkou 2021: 1189–90). First, if p conversationally implicates q, then this implicature can be cancelled by uttering 'p, but not q' (Grice 1989: 39). However, uttering 'X is beautiful, but I have not seen it' is infelicitous (s. (2')). Thus, the acquaintance requirement fails the cancelability test for implicatures. Second, and more importantly, up to now no Grice'ian mechanism has been established, which would explain why the supposed conversational implicature is generated in the first place.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this paper, I accept that seeing a photograph of X counts as perceptually experiencing X indirectly. Furthermore, note that objects of daily use are often tokens of certain types. In this case, uttering 'X1 is beautiful' is often appropriate, even though you have not seen the token X1, but another token X2 of the type. Thus, for the purposes of this paper, I will also accept that seeing a certain token X2 of a type counts as an indirect experience of another token X1 of that type.

<sup>4</sup> Recently, Ninan (forthcoming) has hinted to such a mechanism. However, because Ninan explicitly accepts that the acquaintance inference cannot be cancelled (2014: 297), the mechanism he suggests cannot lead to a

### 3.2 The Entailment Account

According to the entailment account, uttering the aesthetic sentence,

(3) X is beautiful,

conveys that the speaker has experienced X because (3) *entails* that the speaker has experienced X.

Dinges and Zakkou (2021) defend such a view with respect to sentences containing explicitly relativized predicates of personal taste:

(6) This cake is *tasty to me*.

Can their suggestion be transferred to aesthetic statements such as (3)?

Dinges and Zakkou start out by presenting a dispositional account, claiming that (6) is synonymous with:

(7) I am disposed to get gustatory pleasure when I eat this cake (2021: 1189).

Eating the cake (under ideal conditions, not after brushing my teeth etc.) is the manifestation condition and having gustatory pleasure is the manifestation of the disposition. However, (7) does not entail that the speaker has tasted the cake. After all, dispositional properties can be instantiated, even though they have not been manifested. A glass can have the dispositional property of being breakable, even though it might never break. Thus, Dinges and Zakkou suggest that (6) does not refer to a disposition but to something they call ‘tendency’, where a tendency is a disposition that has been manifested (2021: 1195). So, in their view, (6) is synonymous to:

(8) I tend to get gustatory pleasure when I eat this cake.

According to their conception of ‘tendency’, (8) is only true if (7) is. But in contrast to (7), the truth-conditions of (8) demand the additional requirement that the disposition has been manifested, that is, that the speaker had gustatory pleasure while eating the cake. Thus, (8) entails that the speaker tried the cake, otherwise she would not have felt the relevant gustatory pleasure. As (6) is synonymous with (8), (6) entails that the speaker has experienced the cake as well. This explains the acquaintance requirement.

Even though this is an interesting suggestion with respect to the explicitly relativized predicates of personal taste, transferring it to aesthetic predicates is problematic. According to such an account, the aesthetic sentence (3) has the same truth-conditions as:

(9) I tend to get a certain kind of (aesthetic) pleasure when I experience X.

Two problems with this suggestion are particularly serious.

First, according to this view, ‘beautiful’ refers to a special dispositional property, namely a tendency in Dinges and Zakkou’s sense. This property is instantiated only if a person has experienced X. As a result, it is metaphysically impossible that there are beautiful objects that nobody has seen. However, this is very implausible. It seems reasonable to suppose that there might be beautiful diamonds buried in a mountain somewhere that nobody will ever see.

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conversational implicature but at most to a conventional implicature. For the reasons why I do not consider the acquaintance inference to be a conventional implicature, see fn. 6.

Second, if the entailment account is correct and we accept the standard semantics for negation, then (3\*) would be true only because I have not seen X:

(3\*) It is not the case that X is beautiful.

This is very counterintuitive. As a consequence of this view, pointing to the fact that I have never seen X would be a conclusive reason to deny that X is beautiful. However, it seems unreasonable to believe that I have not seen X and that, *therefore*, it is not the case that X is beautiful. I conclude that the entailment account is not promising with respect to aesthetic statements.<sup>5</sup>

### 3.3 The Presupposition Account

The presupposition account holds that it is a semantic presupposition of (1)–(3) that the speaker has experienced the relevant object in question (Pearson 2013; Anand and Korotkova 2018; Ninan 2020). If this were correct, AI/AN would be explained. However, the following observation speaks against this approach.

Presuppositions are pieces of information that are not a part of the semantic content but are nonetheless associated with certain lexical items.

(10) Yoshi quit smoking.

An utterance of (10) does not assert that Yoshi smoked in the past, but the use of ‘quit’ triggers the presupposition that he has. Presuppositions project over a wide range of operations and embeddings. All of the following sentences presuppose that Yoshi smoked in the past:

(11) Yoshi has not quit smoking. (Negation)

(12) Yoshi might have quit smoking. (Epistemic modal)

(13) If Yoshi quit smoking, then his parents are happy. (Conditional)

(14) Has Yoshi quit smoking? (Interrogative)

A serious problem of the presupposition account is that AI shows a very different projection behaviour:

(15) X is not beautiful. (Negation)

(16) X might be beautiful. (Epistemic modal)

(17) If X is beautiful, then I will buy it. (Conditional)

(18) Is X beautiful? (Interrogative)

It is correct that AI projects over negation (15), but in all of the other embeddings both AI and AN are lost. Thus, the presupposition account seems incorrect (Ninan 2014; Franzén 2018: 672; Dinges and Zakkou 2021: 1191–92).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Note that the second problem also concerns the entailment account with respect to relativized predicates of personal taste. Dinges and Zakkou (2021: 1198–1199) try to solve this problem by arguing that negation in the corresponding taste-sentences usually only takes narrow scope.

<sup>6</sup> Note that the same reason speaks against the view that the acquaintance inference is a conventional implicature. Because it is usually assumed that conventional implicatures exhibit a similar projection behavior as presuppositions (Potts 2005).

Recently, it has been suggested that we could hold onto the presupposition account by positing mechanisms that allow certain operators (for example, epistemic modals) and certain embeddings (for example, conditionals) to obviate the acquaintance requirement (Anand and Korotkova 2018; Ninan 2020). However, as long as there is no systematic explanation for why some operators and embeddings have the effect in question and others do not, the proposal seems somewhat *ad hoc*. This is especially correct if—as Anand and Korotkova (2018) argue—the various operators do not always obviate the acquaintance requirement.

Additionally, sometimes negation with the right kind of accentuation can be used as a metalinguistic critique of using the words that trigger the presupposition:

(19) A: Yoshi quit smoking.

B: It is certainly not the case that Yoshi *quit* smoking—after all, he never smoked a cigarette in his life!

In (19), B is criticizing A for using the term ‘quit’, even though the presupposition triggered by her use of the word is false. Presuppositions allow for this kind of metalinguistic critique.

However, aesthetic statements and the acquaintance requirement behave differently:

(20) A: X is beautiful.

B: ?? It is certainly not the case that X is *beautiful*—after all, you have never seen X.

B’s reaction in (20) is odd. With respect to aesthetic statements, negation and accentuation cannot be used by B to criticize A’s use of the term ‘beautiful’ for the falsity of the alleged presupposition. This speaks against the presupposition account both in its simple and in its more sophisticated form. In the face of these difficulties, it is reasonable to investigate whether an alternative explanation of AI/AN can be developed.<sup>7</sup>

### 3.4 The Epistemic Account

Assertions are governed by certain norms. Timothy Williamson (1996) argues for the following:

#### **Knowledge norm of assertion**

Assert p, only if you know that p.

Others consider this norm too strong and opt for something weaker (Schechter 2017):

#### **Justified-belief norm of assertion**

Assert p, only if you justifiedly believe that p.

Furthermore, there is a widely discussed *epistemic* acquaintance principle that does not concern the utterance of aesthetic sentences but the justification of aesthetic beliefs.

#### **The epistemic acquaintance principle (roughly)**

An aesthetic belief can only be justified via first-hand experience with the object in question (Wollheim 1980: 233).

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<sup>7</sup> Willer and Kennedy (2022) suggest an interesting theory that explains AI/AN via a combination of elements of the presupposition account with certain assumptions they put forward as expressivist. Due to space limitations, I cannot discuss their account here in detail.

If we presuppose one of the epistemic norms of assertion as well as the epistemic acquaintance principle, then AI/AN can be explained via the following argument (Robson 2012; Ninan 2014):

- (a) If S is in a position to appropriately utter ‘X is beautiful’, then S’s belief that X is beautiful is justified (see the *justified-belief norm* or the *knowledge norm* of assertion).<sup>8</sup>
- (b) If S’s belief that X is beautiful is justified, then S has made a first-hand experience with X (see the *epistemic acquaintance principle*).
- (c) Thus, if S’s utterance of ‘X is beautiful’ is appropriate, then S has a first-hand experience of X. Hence, AN applies to aesthetic sentences.

Notably, (a)–(c) explains the acquaintance norm AN.

This strategy has been criticized in various ways (Franzén 2018: 672–75; Anand and Korotkova 2018: 61–63; Dinges and Zakkou 2021: 1193–95; Willer and Kennedy 2022: 28–29). For the purposes of this paper, it is not necessary to rehearse all of these problems. In my view, the most serious problem with the strategy is that it presupposes the epistemic acquaintance principle (see premise (b)). *Prima facie*, the following speaks against the principle: Assume that you and your friend have been of the same opinion, with respect to the question of whether certain objects are beautiful, more than a thousand times. Furthermore, assume that your friend tells you that a certain object X, which you have not yet seen, is beautiful and that, on the basis of her testimony, you believe that X is beautiful. Is this belief of yours justified? It is plausible to assume that it is. This seems especially clear if we do not presuppose a binary model of belief. Assume, before your friend tells you anything about X, your credence in ‘X is beautiful’ is 0.5. Should your credence increase after your friend—with whom you have shared the same aesthetic opinion a thousand times—tells you, that X is beautiful? Yes, it should. The testimony of your friend seems to provide inductive evidence for the belief that X is beautiful. And I see no reason to assume the new credence could not meet a certain threshold for justification or knowledge. If proponents of the epistemic account like to hold on to their explanation of AN, they have to put forward additional reasons why such a threshold for justification or knowledge cannot be met.

Additionally, it is perfectly rational to act on aesthetic testimony. It is rational for you to go and see a movie because your friend or a critic told you that the movie is beautiful. And it is natural to account for the rationality of this behaviour by claiming that you have testimonial justification for the belief that the movie is beautiful (for detailed discussion of this point, see Hopkins 2011; Lord 2016).

Thus, on closer inspection, the epistemic acquaintance principle with respect to aesthetic beliefs is questionable, and there are plausible arguments against it. Furthermore, in the context of the present investigation, the strongest argument in favour of the principle is not convincing. The strongest argument is an inference to the best explanation: Advocates of the epistemic acquaintance principle, with respect to aesthetic beliefs, accept the linguistic acquaintance norm with respect to aesthetic statements AN. They argue that (a)–(c) is the best explanation for why AN holds. Because this explanation presupposes the epistemic acquaintance principle, they conclude that this principle must be correct (Robson 2012). This strategy presupposes the linguistic norm AN to justify the epistemic acquaintance principle via an inference to the best explanation. Because this line of thought is an inference to the best explanation, its cogency depends on the question, whether there are other and better explanations for AN. Suggesting a better explanation for AN, one that does not rest on a

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<sup>8</sup> For the sake of argument, I will accept that justification is necessary for knowledge.



questionable epistemic principle with respect to aesthetic beliefs, is exactly what this paper sets out to do. Thus, in the context of the present investigation, not only is the epistemic acquaintance principle confronted with serious counterexamples, but also, the only argument in favour of the principle is not particularly convincing. Thus, just like the other explanations, the epistemic explanation of AI/AN faces severe problems.

## 4 Illocutionary Pluralism and Hybrid Expressivism

### 4.1 The Basic Idea

In speech act theory, various types of illocutionary acts are differentiated. The following are relevant to our discussion:

*Assertive acts:* These acts are usually performed by uttering declarative sentences, for example, ‘This drink is cold’. These acts are descriptive in the sense that they aim to assert that something is the case and they express the corresponding belief—in our example it is the belief that the drink is cold.

*Expressive acts:* These acts are usually performed by uttering an exclamative, for example: ‘Brr! How cold!’ These acts are not descriptive, they do not aim to assert that something is the case but to express a non-doxastic, non-propositional mental state—in our example it is the phenomenal state of feeling cold.

Illocutionary acts are governed by sincerity conditions. The sincerity condition of an assertive act requires that the speaker entertains the belief she is expressing by the act. The sincerity condition of an expressive act requires that the speaker is in the non-propositional mental state she expresses by the act. The corresponding rule is that you should utter ‘q’ only if you are in the mental state expressed by ‘q’. For example, utter ‘Brrr! How cold!’ only if you are in the phenomenal state of feeling cold, and utter ‘Ouch!’ only if you are in the phenomenal state of feeling pain (Searle 1969: ch. 3). It is because of these sincerity conditions and the corresponding norms that we are able to express mental states, such as feeling cold or feeling pain, by uttering certain types of sentences (Schroeder 2008a).

The explanation of AI/AN with respect to the aesthetic statements that I want to suggest rests on the following idea.

(3) X is beautiful.

With the sincere and literal utterance of (3), we perform two illocutionary acts simultaneously. We perform an *assertive* as well as an *expressive* act. The *assertive act* ascribes a certain property to an object X and expresses the corresponding belief. The *expressive act* expresses a complex phenomenal mental state M, namely the state we are in when experiencing something beautiful. It is the same mental state we express by uttering the exclamative: ‘Oh, how beautiful!’

The expressive act correlated with (3) explains the acquaintance norm AN. It is part of the sincerity condition of uttering (3) that the speaker is or was in mental state M that she expresses by uttering the sentence. The corresponding rule is: Utter ‘X is beautiful’ only if you are or have been in M. However, to be in that state, the speaker must have experienced X. After all, the mental state she expresses is the state she was in while experiencing the object. Thus, (3) can only be uttered appropriately if the speaker has experienced X. This explains the acquaintance norm AN. Furthermore, we usually assume that the sincerity conditions of speech acts are met, so the suggested line of thought also explains AI (that is, it explains why uttering (3) usually conveys the information that the speaker has experienced X herself).

As mentioned in the introduction, this explanation is closely related to the expressivist account suggested by Franzén (2018). To spell out my proposal in more detail and to elaborate on its advantages over Franzén’s explanation, I will turn to the following questions:

- (a) If AN/AI is explained via the expressive aspect of aesthetic statements, why should we accept the suggested version of hybrid expressivism that claims that, in uttering an aesthetic sentence, we perform two illocutionary acts, an expressive *and* an assertive one? Why not simply accept expressivism?
- (b) If in uttering an aesthetic sentence, we perform an expressive *and* an assertive act, how are those acts related? What kind of property do we ascribe to an object in the assertive act so that this ascription goes along with the expressive act of expressing a certain non-propositional, non-doxastic mental attitude?

I will answer questions (a) and (b) in sections 4.2 and 4.3, respectively.

## 4.2 Hybrid Expressivism vs. Simple Expressivism

Different theories go by the name ‘expressivism’. In the context of this paper, ‘expressivism’ refers to a theory that is capable to put forward the specified explanation of AN/AI. Such a theory assumes that the utterance of an aesthetic sentence consists of nothing more than an expressive act that is guided by a certain sincerity condition. This characterization of expressivism still allows for various specifications of which type of mental state is expressed. Usually, expressivists think that the mental state expressed by aesthetic statements is a non-representational (non-propositional), affective state of liking, enjoying, or loving the looks or sounds of the object in question (Franzén 2018; Blackburn 1984, 1993). Thus, according to expressivism ‘X is beautiful’ is comparable to the exclamative ‘Bravo!’. This form of expressivism faces various problems. I will address three of these problems and explain the extent to which hybrid expressivism provides convincing solutions.

### The first problem for simple expressivism

The first problem is the notorious Frege-Geach problem. The easiest way to explain the problem is by focusing on certain instances of *modus ponens*:

- (i) If X is beautiful, then Erica will buy X.
- (ii) X is beautiful.
- (iii) Thus, Erica will buy X.

This argument is valid. However, no mental state is expressed by the aesthetic sentence that occurs as an antecedent in (i). This is confirmed by the fact that (i) can appropriately be uttered without the speaker having seen X. Thus, expressivists seem committed to the view that, while the meaning of (ii) is exhausted in the expression of a certain non-representational (non-propositional) mental attitude, this does not hold for the aesthetic sentence that occurs as an antecedent in (i). Thus, from an expressivist point of view, the antecedent in (i) and the premise (ii) have different meanings. But if expressivists commit themselves to this view, they cannot retain the validity of concluding (iii) from (i)–(ii). This is the so-called Frege-Geach problem. The heart of the problem is the difficulty in developing compositional semantics within the framework of an expressivist theory, which explains the meaning of complex sentences via recourse to the meaning of their constituents (Schroeder 2008b).

If we take a hybrid approach, an easy solution to the problem is available. According to the suggested version of hybrid expressivism we perform an expressive *and* an assertive speech act with the utterance of an aesthetic sentence. The validity of the argument (i)–(iii) can, in

this case, be explained on the basis of the assertive part of the utterance. The assertive part of premise (ii) as well as the assertive part of the antecedent of (i) are identical in meaning, they have the same propositional content. Thus, the validity of the argument (i)–(iii) is not threatened. In more general terms, with regard to the assertive part of an aesthetic sentence, there are at least no principled difficulties for standard truth-conditional compositional semantics. Thus, hybrid expressivism circumvents the Frege-Geach problem.

Of course, proponents of simple expressivism have also suggested solutions to the Frege-Geach problem. These proposals can be broadly assigned to two kinds of expressivism. The first kind assumes that the meaning of aesthetic statements (or normative statements in general) is to be explained via the putative connection to non-assertive speech acts (namely, expressives) that express non-representational, affective mental states. It is this kind of expressivism that can explain AI/AN via recourse to the sincerity conditions of those expressive acts (Franzén 2018; Blackburn 1984). Within this form of expressivism, Blackburn has suggested outlines of a compositional semantics that is supposed to solve the Frege-Geach problem. His broadly psychologist semantics maps statements to mental states in a broadly recursive manner (Blackburn 1984, 1993; Rosen 1998). This suggestion, however, has far-reaching and very controversial consequences (Schroeder 2008c). Most importantly, it forces us to reject an entire branch of semantics that is highly developed and has proven very successful in many areas of application, namely truth-conditional (or possible world) semantics.

A second kind of expressivism solves the Frege-Geach problem by offering a compositional semantics that is *not* inconsistent with truth-conditional (possible world) semantics. Starting from Gibbard (1990, 2003), the basic idea is to evaluate a sentence not only with respect to a world  $w$ , but with respect to a world-norm pair  $\langle w, \pi \rangle$ , where norms are construed not as mental states but as certain kinds of abstract entities. This allows proponents of this approach to maintain the tools of possible world semantics and thereby overcome a broadly psychologistic semantics à la Blackburn. For different ways to motivate and spell out this idea, see Yalcin (2012); Silk (2013); Charlow (2014).<sup>9</sup>

However, in the context of the present study, it is important to note that it is unclear whether these alternative approaches can hold on to the suggested explanation of AI/AN, which appeals to the sincerity condition of expressive acts. After all, a main innovation of these approaches consists precisely in breaking the close connection between normative statements and non-assertive speech acts (Yalcin 2018: 400). Furthermore, expressivist positions that take their starting point from Gibbard (1990, 2003) do not characterize the mental state expressed by normative statements as affective states but rather as states of norm acceptance. However, at least with respect to the moral domain, Gibbard explicitly holds that these states do not require acquaintance (1990: 180–181): they can be formed on the basis of testimony. However, if states of norm acceptance do not require acquaintance, why do aesthetic statements that, according to this version of expressivism, express states of norm acceptance give rise to the acquaintance inference AI? This question remains unanswered. Thus, by solving the Frege-Geach problem via recourse to a broadly Gibbardian semantics, expressivists might be able hold on to well-established tools of

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<sup>9</sup> The idea has been further developed within the context of dynamic semantics in Charlow 2015; Starr 2016; Willer 2017.

possible world semantics, but they thereby compromise the outlined expressivist explanation of AI/AN.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, the following advantage of hybrid expressivism can be noted. The variants of simple expressivism that can explain AI/AN must, in solving the Frege-Geach problem, abandon truth-conditional semantics. Other versions of simple expressivism need not give up truth-conditional semantics, but whether and how they can explain AI/AN remains unclear. In contrast, the suggested form of *hybrid* expressivism can convincingly explain AI/AN and circumvents the Frege–Geach problem without abandoning truth-conditional (possible world) semantics.

In this context, it is helpful to consider another potentially problematic argument:

- (iv) If X is exhibited in the gallery, then X is beautiful.
- (v) X is exhibited in the gallery.
- (vi) Thus: X is beautiful.

One might suspect that this argument still raises a difficulty for the hybrid approach. In the conditional (iv), the aesthetic statement occurs in the consequent, and with an utterance of (iv), we again do not perform an expressive speech act. Now, suppose we are justified in assuming that (iv) and (v) are true without having seen X ourselves. Maybe we are justified in (iv) and (v) through testimony. Thus, we can conclude from (iv)–(v) that (vi) is correct, that is, that X is beautiful, without having seen X ourselves. Isn't this in conflict with the linguistic data and with hybrid expressivism?

Although it may seem so at first glance, argument (iv)–(vi) does not pose a problem for the proposed position. We have explicitly distinguished between *linguistic* acquaintance principles concerning aesthetic *statements* and the *epistemic acquaintance principle* with respect to aesthetic *beliefs*. The latter claims that an aesthetic belief can only be justified via first-personal experience with the object in question. We rejected this principle as implausible (see section 3.4). In this sense, we can simply accept that a justification of (iv)–(v) leads to the justified belief that X is beautiful—without the epistemic subject having experienced X. However, the following still holds: If a person has not experienced X herself, but entertains the belief that X is beautiful on the basis of (iv)–(vi), then she still cannot appropriately utter 'X is beautiful'. The reason for this is that with such an utterance she would not only perform an assertive speech act, she would not only ascribe a certain property to an object, but also an expressive one, she would express a certain non-representational (non-propositional) mental state. And with respect to this expressive act the corresponding sincerity condition would not be satisfied.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For a recent suggestion of how an expressivist approach might be integrated into traditional, formal semantics without committing to Gibbardian states of norms acceptance, see Ninan forthcoming; also compare Willer and Kennedy 2022.

<sup>11</sup> The speech act theoretical version of hybrid expressivism suggested in this paper only concerns aesthetic statements and not aesthetic beliefs or thoughts—and, in light of the implausibility of the epistemic acquaintance principle with respect to aesthetic beliefs, it is designed to do so. This is an important difference to popular hybrid expressivist theories suggested in meta-ethics. Hybrid theories in meta-ethics try to hold on to the expressivist solution of the so-called motivational problem, without falling into the problems of a purely expressivist position (Frege-Geach problem, open-question problem, etc.). Given these two objectives hybrid expressivism in meta-ethics has to concern moral beliefs as much as moral statements. For a thorough discussion of this point and of hybrid expressivism in meta-ethics in general, see Schroeder 2009. For an interesting defense of the view against Schroeder's concerns, see Copp 2014, 2018. For different and widely discussed versions of hybrid expressivism in meta-ethics, see Boisvert 2008; Ridge 2014.

## The second problem for simple expressivism

The second problem for simple expressivism concerns aesthetic belief ascriptions. Regardless of the type of simple expressivism, contemporary expressivists do not deny that we can have beliefs in the normative domain. For example, they usually do not deny that there is such a thing as believing that murder is wrong or that this flower is beautiful. Rather, they assume that even though these mental states do not have representational (propositional) content, the mental states can nevertheless count as beliefs (Franzén 2018: 680; Gibbard 2003: 183).

Accordingly, the mental state that is expressed by

(3) X is beautiful

is the same kind of state attributed to S in aesthetic belief ascriptions, such as

(21) S believes that X is beautiful.

Moreover, if simple expressivists want to hold on to the specified explanation of AI/AN, they must accept that to be in this non-representational belief-state requires first-hand experience with X.

This combination of claims, however, leads to the following problem with respect to self-ascriptions of aesthetic beliefs:

(22) I believe that X is beautiful.

In contrast to (3), (22) does not give rise to the acquaintance inference AI, which can be illustrated by the felicity of the following sentence:

(23) I believe that X is beautiful, but I have never experienced X myself.

That self-ascriptions of aesthetic beliefs do not give rise to AI is widely acknowledged and explicitly accepted by expressivists (Franzen 2018: 681). However, if the attitude I ascribe to myself in stating (22) is the same as the attitude that I express by stating (3), and if I can only be in this attitude if I am acquainted with X, why does (3), but not (22), give rise to AI? Simple expressivists owe us an answer to this question, and it is unclear what a convincing answer would look like.

Note that within the suggested version of hybrid expressivism, a straightforward answer becomes available. According to hybrid expressivism, an aesthetic statement consists in the performance of two speech-acts, an expressive *and* an assertive one. In the expressive act we express a non-representational, affective mental state that involves liking, and in the assertive act we express a representational mental state with an ordinary propositional content. Only the representational mental state is a belief-state, and only the non-representational, affective state requires acquaintance with X. According to hybrid expressivism, (3) but not (22) gives rise to AI because by stating (3), speakers express both the affective and the representational states, but in (22) speakers only ascribe the representational mental state to themselves. Because in contrast to affective states representational states do not require acquaintance, only (3), but not (22), gives rise to AI.

### The third problem for simple expressivism

The third problem for simple expressivism concerns certain retraction data. Suppose I utter 'X is beautiful', and my attention is then drawn to the fact that I have, without noticing, ingested perception-altering drugs. In this case it seems appropriate and natural to retract my statement by saying, 'Okay, maybe X is not really beautiful, but it seems beautiful to me and I really enjoy how it looks/sounds right now'. Aesthetic statements are in this respect comparable to descriptive statements, such as 'X is red'. If I say of an object that it is red, and my attention is then drawn to the fact that there are strange lighting conditions in the room, so that colours cannot be reliably identified, it is appropriate to retract my statement by saying, 'Okay, maybe X is not really red, but it seems red to me right now'.

However, if the kind of simple expressivism that allows for a straightforward explanation of AI/AN is correct, and an aesthetic statement is nothing over and above an expressive act, this kind of retraction would not be required. To see this, a comparison to the purely expressive act of uttering the exclamative 'Ouch!' is helpful. In uttering 'Ouch!' I do express pain. And even if someone points out to me that I have taken drugs that lower my pain tolerance, I am not at all linguistically required to retract this speech act.<sup>12</sup>

These retraction data pose a problem for expressivism with respect to aesthetic statements. And as far as I know, no attempt has been made to explain the data within the framework of a simple expressivism. Hybrid expressivists, on the other hand, can easily explain the data: In uttering 'X is beautiful' we perform an expressive *and* an assertive speech-act. It is widely accepted that the act of assertion is governed by an epistemic norm (see section 3.4). If, after our statement, someone points out that our judgment as to the presence of the property is clouded by drugs, the epistemic norm of assertion is no longer satisfied, and I am, thus, required to retract the assertion. This explanation is analogous to the explanation of retraction data for ordinary descriptive statements: In uttering 'X is red' we perform an assertive speech act. Assertion is governed by an epistemic norm. If, after our statement, someone points out that the lighting conditions in the room do not allow for reliable colour perception, the epistemic norm of assertion is no longer satisfied, and I am, thus, required to retract the assertion.

In summary, we can specify three advantages of hybrid expressivism over simple expressivism: First, in contrast to different versions of simple expressivism, hybrid expressivism circumvents the Frege-Geach problem without abandoning truth conditional semantics and without compromising the suggested expressivist explanation of AI/AN. Second, in contrast to simple expressivism, hybrid expressivism can explain why aesthetic statements give rise to AI, whereas self-ascriptions of aesthetic beliefs do not. Third, in contrast to simple expressivism, hybrid expressivism can easily account for certain retraction data with respect to aesthetic statements.

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<sup>12</sup> This is not to say that there are no circumstances in which it is appropriate and natural to withdraw an expressive act. Suppose I am watching a ball game between two teams, A and B, in a pub. I alone am a fan of team A, and everyone else is a fan of team B. If I express my enthusiasm for A in an expressive speech act such as 'Hooray, A!' it may well be appropriate to retract the speech act. In this case, however, there is no linguistic norm that requires me to do so but rather the desire not to draw the hatred of fans in a pub onto myself. Thanks to an anonymous referee of this journal for drawing my attention to that example.

### 4.3 Illocutionary Pluralism and the Dispositional Analysis of Beauty

The general point of illocutionary pluralism, namely that a speaker can perform a plurality of illocutionary acts via an utterance token in one unique speech situation, is widely discussed and defended in speech act theory (Johnson 2019; Lewinski 2021).<sup>13</sup> However, in addition to the cases discussed in these investigations, the focus on aesthetic statements points to a further example of illocutionary pluralism that has been overlooked thus far. The reason we should accept that in uttering an aesthetic sentence we perform two illocutionary acts simultaneously, an expressive and an assertive one, is: The expressive part of an aesthetic statement explains the acquaintance phenomena, and the assertive part allows us to circumvent problems of simple expressivism while holding on to the suggested expressivist explanation of those phenomena. However, even if we take this to be an interesting suggestion, we might still wonder how the expressive and the assertive act of aesthetic statements are related. Those who claim that we perform two speech acts with a sincere and literal utterance of ‘X is beautiful’, must also say something about the relation of those acts (Franzén 2018: 682). Thus, hybrid expressivists face the challenge of answering the following questions: Which type of property do we ascribe to X so that the assertive act is accompanied by the aforementioned expressive act? How are the expressive and the assertive acts related?

My response to this challenge is twofold. First, I suggest analyzing beauty as a response-dispositional property, namely the property to evoke a certain kind of mental state M in subjects S under certain circumstances C. The mental state M is the manifestation of the disposition and perception of the object under ideal conditions (in the appropriate environment, with functional perceptual capacities, with the appropriate attention to certain details, etc.) is the manifestation-condition C. In the *assertive act* associated with the aesthetic statement ‘X is beautiful’, we ascribe this kind of response-dispositional property to X. Thus, ‘X is beautiful’ is true if and only if X has the dispositional property to evoke M in S under C. In the *expressive act* associated with ‘X is beautiful’ we express exactly the mental state M that is the manifestation of the response-dispositional property, which we ascribe to the object in the corresponding assertive act. This is how these two acts are related. This relation explains why the assertive act of ascribing a certain property to an object is accompanied by expressing a certain non-representational, affective mental attitude. The manifestation of the response-dispositional property ascribed to X in the assertive act is exactly the mental state M that is expressed in the expressive act.

Second, with respect to the relation of the two speech acts, I furthermore suggest the following:

#### **Simple Principle (SP)**

The utterance ‘X is beautiful’ is an instance of an expressive act of expressing M if and only if it is also an instance of the assertive act of ascribing the property beauty to X.

Given that I accept that hybrid expressivists must specify the relation of the two speech acts that are supposed to be performed with ‘X is beautiful’, I consider (SP) an integral part of the suggested version of hybrid expressivism. Note that, according to (SP), whenever ‘X is beautiful’ is embedded in a context where the assertive act is absent, the expressive act is absent as well. For example, suppose ‘X is beautiful’ is embedded in the conditional ‘If X is

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<sup>13</sup> For the difference between illocutionary pluralism and Searle’s (1975) analysis of direct and indirect illocutionary acts, see Johnson 2019: 1153–55.

beautiful, then  $p$ ?. Uttering this conditional is not a performance of the assertive act of ascribing beauty to  $X$ , and it is also not an act of expressing  $M$ . The same is true when certain operators are added to ‘ $X$  is beautiful’, such as: ‘ $X$  might be beautiful’, and ‘It is possible that  $X$  is beautiful’. Uttering one of these sentences is not an assertive act of ascribing beauty to  $X$ ; thus, in accordance with (SP), the expressive act is absent as well.

Thus, the suggested version of hybrid expressivism can account for the data that in certain embeddings, the acquaintance requirement is absent:

- (24) If her new painting is beautiful, then I will buy it.
- (25) Her new painting might be beautiful.
- (26) It is possible that her new painting is beautiful.

None of the sentences (24)–(26) conveys that the speaker has experienced  $X$ . According to the hybrid theory proposed here, this is not surprising. Uttering (24)–(26) is not a performance of the assertive act of ascribing beauty to an object, and according to (SP), only assertive acts of this kind are accompanied by the expressive act of expressing a certain non-representational affective mental state  $M$  and, thus, exhibit the acquaintance inference.

Thus, to respond to the challenge of specifying how the assertive and the expressive acts are related, I suggest that hybrid expressivists subscribe to the simple principle (SP). The principle fits well with the response-dispositional analysis of beauty; and by subscribing to (SP), hybrid expressivists can explain why in certain embeddings the acquaintance requirement goes away. Note that the commitment to (SP) also highlights the extent to which the explanation of AI/AN provided by hybrid expressivism is a speech-act theoretical explanation. AI/AN is not explained via recourse to semantic or pragmatic rules governing the lexical item ‘beautiful’ but via recourse to the speech acts we can perform with ‘ $X$  is beautiful’. Only if we perform the assertive act of ascribing the response-dispositional property of beauty with an utterance of that sentence do we also perform the expressive act of expressing the affective state  $M$ ; and it is the sincerity condition of the latter act that explains AI/AN.

It is important to note that the proposed dispositional analysis of the assertive act associated with aesthetic statements leaves many questions unanswered: How can we specify the phenomenal characteristics of the mental state  $M$  in more detail? What idealizations are necessary with respect to the manifestation conditions  $C$ ? Must the class of subjects  $S$  be restricted by further conditions? Should beauty ultimately be conceived as a single-track or multitrack disposition (Manley and Wasserman 2008)? What are the exact truth-conditions of ‘ $X$  has the dispositional property to evoke  $M$  in  $S$  under  $C$ ’? Fortunately, for the purposes of this paper, these questions need not be addressed.<sup>14</sup> The hybrid expressivist explanation of AI/AN must say something about the connection between the two assumed speech acts and, in this context, I have referred to the dispositional structure of aesthetic properties and (SP). However, the suggested hybrid expressivist explanation of AI/AN is compatible with a whole set of specifications of the dispositional structure and of the truth-conditions of the corresponding dispositional sentence. The only requirement is that the truth-conditions

be spelled out in a way that allows us to hold onto the advantages of a hybrid over simple variants of expressivism established in subsection 4.2.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> For a detailed discussion of these questions, see Briesen 2020: ch. 6–7.

<sup>15</sup> Hybrid expressivism is compatible with invariantist or context-sensitive semantics of the dispositional sentence. The latter restrict  $C$  or  $S$  via certain parameters—either of the context of utterance or the context of



## 5 Problems and Limits of the Account

### 5.1 First Problem: Expressing Past Experiences

According to the suggested version of hybrid expressivism an utterance of ‘X is beautiful’ expresses mental state M, the state we are in when experiencing something beautiful. This is comparable to an utterance of ‘Ouch!’ that expresses the mental state of pain. The sincerity condition with respect to the latter statement demands that the speaker is in the state of pain while making the statement. However, the sincerity condition with respect to ‘X is beautiful’ demands that the speaker is or *was* in M (section 4.1). Thus, the latter allows for past experiences, and rightly so: There is no norm demanding to utter ‘X is beautiful’ only if you are in M while making the statement. However, is it really possible to express a mental state you are not in while making the statement?

I think this worry rests on a false conception of what it means to express something. If you accept a causal account of expression and think that the mental state expressed by the statement ‘p’ is the state that is causally responsible for the statement, then it might be hard to see, how a mental state of the past could be expressed by ‘p’. However, as Schroeder (2008a) has convincingly argued this causal conception of expression is wrong. What establishes the relation of a mental state and a statement ‘p’ is not a causal relation, but the norm corresponding to the sincerity condition. For ‘Ouch!’ this norm says: Utter ‘Ouch!’ only if you are in pain. It is because of the relation established by this norm that ‘Ouch!’ expresses pain—even in cases where someone disregards the norm and utters ‘Ouch!’ without being in pain. With respect to ‘X is beautiful’ the norm says: Utter ‘X is beautiful’ only if you are or *have been* in M. Since the expression relation is not established by a causal connection, but by a certain norm, there is nothing mysterious about expressing a mental state you are not in while making the statement. As long as the sincerity condition and the corresponding norm connects present as well as past mental states with the statement, the statement can express present as well as past mental states.

### 5.2 Second Problem: Acquaintance and Negation

We have already noticed that the acquaintance inference AI and the corresponding norm AN project over negation:

(27) X is beautiful.

(28) X is not beautiful.

Notably, (27) as well as (28) convey that the speaker has experienced X, and both sentences are uttered appropriately only if that is the case. The hybrid expressivist suggestion is capable of explaining AI/AN with respect to (27), but how is this explanation transferable to (28)? What property is ascribed, and what kind of non-doxastic mental state is expressed by uttering (28)? Answering these questions is the most serious challenge of the account.

The best answer I can think of starts by pointing out that the negation in (28) has narrow scope, in contrast to the wide scope negation in

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assessment (MacFarlane 2014). As long as such a context-sensitive semantics allows us to hold on to the advantages of hybrid over simple expressivism, it is not in conflict with the suggested explanation of AI/AN.

(29) It is not that case that X is beautiful.

Highlighting the narrow scope reading allows proponents of hybrid expressivism to assume that, in the assertive act associated with (28), we ascribe the property of *non-beauty*, and in the expressive act, we express the mental state  $M^*$ , which is the state we are in when experiencing something *non-beautiful*. Just as with respect to the mental state that is the manifestation of the response-dispositional property *beauty*, the mental state that is the manifestation of the response-dispositional property *non-beauty* requires acquaintance with the object in question. Thus, (28) gives rise to AI/AN just as (27) does.

The problem with this line of thought is that even though it might be plausible to consider beauty as a response-dispositional property, this seems less plausible with respect to non-beauty. If non-beauty is a response-dispositional property, then it has a particular type of mental state as its manifestation. What kind of state should that be? In my view, the fact that hybrid expressivists—who want to hold on to the suggested explanation of AI/AN—are committed to the assumption that non-beauty is a response dispositional property with a specific mental state as its manifestation must be booked as a cost of the theory.

One way to soften that blow consists in highlighting the negative strengthening effect (Horn 1989). Negative strengthening is the phenomenon in which statements of the form ‘X is not happy’, ‘X is not likely’, or ‘X is not intelligent’ often receive a stronger interpretation, namely that X is unhappy, X is unlikely, or X is stupid (for different explanations of this phenomenon see, for example, Levinson 2000; Krifka 2007). Because the negative strengthening effect is a widespread phenomenon, it is reasonable to assume that it also occurs in aesthetic statements. Accordingly, (28) is often understood along the lines of

(30) X is ugly.

Note that with respect to (30), the hybrid expressivist story is plausible again. In the assertive act, we ascribe the property of *ugliness*, and in the expressive act, we express the mental state  $M^{**}$ , which is the state we are in when experiencing something ugly (a state that requires acquaintance with the object). The assumption that ugliness is a response-dispositional property with a particular mental state as its manifestation is just as plausible as the analogous assumption with respect to beauty. Thus, when (28) is understood along the lines of (30), which, given the negative strengthening effect, often is the case, then hybrid expressivism can plausibly explain AI/AN with respect to (28).

Although this is good news for hybrid expressivists, its force remains limited. Because (28) is presumably not always understood along the lines of (30), proponents of the hybrid expressivist explanation of the acquaintance phenomena seem nevertheless confronted with a problem. Either they deny the acquaintance phenomena for those readings of (28) that are not understood along the lines of (30), or they are committed to the metaphysical claim that non-beauty is a response-dispositional property with a particular mental state as its manifestation.

Unfortunately, there is an additional worry. So far, the suggested strategy has been concerned only with narrow scope negation. What about aesthetic statements in which the negation has wide scope?

(29) It is not the case that X is beautiful.

Arguably, (29) is also subject to AI/AN. However, according to hybrid expressivism, aesthetic statements give rise to the acquaintance requirement, because those statements consist of two speech acts, an assertive act of ascribing a response-dispositional property to an object, and the expressive act of expressing the mental state  $M$  that is the manifestation of this property. It is the sincerity condition associated with the expressive act, that explains

AI/AN. Furthermore, the assertive act of ascribing a response-dispositional aesthetic property (for example, beauty) is closely linked to the expressive act of expressing the corresponding mental state: If the assertive act is absent, the expressive act is absent as well—which, according to the suggestion, also results in the absence of the acquaintance requirement (see simple principle (SP)).

The problem is that even though uttering (29) is an assertive act, namely the act of asserting the proposition *that it is not the case that X is beautiful*, it is not an assertive act of ascribing the property of beauty to X—nor is it an assertive act of ascribing any other aesthetic property, such as non-beauty, to X. Thus, according to the suggested version of hybrid expressivism, (29) should not be subject to AI/AN. Therefore, if it is correct that (29) is subject to AI/AN, hybrid expressivism cannot explain why this is the case.

One way of responding to this problem consists in claiming that speakers get confused regarding wide and narrow scope readings of negated aesthetic sentences. Thus, speakers are not really aware of the difference between (28) and (29), so that the explanation with respect to (28) is transferable to (29). It is certainly true that in some cases there is confusion on the part of the speakers with regard to wide and narrow scope readings of negated sentences and that sometimes a wide scope reading is hard to get (Leslie 2008; Dinges and Zakkou 2021).

Moreover, hybrid expressivists could point to the fact that in cases where the wide scope reading is particularly salient, the acquaintance requirement fades away, which is exactly what their theory would predict. Take a look at the following example. Suppose two people discuss which objects exhibit a particular form of beauty, namely visual beauty. One of the persons says:

- (31) It is certainly not the case that Mahler's 5th Symphony is visually beautiful; it is not the right kind of thing to be visually beautiful or visually non-beautiful because it is not a visual object in the first place.<sup>16</sup>

In this example, the wide-scope reading is particularly salient. By insisting that the object is neither visually beautiful nor visually non-beautiful, the narrow-scope reading is explicitly blocked. Fortunately for hybrid expressivists and perfectly in line with their theory, (31), however, is *not* subject to AI/AN. Sincerely uttering (31) can be appropriate even though the speaker is not perceptually acquainted with the symphony, and from hearing the statement we would not infer that the speaker is perceptually acquainted with it.

Thus, the strategy of applying the hybrid expressivist explanation of AI/AN to aesthetic statements with wide-scope negation includes two aspects. First, if the wide scope reading is salient, then the statements are not subject to AI/AN. This is exactly what the hybrid explanation predicts: If the wide scope reading is salient, no assertive act is performed in which an aesthetic property is attributed to an object; thus, according to (SP), the expressive act is absent, as well as the acquaintance requirement. Second, in all other cases, the wide-scope reading is not salient, and the statements are subject to AI/AN. However, if the wide-scope reading is not salient, then speakers easily confuse the wide and narrow scope reading of those sentences; and if speakers confuse the wide and narrow scope reading, then the explanation of AI/AN offered by hybrid expressivism with respect to uttering the narrow scope sentence (28) can be transferred to the wide-scope sentence (29).

In summary, the following costs of the hybrid expressivist's strategy of explaining AI/AN with respect to negated aesthetic sentences must be noted. First, in terms of explaining (28),

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<sup>16</sup> Thanks to an anonymous referee of this journal for drawing my attention to an example with an analogous structure.

hybrid expressivists are committed to the somewhat problematic metaphysical claim that non-beauty, just like beauty and ugliness, is a distinct response-dispositional property with a particular mental state as its manifestation. Second, in terms of explaining (29), hybrid expressivists are committed to the somewhat problematic linguistic assumption that whenever the wide scope negation of an aesthetic sentence is not particularly salient, speakers confuse wide with narrow scope readings of these sentences.

## 5 Conclusion

Aesthetic statements give rise to the acquaintance inference AI and are subject to the acquaintance norm AN. Aesthetic statements, such as ‘X is beautiful’, convey that the speaker has first-hand experience with X and can, thus, only be uttered appropriately if this is the case (see section 1 and 2). Why does AI/AN hold? In section 3 I have argued that previous answers to this question are wanting. In section 4 I have suggested an explanation of AI/AN that rests on a certain version of hybrid expressivism. The theory states that, in uttering ‘X is beautiful’, speakers perform two illocutionary acts simultaneously—an assertive and an expressive one. In the assertive act, speakers ascribe a response-dispositional property to X. They claim that X has the dispositional property to evoke mental state M in subjects S under condition C. In the expressive act, they express the manifestation of this property, namely the mental state M. The reason why AI/AN holds is that the expressive act correlated with an aesthetic statement is, like all expressive acts, governed by a sincerity condition demanding that the speaker is or has been in the mental state she expresses. Because a speaker can only be in M if she experiences the object in question, AI/AN holds.

I have specified this theory and the corresponding explanation of AI/AN in detail and argued that it is superior to the explanation of simple expressivism (section 4). Additionally, I discussed remaining problems of the hybrid expressivist explanation as well as possible approaches to solve them (section 5). Even though the suggestion is not free from difficulties, in light of the many concerns regarding alternative explanations of AI/AN, the theoretical cost-benefit ratio of dispositional hybrid expressivism seems acceptable. Thus, considerations related to certain acquaintance phenomena lead to a strong case for a particular variant of hybrid expressivism with respect to aesthetic statements.

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