

Aesthetic Qualities, Aesthetic Experience, Aesthetic Value

STEPHANIE A. ROSS

Introduction

In an early work, *Speaking of Art*, Peter Kivy suggests this concise summary of the problem of aesthetic experience: it involves either the special experience of ordinary qualities, or the ordinary experience of special qualities.¹ I believe this claim needs to be amended considerably in order to capture the full complexity of the issue. First, two more candidates must be added to Kivy's list. In canvassing all the combinations regarding aesthetic experience, we must entertain four possibilities: it involves either (1) the special experience of special qualities, or (2) the special experience of ordinary qualities, or (3) the ordinary experience of special qualities, or (4) the ordinary experience of ordinary qualities. I take it that endorsing option #4 is tantamount to simply denying the existence of aesthetic experience altogether. While some might be inclined to say the same of option #3, I would prefer to view it as a gloss or analysis of the notion of such distinctive aesthetic experience.

But doubling Kivy's list from two to four possibilities is just the beginning. A thoroughgoing analysis of aesthetic experience would not only take a stand on the nature of its correlate or object; it would also extend one level further in each direction and speculate about the relations between aesthetic qualities and their factual or perceptual base, on the one hand, and between aesthetic experience and aesthetic value, on the other. Accommodating these additions to the logical space of candidate answers here, we now confront a dizzying array of possibilities. Jerrold Levinson, in his paper "Aesthetic Supervenience," has argued that there are four possible relations in which aesthetic qualities may stand to their base properties: definitional reduction, positive condition-governing, negative condition-governing, and emergentism.²

And surveying views about aesthetic value, we can sketch at least three options linking aesthetic experience with such value: it might be criterial for such value (definitional instrumentalism), causally contributive to it (contingent instrumentalism), or independent of it (intrinsic artistic value).³

In sum, we have four candidate theories for the first relation (that linking base properties to aesthetic properties), four candidate theories for the second relation (that linking aesthetic properties to aesthetic experience), and three candidate theories for the third relation (that linking aesthetic experience to aesthetic value). A quick glance at the arithmetic needed to determine all possible combinations yields an answer of 48. I will certainly not attempt to investigate each of these combinations in the course of this paper. Indeed, some of them may not in fact be compossible.⁴ I shall simply attempt a first broad survey of the terrain. My goals are to identify philosophers who held some of these views, point out the shortcomings of some of their approaches, and indicate some preferred routes through the maze. I shall begin with central pairing, that between quality and experience.

Experience, Special and Ordinary

Two problems confront us in trying to choose from my revision of Kivy's grid. What distinguishes special from ordinary qualities, and what distinguishes special from ordinary experience? In addressing the second problem, we might hope to find some introspective criterion. Perhaps the specialness of aesthetic experience is indicated by distinctive qualia or feeling tones. This seems not so far from the view Clive Bell defended in his essay "The Aesthetic Hypothesis." Bell portrayed the aesthetic emotion as a sort of sexualized inner clanging to which only the sensitive were privy. In the presence of significant form, it triggered a kind of ecstasy. Here is Bell's statement of this view: "The starting-point for all systems of aesthetics must be the personal experience of a peculiar emotion...The emotion is called the aesthetic emotion; and if we can discover some quality common and peculiar to all the objects that provoke it, we shall have solved what I take to be the central problem of aesthetics...'. Significant Form' is the one quality common to all works of visual art...A good work of visual art carries a person who is capable of appreciating it out of life into ecstasy..."⁵

Bell is criticized – and rightly so! – for grounding his theory in a pair of unacceptably circular definitions. We have no independent access to either

aesthetic emotion or significant form. Each is known only through the other. What might provide adequate entree to the notion of aesthetic experience or aesthetic emotion? Presumably, these must be known through some intrinsic identifying feature, or through a link to something outside themselves which is in turn definitively knowable. Models for the first sort of requirement might be our relation to our own pains, or perhaps, to extend the sexuality implicit in Bell's theory, our relation to our own orgasms. We are authoritative in our reports about our own pains. If I sincerely and repeatedly insist that I have a headache, then the reply "No you don't" is simply not in order. Nor is any suggestion that relocates or re-describes my condition. Even if you ascertain the actual source of my pain, or amass telling evidence of its severity, my avowal doesn't change unless I agree that a new description better suits my experience. In this way, our privileged access to our own pains renders us perhaps not infallible, but definitely incorrigible, judges of our painful experiences.

Not only are we uniquely authoritative in making such self-reports, but the phenomenology of pain is also such that we can't be in pain and not know it. By definition, pains are unpleasant feelings that announce themselves to us. The notion of an "unfelt pain" is without application.. Granted, I may not be able to determine, of a particular sensation, whether it is very strong pressure or very mild pain. But these are just niceties of classification. That I have the sensation is not in question. By contrast, we would say of the athlete who heroically finishes the race or game despite a serious fracture not that he or she was in pain and didn't feel it, but that there was no pain at all, or that the pain was perceived and endured.⁶ Overall, then, we stand in this very special relation to our pains: they are transparent and self-intimating, and we are incorrigible in our reports of them.

There is no reason to think that aesthetic experience works in the way I have just been describing. Despite all his talk of ecstasy and transport, Clive Bell is not entitled to the sexual analogy he tries to exploit in his account of the aesthetic emotion. Compare a query to Anne Landers, Dear Abby, or Dr. Ruth, from someone wondering whether she's had an orgasm. The appropriate answer here is something like "If you have to ask, then sorry, but you haven't had the experience in question." This testifies to our belief that such experiences have the epistemological hallmarks mentioned above – they are transparent and self-intimating, and our relation to them is privileged in that our sincere avowals cannot be called into question except for issues of meaning. We could spin

evolutionary arguments about the overall adaptability of having such relation to our own pains and pleasures. There is no reason to think evolution has fitted us to be infallible recognizers of good art as well as of harmful situations and good sex. We seem neither to have nor to need aesthetic experience of the sort Bell was trying to defend.

So far I have been arguing that our access to aesthetic experience does not parallel our access to our own pains or sexual pleasures. Art does not seem to trigger in us a mental state that is immediately and incorrigibly recognized on the basis of its distinctive phenomenology. But even if there is no type of aesthetic experience that is immediately knowable in this way, perhaps there is a state that we can reliably get to through some sort of process or procedure we go through. The analogy might be some sort of machine that arrives at a particular machine state by first passing through a requisite series of prior states. The example I am thinking of in the aesthetics literature here is Edward Bullough's classic essay "Psychical Distance." Bullough there uses "distance" as a verb; he characterizes distancing as an operation we can perform at will. Although it can be assumed in non-artistic situations (recall his famous example of a fog at sea), perhaps the act of distancing in the presence of a work of art sends us into a state in which we are undergoing aesthetic experience. The process here would be a progressive stripping away of practical concerns (Bullough's "putting out of gear"...) until we are focussed entirely on the purported aesthetic qualities of the object in question.⁷

Two questions arise about this candidate for aesthetic experience. First, is it the distinctive aesthetic experience that we seek, or merely a uniquely riveted or dedicated type of attention? The very fact that Bullough characterizes distancing in negative terms, emphasizing the practical considerations we banish from our minds rather than citing the competing concerns that take their place, inclines me to view the end state achieved as a rarefied form of attention. Consider a sort of parlor-game instance of distancing. It is possible to take any word in the English language and repeat it to oneself so often that it loses all sense of meaning and becomes akin to a nonsense syllable. The process may take place even more rapidly with a somewhat unfamiliar word. So, take a moment to repeat the word "admumbrate" to yourself over and over. If you find yourself losing your grip on the meaning of the word ("to give a sketchy outline, to disclose partially or guardedly") and focussing instead on the sounds of its three component syllables, then scrutinize this mini act of distancing. Into what

mental state have you dispatched yourself? You have presumably lost such basic practical skills as how to use or understand the word. Do any feeling tones remain? Suppose you previously liked or disliked the word – because it seems arch and stuffy, or because it figured in a spelling quiz you recall from sixth grade, or because you’re just put off by the sound of its three syllables. Do these attendant pleasures and pains disappear in distancing?

Just considering this one rather artificial example of distancing has pointed to a dilemma for Bullough’s theory. Bullough himself acknowledges that the process of distancing can be overdone. What is most desirable, he says, is “the utmost decrease of Distance without its disappearance.”⁸ This admission makes clear that a problem that arose for aesthetic experience persists with Bullough’s replacement candidate. We have no internal signs to mark the optimal degree of distance. Yet lacking these, we can only engage the process until all extraneous practical and personal associations have been pared away. The endpoint will inevitably be rapt attention to nothing but the perceptual properties of the object before us. Returning to the alternatives with which we framed this investigation, such engagement sounds ordinary rather than special. It does not seem a promising candidate for aesthetic experience.

I submit that Bullough’s theory fails on internal grounds, since it offers no means for identifying the desired appreciative state, that with the “utmost decrease of Distance.” Moreover, examining the process of distancing encourages us to redirect our investigation, since the question we have ended with concerns not the nature of distance optimally achieved, but rather the set of qualities that that state tunes in to. Before turning to the new topic of special vs. ordinary qualities, let me address one last point raised by Bullough’s theory. That point concerns its Kantian origins.

Bullough’s proposal is clearly in the Kantian tradition, a tradition that emphasizes disinterestedness as a hallmark of the aesthetic. Yet I have not yet in this paper mentioned Kant’s theory. Should we look here for an account of aesthetic experience? Surely Kant posits a distinctive mental state – the free play of imagination and understanding, based on no concept, and resulting in pleasure – into which we are sent when we contemplate certain combinations of form. Moreover, Kant speaks at times as if we are aware of this free play. Consider a passages from the Second Moment of the *Analytic of the Beautiful*: “We now occupy ourselves with the easier question, in what way we are conscious of a mutual subjective harmony of the cognitive powers with one another in the

judgment of taste...[T]hat subjective unity of relation can only make itself known by means of sensation."⁹

Of course, Kant's "easier question" is not at all easy. At issue is whether Kant's posit of a common sense that allows us an aesthetical (as opposed to an intellectual) consciousness of the subjective harmony of our cognitive powers fulfills some of the epistemological requirements discussed above. In particular, does it permit immediate acknowledgement of the relevant mental state (the judgement of taste with its concomitant pleasure) each time we enter that state? If yes, then this is indeed a candidate claim about aesthetic experience. It seems to fit the second of the four possibilities sketched at the start of this paper, portraying aesthetic experience as special experience of ordinary qualities. But the Kantian baggage is just overwhelming here. There is no reason to think cognition in general proceeds as Kant suggests, nor that aesthetic experience is exhausted in encounters with beauty. Even if Kant's account correctly describes our response to certain formal arrays under certain conditions,¹⁰ this involves much too narrow a range of items to which we respond aesthetically. Thus in pursuing both Kant's and Bullough's accounts of aesthetic experience, our attention has shifted from the inherent nature of such experience to questions about its targets. To what qualities are we attending when we have a desirable or optimal aesthetic experience? That is, when we achieve the utmost decrease of Distance without its disappearance (Bullough) or the harmonious free play of our cognitive faculties (Kant)? To address these latter questions, let us turn to the other term in my opening formulations and examine the qualities that are considered when we are experiencing or judging aesthetically.

Qualities, Special and Ordinary

Surely the most famous disquisition on aesthetic qualities is Frank Sibley's much anthologized essay "Aesthetic Concepts," first published in 1949. Sibley there identifies aesthetic concepts as those for the application of which taste or perceptiveness is required. He then offers the following list of typical aesthetic terms: unified, balanced, integrated, lifeless, serene, somber, dynamic, powerful, vivid, delicate, moving, trite, sentimental, tragic. He supplements this list by acknowledging that some terms have both an aesthetic and a non-aesthetic use, others have predominantly aesthetic use (he cites as examples the terms: graceful, delicate, dainty, handsome, comely, elegant, garish), while still others acquire their aesthetic use through metaphorical extension (his examples here are the terms: dynamic, melancholy, balanced, tightly knit).¹¹

Other authors follow Sibley and characterize aesthetic qualities by enumerating a list of typical examples. Thus Jerrold Levinson, in "Aesthetic Supervenience," states that he will "content [him]self with the usual enumerative induction to characterize the class with which we are concerned: gracefulness, mournfulness, balance, sublimity, garishness, sobriety, flamboyance, gaiety, eeriness, etc."¹² Goran Hermeren offers a similar list ("Examples of aesthetic qualities include garishness, tenseness, grace, harmony, gaiety, nervousness, sadness, excitement, somberness, serenity, solemnity, joy, cheerfulness, boldness, vitality, restraint, sublimity, monumentality, coherence, picturesqueness, mysteriousness, and beauty.") in his *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* article "Aesthetic Qualities." But Hermeren then goes on to draw some distinctions among items in this class, noting that some aesthetic qualities are complex while others are simple, that some are internal (experienced as in the work) while others are external, that some are metaphorical while others are literal, that some are perceived emotional qualities in the work while others ascribe certain reactions or responses to beholders.¹³ Finally, Alan Goldman, in his book *Aesthetic Value*, defines aesthetic properties as "those that contribute to the aesthetic values of artworks," and expands upon this slightly one paragraph later as "those that ground or instantiate in their relations to us or other properties those values of artworks that make them worth contemplating."¹⁴ In his opening taxonomy, Goldman recognizes a rich variety of aesthetic terms each of which picks out properties that can't be described in a purely physical vocabulary. The eight types of terms he singles out are: evaluative, formal, emotion, evocative, behavioral, representational, second-order perceptual, and historical, and for each he lists a series of examples.¹⁵

Goldman admits that the terms he lists cannot be categorized simply as terms singling out phenomenal properties of works of art, since the correct application of some of them requires knowledge of external contextual or causal factors.¹⁶ Whether a work possesses certain emotion, evocative, or behavioral qualities depends in part on the repertoire available to the artist, the range of alternatives from which the artist made his or her selection. Nor can historical qualities like originality be applied solely by consulting the work itself. (Compare the point Kendall Walton makes with the example of Guernicas in his article "Categories of Art.") Goldman also rules out the possibility that these terms all name regional properties of works of art,¹⁷ as not all of them turn on relations among parts.

In the end, what Goldman deems common to and definitive of the category 'aesthetic quality' is a contributory relation to aesthetic value. This is, for Goldman, a property that can be possessed in varying degrees. For instance, Goldman states that "to call a piece of music sad... is not necessarily to evaluate it;" "to say that a painting's composition is balanced may be to evaluate it positively; to say that it is symmetrical is not evaluative."¹⁸ Calling our attention to "the difference between properties that are evaluative in themselves and those that merely ground evaluations by further examples," Goldman maintains that the justification of aesthetic claims ultimately rests on appeal to non-evaluative formal properties. He calls this last set 'base properties' and distinguishes five varieties: formal, expressive, representational, sensuous, and historical.¹⁹

Most of the authors just surveyed, despite their differing definitions of aesthetic qualities, concur that they are ascribed to works of art by reference to those works' non-aesthetic properties. Thus in arguing that a melody is graceful, one points out its gentle intervals, lilting articulations and sprightly tempo; in arguing that a painting is dreary, one emphasizes its dark shadows and depressing subject matter. Different positions are of course defended regarding the relation between aesthetic properties and these other non-aesthetic properties, or base properties, on which they depend. Sibley argued in his essay that aesthetic terms are not condition governed. Thus on his view, no ascription of base properties guarantees that a particular aesthetic property will obtain. A sculpture may be pink, curvilinear, and perforated. But the presence of these traits does not establish the work's delicacy if it is also 20 feet tall and made of steel. And this illustrates why an ascription of aesthetic traits seems ever defeasible. We can always think of additional properties which, if possessed by the work, block the application of the aesthetic property in question – the one we in all reasonableness expected the unamended cluster of base properties to support. Goldman, for instance, is fond of supposing hyena cries interspersed in a performance of music by Mozart. Such a performance would not merit the expected aesthetic adjectives. But not only are our expectations of aesthetic description disrupted when properties that would ordinarily command the application of a particular aesthetic term are admixed with properties that call for quite different descriptions (immense scale competing with more conventionally delicate shapes and colors, hyena cries interrupting conventionally attractive melodies...) Our expectations of a connection between

certain base properties and a related aesthetic quality can also be defeated because those same base properties often support the application of a similar but incompatible aesthetic term. For instance, the evidence that one critic offers to show that a work is elegant could be used by another to prove it is flaccid; the cluster of traits supporting an ascription of jauntiness could be turned in another argument to prove the work vapid and banal.

The considerations just adduced are among those Sibley brings out in his article. They provide overwhelming reasons for rejecting the first two of the four possibilities Levinson sketches in his paper "Aesthetic Supervenience." Given that such terms as "graceful" and "jaunty" can fail to hold despite the presence of base properties with which they're conventionally linked, it cannot be the case that aesthetic qualities are definitionally equivalent to clusters of base properties, nor that they are logically supported by the presence of such clusters (the relation Levinson, following Kivy, labels positively condition-governed). The presence of the relevant base properties can never guarantee the application of the aesthetic quality with which they are typically associated. Levinson surveys two remaining choices: that the relation between aesthetic and base properties is negatively condition-governed, or that it is one of supervenience.

Levinson initially rejects the first option because it seems unacceptably vague. It would no doubt be impossible in principle to spell out all the defeating conditions for the application of any given aesthetic term, since we can always imagine further instances that require additional amendment. But supervenience itself is not so clear a notion.²⁰ In his penultimate section, however, Levinson concedes that some aesthetic properties do seem to be negatively condition governed at least in part, and so to at least to some degree consist in their structural bases. He offers two options between which to choose – that there is a "continuum among aesthetic attributes, some of which would then be said to be more wholly emergent than others" or that emergence does not require "complete conceptual distinctness from the structural base [but only] some substantial measure of conceptual distinctness, reinforced perhaps by phenomenological separability."²¹

Alan Goldman seems to endorse a similarly nuanced view of aesthetic qualities in this respect: he maintains that all such qualities have an evaluative dimension, but that different aesthetic qualities vary in how much they are weighted towards evaluative content, on the one hand, and objective content, on

the other. While we may not always be able to analyze aesthetic properties into their evaluative and non-evaluative components, our aesthetic ascriptions rest on hierarchical chains of justification.²² An aesthetic quality that is highly evaluative is ascribed to a work by appeal to a quality that is relatively more objective; this quality is in turn ascribed by appeal to a quality that is even less evaluative, until finally the evaluative dimension is entirely discharged; the remaining claims concern purely factual or descriptive properties of the work. Thus Goldman too eschews a strict division between superstructure and base.

We needn't go any farther in pursuit of Levinson's account of emergence or Goldman's account of justification. Suffice it to say that these authors, like many other present-day aestheticians, acknowledge the existence of aesthetic qualities and deny that they are reducible in any simple way to the non-aesthetic qualities that make up their base. Our task, in keeping with the opening of this paper, is to determine whether or not this is proof of the specialness of aesthetic qualities. If we grant that they can't be fully defined in terms of non-aesthetic qualities, then the possibility of their specialness remains open. But we may have even less of an intuitive sense of what makes a quality special than of what might make an experience special. I suppose what we're looking for is something like 'different in kind,' where that difference resides not in the way the quality is experienced but in its very nature.

Yet such specialness remains elusive. The authors discussed above have acknowledged a great variety of aesthetic qualities. (Recall the lists with which I began this section.) The very range of their examples discourages the hope of finding an essential shared trait that constitutes the specialness we seek. It certainly doesn't turn on whether we decide to be realists about aesthetic qualities. Most philosophers are not realists with regard to secondary qualities, yet these hardly seem special or exotic. All of us with functioning sense organs presumably have experiences of color, taste, texture, and so on. Nor can the specialness of aesthetic qualities lie in the fact that they are possessed only by works of art. We can aesthetically appreciate natural scenes, industrial artifacts, aspects of daily life, and more.

Maybe, then, the specialness of aesthetic qualities is relational. Perhaps it inheres not in the qualities themselves (for in the abstract, balance, delicacy, triteness, joy, and the like seem perfectly ordinary), but in the ways they interact with one another, emerge from or depend on their base properties, and so on. And of course these are just the sorts of relationships Goldman and Levinson were exploring.

This last suggestion points us in a new direction. Our investigation of aesthetic experience has encouraged a more integrative view, one according to which it is not particular qualities that are special. Thus no 'checklist' can be offered to circumscribe the realm of the aesthetic. Nor is it particular experiences that are special. Thus no one type of experience serves as hallmark of the aesthetic. Rather, the specialness of aesthetic experience, and thus its value, inheres in the way base properties, aesthetic qualities, and perceptual, intellectual, and emotional experience come together in our encounters with works of art. While this view might seem to recall theories that emphasize the organic unity of works of art, I believe it is logically independent of such accounts. It is, however, supported by claims Jerrold Levinson makes in another context. Characterizing aesthetic pleasure, he asserts that "Pleasure in an object is aesthetic when it derives from an appreciation of and reflection on the object's individual character and content, both for itself and in relation to the structural base on which it rests."²³ Levinson elaborates his claim as follows: "We do not apprehend the character and content of an artwork – including formal, aesthetic, expressive, representational, semantic or symbolic properties – as free-floating, but rather as anchored in and arising from the specific structure which constitutes it on a primary observational level. Content and character are supervenient on such structure, and appreciation of them, if properly aesthetic, involves awareness of that dependency...Features aesthetically appreciated are features thought of as qualified by, or even internally connected with, their underlying bases."

Value: Some Applications

I stated at the outset that a number of authors take the value of art to lie in the experiences it provides its viewers, readers, and hearers. For example, Malcolm Budd begins his book *Aesthetic Value* by announcing that "The value of a work of art as a work of art is...(determined by) the intrinsic value of the experience the work offers,"²⁴ while Alan Goldman claims that "It is in the ultimately satisfying exercise of [our] different mental capacities operating together to appreciate the rich relational properties of artworks that I shall argue the primary value of great works is to be found."²⁵ But our investigation has offered no reason to assume that the value of art exhausted by either (1) aesthetic experience, or (2) aesthetic qualities. I have in effect repudiated the framework, which I based on some isolated remarks of Peter Kivy, as overly simple. Thus let us dispense with the assumption that the experience of art is such that the presence of distinctive aesthetic qualities triggers a distinctive aesthetic

experience. Instead, let us close with some examples in which we investigate the interrelations of all the features we have been tracking in our investigation. Our goal is to ask in a more open-minded way just what we experience, and what, if anything, we appreciate, when we interrogate works of art. I shall briefly consider three examples – our interactions with painting, music, and literature. In each case, I shall offer some observations about base properties, aesthetic qualities, appreciative experience, and aesthetic value.

For a problem related to the art of painting, consider Richard Wollheim's notion of twofoldness, introduced in his book *Painting as an Art*.²⁶ Wollheim's claim is that when we encounter a representational painting, we are simultaneously aware of it as a pattern of marks on a surface and as an image of a scene in three-dimensional space. Surely at least some of our awareness of the surface marks on any painting would consist in awareness of what Hermeren, Goldman, Levinson, and others would call base properties. These are the non-aesthetic qualities on which our ascriptions of aesthetic qualities are based. Wollheim's claim is contrasted with, for example, a Wittgensteinian duck-rabbit account of representational art, one in which we switch back and forth at will between seeing the work as a two-dimensional array and as a three-dimensional representation, but cannot sustain both sorts of vision at once. What is noteworthy for our topic of aesthetic qualities and aesthetic experience is this: on Wollheim's view, the uncovering and fixation on a work's aesthetic qualities is not the goal of aesthetic experience. Rather than ascending from the perceptual to the aesthetic, and resting forever in that empyrean ground, Wollheim's account has us always partially rooted in the everyday realm of ordinary qualities. We maintain awareness of both the recognitional and the configurational aspects of a work, and part of our appreciation flows from this duality. That is, we marvel that these base properties, in this particular array, generated this representational effect. If this is correct, and especially if it transfers to examples of representation in other media and other arts, it requires that we rethink any privilege we may have unintentionally accorded to aesthetic qualities.

For a second example, consider the art of music. In an essay entitled "Whole/Part Relations in Music: An Exploratory Study", Douglas Bartholomew offers a Husserlian analysis of listening to music. Attempting to show "how Husserl's distinctions between types of parts and wholes shed light on musical structure, activity, and instruction," Bartholomew argues that presence and absence play a crucial role in our listening. Hearing a melody demands what

Husserl called retention and protention. This involves "...our sense of how the not-sounding tones are absent, or rather, the way in which these not-sounding tones are present.... Thus, as the melody moves from beginning to end, the meaning of each tone is affected by the protention of what is to come and is increasingly enriched by the retentions of what has already happened."²⁷

Bartholomew's essay invokes ontological claims that I don't have the time or expertise to explore, but I find his analysis of musical components and our access to them a fascinating one. It certainly requires that we complicate further any simple dichotomy between base properties and aesthetic properties, or even a more sophisticated continuum of increasingly value-laden qualities. How would we classify the protentive traits of a familiar melody? Surely they contribute significantly to our grasp and appreciation of particular compositions. Here we smudge over any tidy distinctions between fact and value, or between quality and experience, since we are, on Bartholomew's view, taking into account absent qualities, both those previously experienced and those not yet experienced. Moreover, doing so, if he is correct, contributes essentially to our understanding and valuing the work. Finally, Bartholomew's approach can be extended to apply to any art that unfolds in time. Narratives, too, must be kept in mind, their shapes estimated as they unfold.

Turning to the art of literature, Jenefer Robinson presents an interesting case in her essay "Style and Personality in the Literary Work." Arguing that individual style in literature is expressed in terms of apparent features (qualities of mind, attitudes, personality traits, and so on) that are attributed to the personality of the implied author, she suggests that we must take in facts of several different orders. One example she cites early on is an essay on the opening paragraph of Henry James' novel *The Ambassadors*. The author, Ian Watt, claims that some of the most notable elements in James' prose style include "the preference for 'non-transitive verbs, the widespread use of abstract nouns, the prevalence of the word 'that,' the presence of 'elegant variation' in the way in which something is referred to, and the predominance of negatives and near-negatives."²⁸ On Robinson's view, these stylistic traits ground our reconstruction of the personality of the work's implied author.

Combining Watt's analysis and Robinson's theory makes wonderfully clear the complexities that arise in reading and appreciating James' novel. To understand the tone of the novel, we must attend to a number of facts simultaneously on a number of distinct interpretive levels. We must, first and

foremost, read James' sentences and understand them. This is none too easy, in a novel that begins with the sentence "Strether's first question, when he reached the hotel, was about his friend; yet on his learning that Waymarsh was apparently not to arrive till evening he was not wholly disconcerted" and soon thereafter challenges its reader with this construction: "The principle I have just mentioned as operating had been, with the most newly-disembarked of the two men, wholly instinctive – the fruit of a sharp sense that, delightful as it would be to find himself looking, after so much separation, into his comrade's face, his business would be a trifle bungled should he simply arrange that this countenance should present itself to the nearing steamer as the first 'note,' for him, of Europe."²⁹ In doing so, we must also note peculiarities of style and diction, have some sense (if Robinson's theory is correct) of what personality traits such diction would ordinarily flag, as well as a sense of James' style in his other stories and novels, how it contrasts with the fiction of his peers, how the character of the narrator, Strether, is being portrayed, how Strether's character contrasts with that of his foils in the novel, and so on. Again, how might this endeavor be understood on a model that took only aesthetic quality or aesthetic experience as its constructs?

I have so far linked aesthetic experience with appreciation and understanding. I may have overemphasized the intellectual aspects of our response to art and underplayed the emotional resonances awakened. But single-minded attention to appreciation would also be a grave error. "Art" is not an honorific term, and there are many mediocre and appalling works of art, as well as compelling and inspiring ones. So let us briefly visit the aesthetic terms, qualities, and experiences unleashed by a meretricious work of art. Consider the opening paragraph of Daniel Mendelsohn's review of Bret Easton Ellis' new novel, *Glamorama*: "It's a mystery to me why some people are complaining that Bret Easton Ellis's latest novel is nothing more than a recycling of his controversially graphic 'American Psycho,' (1991). 'American Psycho,' after all, was a bloated, stultifyingly repetitive, overhyped novel about a fabulously good-looking and expensively dressed Wall Street sociopath who tortures and dismembers beautiful young women, whereas 'Glamorama,' as anyone can see, is a bloated, stultifyingly repetitive, overhyped book about an entire gang of fabulously good-looking and expensively dressed sociopaths who torture and dismember both women and men – and lots of them. Clearly, Ellis's authorial vision has grown broader and more inclusive over the past decade."³⁰ At the very least, this review introduces us to a range of aesthetic terms — bloated,

stultifyingly repetitive, and overhyped – that our previous authors may have overlooked! It clarifies the sorts of observations needed to ground judgments of originality, suggests a role for revulsion as a possible aesthetic response, and reminds us of the delights of irony. It is important that our aesthetic theories encompass judgments like that expressed in Mendelsohn’s review as well as our responses to more worthy works of art.

Conclusion

I hope I have made some progress in sorting out the notions of aesthetic quality and aesthetic experience. The overall moral I draw concerns the complexity and interconnectedness of the notions that come into play when we address works of art. The closing examples indicate yet another variable that must be worked into the mix, that of artistic intention. For if we’re tying the value of a work to the experience it generates in appreciative audiences, we need to know how far-flung a set of experiences can be before they no longer count as appreciations of that particular work. To adapt an example from Clive Bell, whose views were discussed in section 2, what if my appreciation of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony comes to this: that it is my very favorite symphonic piece to daydream to because it lasts a long, long time, gets very loud, and has differently textured parts that support a varied string of fantasies. Surely this is not an acceptable appreciation of Beethoven’s Ninth. It undercuts the composer’s intentions in presenting the work, and conflicts with the implicit conventions of the classical concert hall. This is not to deny that works of art are subject to multiple interpretations and varied uses. There will no doubt be many critics whose verdicts will rehabilitate Bret Easton Ellis’ latest novel. Yet their arguments must meet certain constraints. They must show that readers retrieve something of value, that this derives from properties of the work, and that it connects with the author’s intent. Overall, our aesthetic experience is created from and responsive to a wide range of factors. A full account of such experience will trace the richness of these relations.

Notes and References

1. Peter Kivy, *Speaking of Art* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), p. 70. The actual sentence that was my taking-off point reads as follows: “Since the end of the eighteenth century, there has been a view widely held by thinkers of varying other persuasions that aesthetic

perception is not ordinary perception of some special species of quality, but, rather, a special species of perception of ordinary qualities."

2. Jerrold Levinson, "Aesthetic Supervenience," *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 22 (1983) Supplement, pp. 95-7.
3. Experience might be a constituent of aesthetic value in yet another regard if we concentrated on theories of creativity like those of Croce and Collingwood. On such views, the value of art might reside not in a type of experience generated in its audience, but rather in one generated in its creators. That is, proponents of the view might insist that creative experience be of a certain distinctive sort – what Collingwood speaks of as clarifying an intuition ... While this family of views might indeed make experience of some sort criterial for both the existence and value of art, the experience seems so different in kind (or at least in locale!) from that being considered in our original question that I am not including it in my grid of possible answers to the problem.
4. For instance, we would eliminate those strands that combine a denial of aesthetic experience with a demand that such experience ground aesthetic value, and perhaps also those that combine a definitional reduction of aesthetic qualities to their factual base with a claim that aesthetic experience is the ordinary experience of special qualities. Thus 48 is simply an arithmetic result, the number of answers that exists before we sort Aesthetic Hypothesis," reprinted in *The Philosophy of Art: Readings Ancient and Modern* ed. Alex Neill and Aaron Ridley (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1995), through them to see whether some combinations are incompatible on their face.
5. Clive Bell, "The pp. 100, 107.
6. One other phenomenon that is often mentioned as a proof of unfelt pain is the experience of dental work while under the influence of laughing gas. Those brave enough to choose this option rather than novocaine (and I am not among them) describe the experience as one in which they felt pain but didn't mind it. That is, the ordinary connection between pain and its awfulness was severed. Though I'm not entirely sure how to accommodate this example, I don't think it defeats the line I am taking here since the dental patients are still undergoing a distinct experience which they alone can authoritatively characterize. Thus privilege, incorrigibility, and immediacy remain linked.
7. Summing up the act of distancing in a fog at sea, Bullough states that "the transformation by Distance is produced in the first instance by putting the phenomenon, so to speak, out of gear with our practical, actual self; by allowing it to stand outside the context of our personal needs and ends – in short, by looking at it 'objectively.'" He repeats the out of gear metaphor a page later: "Distance, as I said before, is obtained by separating the object and its appeal from one's own self, by putting it out of gear with practical needs and ends. Thereby the 'contemplation' of the object becomes alone possible." Edward Bullough, "Psychical Distance," reprinted in *The Philosophy of Art: Readings Ancient and Modern* ed. Alex Neill and Aaron Ridley (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1995), pp. 298, 300.
8. Bullough, p. 302. Bullough goes on to remark that: "There are two ways of losing Distance: either to 'under-distance' or to 'over-distance.'"
9. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Aesthetical Judgment*, reprinted in *Art and Philosophy*, ed. W.E. Kennick (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), p.510. Cp. A later remark: "The judgment is called aesthetical just because its determining ground is not a concept

but the feeling (of internal sense) of that harmony in the play of the mental powers, so far as it can be felt in sensation.” (516) Kant goes on to argue that the existence of a common sense is a necessary condition of the possibility of the judgment of taste. “...it is only under the presupposition that there is a common sense (by which we do not understand an external sense, but the effect resulting from the free play of our cognitive powers)... that the judgment of taste can be laid down.” (520)

10. Those involving free rather than dependent beauty, in the absence of both interests and concepts.
11. Frank Sibley, “Aesthetic Concepts,” reprinted in *Art and Philosophy*, ed. W.E. Kennick (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1979), pp. 542-3. Following Peter Kivy, I have spoken of aesthetic qualities throughout this paper. And since I do not draw any particular distinction between qualities and properties, I would use these two terms interchangeably. Sibley, by contrast, speaks of aesthetic terms and aesthetic concepts. I assume he understands these phrases such that both are properly used to pick out or refer to aesthetic qualities.
12. Levinson, p. 93.
13. Goran Hermeren, “Aesthetic Qualities,” *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Kelly (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), vol. 4 p. 98.
14. Alan Goldman, *Aesthetic Value* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), p. 20.
15. The examples listed are — evaluative: beautiful, ugly, sublime, dreary; formal: balanced, graceful, concise, loosely woven; emotion: sad, angry, joyful, serene; evocative: powerful, stirring, amusing, hilarious, boring; behavioral: sluggish, bouncy, jaunty; representational: realistic, distorted, true to life, erroneous; second-order perceptual terms: vivid, dull, muted, steely, mellow; historical terms: derivative, original, daring, bold, conservative, Goldman, p. 17.
16. Goldman, p. 18.
17. Goldman, p. 19.
18. Goldman, pp. 19, 25.
19. Goldman, pp. 25, 46.
20. Levinson helps our understanding a bit when he distinguishes supervenience from emergence, noting that all emergent qualities are supervenient on their bases, but some cases of supervenience fall short of emergence, namely those in which the relation between the two levels is merely summative (p. 103).
21. Levinson, p. 108.
22. Goldman, pp. 24, 26.
23. Jerrold Levinson, article on “Aesthetic Pleasure” in *A Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. David Cooper (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1992), p. 332.
24. Malcolm Budd, *Values of Art: Pictures, Poetry, and Music* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), p. 4.

25. Goldman, p. 8.
26. Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 21, 73.
27. Douglas Bartholomew, "Whole/Part Relations in Music: An Exploratory Study," in *Philosopher, Teacher, Musician: Perspectives on Music Education* ed. Estelle R. Jorgensen (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 173, 181-2.
28. Jenefer Robinson, "Style and Personality in the Literary Work," in *Aesthetics: A Critical Anthology* ed. George Dickie, Richard Sclafani, Ronald Roblin (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 455.
29. Henry James, *The Ambassadors* (New York: New American Library, 1960), p. 5.
30. Daniel Mendelsohn, "Lesser than Zero," review of Bret Easton Ellis' book *Glamorama* in the *New York Times Sunday Book Review*, Jan. 24, 1999.

Stephanie Ross
Department of Philosophy
University of Missouri-St. Louis
8001 Natural Bridge Rd.
St. Louis, MO 63121-4499