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6/16/26

What is the nature of our aesthetic sensibilities or tastes? I address this question by examining the relationship between the perceptual and emotional aspects of aesthetic feeling, asking what stands in the way of the intuitive claim that aesthetic sensibilities consist in unified perceptual and emotional responsiveness to objects of experience. On a schematic notion of perception, perception is a univocally receptive or representational capacity, reflecting features of the world in a purely indicative, as opposed to evaluative, manner. A counterpart schematic conception of emotion suggests that it is, rather than a discerning faculty, a reflection of how our values, interests and desires meet with the circumstances, or a matter of how the circumstances make us *feel*. These tropes place perception and emotion at odds with each other with respect to ‘direction of fit’; whereas perception exhibits a *belief-like* direction of fit—representing the world as we take it to be—emotion exhibits a *desire-like* direction of fit, expressing how we wish the world was. I argue against both of these schematic conceptions. First, I provisionally motivate a form of cognitivism about aesthetic emotions—that the accuracy conditions of emotions are aesthetic value relations in which objects of experience stand to subjects. Second, drawing on the increasingly popular view that perception is intrinsically valenced, I argue that perception, similarly, is capable of disclosing aesthetic value relations. On such a picture emotional and perceptual aesthetic capacities have a parallel empirical structure, making plausible the claim that their unified operation constitutes aesthetic sensibility.

The focal question of this article is: ‘What is the nature of our aesthetic sensibilities or tastes?’ I aim to make some progress on this question by examining the relationship between the perceptual and emotional aspects of aesthetic feeling and sensibility. I draw on recent developments in the literature on emotion’s cognitive content and perception’s affective character to suggest that the emotional and perceptual aspects of aesthetic feeling need not be understood as opposed to each other with respect to direction of fit. This makes possible a view of aesthetic sensibility on which it exhibits *unified* object-directedness in virtue of both perceptual and emotional responsiveness to aesthetic character.

Relatedly, it has been argued that the notion that (1) aesthetic sensibility is grounded in emotion is incompatible with the claim that (2) aesthetic judgments are intersubjectively valid (that they hold equally across subjects, irrespective of the subject’s tastes or preferences). A version of this argument articulated by Fabian Dorsch holds that *aesthetic emotions* must vary with the object or exhibit the same character across subjects if they are to be capable of grounding intersubjectively valid aesthetic judgments.¹ Since the emotions do not hold across subjects and, in fact, faultlessly disagree across subjects (perhaps due to their desire-like direction of fit), one cannot maintain both (1) and (2).²

A view on which aesthetic sensibility is modeled on the schematic view of *perception* would sustain the claim of intersubjective validity (2) at the expense of the claim that emotion or affective responsiveness is the source of aesthetic knowledge (1).³ Conversely, a view on which aesthetic sensibility is modeled on the schematic view of *emotion* would maintain that aesthetic sensibilities are grounded in emotion, but abandon intersubjective validity. Both views have proponents individually, though Hume and Kant seem to demand *both* theses. Thus, at stake in unifying the emotional and perceptual aspects of aesthetic sensibilities is a response to Dorsch’s version of the ‘paradox of

¹ Dorsch 2007.

² Ibid, see *The Challenge to Sentimentalism* p. 426.

³ The view that aesthetic sensibility or taste is epistemically grounded in emotion can be divorced from metaphysical (neo)sentimentalism which is commonly associated with fitting attitude theories of value. The former makes no claims about the nature of aesthetic value, it is committed only to the view that our canonical source of access to aesthetic value is through the emotions.

taste’—how it can be that tastes are both essentially idiosyncratic *and* ground apt judgments, specifically judgments which figure in practices that presuppose their intersubjective validity.

Unlike most philosophical problems, this paradox is paradoxical not just at the level of conceptual analysis (though it certainly is) but at the level of ordinary life. For example, we both know that others’ taste in food will not converge with our own *and* we nevertheless look to Google and Yelp reviews of restaurants before picking where to eat. We recommend books to our friends knowing that their libraries are entirely different from our own. We pay to go to museums which are curated by professionals, knowing that much of what we see will rub us the wrong way. Views which model aesthetic sensibility on emotion (schematically conceived) might be able to make sense of our idiosyncratic aesthetic preferences, but they do so at the expense of mystifying our intersubjective-judgment-demanding aesthetic practices (Yelp reviews, book recommendations, museum-going). Conversely, views which model aesthetic sensibility on perception (again schematically conceived) instead fail to capture the phenomenon in the opposite way. What this suggests is that a way of unifying the perceptual and emotional dimensions of aesthetic sensibility is necessary for getting into view the authentically paradoxical nature of ordinary aesthetic life.

1. Emotion

The concern that emotions are an inadequate epistemic basis for objective aesthetic judgments is expressed in a particularly direct way by Dorsch:

“The view that certain of our emotional responses indeed possess the capacity to justify aesthetic evaluations, and that our aesthetic assessments are primarily, if not always, epistemically based on or constituted by these responses, has become almost orthodoxy in aesthetics, or at least the predominant approach to the epistemology of aesthetic evaluations. Moreover, this view is very often combined with the further view that all our aesthetic evaluations are intersubjective, in the rough sense that at least neither their truth-values, nor the exemplifications of the ascribed values are relativised to specific human subjects or groups. I will label the first of these two views about aesthetic evaluations *sentimentalism*, and the second *intersubjectivism*. Contrary to the still strong and influential tendency in aesthetics to combine sentimentalism and intersubjectivism, I aim to show that the two views should not be endorsed simultaneously. That is, in my view, sentimentalism should be upheld only if intersubjectivism is rejected; and

intersubjectivism should be upheld only if sentimentalism is rejected. Given that I furthermore take the denial of intersubjectivism to be highly implausible (although I do not intend to argue for this here), I believe that, ultimately, it is sentimentalism concerning aesthetic evaluations that should give way.”⁴

At the crux of his concern is that we cannot dismiss the possibility that aesthetic emotions—liking, disliking, agitation, wonder, etc. —diverge faultlessly amongst even ideally placed and discerning critics. In effect, the critics’ emotions are fundamentally idiosyncratic, undermining their ability to ground evaluations that are not relativized to any group or subject. If there are two distinct emotional responses to a given aesthetic object or matter, two distinct aesthetic evaluations will respectively be warranted. Since there are aesthetic truths that hold across subjects, aesthetic sensibilities cannot be the key source of epistemic access to them.

We might analyze Dorsch’s objection into two distinct elements:

- (1) Emotions are not wholly object-governed, whereas aesthetic judgments are.
- (2) Emotions are more variable than apt aesthetic judgments, thus they are not plausibly their grounds.

1.1

Cognitivists about the aesthetic emotions (hereafter ‘cognitivists’) have a *prima facie* response to (1): they claim that emotions exhibit the same sort of intentionality as other cognitive states, hence their fittingness or accuracy is dictated by whether the target of the emotion instantiates the emotion’s formal object.⁵ That is, anger is apt if the formal object of anger is acts of wrongdoing, and the particular target of that attitude of anger *is* an act of wrongdoing. They may also claim that emotions vary in their degree of justification, according to how they are formed and the adequacy of the epistemic conditions under which they are made.

Can the suggestion that emotions are contentful cognitive states which respond to worldly values be made to fit together with the ordinary notion of an aesthetic sensibility? *Sensibilities* are, according to Olivia Bailey, “on a rough first pass, an emotional orientation to the world.”⁶ We are affectively and

⁴ Dorsch, 2007, p. 417-18.

⁵ For a helpful overview of cognitivism about emotion see Tappolet, 2016, section 1.2.

⁶ Bailey, 2023.

emotionally oriented toward the ordinary objects and matters that we encounter: the chewy texture of the gummy bears is aesthetically pleasing; the music in the cafe is aggravating, the delicate shape of the plant's leaves is lovely. What makes the chewiness of the gummy bears or the shape of the plant's leaves *good* in a specifically aesthetic sense?

The cognitivist will attempt to explain this in terms of an *object* toward which the aesthetic emotion is directed. Not only will it have to be that the emotion is governed by this object, but it will have to be that the object explains why the emotion discloses it as good or bad in this aesthetic sense.

What determinate element of the world could constitute this cognitive standard? In this section I suggest that a plausible candidate for these objects are 'aesthetic value relations'—objective ways in which objects of aesthetic concern actually or potentially benefit (or fail to benefit) subjects. This solution strengthens the cognitivist's *prima facie* response by addressing both (1) and (2).

To better understand the key difficulties for cognitivism, and especially for a version aimed at specifically aesthetic value, consider its plausible counterpart view: *non-cognitivism*. Expressivism, for example, might hold that claims such as 'Vermeer's *The Art of Painting* is a great work' are expressions of feeling—a liking for *The Art of Painting* or an expression of desire toward it. Both cognitivists and non-cognitivists acknowledge an essential role for feeling, but cognitivists differ on an essential point: certain emotions are capable of *conflict* insofar as they concern the same characteristic of the same object and predicate inconsistent properties to it. If such emotions are akin to other cognitive states, it must be such that the accuracy of one such emotion entails the inaccuracy of the other. Thus, like cognitive states, the cognitivist about emotion asserts the possibility of conflicting pairs of emotions as well as emotion-based aesthetic evaluations. The initial challenge to the cognitivist is to demonstrate that such pairings exist.

A key motivation for cognitivist theories of the emotions is the argument that, if emotions have intentionality then they must have internal standards of correctness.⁷ The felt aspect of emotions, corresponding to their affective and motivational elements, is insufficient to account for this—emotions must enter into *logical relations with formal objects* in order to explain their intentionality. In other words, emotions have content which determines whether they are accurate or inaccurate

⁷ Anthony Kenny, 1963.

relative to their intentional objects. Only thus are they genuinely *about* their object and capable of standing in conflicting pairs.

Since content is able to *misrepresent* the evaluative character of its particular objects, the cognitivist must account for the possibility of *mistaken emotions*. Some might question whether aesthetic feeling is capable of erring in this way. Can we be wrong about what we like? Or what pains us aesthetically? Cases of artistic forgeries, as well as certain kinds of gustatory preferences seem to exemplify the manner in which aesthetic sensibilities can err.

Han van Meegeren is perhaps the best known Vermeer forger. Tending toward mediocre, melodramatic, insipid portraiture when working under his own name, he sought a kind of recognition from critics that was only available when the work was approached under the prejudice created by Vermeer's reputation for subtle profundity and depictive mastery. Abraham Bredius, an authoritative Vermeer scholar in the 1930s, was taken in by van Meegeren's Vermeer forgery *Christ at Emmaus*. His published words about *Christ at Emmaus* include "It is a wonderful moment in the life of a lover of art when he finds himself suddenly confronted with a hitherto unknown painting by a great master, untouched, on the original canvas, and without any restoration—just as it left the painter's studio. And what a picture!...In no other picture by the great master of Delft do we find such sentiment, such a profound understanding of the Bible story—a sentiment so nobly human expressed through the medium of highest art."⁸

Bredius' reputation suffered, needless to say, after van Meegeren's confession and trial. More importantly for our purposes is the fact that it did so *because the aesthetic sensibilities of critics and audiences toward van Meegeren forgeries shifted radically when they were seen in an honest context*. It is now widely accepted that van Meegeren forgeries look nothing like real Vermeers.⁹ Full of overwrought emotion, clumsy, and insipid, their resemblance to van Meegeren's non-forged works becomes fully apparent.

Can there also be errors of gustatory aesthetic tastes? Plausibly yes. Someone put off by the texture of oysters, unfamiliar with the notion of consuming raw seafood, will normally fail to understand or appreciate their complex, briny, deliciousness. Or, as one redditor described it: 'like sucking on a

⁸ Bredius, 1937.

⁹ Dolnick, 2008, p. 16-17.

lumpy snot wad'.¹⁰ Such tastes are ones that should be disputed or at least treated as innocently erroneous—the oyster hater can be educated by the oyster lover, but the reverse is not true. Many of the most delicious foods, it is understood, require a refinement of tastes and the placing of gustatory sensations like the oyster's gelatinous texture in a context in which it can be appropriately appraised.

I hope that these cases show how a plausible cognitivism about aesthetic emotion might shape up, even if a detailed specification or a full defense of the view is beyond the scope of this article. My ambition will be to show that cognitivism, when joined with a certain view of aesthetic perception, has a plausible response to Dorsch's challenge.

1.2

I have argued that when cognitivists point to aesthetic value relations, they have a viable specification of the formal objects of aesthetic emotions. What about the second element of Dorsch's objection, that emotions are more variable than aesthetic evaluations and therefore a poor candidate for their grounds?

A response available to the cognitivist is that the evaluative properties to which emotions are responsive—dangerous, shameful, joyful, and so on—are, at least plausibly, intrinsically relational properties. Something is dangerous only to a subject who is vulnerable to such a danger. Something is shameful only to someone who could reasonably have been expected to be better in whatever respect they fell short. Something is worthy of joy only if the circumstances are especially happy relative to the subject's ordinary circumstances. These observations suggest that each emotion makes essential reference to a subject in addition to the properties of the object.

Is the suggestion that emotion properties are intrinsically relational consistent with cognitivism? Some might doubt that it is, claiming that this intrinsic relationality amounts to the same thing as evaluative properties being response or mind-dependent. But this would be a mistake. Consider 'heaviness'. Whether something is heavy depends on a comparison between it and another weighty object or a further frame of reference (too heavy to carry the material a mile, more protons in the nucleus of one of its atoms, etc.). Nevertheless, whether something is heavy is response and mind-

¹⁰ u/SniffCheck (Jan. 8th, 2022) https://www.reddit.com/r/therewasanattempt/comments/ryy0i5/to_eat_oysters_for_the_first_time/

independent and in this respect an *objective* relational property. Evaluative properties may follow the same pattern: whether something is beautiful may depend on a subject or frame of reference. Fear of x is apt for a subject A to whom x poses a threat, but inapt for a subject B to whom x is harmless. Nevertheless x is not dangerous or fearsome because it is disposed to cause fear in As or because fear is a fitting response for As to x. X is worthy of fear to A because of an objective fact about the threat that x poses to A (but not to B). Thus A's and B's distinct responses will be equally apt. Since whether x fits the formal object of fear (threat) objectively varies across A and B, the variation of emotion across A and B doesn't offer evidence that emotions lack correctness conditions, are idiosyncratic, or are response-dependent. If this is so, then there is a principled explanation of why correctness conditions for emotions exhibit the variability that they do which is consistent with cognitivism and thus resists Dorsch's objection.

This solution remains, perhaps surprisingly, consistent with the suggestion that aesthetic judgments based on aesthetic emotions are intersubjectively valid. Intersubjectivity can be taken in two senses. Weak intersubjectivity requires that the truth values of aesthetic judgments are not relativized to subjects—there are no judgments that are true-for-me and false-for-you, whether for individuals or groups. Strong intersubjective validity requires that exemplifications of values are also not relative to groups. According to the form of cognitivism I describe, all judgments are weakly intersubjective and many (though not all) judgments are strongly intersubjective.

To see this, we need to appreciate that many aesthetic judgments are not simply reports of aesthetic emotions, but operations over aesthetic emotions which speak to general value relations established by norm-governed human practices—artistic, design, gustatory, and so on. These practices have an existence beyond the aesthetic emotions—a mere change in aesthetic response would not suffice for a change in the practice-based conventions or aesthetic values. Consequently, practice-based aesthetic values are strongly intersubjective. Non-practice based aesthetic values have subject-relative exemplifications. For example, a prosthesis fitted to someone's unique limb may have aesthetic value in virtue of an excellent fit with the limb, and hence a good feel to the prosthetic's wearer. This aesthetic value of the prosthesis's contour is clearly not practice-based, and so the prosthetic's exemplification of an aesthetic value is grounded in the objective aesthetic benefit of the contour to an individual. Nevertheless, it is not true-for-me and false-for-you that the prosthetic is aesthetically valuable. Rather, it is true for everyone that the prosthetic is aesthetically valuable to its user. In contrast, whether a piece of folk music is excellent or a certain building a poor instance of brutalism

is intersubjective both in the weak sense and in the strong sense, since its exemplification of an aesthetic value makes no reference to any subject or group.

Affect may disclose aesthetic value relations of both kinds, although in distinct manners. Consider the norms involved in the craft of bagel-making. Such a practice has implicit norms—bagels are a dense form of bread and they are meant to have a crusty exterior and a soft interior, to have a particular wheat-y flavor, and so on. The cognitivist may claim that, to make a judgment about what counts as a good bagel, one has to take into account not just the aesthetic pleasure that one has in eating a bagel, but also how one's aesthetic sentiments vary from the general aesthetic sentiments of participants in the practice, and thus how they reflect the gustatory norms of the practice. As someone who enjoys particularly dense, chewy bagels, I differ in my responses from someone who is a perfect representative of the practice's conventions. But I can still be an excellent critic as long as I recognize the difference between what is aesthetically ideal for me and what is aesthetically ideal relative to the norms of bagel-craft. I can make two sorts of apt judgments: I can taste a dense, chewy bagel and take utter pleasure in it, judging that it is exactly the kind of bagel that *I* like best. Or, I can taste the same bagel and judge that it is too chewy and dense, by the standards of bagel-craft. Both, the cognitivist can claim, are intersubjectively valid, though the second type may be of greater interest to aesthetic epistemologists, at least was, traditionally, than the first.

1.3

For now, I will raise a further challenge facing cognitivism, namely a formal specification of the view in terms of content. These contents have to play a challenging dual role: they must adequately account for the phenomenological and motivational character of aesthetic emotion, and they must establish a logical relation between the content of the mental state and the emotion's formal object.

We can observe that emotions and beliefs with the same putative contents are nevertheless very different kinds of states. Believing that e.g. carrots are good (delicious) and enjoying the taste of carrots might both have the content 'these carrots are good', yet finding them tasty has a fundamentally distinct phenomenology—what I will call *affective phenomenology* or *valence*. Something similar can be said about affective experiences which are not tied to any particular sensory modality: feeling angry at someone or ashamed of something are very different phenomenologically from the mere belief in the wrongness of that person's actions or an acceptance that a certain feature reflects poorly on oneself.

Along with this distinctive phenomenology comes a distinctive motivational character. To put it in a rough way, finding carrots tasty disposes us to purchase and eat them in a way that merely believing that carrots are good does not. If both beliefs and emotions are forms of rational commitment, as the cognitivist suggests, something about the content or character of these attitudes must be different from each other to account for these further differences.

Some have made the case that this difference is accounted for by designating the content of belief as conceptual content, and the content of perception or emotion as non-conceptual content.¹¹ Non-conceptual content is a contrastive notion—the possessor of non-conceptual content is in a representational state which establishes a logical relation between the attitude and its formal object, but they do not possess the concepts that would, in the conceptual case, establish this logical relation. For instance, the demonstrative belief ‘that ball is blue’ implies the possession of the concepts ‘blue’ and ‘ball’ by the believer. The perceptual awareness might likewise be a contentful representation, but it might not entail the possession of those concepts by the perceiver. Therefore one might insist that, given that a perception must be a representation, it has non-conceptual content.

While it is plausible that the content of emotions does not entail that the subjects of those emotions possess the relevant concepts, mere appeal to ‘non-conceptual content’ cannot distinguish belief content from emotion content, since appeal to non-conceptual content as such offers no positive explanation of the distinctive affective phenomenology of emotional states. While in the conceptual case, the boundary drawn by the concept is itself a way of drawing out this logical connection, there is no counterpart explanation for non-conceptual content. The logical connection between non-conceptual content and its object is instead stipulated by its proponents through the contrast with conceptual content.

Another attempt to positively characterize the content of emotions appeals to *imperative* content (‘go for that!’ or ‘avoid this!’) or action tendencies.¹² The impulse is to identify emotions with their phenomenological and motivational dimensions, and thereby to give emotion’s content a world-to-

¹¹ See Evans 1982, Peacocke 2001, Toribio 2007, Bermudez 2007, Wringe 2015, Mitchell 2020.

¹² See Frijda 1986, Scarantino 2014, 2015, Scarantino & Griffiths 2011, Hufendiek 2016, and Shargel and Prinz 2018, Barlassina and Hayward, 2019.

mind direction of fit. Thus, when the hoped for outcome is attained or the imperative followed, the emotion is ‘satisfied’. This reflects the classic urge to separate the target of the emotion (a factual state represented by indicative content) from the attitude of the emotion (a conative state directed at some alternate way that thing could be). But such suggestions do not alter the underlying concern for cognitivism—that the correctness conditions with which they identify emotions are neither inherently affectively charged nor motivating. The proposal bifurcates aesthetic emotions into two ‘Humean’ elements: a doxastic element and a desiderative element, where the desiderative element contributes nothing to explaining how the emotion qua emotion is logically directed to its object.

A different approach is to re-characterize the indicative content of emotion so as to explicitly distinguish it from the content of doxastic states. Rachel Achs has recently put forward a proposal of this kind.¹³ She argues that emotions are *reflexive* rational commitments whose contents reference attitude-type-specific reasons. For instance, to feel fear is to make a rational commitment to something like the following: ‘O’s dangerousness, in and of itself, rationalizes this attitude.’ Thus, the attitude stands in the following logical relations with their formal object: affective attitude type A is rationalized by reasons bearing in the way they bear on type-A attitudes. While for belief the reasons bear on the attitude by way of truth, for each of the emotions they bear on the attitude in ways that are distinct to a particular emotion—hope, fear, shame, pride, and so on.

Does Achs’ theory account for the difference between believing that e.g. something reflects poorly on oneself and actually *feeling* shame? Although it does distinguish the content of belief from that of emotion, it seems to achieve this by making the content of emotion highly sophisticated: whether reasons bear in the way that they bear on attitudes of that type becomes part of the internal correctness conditions of the emotion.

Consider the common emotion that young children have when a stranger addresses them and they feel compelled to avoid the attention, often by ducking behind a parent. Call this complex social emotion ‘shy shame’. Is it true that the best way to characterize the child’s internal emotional state is: ‘committed to the shy-shame inducing character of the stranger’s address bearing on this attitude in the way that reasons of shy shame bear on this attitude.’? The worry is that, like other forms of cognitivism, this over-intellectualizes the emotional state. Yet, this over-intellectualization seems to be a necessary cost of establishing a logical relation with the emotion’s formal object which is

¹³ Achs (forthcoming).

distinct from a belief-like commitment such as ‘this attention is too much’. It accounts for the phenomenological profile of shame only by making the content self-referential. Further, it is not clear whether this move helps with locating the distinctive *feeling* accompanying the emotion, such as the feel of fear that is foreign to the mere belief that an object is dangerous.

Let’s recap. Dorsch claims that the emotional aspects of aesthetic sensibilities can faultlessly diverge because emotions are, like desires, the kinds of things that vary idiosyncratically. The cognitivist refutes this position: the emotions of the two critics that Dorsch has in mind each have correctness conditions. It must be that either these conditions of correctness are both met, in which case the aesthetic sentiments do not truly disagree, *or* the correctness conditions establish the possibility of genuine disagreement and one of the critics’ aesthetic sentiments is in error.

Take our case of the Vermeer forgery. Bredius, the critic who lauded the forgery, thought that the expressiveness of *Christ at Emmaus* was profound. Suppose another critic found the expressiveness of *Christ at Emmaus* heavy-handed and insipid. Assuming that the contents of these aesthetic responses are genuinely opposed, it was Bredius who was mistaken and the other critic correct.

The cognitivist solution implies that for each instance of an aesthetic sentiment, it is correct or incorrect in relation to its object. Bredius did not realize that he was being duped by *Christ at Emmaus*, yet he was. This deception was the essence of the aesthetic relation between himself and this painting—it was, to put it bluntly, ‘aesthetically bad for him’, though he was tricked into thinking it was good. The failure of his tastes to pick up on this, according to the cognitivist, is like the failure of an epistemic subject to discern a falsehood. It comes down to a failure of cognition relative to a cognitive standard for cognitions of its kind: aesthetic sentiments ought to reflect the aesthetic value of their objects, otherwise they are deficient qua sentiments.

If only the cognitivist about emotion could avoid the problem of over-intellectualization, maintain the intentionality of cognitive states (understood in terms of their accuracy conditions) and account for the distinctive phenomenology of emotion, they could address the challenge that Dorsch sets in a straightforward manner, rendering compatible sentimentalism and intersubjectivism. I think there is a way to address this problem, but I will put it off until after discussing the perceptual aspect of aesthetic sensibilities, which will serve as an important preface to it.

2. Perception

A common way to think of the relationship of perception to aesthetic taste is that perception makes a subject aware of the mundane, non-evaluative properties of an aesthetic object: we can see where on the painting there are brushstrokes of certain colors; we can recognize the figures or shapes it depicts; we can see that it has a 3:4 aspect ratio, etc. Gustatory and tactile sensations tell us that e.g. the oyster is salty, cold, slippery, that the mignonette is acidic, etc. Then there is some further step (perceptual or cognitive) by which we *evaluate or appraise* the relative significance of these evaluatively neutral perceived qualities. Prefiguring this evaluative step is some sort of external evaluative standard, perhaps a desire or internalized norm, which establishes the evaluative significance of these features (salty, cold, slippery, acidic, etc.) relative to this standard. Thus it is only in conjunction with this evaluative standard and some operation performed over it that the aesthetic significance of the perceived object is perceptually appreciated.

This received picture of perception as a non-evaluative capacity now faces significant philosophical and empirical resistance. The alternative view now emerging is that in perception we occupy a landscape of good and bad ‘feels’, one which is continually updated as we sensorially navigate the environment. Perception is thus *intrinsically valenced*.¹⁴ Just as pains are unpleasant to undergo, smells can be good, tastes can be bad, sounds can be pleasing, and visual compositions grating. Such evaluation is part of the perceptual recognition of objects that is constitutive of perception, not a post-hoc element that occurs after we are conscious of such objects (because it involves some further operation over them). This, what can be called the ‘affective character of experience’ or ‘valence’ is a way of being perceptually aware of how elements of the environment bear on our interests.¹⁵

In accord with the conception of perception as an integrally evaluative capacity, the affective character of experience can be thought of as a ‘determination dimension’ of perceptual appearances—a scale of positive, neutral, and negative valence which persistently modifies other aspects of appearances.¹⁶ E.g. *a way* for coffee to smell is ‘positive’ (good) just as a way for a cup to appear is

¹⁴ See Bain 2017, 2019, Aydede and Fulkerson 2018, Barlassina and Hayward 2019, Fulkerson 2020, Jacobson 2021, 2024, De Vignemont 2023, Berinstein 2025.

¹⁵ Bain 2013, 2017, 2019, Berinstein 2025, (under review).

¹⁶ Jacobson 2021.

‘white’. Both determination dimensions can figure in perceptual recognition as such. It has been argued that this determination dimension is basic to perception, that it holds across the sense modalities, and that it is present in non-human animals, including primitive animals without intellectual means (e.g. arthropods, amphibians, etc.).¹⁷ This is inconsistent with the notion that perception-independent evaluative standards prefigure perceptual appraisal or that perceptual appraisal constitutes a further step beyond a certain ‘primary act’ of perception, in which ‘high-level’ contents are generated from ‘low-level’ contents.¹⁸

Though I will not survey the data here, empirical evidence squarely favors the evaluative conception of perception over the non-evaluative.¹⁹ First, response times for these phenomena have been observed to begin as early as 80ms, extending to 120 ms.²⁰ The range of perceptual responses is typically categorized as occurring between 150 and 250 ms, with post-perceptual responses falling outside of the 300 ms range. The amygdala, the emotional seat of the brain, and orbitofrontal cortex (OFC), where predictions about threat and opportunity relative to prior experience are processed, have both been shown to play an integral role in early and middle stages of vision.²¹ Thus theory supports that affect is a combination of ‘top down’ and ‘bottom up’ effects, in which sensory signal is enhanced up until the stage of conscious perception.²² Jacobson writes: “In particular, the encoding of valence in the OFC, provides crucial evidence, as it is taken to be part of the *first* of two stages hypothesized to be involved in object recognition—a fast, gist-based stage, which is then followed by a second, slower stage of refinement. The second stage is assumed to be facilitated by the encoding of valence in the first stage. Thus, cumulatively, the described findings support the researchers’ claim that ‘valence is integral to seeing’.”²³

Various philosophical theories of valence concur that perception is an intrinsically valenced affair. Growing consensus reflects the phenomenologically corroborated claim that valenced perception is

¹⁷ For the claim that valence holds across the sense modalities see De Vignemont 2023 and Jacobson 2021. For the claim that valence is present in primitive animals see Feinberg & Mallatt 2016 and Veit 2023.

¹⁸ Hopkins 2006, Cowan (with respect to ethical properties) 2015 p.168-171, Stokes 2014, 2018, Lord 2019.

¹⁹ Barrett et al 2007, Pessoa 2008, 2017, Pessoa and Adolphs 2010, Tamietto and de Gelder 2010, Lebrecht 2011, Lebrecht et al 2012, Barrett & Bar 2009, Zeidman and Maguire 2016, Barbot & Carrasco 2018.

²⁰ Barrett & Bar 2009, p. 1329.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Pessoa and Adolphs 2010.

²³ Jacobson (forthcoming), p.12.

not a special category of perception, but simply a feature of perception simpliciter, across all sense modalities.²⁴ In contrast, the metaphysical and epistemic character of valence is highly contentious. Theories diverge over key questions: What is valence's source? What, if anything, does valence disclose epistemically? And can valence justify evaluative judgments? I'll briefly survey these options and (to show my hand) argue that a particular view is, if not the correct view, well suited to supply aid to the cognitivist. On this view, evaluative perception and emotion have a parallel metaphysical structure, and thus together can supply a more compelling response to Dorsch's challenge than cognitivism alone.

Let's begin with a disagreement over valence's source. Attitudinalists claim that valence's source is the influence of a perceiver's conative states upon the representational mode of a perception's content.²⁵ Thus, a desire for (e.g.) an almond is the ultimate source of an almond's good taste. Evaluativism, in contrast, claims that valence's source is the *content* of a perception, and hence something that perception represents out in the world.²⁶

This key difference—over whether valence is a matter of content or attitude—has implications with respect to valence's epistemic role. Evaluativists claim that, like other contentful aspects of perception, valence licenses perceptual beliefs and, when well formed, can be a source of perceptual justification. Attitudinalists will tend to disagree. As long as they accept the standard view that conation is psychologically primitive, non-factive, and exhibits an exclusively world-to-mind direction of fit, they will consider valence epistemically inert. Evaluativists will claim the opposite: that valence is epistemically significant because, like other content, it represents worldly features, in this case, axiological ones.

Affectivism about valenced perception, like evaluativism, claims that the affective character of perception is epistemically significant because it tracks worldly features.²⁷ However, it differs significantly because it doesn't conceive of valence in terms of representational content. Instead, it claims that valence discloses the value of its objects through a non-representational perceptual epistemic norm—*inheritance*.

²⁴ de Vignemont, 2023, Jacobson 2024, González & Toribio (under review).

²⁵ de Vignemont 2023 and Jacobson 2021 take attitudinalist positions.

²⁶ Evaluativism is supported by Bain 2013, 2017, 2019 for pain.

²⁷ Berinstein 2025, (under review).

Inheritance: the axiological relation of an experience to a subject is a function of the axiological relation of the object to the subject.²⁸

For example, a stubbed toe is painful, and in that respect a bad experience for a subject to have. Insofar as the object of the experience (the stubbed toe) is bad for the subject, the experience is more informative of this disvalue to the extent that the experience hurts (has negative affective character). Thus according to affectivism it is a separate, non-representational norm that governs the affective character of experience. Nevertheless, when this epistemic norm is obeyed by experience, the subject is in a superior epistemic position, because they are aware of the (response-independent) value of the objects of their experience. While on evaluativism valence exhibits a mind-to-world direction of fit and on attitudinalism valence exhibits a world-to-mind direction of fit, on affectivism, valence exhibits a *dual* direction of fit (both mind-to-world and world-to-mind). This is because valence is taken to disclose the value of its objects by itself being good or bad for the subject rather than through the accuracy of evaluative content.

Among the cognitivist theories of valence, affectivism and evaluativism, there is a question of whether the evaluative or affective element of perception can be treated in the same way as its non-evaluative aspects. Ordinary, accurate perceptual appearances (the appearance of a square as square or a hat as a hat) are paradigms of mental states whose contents exhibit a mind-to-world direction of fit. It is in virtue of this that they are able to play their canonical empirical role: informing us about states of the world and enabling consequent forms of empirical reasoning. The received view of how perceptual appearances play this role is by *representing properties*: e.g. my representation of the black cat ascribes blackness to the cat. It is because of the contents or accuracy conditions that property-ascribing representations have that they are assumed to ‘reach out to the world’ as they do. Evaluativists treat the affective character of perception in just this way.²⁹ The painfulness of a stubbed toe is, on their view, a representation of the badness of the stubbed toe to the subject. Accordingly, the pleasant or unpleasant character of perception is just a matter of property ascription, like typical sensory aspects. Affectivism, in contrast, rejects this ‘equal treatment’ approach for evaluative and indicative aspects, noting that only evaluative aspects have an inherently motivating character and typically fail to ascribe any ordinary monadic properties to their object.

²⁸ For a defense of *inheritance* see Berinstein (under review).

²⁹ Bain

Affectivists may thus argue that valence is distinct from any aspect of perception that consists in a merely indicative representation of world properties.

Relatedly, a simple argument for affectivism over evaluativism is that perception, being valenced, exhibits a *dual direction-of-fit*, while evaluativism assigns it only a mind-to-world direction of fit. Consider the bad taste and smell of rotten meat. If this bad smell reveals that meat is a bad food source, it is conveying empirical information about its object, just as the blackness of a cat's appearance is disclosing information about *its* object. However, this bad taste and smell doesn't seem to be a mere ascription of an evaluative property to its object; it is also strongly aversive, motivating us to avoid the meat and establishing apt desires about, say, disposing of it promptly. While some might argue that a mere representation of the meat as bad just is intrinsically motivating, most agree that there is no general, internal relationship between a representation's accuracy conditions and certain conative states or motivations (in other words, states with world-to-mind direction of fit).³⁰

Affectivism's treatment of valence preserves the empirical significance of valence, much like evaluativism, suggesting that valence generally discloses value relations to the subject and is therefore informative about states of the world. However, unlike evaluativism's version of cognitivism, it does not suggest that this empirical significance is a matter of belief-like representations. Instead, it secures the logical relationship between the mental state and the object of perception through a non-representational epistemic norm.

Inheritance is a matter of transmitting the relation of 'being good or bad for' from an object to an experience, rather than a matter of having certain truth conditions. It formalizes a norm to the effect that experiences of bad things are better empirically to the extent that they feel bad and experiences of good things are better to the extent that they feel good. By mirroring the evaluative or axiological character of their objects, experiences thereby incentivize subjects to act toward objects of experience in an appropriate manner. Further, subjects who experience in pleasant and painful ways have such reasons without the subject having to make a practical inference from a descriptive fact and an antecedently held value to an action. In other words, an animal need not recognize something as x, accept that x's are good, and infer from this that it should pursue x. Instead, it can simply be aptly motivated by the good or bad feeling of experiencing x.

³⁰ See McDowell 1978.

3. Uniting the emotional and perceptual aspects of aesthetic sensibility

My argument here is that the perceptual and emotional aspects of taste need not be in tension with each other with respect to ‘direction of fit’. I haven’t attempted to offer any conclusive argument for cognitivism about the emotions, nor for affectivism, but I will argue for the conditional claim that if one accepts cognitivism about the emotions and affectivism about perception, we can resolve the *prima facie* tension about the direction of fit of these elements. We can see that both perception—with its essential affective dimension—and emotion—with its felt character and evaluative content—may each have a *dual* direction of fit.

Moreover, it’s quite plausible to see them both as world-directed not in spite of but in virtue of their distinctively evaluative character. The norm that I’ve called *inheritance* suggests that perception’s most emotion-like element—valence—is crucial to its empirical function. Its normative function (to guide animals away from harm and toward what is good for us) and its epistemic function (to tell us about our environments and to correct false assumptions about them) are both served by sensory experience being ubiquitously valenced.

The idea that emotion is a capacity that has an empirical basis in perception becomes very plausible on this picture. The positive valence of the taste of a perfectly crafted bagel might be a constituent of admiration for the baker’s skill, when joined with further cognitive attention. Alternately, a negatively valenced glance at one’s appearance in the mirror might be the basis of shame at some specific feature one is convinced is inadequate. Without *assimilating* aesthetic emotion and aesthetic perception, we can imagine innumerable ways in which they work in tandem in our practical aesthetic lives.

On this picture emotion and perception are both essentially characterized by valence. Further, cognitivists and affectivists make congenial claims about it: that valence *discloses value*. The cognitivist holds that emotions are representations of worldly values, while the affectivist claims that valences are governed by certain axiological epistemic norms. Thus, when we think of the emotional and perceptual aspects of an aesthetic sensibility, we need not think of these aspects as performing contrasting operations, according to the classical Humean division between belief and desire. Emotions are not about subjective wishes and perceptions about objective facts. Rather, emotions

and perceptions are, when functioning well, two distinct capacities for evaluating the objective circumstances relative to the perceiver's objective interests.

Take the paradigm example of Picasso's *Guernica*. Dorsch will contend that two critics can have faultlessly diverging emotional responses to it and that this undermines the plausibility of sentimentalism. According to the affectivist, at first glance a critic would perceive not just the physical characteristics of the painting but recognize figurative elements such as the anguished faces of bombing victims, stretched and stylized human and animal forms, and flaming buildings. The amygdala—the emotional seat of the brain—is involved in making these out perceptually. Their evaluative and descriptive processing does not occur separately, but simultaneously, such that they are, from the outset, valenced in appearance.

Works of art invariably fit within artistic practices, typically made up of artists, audiences, and institutions which cultivate human activity of a certain kind, including art's production, conservation, and appreciation. *Guernica* was commissioned by the Spanish government for the Spanish pavilion at Paris's 1937 International Exhibition. Within this context, Picasso's work is understood to be an anti-fascist statement condemning the Nazi attack on the Basque town of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War. Presumably, such practices exist because they are valuable to the aesthetic lives of subjects. In doing so, they establish individual-response-independent evaluative standards. In this case, the power of the aesthetic practice was harnessed for political purposes through an artist's cooperation with an overt geopolitical initiative.

The cognitivist and the affectivist can claim that the affective response of a critic (or suitably informed audience member) is grounded in an objective relationship between the particular qualities of *Guernica* and such aesthetic practices. The art practice in which *Guernica* is situated negotiates elements of modernism, symbolism, and abstraction between artists, audiences, and critics. According to the picture I have been developing, we would expect positive valence to characterize the response of those whose aesthetic lives benefit from these practices. *Guernica* is valuable insofar as it is a worthy contribution to or advancement of that practice, having the features that exemplify the virtues of such a contribution.

Conversely, one would expect someone who found an artwork to be an unfitting contribution, or to fail to instantiate the virtues of that practice, to have a negative response to it. Illustratively, a group

of Spanish officials—detractors of modernism in the recounting— sought to replace *Guernica* with a more traditional painting named *Madrid 1937* by Horacio Ferrer de Morgado. Presumably such figures had more negatively valenced experiences of the painting than other audiences. Similarly, they had a distinct relationship to modernism or the practice of which *Guernica* was a part.³¹

If *Guernica* is an innovative and accomplished work relative to the artistic practice of which it is a part, as many have argued it is, then it is also an item which stands to aesthetically benefit participants in the practice. This, the affectivist can argue, is what perception discloses through its affective character—the aesthetic relevance of *Guernica* and its figurative elements to its practice. The cognitivist, similarly, can address the aesthetic meaning of more complex, non-perceptible elements. These include the symbolism of the Minotaur (irrational power) and the Harlequin's diamond tear (the power of life over death) and the highlighting of specifically women's suffering in war (through the dominance of women in the scene, particularly a woman on the left who is holding a lifeless child). While perception is sensitive to the evaluative significance of sensible features of the work, emotion is sensitive to the evaluative significance of non-sensible, abstract elements, in addition, perhaps, to sensible ones.

reThese are, the cognitivist can argue, constitutive of relationships of aesthetic benefit that a particular individual stands in to the work. While these relationships depend on the background and capacities of the subject—e.g. the aesthetic relevance of *Guernica* depends on the subject's cognizance of the threat of fascism to Spain, concern for human suffering in the context of war, and perhaps some grasp of the rapidly evolving history of figurative painting in the early 20th century—they nevertheless have very little to do with the idiosyncratic tastes or arbitrary preferences of individual subjects. The sensory pleasantness of mere sensory properties (purpleness, softness, being of a high pitch) gives us little reason to think that these are grounded in individual-response-independent values. My point is that in the ordinary aesthetic case this does *not* apply—perceptible properties of aesthetic objects (artworks and non-artworks alike) have aesthetic value because of a relevant context (a practice) in which they are created and appreciated. To return to some simpler examples: bagels are good relative to standards for bagels established by practices of bagel-craft. When someone makes an impersonal evaluative judgment about a particular bagel, they are obligated to recognize these standards.

³¹ <https://www.museoreinasofia.es/en/collections/artwork/madrid-1937-aviones-negros-madrid-1937-black-aeroplanes>

3.1

The two problems I raised for the cognitivist, overintellectualization and difficulty accounting for its motivational character, could plausibly be addressed by an extension of *inheritance* to emotion.

Though I cannot argue for it here, emotions too might inherit the axiological character of their objects. And they might do so because they are closely related to perception. On such a picture, the affective character of emotion, its distinctively motivational feel, is a function of the fact that its objects are value relations which genuinely affect the subject. *Inheritance* articulates a specific logical relation, unlike non-conceptual content. It does so without a further, highly sophisticated enhancement of content, as on Achs's proposal.

That is, *inheritance* as a conceptual tool establishes a logical relation between an affective experience and its object that is not concept-mediated. This shift frees us to think of any affective state as intentional without appeal to content or concept-based rules to establish intentionality. With this amendment, the cognitivist solution to Dorsch's challenge, which is to claim that aesthetic emotion exhibits a mind-to-world (belief-like) direction of fit, doesn't require us to think of aesthetic responsiveness as a reflexive rational commitment. It can be conceived of in a less intellectual mode: as a form of responsiveness that is fundamentally affective.

4. Queries and objections

The view that I have been propounding holds that aesthetic emotion and affective perception are cooperative faculties which work in tandem in the acquisition of affective knowledge. Elsewhere in the literature, it is often taken that these faculties cannot cooperate in the manner I have proposed, and that, instead, we must arbitrate between two competing views, one on which affect or emotion grounds aesthetic knowledge and another on which (non-affective) perception instead provides its canonical foundation (perceptualism). Keren Gorodeisky and Eric Marcus (hereafter G&M) thus write: "What about aesthetic knowledge? Does it too bottom out in perception? Is it those very perceptual states that ultimately justify our empirical beliefs that also ground aesthetic knowledge? Most say "yes"; we will call them Perceptualists. But Perceptualism is wrong. When it comes to aesthetic knowledge, it is appreciation, not perception, where the rubber hits the road. Aesthetic

knowledge, we argue, derives ultimately from feeling; it is a kind of affective knowledge. This is Affectivism.”^{32 33}

At the heart of G&M’s objection to perception-involving theories of aesthetic judgment like the one I have proposed is that they cannot make sense of the *rationality* of aesthetic sensibilities. Aesthetic feeling has a rational structure, they argue. Liking a certain film can be justified: asked “why did you like it?” or even ‘why is it worth watching?’, subjects can offer *justificatory reasons*. This basing relation between feelings and their objects entails that subjects are rationally accountable for the appropriateness of their responses.

When premised on the notion that non-evaluative low-level features must rationally ground high-level evaluative features in perception, perceptualism becomes an unattractive view, since it is implausible, first, that these low-level features serve as a subject’s reasons for their “higher level” perceptions or, second, that there are aesthetic rules governing how the low-level features determine higher level ones. G&M thus argue that perceptualists cannot meet Boghossian’s ‘Taking Condition’, which states that genuine rationality requires that the subject *take* their grounds to support their conclusion—i.e. one’s aesthetic judgment is drawn *because* one takes the aesthetic grounds to support the aesthetic appraisal.³⁴

It is often claimed that perceptions are not the kinds of states that can be justified or unjustified, nor are they *reasons-responsive*: an object of perception e.g. a black cat is not a *reason* for seeing the black cat, it is merely a cause of that seeing. Perception, in contrast to rational states like belief and emotion, is thereby understood as passive and receptive rather than spontaneous and cognitive. There is a good reason to think that this conception of perception is inaccurate. A wide array of states straddle the boundary between perception and belief: perceptions which are cognitively penetrated or subject to top-down effects, core cognitions, perceptions based on stored information, perceptions hijacked by conative states, cross-modal perceptions, perceptual representations that rely

³² Gorodeisky and Marcus 2022.

³³ It’s worth noting the inconsistency of this use of the term ‘affectivism’ with its prior usage in this paper. I will not further appeal to the notion in G&M’s sense.

³⁴ Gorodeisky and Marcus 2022, p. 2511, Boghossian 2014.

on empirical views, and so on.³⁵ A range of plausible arguments exist to the effect that such states have statuses as justified and unjustified.³⁶ Valenced perceptions may be among this class.

Further, we should question the premise that non-aesthetic, non-evaluative ‘low-level’ features are the rational grounds of high-level evaluative features in either aesthetic perception or aesthetic judgment. G&M’s view, for one, itself rejects this story by denying the separation between low and high-level features with respect to the objects of affective states: “The rough idea is this: feelings (e.g., fear) present the facts on which they are based (e.g., the approaching man is a violent criminal) as having a certain normative significance.”³⁷ They do not claim that we *infer* the normative significance of the approaching man from non-normative facts about him in some further cognitive act. Rather they claim that the fear itself takes as a direct object a ‘normative complex’: the dangerousness of the approaching man, a violent criminal. The same approach is available to the affectivist about perception. The affective perception of e.g. the normative significance of x does not require the subject to infer normative significance from non-normative low-level properties of x’s appearance. Instead, insofar as they are soundly perceiving, subjects may be directly aware of the axiological relationship in which the subject stands to them through the valenced character of perception (and emotion).

On this proposal, are valenced perceptual states epistemically assessable as justified or unjustified? G&M fail to mark an explicit difference between a cognitive appraisal and an affective presentation of value. I take it that what is distinctive of a cognitive appraisal is that it is truth-apt and (non-coincidentally) has an exclusively mind-to-world direction of fit. The disclosure of value through affect, on the other hand, exhibits a dual-direction of fit: its felt character is motivational, and it can fit or fail to fit its object in virtue of its value. This is not to be confused with its being a truth-evaluable cognitive state. Evaluative experiences offer a *de re* rather than a *de dicto* presentation of value—they do not ‘claim’ or ‘state’ their objects to be valuable, they merely convey their value through inheritance by feeling good or bad.³⁸ As a consequence they are not subject to ‘the taking condition’ in the manner of paradigmatic cognitive states. They can be justified in a manner specific to affective states even while lacking familiar features of justified cognitive states, such as beliefs.

³⁵ Cf. Raftopoulos 2001, Raftopoulos & Zeimbekis 2015, Siegel 2017, Jenkin 2020, 2022, 2023, Gupta 2023.

³⁶ See especially Jenkin 2020, 2022, 2023.

³⁷ Gorodeisky and Marcus 2022, p. 2516.

³⁸ Berinstein (under review).

One can be angry at x or pleased by y, even as x and y are fitting and appropriate objects of anger or pleasure, and one can even be (rationally) angry at x or (rationally) pleased at y, i.e. pleased or angry for good reasons, without taking x to be *the reason* for one's anger or y to be *the reason* for one's pleasure. That is, the recognition of the reason as a reason is not what makes the reason a reason (in the affective as opposed to the cognitive case). Instead, it is the logical relation between the reason and perception (e.g. the logical relation between the objective need for water and thirst or the man being a violent criminal and fear) that makes the first a reason for the second. Unlike reflectively rational states, on which self-conscious endorsement may be constitutive of the state, these exclusively first-order, *de re* value presentations are archetypal of affective rationality.

5. Conclusion

Inheritance gives us reason to think that affective rationality and cognitive rationality are *principally* distinct. Affective rationality may characterize both perception and emotion, explaining why they both exhibit a dual direction of fit. Arguments that emotion cannot ground aesthetic judgment are based on schematic pictures of perception and emotion, and thus rely on the claim that they exhibit contrary directions of fit. I've considered a way of being a cognitivist about emotion and a view of perception as intrinsically valenced which refute these schemas and show that both capacities have descriptive and evaluative aspects which plausibly work in close connection with each other.

On this picture we can make sense of the paradoxical character of aesthetic life. Aesthetic value relations vary among subjects according to their interest and expertise in a given aesthetic practice, along with other aspects of their background and capacities. Perception is sensitive to these differences via *inheritance*. Emotion too is sensitive to value relations; if not through inheritance, then through other means. Through valenced experiences subjects nevertheless have fallible access to aesthetic truth, insofar as valences are governed by response-independent value-relations. This allows for a picture on which variation in aesthetic emotion is not due to idiosyncrasies in the state itself, but rather genuine differences in the subject's 'aesthetic perspective' upon the object. Through such a perspective, aesthetic perception and emotion enable a subject to make out non-perspective-dependent features of aesthetic value relations. On the view I prefer, such value relations depend on aesthetic practices which play an important role in human flourishing and thus can be made out in an essentially response-independent manner.

We have reason to think that the affective intentionality of valenced perception is instantiated in experiences of artwork and other (non-art) objects of aesthetic interest, including the aesthetics of the everyday.³⁹ Many such experiences are heavily informed by perception, with its inextricably intertwined descriptive and evaluative aspects. Emotion and cognition are equally part of our mind's directedness to the aesthetic world. In a typical aesthetic experience all three of these faculties, with their distinctive profiles, are at play. I have argued that we should reject two tropes that make this picture implausible: that perception is a simple receptive capacity and that emotion is empirically inert. Instead, on a richer picture of perception and affect as distinct yet complementary evaluative capacities, there is no pressure to think that if perception grounds aesthetic sensibility that affect cannot or that if affect grounds aesthetic sensibility that perception cannot. This allows for a unified picture of the aesthetic sensibilities: a perceptual aspect which puts us onto the evaluative significance of sensible features of aesthetic objects, and an emotional aspect which extends the reach of evaluative perception to abstract features and those which are necessarily mediated by cognition.

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³⁹ See Saito 2007, also Lopes, Nanay, and Riggle 2022.

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