

# THE AUTHORITY OF PLEASURE

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**ABSTRACT:** The aim of the paper is to reassess the prospects of a widely neglected affective conception of the aesthetic evaluation and appreciation of art. On the proposed picture, the aesthetic evaluation and appreciation of art are non-contingently constituted by a particular kind of pleasure. Artworks that are valuable *qua* artworks merit, deserve, and call for a certain pleasure, the same pleasure that reveals (or at least purports to reveal) them to be valuable in the way that they are, and constitutes their aesthetic evaluation and appreciation. This is why and how art is non-contingently related to pleasure. Call this, the Affective View. While I don't advance conclusive arguments for the affective view in this paper, I aim to reassess its prospects by (1) undermining central objections against it, (2) dissociating it from hedonism about the *value* of artworks (the view that this value is grounded in, and explained by, its possessors' power to please), and (3) introducing some observations on the practice of art in support of it. Given that the objections I discuss miss their target, and given the observations in support of it, I conclude that the affective view is worth serious reconsideration.

## Introduction

Does art have anything interesting to do with pleasure? While a long and venerable tradition, stretching all the way back to Ancient Greece, answered this question affirmatively, the second half of the twentieth century has introduced many naysayers. These naysayers' attempt to banish pleasure from the realm (and the philosophy) of art comes in different forms and is explained by different reasons.<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I focus on one of its forms: the denial of the Kantian view regarding the pleasurable nature of what

has traditionally been called ‘aesthetic judgment.’ Does pleasure non-contingently constitute the aesthetic evaluation and appreciation of artworks? The naysayers say “no.” Call the view based on this denial, the Anti-Affective View.

The main task of the paper is to reexamine the grounds for this denial and the prospects of the view that is so denied: the view that we evaluate and appreciate artworks “through a pleasure or displeasure” (Kant 1790: 211). Call this the Affective View.<sup>2</sup> On the proposed affective view, artworks that are valuable *qua* artworks<sup>3</sup> merit, deserve, and call for a certain pleasure, the same pleasure that reveals (or purports to reveal) them to be valuable in the way that they are, and constitutes their aesthetic evaluation. In other words, the aesthetic evaluation of art is constituted by the kind of pleasure that purports to reveal and to be responsive to the value of artworks.<sup>4</sup> This is how art is non-contingently related to pleasure.

While most aestheticians tend to agree that the *appreciation* of art, as contrasted with its *evaluation*, is often *related* to pleasure,<sup>5</sup> the idea that appreciation is non-contingently constituted by pleasure was recently rejected just as much as the idea that the evaluation of art is so constituted.<sup>6</sup> According to this anti-affective line, appreciation consists essentially only in non-affective understanding or cognitive recognition. Pleasure, on this view, is, at best, the contingent and non-cognitive accompaniment or by-product of appreciation:

[T]he connection between appreciation and liking . . . is a contingent matter. (Carroll, 2016: 6)

Aesthetic appreciation is . . . contingently, a source of pleasure. (Lopes, 2018: 207)

The rejection of the affective view of evaluation is even more entrenched.<sup>7</sup> Consider, for example, Aaron Meskin's denial of this view. Though not using the term 'pleasure,' Meskin rejects no other than a Kantian-inspired conception of aesthetic evaluation that is constituted by a "special state of mind," different from belief:

Aesthetic judgments<sup>8</sup>—as opposed to mere attributions of aesthetic properties—are often understood as connected to a special state of mind . . . I believe that the only useful sense to be made of the notion of aesthetic judgment is in terms of the content of such judgments rather than in terms of some special mode of judging. That is, aesthetic judgments should be understood as statements that attribute aesthetic properties.

Evaluative aesthetic judgments are subspecies of these statements, which attribute values.

(Meskin, 2004: 60)<sup>9</sup>

Like many anti-affectivists, Meskin offers no arguments against the affective view. That's why, for the most part of the paper, I will motivate the affective view by reconstructing and responding to implicit arguments against it.

Two central assumptions obscure the virtues of the affective view: the assumptions that (1) pleasure is merely subjective, particularly, that it is incapable of disclosing the value of its object, and (2) pleasure can be connected to art only if it is the answer to the question "why are artworks valuable?", namely, only if pleasure explains why certain artworks are to be valued, and normatively warrants their valuation. I challenge these assumptions by carving out space for the idea that pleasure can play an epistemic role with regard to the values of artworks<sup>10</sup> and by dissociating the affective

view from hedonism about the *value* of artworks. I discuss the second assumption in section 1, and the first assumption in sections 3, 4, 5 and 6. I do so by responding to objections. Section 1 shows that objections against value-hedonism are no objections against the affective view, and that a non-contingent connection between art and pleasure need not be the one advocated by the standard value-hedonist. Section 3 responds to an objection based on the premise that pleasure is a passive sensation. Section 4 responds to the objection from “painful art.” Section 5 responds to an objection based on the premise that artworks can be evaluated in a variety of ways. And section 6 responds to epistemological objections against the idea that pleasure can reveal the value properties of its object. Section 2 is dedicated to introducing some observations in favor of the affective view, but none of them is meant as a conclusive argument for the view.

## **I. The Affective View vs. Value-Hedonism**

The affective view is not a view of art’s value, but a view of the *evaluation* and *appreciation* of art (as those which are constituted by pleasure). The view is divorced from, and compatible with a denial of, a hedonic view of the *value* of artworks *qua* artworks. Hedonism about this value (henceforth, value-hedonism) is the view that this value lies in the power of works to please (under standard conditions):

[T]he *aesthetic merit* of a work of art derives from (1) the *aesthetic pleasure* that (2) it is *capable* of giving to a consumer . . . (Mohan Matthen, 2018: 28)

The surge of aesthetic hedonism in recent decades is indeed responsible for the resurgence of pleasure in the philosophy of art.<sup>11</sup> But, while I agree with the hedonist that

pleasure *is* non-contingently connected to art, I believe that the hedonist misrepresents the role of pleasure vis-à-vis art insofar as she argues that the power to please explains why works are valuable. As a consequence of offering a wrong explanation of the connection between art and pleasure, hedonists unwittingly strengthen their opponents' resistance to accepting the link between art and pleasure. For if the connection between art and pleasure *could only be* the one that the value-hedonist advocates then we would be justified in denying this connection. One of the main tasks of this paper is to open up a space for a non-contingent connection between art and pleasure, which is different from the one advocated by the value-hedonist (in statements like Matthen's above). To see the difference, it might be helpful to recall Socrates's challenge to Euthyphro. I side with (aesthetico) Socrates in holding that artworks are not valuable because they give us pleasure. Still, the affectivist holds that such works merit pleasure insofar as they are valuable. Pleasure is connected to art as the proper response merited by the values of artworks, *not* as the source of art's value.

The affectivist does, of course, acknowledge that works that are valuable *qua* artworks often please, and that these pleasing experiences are, as such, hedonically valuable. But, for her, what makes these works of value is not explained by the hedonic value of these experiences.<sup>12</sup> Artworks share this feature with Aristotle's virtuous actions: Virtuous actions are not ethically good on account of their hedonic value, but they are nonetheless worthy of pleasure insofar as they are valuable. On the affective view, the same applies to artworks that are valuable *qua* artworks. These works are not aesthetically good on account of their hedonic value, but they are nonetheless worthy of pleasure insofar as they are valuable.

Due to the limited space, I will not rehash what I find to be the strongest arguments against value-hedonism.<sup>13</sup> Nor will I prove the superiority of the affective view over hedonism. I've done so elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> Here, I only stress that the affective view does not entail hedonism (nor is it entailed by it), and need not accompany it. Accordingly, objections against value-hedonism fail to undermine the affective view.

And so, I aim to preserve both the grain of truth in hedonism (the hedonist's commitment to a non-contingent relation between art and pleasure), *and* the grain of truth in its non-affective denial (the denial that what makes artworks valuable is their power to please),<sup>15</sup> while rejecting the former's explanation of the source of art's normativity and the latter's way of divorcing art from pleasure. My proposal is therefore unique in the field: the affective view is a neglected alternative between hedonism about the value of art and the anti-affective view of its evaluation, but, I will argue, this is a view that we have very good reasons to adopt.

## **2. Support<sup>16</sup>**

Why think art is non-contingently connected to pleasure, particularly, why think that the latter plays a constitutive role in the evaluation of the former? This section presents, in extreme brevity, a few observations that support this idea.

First, consider how often we communicate our responses to, and recommendations of, artworks in terms of feelings, particularly in terms of our likes and dislikes. We claim that we liked the film, enjoyed the exhibit, and so on and so forth. The affective view offers an explanation of this, and is supported by the phenomenon.

Second, many value-laden aspects of our lives call for and merit, not only beliefs, but certain kinds of feelings. Being responsive to Oedipus's tragedy requires that we *feel* pity and try to get others to feel it too. This is true of those people and situations that call for empathy, for certain forms of collective forgiveness, for moral outrage and many other feelings. Why can't the values of artworks *qua* artworks also be those that call for and merit a particular kind of pleasure? Is there any reason to deny that they belong to what in meta-ethics is often regarded as "a familiar set of concepts with an especially tight connection to the human emotional repertoire [which] concerns the sentimental values," where these values merit "specific human sentiments" (D'Arms, 2013: 3)?<sup>17</sup>

The affective view is also supported by the logic and the aim of our aesthetic and critical exchanges about art, logic and aim which the view is well-positioned to explain. It seems that other than in very special circumstances, when we recommend a novel or a performance to others, we don't wish them merely to believe that the novel or the performance is valuable in the way we claim it is. Rather, we want them to enjoy it for themselves. Others may be able to believe, on the basis of our recommendation, that these works and performances are valuable. But independent of pleasure, mere belief would, most often, disappoint in a way that suggests that mere belief is not the aim of aesthetic recommendations. For example, my cousin Melissa may well tell me that, after my recommendation and a few months of listening to the album, she believes me that Miles Davis' *Birth of the Cool* is an excellent album. But she may add that she "must confess" (as she puts it), that it is not to her liking. She just doesn't enjoy the album, she adds. Hearing Melissa, I'd most likely be disappointed. I'd think that "confession" captures her speech act so well because it conveys a certain failure of responsiveness—

failure of responsiveness to the merit of the album and to my own recommendation. Even though Melissa believes that the album is valuable, I would nonetheless think that she failed to fully acknowledge the value of the album and that I failed to achieve my aim in recommending the album in the first place.<sup>18</sup> Aesthetic exchanges seem to facilitate the hearer's own (responsive and cognitive) pleasure, the pleasure the work at stake merits.<sup>19</sup>

Both affectivists and anti-affectivists tend to share this understanding of the aim or logic of the practice. Even those who deny that “we ought to like great art,” think that “[a]rt critics view as truism the claim that one ought to like good art” (Hein, 1967: 209). Why do the experts in this practice, those who are skilled in achieving its aim, take this as a truism, unless they were indeed aiming to get their readers to *like* good art?

On the affective view, what explains why the goal of the practice seems to be the hearer's pleasure in the relevant work, as these observations strongly suggest, is that merely believing and even seeing (or otherwise perceiving) that a work is valuable, but not liking its aesthetic excellence is a form of irresponsiveness to what the work merits. The affective view is not only faithful to the phenomena that underlie this practice, but it offers an explanation of them and is strongly supported by them.

Consider next what presents itself as a variant of Moore's Paradox concerning aesthetic reasons. Consider the statement, “Sakai Hōitsu's *The Moon and Plum Trees* is beautiful but there are no reasons to enjoy it.” Intuitively, this claim sounds odd, requiring further explanation. Why is that so? On a straightforward explanation, this is so because greatness in art is the source of reasons for enjoying the work. This is the core commitment of the affective view, which is thus supported by the oddity of this statement.



Finally, thinking about the aesthetic evaluation of artworks as constituted by a certain kind of pleasure (the pleasure I introduce in 3.5; henceforth PA) provides a very good explanation of what is commonly regarded as the dual nature of aesthetic evaluation as both subjective and objective, or both first-personal and cognitive.<sup>20</sup> It has been argued that, on the one hand, a certain kind of autonomy or first-personal engagement is expected of the aesthetic evaluator; making this evaluation merely on the basis of testimony strikes many as incomplete or strange. On the other hand, aesthetic evaluation seems also subject to rational doubt of the following sort: if experts or the consensus of others disagree with my own aesthetic evaluation, this gives me good reasons to doubt my evaluation and reconsider the work. However first-personal we require aesthetic evaluation to be, we also widely assume that the evaluation of only one of two disagreeing parties can be right. The affective view can accommodate both of these seeming incompatible characteristics. On the affective view, the first-personal character often expected of aesthetic evaluations is explained by the pleasure that constitutes aesthetic evaluation, pleasure that no one else can feel for the evaluator. At the same time, the affective view explains the rational nature of self-doubt and the (at least seeming) validity of cognitive fault by arguing that aesthetic evaluation concerns a value that is revealed, but not constituted, by pleasure.<sup>21</sup>

In short, the affective view is explanatorily powerful, and is well supported by the practice of evaluating, appreciating and talking about art. Both neglecting and denying it, as the standard approach in the literature has done, had better rest on very strong grounds. Are there any such grounds? In the rest of the paper I will reconstruct (implicit) arguments against the affective view, and show them to fail.

### **3. A Passive Sensation?**

#### **3.1 Not mere sensation**

A common objection to the link between art evaluation and pleasure is based on a narrow conception of pleasure, in general, and the pleasure one often feels in artworks, in particular. On this conception, pleasure is passive and merely sensory—it is something like a sensation of a thrill. Arthur Danto, for example, describes aesthetic pleasure, as a “kind of sensuous thrill that beauty . . . causes in us without benefit of argument or analysis.”<sup>22</sup> But, according to those who pursue this objection, the experience and evaluation of art are neither sensory nor passive, but cognitive, complex and active. Hence, the objector concludes, there is no reason to think that pleasure is connected to the evaluation of art in any but wholly contingent way.<sup>23</sup>

But there are strong reasons to deny the conception of pleasure behind this objection, and so the conclusion based on it. Particularly, it is highly plausible that (1) neither pleasure, in general, nor the pleasure in art, is reducible to mere sensation, (2) pleasure cannot be captured by a phenomenological account that characterizes all pleasures by a common sensory “feel,” such as a “thrill,” (3) pleasure, in general and the pleasure in art in particular, are in an important sense “active” rather than merely passive, and (4) even the passivity that does characterize pleasure is compatible with it playing a robust epistemic role in the cognitive, active and complex evaluation of art. I turn now to explain these.

Gilbert Ryle, who emphatically declared, “pleasure is not a sensation at all,”<sup>24</sup> articulated some of the reasons against any conception of pleasure as mere sensation.

While sensations are necessarily open to certain temporal and spatial measurements, he claimed, pleasures are not. For example, while I can, in principle, tell the doctor when my headache started and when it subsided, whether it was sharp or dull, where I felt it and so on, the pleasure one may feel in a conversation with a friend, a good soccer game, or a good philosophy book don't bear these characterizations. While temporal duration and spatial localization are necessarily applicable to sensations, they are, according to Ryle, inapplicable to pleasures. Conflating the two is a category mistake.

We need not follow Ryle either in denying that at least some pleasures are sensory or in adopting his positive characterization of pleasure.<sup>25</sup> But there is every reason to resist the reduction of all pleasures to mere sensation, and every reason to follow Ryle in challenging phenomenological accounts of pleasure that define it by its sensory feel or hedonic tone. These are ill-suited for adequately characterizing many of the central pleasures in a mature life, and for capturing what is common to all pleasures, even to all sensory pleasures.<sup>26</sup>

### **3.2 Active<sub>1</sub>**

The difference between pleasures and mere sensations is supported by the following “active” character of many pleasures, but not of mere sensations. In contrast to sensations such as headaches, pleasures as various as those of drinking a top crop Barolo wine, of watching a good football game, and of dancing a waltz (to mention only a few), standardly involve understanding and responsiveness to different standards concerning, for example, how and why to feel them, what the object or activity at stake requires: did the aromas of truffles and rose sufficiently complement each other? Were our steps in

sync without too much effort? Though they are not active in the sense of being produced ‘at will’, these pleasures are typically active in the sense of being responsive to such considerations about what and how to feel. They are active in the (plausibly “thin”) sense of not being merely psychological episodes that I find myself undergoing, like headaches, but those that I can either endorse or disavow in light of certain considerations.<sup>27</sup>

### 3.3 Active<sub>2</sub>

This is particularly true of the pleasure many of us often feel when properly engaging with good artworks. For example, if you told me that Henry James’s novel, *The Ambassadors*, is an excellent novel and I asked you why you enjoyed it, it is very plausible that you’d say that you enjoyed it because you loved the structure of its sentences and how loaded with meaning they are, because you were taken by the complexity of the characters and the plot line, because you enjoyed the choice of words and tone of voice, and so forth. You might even contrast the novel with some of James’s other writings, and briefly explain *The Ambassadors*’ relation to other realistic novels within the relevant canon.

If this pleasure is not itself an affective awareness of such reasons for appreciating the novel, it must, at the very least, be informed by, and so be responsive to, them. The pleasure in art is not a merely passive kind of sensation. Rather, it is active in the following rational way that distinguishes it, not only from mere sensations, but also from many other kinds of pleasure: when proper, a pleasure taken in the excellence of an artwork *qua* artwork is *explained by that which also justifies it*. This means that if the pleasure is shown to be unjustified—not to be normatively supported by the aspects of

the work that make it valuable/disvaluable in the way that it is—the feeling subject is under rational pressure to re-experience the work and reconsider what to feel.

Another way of putting the point is this: the relevant “why” question concerning the pleasure in art requires that one answer it by citing *both* that which led one to feel it and that which justifies it as *one and the same answer*.<sup>28</sup> Explaining this pleasure in terms of what led you to feel it, where this is *not* what justifies the pleasure as merited by the work *qua* artwork, namely, where this is not what makes it excellent *qua* artwork, is not a legitimate answer to the relevant question “why.” For example, explaining that you enjoy *The Ambassadors* because Strether, the protagonist, reminds you of your uncle is not an answer to the relevant “why” question. The relevant explanation of this pleasure has to be shaped by this “explanatory-normative nexus.”<sup>29</sup> And so, if reasons are those considerations that *both* explain and justify a state at one and the same time—as Joseph Raz argued—then, when proper, the pleasure in art is responsive to reasons.<sup>30</sup> Even though it is not produced ‘at will,’ even though it is *receptive* such that we cannot feel it simply by deciding to feel it, the pleasure in art is active insofar as, when successful, it is characterized by this kind of (rational) responsiveness to reasons—to the facts that make the work valuable *qua* artwork.

### **3.4 Passivity and Cognition**

This kind of activity is nonetheless compatible with a certain sense of passivity. After all, we are talking about a feeling, not about an intentional action chosen on the basis of deliberation. Moreover, if the pleasure in art had no passive dimension in the sense of not

being open to the world in the way that perception is, it would be hard to see how it may disclose value, as I claim in the following that it can and often does.

But being passive in the sense of being part of our receptivity, in the sense of being open to the world, is fully compatible with the active, complex and cognitive nature of the experience and the evaluation of art, just as the passivity of perception is fully compatible with the active, complex and cognitive nature of perceptual experience and judgment. The opponent of the link between pleasure and art that I introduced above would be forced to reject this last claim. For, presumably, this opponent rejects the link because she supposes that the passive nature of pleasure cannot allow it to constitute the complex, active and cognitive experience and evaluation that art calls for and encourages. Her argument is based, then, on the premise that a passive state cannot play an essential cognitive role in a complex evaluative experience. But this is an implausible premise. Were it true, we would need to deny that (non-affective) perception can serve an essential cognitive role in perceptual experience and knowledge. Clearly, this would be an unreasonable denial.<sup>31</sup>

And so the active, complex and cognitive character of the experience and the evaluation of art provides no reason to deny the link between pleasure and art that is advocated by the affectivist.

### **3.5 The Pleasure in Art [PA]**

So what is the pleasure at the heart of the affective view?<sup>32</sup>

I characterize this pleasure by sketching the eight central characteristics of its structure. The sketch presupposes that a formal, structural or functional approach to

pleasure as such is superior to phenomenological approaches (also known as hedonic tone approaches). What is common to all pleasures cannot be captured by a uniform kind of affective phenomenology. Rather, pleasures have to be characterized in terms of their structure and in terms of the way that they shape, modify or affect pleasurable activities or experiences.

In introduce the eight characteristics of PA according to their generality: we start by what seems to be true of all pleasures, and gradually zoom in to get a close-up on the pleasure in art.

(1) *Affective*: PA is a type of affective experience with *an* affective phenomenology. But this is neither a phenomenology that unifies it with all kinds of pleasure (not one that we feel every time we feel pleasure), nor one that unifies all instances of PA: different instances of this pleasure may feel quite differently.

Nor is PA experienced as a separate occurrent state. Rather, phenomenologically, PA is experienced as a positively affective *way of* perceiving, attending to, imagining or evaluating a work.

(2) *Self-maintenance*: I regard the affective experience at stake as *pleasure* primarily because it is characterized by a positive affective valence that is best captured by the future-directedness that is a mark of *all* pleasures simply *qua* pleasures. Like the pleasures in food, sex, conversation, learning and others, *qua* pleasure, PA is self-maintaining. It tends towards its own continuation such that one typically wishes to, and tends to, retain the same pleasurable experience.<sup>33</sup> In Kant's words, "we linger over the

consideration of the beautiful because this consideration strengthens and reproduces itself” (1790: 222).

It is the combination of these two first characteristics that gives us reasons to call this experience a ‘pleasure,’ not simply a ‘positive affective experience’ or even merely ‘liking.’

(3) *Holistic Complexity*: PA is typically (but not always) taken in a work in light of liking something or other about it:<sup>34</sup> I enjoy Angelin Preljocaj’s dance video *The Scrapers* in light of enjoying how the painting it is a gesture to (Gustav Caillbotte’s *Floor Scrapers*) resonates through it, the innovative body language and movement style, the screechy sounds and colors that bring to life the screechiness and texture of floor scraping, its edginess etc. and the way these all complement and reinforce each other. We typically enjoy an excellent work in light of enjoying something about it, be it its gracefulness, fine acting or even (as I will explain shortly) disturbing and painful power. PA is not only responsive to reasons, but responsive to holistic reasons, ones that are reasons only in the context of the appreciation of the whole.

(4) *Revealing value*:<sup>35</sup> the pleasure at stake is a cognitive kind of affective experience (analogous in some respects to non-affective perception) insofar as it purports to reveal the value of its object (as one that merits itself). When correct, this pleasure indeed presents the object as having the value it has.<sup>36</sup> In successful cases, we apprehend the value of a work *qua* an artwork *in and through* feeling pleasure in it. In these cases, we enjoy the work *as* valuable in the way that it is, without necessarily *first* believing that



it is valuable in the way that it is or first non-affectively perceiving it to be so.<sup>37</sup> We may, immediately, grasp the work's value *by* enjoying it.<sup>38</sup> Thus, pleasure need not be based on a prior perception of the relevant merit, but can (and often does) *itself* reveal it.

Note that this pleasure typically makes the object's value available to the feeling subject by modifying experiences such as perceiving, imagining, and attending. Aydede (2018) suggests helpfully that thinking of pleasure as modifying other experiences should not be more mysterious than thinking that being fast or slow modifies an activity like dancing. I'd add that it should similarly not be mysterious that different ways of engaging with works (e.g., pleasantly or not) do not only allow us to experience them differently, but also, by so doing, to discover new features of them, for example, their value *qua* artworks.

Given that PA can *cognitively* modify experiences in such a way, it can be, and often is, a more basic cognitive disclosure of the *value* of the relevant works than the experiences it modifies (experiences of e.g., seeing, hearing, imagining, attending to). This means that, often, independently of feeling PA, the imagining, seeing, hearing and otherwise experiencing the valuable work do not reveal the work's value, but rather only the non-aesthetic properties on which this value supervenes. In successful engagements with artworks, it is *in and through* feeling PA (and thanks to feeling it) that we are first struck by, and thus experience, the particular value of the work.

(5) *Affective Self-Awareness*: PA presents itself as merited by its object—the specific work. It involves a kind of affective self-awareness, however inchoate and

inarticulate.<sup>39</sup> The basic idea is the one introduced in 2.3: this pleasure is always subject to a rational question “why,” such that if the work is shown not to merit PA, the feeling subject is under rational pressure to re-experience the work, reconsider what to feel, and try to align her feelings with what the work indeed merits.

(6) *Universal* (but defeasible): valuable artworks merit everyone’s pleasure, even if the universal reasons to feel PA may be defeated by other reasons, such as moral reasons not to enjoy the same work (e.g., since the artist is morally debased) or pragmatic and personal reasons not to spend the time needed in order to put oneself in the position to enjoy the work.<sup>40</sup>

(7) *Self-contained*: PA is self-contained such that it is taken in a work independently of (a) this work’s suitability for any further end and (b) the work’s fittingness to a particular requirement, principle, rule or law (say a principle of art or a rule of criticism). Artworks that are valuable *qua* artworks merit pleasure merely by virtue of being valuable in this particular way, neither by virtue of their contribution to any further end nor by their fittingness to some requirement, principle, rule or law.

(8) *Background*: for the most part (but not always), to feel this pleasure, one has to have certain minimal background experiences, such as familiarity with related works, and practice in looking, listening, attending and related ways of experiencing objects.<sup>41</sup>

Recall that these characteristics were introduced according to their generality. While the first two of these features seem to characterize all pleasures, and the first three characterize most pleasures, universalization may characterize only very few pleasures, being self-contained seems to characterize mainly PA and the last feature may characterize only PA.<sup>42</sup>

#### **4. Objection From Painful Art**

The opponent of the affective view may persist by arguing that, rather than pleasure, engagement with some great artworks involves much pain. But this argument too is based on a narrow conception of pleasure, and on a misunderstanding of the non-contingent connection between pleasure and art at the heart of the affective view.

Though the art lover is by no means a masochist, it is as possible for the art lover to feel pleasure in great artworks that she also finds painful to experience, as it is possible for the masochist to feel a certain kind of pleasure in experiences that she also finds painful.<sup>43</sup> It is the holistic complexity of PA that is crucial for properly understanding this analogy and thus how even “painful art” may merit, and should be evaluated through, PA. Recall, typically we enjoy the work as a whole in light of enjoying something about it, be it, its gracefulness, fine acting or disturbing power, when this disturbing power fits other aspects of the work such as to contribute to its overall excellence *qua* artwork. Consider, for example, Michael Haneke’s films, Thomas Hardy’s novels, Lauren Groff’s short stories and many classical tragedies. These works are disturbing; experiencing them is often painful. But this is no reason to deny that they merit, and should be evaluated by feeling, PA. On the affective view, works such as these are *worthy* of PA in

part because experiencing them is disturbing. Here, PA is a felt approval of that which is valuable *qua* an artwork in part because it is disturbing. Notice the emphasis on *worth*. Holding, as proponents of the Affective view do, that art is non-contingently connected to pleasure does not entail that we always feel pleasure in great but painful art under standard conditions, but rather that we both *could* and *should*.

And so, painful art is no reason to deny that excellent artworks merit, and should be evaluated by, PA; painful art is no objection to the affective view.<sup>44</sup>

## **5. Objection from the Variety of Evaluations**

Another common, though again, implicit, objection against the idea that the evaluation and appreciation of art are constituted by pleasure draws on the undoubtedly true claim that we attribute values to works in various different ways. Perhaps some of them are affective, but others are not: “Some aesthetic evaluations are belief-like judgments, while others are perceptual or affective states” (Lopes, 2018: 43).

But the affective view is neither the view that one can evaluate valuable artworks only affectively, nor is it the view that one can only evaluate them “correctly” through PA (I explain this sense of “correctness” below). You might “correctly” evaluate an artwork by forming a warranted belief about its value merely on the basis of a trustworthy expert testimony (say, by reading a review of your favorite critic) or on the basis of a direct but non-affective perception of the work.

Non-affective testimony-based evaluations are a commonplace of our everyday life: we make them daily before going to the movies, reading the next novel, listening to a new album, and so on. Some art appreciators claim that non-pleasurable but direct (i.e.,

not based on testimony) experiences of works are also not rare. They report, for example, that often, after directly engaging with some works that they fully understand, they evaluate them to be great, but nonetheless don't like them. Since the affective view, is, allegedly, "at odds with the possibility of acknowledging that an artwork possess value, while also asserting that it is not to one's liking" (Carroll 2016: 7), the argument goes, it is not a promising view of the evaluation or appreciation of art.

But the affective view is not at odds with this possibility. As I just mentioned, it is as possible to correctly attribute to a work the value that it indeed has (even with understanding) either on the basis of testimony or perception, while failing to like it, just as it is possible to judge a person to merit forgiveness while failing to forgive her.

Rather than denying that we can and do attribute value properties to works in different ways (even if we do not like these works), the affectivist is committed to the following: among the different ways of correctly attributing values to artworks, the affective evaluation (through PA) is (1) the only one that does not only present the value that the work indeed has but is also *responsive* to the work in the way that its value *qua* artwork merits, (2) has primacy over other ways of evaluating artworks, insofar as the latter's content refers to PA, and (3) the only one that is aesthetic both in content and in form, and for this reason, the only one that the affectivist calls the '*aesthetic*' evaluation of art.<sup>45</sup> I will explain these in turn.

First, failure of responsiveness: I call some testimonial and other non-affective evaluations of artworks "correct" in order to emphasize that one can attribute to a work the value that it *indeed* has independently of feeling pleasure in it. One can have a true belief about its value independently of feeling pleasure. On the affective view, though,

such non-affective evaluations still fall short in terms of the *responsiveness* owed to the work. To correctly ascribe to an artwork the value that it indeed has *qua* an artwork without enjoying it is analogous, in some respects, to judging that a person merits respect without respecting her, judging that an agent deserves forgiveness without forgiving the agent and so forth. Such an ascription is a doxastic judgment, but, I will argue, not one deserving the label an “*aesthetic evaluation*” or “*aesthetic judgment*,”<sup>46</sup> just as judging that an agent deserves forgiveness without forgiving the agent is a doxastic judgment but not an emotional evaluation of what this agent merits. In both cases, one fails to engage with the work or the person in a way that their values *call for*.

This is the heart of the non-contingent connection between art and pleasure on the affective view: valuable artworks have, to paraphrase Kant, “a claim to everyone’s pleasure” (1790: 282). Valuable artworks merit and call for PA,<sup>47</sup> even if many of us are often not in the position to feel it, and even though, as the objection at stake in this section correctly assumes, *we can* attribute value properties to these works independently of feeling PA. Responsively evaluating a work requires not that one correctly attribute value to it, but that one correctly experience the value that it indeed has and, at the same time, be responsive to what it *merits*. PA functions as both: by presenting the work as that which merits itself (PA), it both reveals its value and is responsive to its merit.<sup>48</sup>

Think about it this way: The observations presented in section 2 strongly suggest that to evaluate a work to have merit as an artwork is to evaluate it to merit PA. Evaluating a work entails that the work merits PA. Given that, evaluating works by feeling PA is not simply a way of tracking the facts about the work’s value, but, also, *at one stroke*, a way of responding to it as that evaluation entails that one should. When one

evaluates works through PA, one's evaluative state is not only true of the work, by correctly (re)presenting it, but is also, at one stroke, true *to* the work, by being responsive to its merit, as the correct (re) presentation of it entails that one should. What the affective evaluator does right that the non-affective evaluator does not is to respond in the way that lies at the heart of the kind of value the evaluation of which is in question (in both cases). And this is explained, in line with the observations about the practice of aesthetic exchanges presented in section 2, by the fact that beliefs about valuable artworks and non-affective perceptions of them are at best the starting point: a step towards responding to the value as one should, with pleasure. At worst, these beliefs are beside the point. For valuable artworks merit pleasure.

Second, the affective evaluations that are made in and through PA have a certain kind of primacy over all other evaluations.<sup>49</sup> Non-affective evaluations of valuable artworks—testimonial and non-affective perceptual ones—depend on the affective ones in terms of their *content* insofar as the content of these non-affective evaluations appeals to PA in the following way: every time we ascribe a value to a work *qua* artwork (in however way), this ascription implies that the work merits PA. In this way, any ascription of this value property appeals to PA. It is in this sense that the affective evaluation that is constituted by PA has a certain (content-wise) primacy over non-affective evaluations.

Let me elaborate. Section 2 suggested that (a) a certain kind of pleasure is very likely the aim of our aesthetic and critical recommendations, (b) we often communicate our aesthetic responses in terms of pleasures and displeasures, (c) it is hard to deny that there are always reasons to enjoy or like a valuable artwork. A very promising

explanation of these three facts involve the thought that *what* one claims when evaluating good artworks in *whatever way* (affectively or not) is that the work at stake merits pleasure, the very pleasure that constitutes the affective kind of evaluation (PA). This view explains very well (a) the common disappointment one often feels if the work one recommended is believed, by the receiver of the recommendation, to be valuable but is not to her liking, (b) why we communicate our responses to art in terms of likes and dislikes and (c) why statements of the sort “this painting is an artistic masterpiece but there are no reasons to like it” are odd. But if to evaluate a work to be excellent is to evaluate it to merit pleasure, and to be the source of reasons to feel pleasure, and to recommend such a work involves aiming to get others to enjoy it as it merits, then the content of any non-affective evaluation refers to PA: it includes the claim that the work merits PA. The affective kind of evaluation, then, is not only the sole one that is responsive to the value at stake, but it also enjoys (content-wise) primacy over other kinds of evaluation.

Third, it is widely agreed upon that the term ‘aesthetic’ most minimally modifies immediate (in the sense of a non-inferential) experiences (or those related to them).<sup>50</sup> Among the various ways of attributing values to artworks, only the evaluation that is made in and through PA is both experiential and immediate, so it alone is aesthetic both in content and form, and thus most suitable to be called *aesthetic* evaluation, rather than theoretical, doxastic or inferential evaluation.

The testimonial evaluation is clearly doxastic in form—it is constituted by a testimonial belief independently of experience. But as the art appreciators I mentioned



above suggest, there may also be non-testimonial, partly perceptual but *non-affective* ways of attributing values to works—e.g., cases in which we perceive works correctly, attribute to them the values that they indeed have, but don't like them. Though partly perceptual, I believe that these evaluations are not immediate, but *mediated* by an inference, and thus are not entitled to the label 'aesthetic' as the affective evaluation through PA is.

Suppose, for example, that a year after graduating from her art appreciation course, Rachel visits the SF MOMA. Given her diligence in the course the previous year, Rachel is now able to perceptually discern features of Gerhard Richter's painting *Reader*, such as its shades, contrasts, allusions, and photo-painting character; she can now compare the painting to other paintings by Richter, Vermeer, Caspar David Friedrich and so on. But, if she does not enjoy the painting, she, I believe, *infers*, on this basis, that the painting is excellent *qua* artwork (or *qua* painting). She does *not* immediately experience it to be excellent. As inferential and not immediate, Rachel's evaluation (just as my cousin Melissa's evaluation in section 2) is not an incorrect aesthetic evaluation; in fact, it is not an *aesthetic* evaluation at all. It is a "correct," perception-based inferential evaluation.

The evaluation of the same painting made through PA also depends on the evaluator's understanding of the artist and the genre, familiarity with relevant works etc. But when the affective evaluator evaluates the same painting *in and through* PA, she does not *infer*, on these bases, that the paintings is valuable in the way that it is. Rather, with this background understanding and familiarity, she is in a position to immediately enjoy the painting as valuable in the way it is without either believing that it is valuable in this

way, or non-affectively perceiving it to be so. It is *by* feeling pleasure that she immediately experiences the way that its different features contribute to its overall value, even if she cannot yet fully explain why she enjoys the painting.<sup>51</sup> She is, as we often say, struck by its beauty. If the aesthetic is that which is related to *immediate experience*, then only such affective evaluations are aesthetic not only in content but also in form.

And in any case, the possibility and actuality of various non-affective ways of attributing value properties to artworks, and of disliking works that we also judge to be good *qua* artworks, is no objection against the affective view.

## **6. Affective Disclosure of Value?**

### **6.1 Why not?**

Another central obstacle to thinking that pleasure is essentially linked to the evaluation and appreciation of artworks is the assumption that feelings cannot, to use John McDowell's words, "constitute an experience in which the world reveals itself to us" (1998: 130). For if pleasures cannot themselves disclose value, one might suppose that they may be no more than by-products of evaluation that is itself constituted by a belief. Meskin, whose view of aesthetic evaluation I introduced at the outset, might be open to this picture: his view that aesthetic evaluation is a belief is compatible with the thought that such a theoretical evaluation may be the basis for pleasure, where this is understood as distinct from aesthetic evaluation (2004: 76; cf. Lopes, 2018: 204-10). Meskin's rejection of the idea that evaluation is a matter of *enjoying* the work as valuable seems to suppose, among other things, that pleasure is incapable of revealing value.<sup>52</sup> If pleasure is

non-cognitive in this sense, then, to have any role vis-à-vis art, it can, at best, be “consequent upon, aesthetic evaluation” (Lopes, 2018: 205).

But notice first that the view that affective experiences *do* reveal certain aspects of the world to us by teaching us, say, what is attractive or repulsive or beautiful or sublime seems to be a common pre-theoretical assumption. As Robert Hopkins puts it,

I might discover that someone is attractive by finding myself aroused in that person’s presence. I might discover that some creature or substance is disgusting by responding to it with disgust. *Or I might discover the aesthetic properties of a thing by taking pleasure in it. . . .* Thus I discover through feeling that someone is sexy, a creature disgusting, or that a tie and shirt look right together.<sup>53</sup>

Are there any reasons to think that this—according to Hopkins, intuitive—conception of pleasure as revealing value is suspect?<sup>54</sup>

The grip of the resistance to this conception of pleasure and the consequent blindness to the Affective view are grounded primarily in a host of epistemological objections. In 6.2, I will dispel some of them.<sup>55</sup>

## **6.2 Epistemological Objections**

In this section, I aim to show that, even if affective experiences such as pleasures<sup>56</sup> cannot represent contents propositionally, there are no reasons to deny that they can present to us things, artworks particularly, as being a certain (value-laden) way, and, as such, *are* modes of evaluations.<sup>57</sup>

One epistemological objection against the presentational power of feelings is formulated as the worry that feelings cannot be object-directed in the relevant sense required for them to reveal the values of their objects.<sup>58</sup> According to Damian Whiting (2011, 2012), perceptions are capable of revealing their objects' properties only insofar as they do so "in a particular way" (2011: 284) "or under a certain description" (ibid), a way that manifests itself in the phenomenology of the state (2012: 97). But feelings and emotions, according to Whiting, have neither sensory nor affective modality of that required sort. Indeed, they do not present objects under any description or mode of presentation that manifests itself in their phenomenology (2012: 97).

Whiting supports his arguments by appeal to introspection: to how things seem to him (2011: 285, 287; 2012: 97). But is there anything blocking the opposing intuitions?<sup>59</sup>

If the view that affective experiences *do* teach us about their objects is indeed a common and intuitive way of thinking about affective experiences, as Hopkins suggests, the intuitions opposing Whiting's are at least as strong as his. And there are a number of further considerations that speak against Whiting's intuitions and arguments.

First, *pace* Whiting, PA may present the value of its object in a way that is manifested both in what it is like to feel it as in its other essential characteristics (3.5), that is, in its structure or phenomenology broadly construed.<sup>60</sup> For example, the positive valence of my pleasure in Glenn Kaino's sculpture *Bridge* may well manifest the value (rather than disvalue) of the piece. The holistic complexity of the work (as valuable on account of its sublimity, graceful lines, symbolic gesture, endless repetition, historical allusion, and social and political depth) may be manifested by the holistic complexity of my pleasure (taken in the piece as a whole on account of enjoying each of these aspects,

and of enjoying the way they complement each other and contribute to the excellence of the work as a whole). Moreover, the background required in order to enjoy *Bridge* may be the manifestation of the work's embeddedness both in a particular historical and political moment and in a particular artistic and appreciative practice. *Pace* Whiting, my PA can present *Bridge* in a *specific way* that is manifested in its particular phenomenology and structure.

Second, if pleasures were object-directed and capable of presenting their objects as being a certain way, we would be able to distinguish between different pleasures taken in different aspects of the same objects straightforwardly. Consider the following case: I rave about the cinematography of the *Tree of Life*; you can't stop talking about the film's script, its depth, its rhythm and the questions it raises. I might prefer to watch the film muted, while you may prefer only to listen to it. I suspect that in this case, we would ordinarily say that I *enjoy the film's cinematography* while you *enjoy its script*. The way we speak suggests that these two pleasures are (themselves) directed at different aspects of the film. I enjoy the film (if I do) *as* visually beautiful, you enjoy it *as* well-written. We enjoy the film *under different descriptions* (as Whiting requires for presentation). Object-directedness provides a straightforward and elegant explanation of the differences between these pleasures, pleasures that seem to be felt under different descriptions of the film.<sup>61</sup>

Perhaps we arrived at a stalemate of intuitions, but we have nonetheless taken a step forward towards the view that at least some feelings can present their objects as being a certain way by presenting them in a particular way, under a certain description or

as is manifested by their particular structure and phenomenology. Moreover, the picture of feelings as capable of presenting their objects has a few additional advantages.

First, as Whiting recognizes, the surface grammar of our language about emotions and feelings speaks in favor of the idea that they do present their objects under certain modes of presentation: “everyday language suggests that emotions have intentional objects” (2011: 289). Whiting chooses a kind of error theory to explain our language: “We have here then an example of where the surface grammar of our speech about emotion misleads” (ibid.). But why assume that language misleads us unless we have other good reasons to accept Whiting’s intuitions?

Second, consider what Whiting calls the “Argument from Rational Assessment” (2012: 293-94).<sup>62</sup> We seem to legitimately and indeed pervasively assess feelings and emotions as either proper or improper, right or wrong, rational or irrational. The most straightforward explanation of these assessments is that emotions and feelings are taken in objects that they present as being a certain way either correctly or not.

Finally, note that feelings often present themselves as revealing certain kinds of values. Understanding that a certain situation requires kindness, and that a person is either affable or sexist, is often made possible and explained by *feeling* sympathy or resentment. This does not imply that these feelings are necessary for believing the situation to be such or for judging the person thusly. It is possible to gain knowledge of these propositions, or at least a warranted belief that this situation requires kindness, and that this person is affable on the basis of testimony (or induction), independently of feeling. Still, consider the following: I may, for example, be unable to articulate well enough why I believe that a person was gentle on this occasion, but add, “but I am quite

confident; I felt it. Didn't you feel it too?" This type of exchange is common. We often refer to our feelings as those through which we apprehend values, as those that back up our beliefs, thoughts and understanding of values. And this is because feelings often present themselves as revealing certain values and disvalues to us and as backing discursive reasoning without being backed by discursive reasoning. I claim that PA does too.

Consider another epistemological objection. Some deniers of the theoretically popular analogy between perceptions and emotions stress that the structure of reason giving that shapes our talk about perceptions and the one that shapes our talk about feelings and emotions differ in a way that matters: "perceptual experience[s] are sufficient reasons for beliefs about external objects and events. In contrast, however, we often feel the need to discover reasons or evidence in support of our emotional experience in normal circumstances" (Brady, 2013: 86).

The thought is as follows: when you tell me that the hat he is wearing today is green and I ask you why you think so, your answer, "because I saw it," ends the why questions. Unless I have reasons to think you are colorblind, or suffer from bad vision, any further inquiry, particularly inquiry about the propriety of your seeing, is misplaced. Conversations concerning feelings, emotions and emotions-based judgments are different: "[they] do not end the quest for justification in evaluative judgments" (Deonna & Teroni, 2012: 93; cf. Todd 2014: 706).

Conversations concerning pleasures and displeasures in art may not fall neatly into either one of these categories, but for the most part they *do* call for a further question

about the reasons that explain and justify them. Ordinarily, when a friend tells one about her favorite film of the year, one would assess the propriety of the friend's pleasure, by asking: "why do you like it"? (where this question, again, requires an explanation of both what led you to enjoy the film and what justifies it).

This indeed points to a central difference between non-affective perceptions, on the one hand, and emotions and feelings, on the other hand. One important difference between perceptual properties, like colors, and the values of artworks *qua* artworks is that the latter are not only those that, under proper conditions, are *to be* experienced in a certain way, but those that *merit* being experienced in a certain way—with PA.<sup>63</sup> Correspondingly, to be "correct," non-affective perceptions need only correctly present their objects (or merely be veridical, accurately tracking). In contrast, to be "correct," (most) feelings but not non-affective perceptions must also be *true to* and *responsive to* what their objects merit. Questions of merit, desert and responsiveness are external to ordinary perceptions but built into most of our emotions and some of our feelings, particularly into our pleasures and displeasures in art.

Relatedly, not responding to a valuable artwork as it merits involves a failure, which is not (just) a failure of one of one's capacities (perceptual or otherwise), or even a failure of skill, but a failure of *responsiveness*, analogues to the failure to be responsive to an individual as she merits—say, with empathy or pity, or love, or contempt.

Therefore, I have no wish to identify feelings with non-affective perceptions. On the affective view, feeling PA and (say) seeing an object's color are both exercises of human sensibility that reveal an aspect of the world to us immediately. But they are nonetheless categorically different. PA reveals values *no less* than perceptions reveal



non-evaluative properties, but this does not render them the same kind of state. In other words, the significant and interesting analogy between PA and perception is just that—an *analogy* between two categorically different kinds of experiences. But no matter how important this difference is, it does *not* undermine the power of emotions and feelings to reveal the world, that is, to provide cognitive openness to value-laden aspects of the world.

Finally, in the philosophy of emotions, very few bother to argue for the idea that feelings and affective experiences *are* modes of (re)presenting (value) properties. They take that for granted. Even in the field of aesthetics, Kris Goffin recently claimed, “I presupposes representationalism as the philosophy of emotion is predominantly representationist with very few, if any, exceptions” (2019: 7); “Most emotion theorists today think that emotions are representational, and rightly so,” and “very few people deny that emotion and perception are somewhat similar” (2019: 13). We are yet to be presented with strong enough arguments that refute this widely-shared view, the view that feelings and affective experiences can (re)present the evaluative properties of their respective objects, and thus be themselves modes of evaluating these objects.<sup>64</sup>

## **8. Conclusion**

The reluctance to admit a non-contingent connection between art and pleasure often stems from two mistaken presuppositions: the presupposition that pleasure itself is merely sensory and not revelatory of the value properties of its objects, and the presupposition that pleasure can be connected to art only if it is the reason why artworks

are valuable. But if we rid ourselves of these presuppositions, and recognize that pleasure may reveal the values of artworks as those that merit itself (this very feeling of pleasure), we would be able to reaffirm the time-honored connection between art and pleasure. We will then be in good company, following the footsteps of philosophers such as Aristotle and Kant.

In section 2, I suggested that the practices of talking about, recommending, reviewing and critiquing art, the philosophical literature on art and its explanatory advantages all provide support of the view that a certain kind of (disclosive and responsive) pleasure is non-contingently tied to the values of artworks *qua* artworks and constitutes their evaluation and appreciation. In sections 1 and 3-6, I argued that objections against value-hedonism, objections based on a conception of pleasure as sensory and passive, objections based on the varied forms of the evaluation of art and objections against the cognitive power of feelings, all fail to target the affective view. We are still to see good arguments against this view. Until then, we should not rush to dismiss it, but, at the very least, reconsider and explore it. The affective view is worth a serious reassessment.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As I explain in section 1, I agree with the criticisms that underlie this attempt *insofar* as they target aesthetic value-hedonism, the view that the values of artworks *qua* artworks lie in their power to please. There are good reasons to reject this view, but these are not reasons to banish pleasure from the realm and philosophy of art. Additionally, these criticisms were often part of the naysayers' challenge to narrow varieties of formalism. This challenge is also, on the whole, valid, but the move from it to the rejection of pleasure from the philosophy of art is illicit.

<sup>2</sup> The proposed affective view is not suggested as Kant's own view. Rather, it is meant as Kantian in spirit insofar as (and to the extent that) it is a view of aesthetic evaluation that is made in and through a feeling of pleasure or displeasure.

<sup>3</sup> I cannot engage with the fascinating literature about the value of art in this paper (e.g., Lopes (2011)(2014) and Hanson (2013).) The main questions in the debate are whether art in general has a value independently of the values of the different arts, and whether the value or values that artworks have (the one that is of most interest to aestheticians: their value *as* artworks) is different from aesthetic value. Since I cannot here defend any answer to these questions, I will attempt to remain neutral about them by

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constraining myself (as much as possible) to speak about the value or values of artworks *qua* artworks. But I hope that the paper will contribute to the second debate indirectly by motivating the idea that the values of artworks *qua* artworks merit or call for pleasure. If this is true, then these values are aesthetic in meriting an affective and immediate response.

<sup>4</sup> These functions (of revealing, being responsive to and constituting evaluation) are not temporally separated.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., Budd (2003), Hills (2017).

<sup>6</sup> E.g., Goldman (2004: 93), Hills (2017: 174), Lopes (2018: 204-10).

<sup>7</sup> I will mainly use the term ‘evaluation,’ rather than ‘appreciation,’ because (1) using only one of these terms makes things simpler, and (2) the prospects of an affective account of the evaluation of art are more challenging than the prospects of an affective account of its appreciation.

<sup>8</sup> Meskin uses the term ‘aesthetic judgment,’ the term that was traditionally used by such as Kant and Frank Sibley (e.g., 1965). Although the view I reconstruct is Kantian-Sibleyan in spirit, I use the term ‘aesthetic evaluation,’ rather than ‘aesthetic judgment,’ in order to prevent confusing the kind of evaluation at stake with what is commonly associated with ‘judgments’ today, namely, with verdicts and with *a certain kind of judgment: belief-constituted-judgment*. The substitution is warranted since (1) what is at stake is whether what Meskin regards here as ‘aesthetic judgment,’ namely, the attribution of certain value properties to artworks, which is the *same thing* that is ubiquitously taken to be ‘aesthetic evaluation,’ may be constituted by pleasure, and (2) the affective view of aesthetic *evaluation*, not only of aesthetic judgment, is also widely rejected today, even by value-hedonists (e.g., Lopes (2018: 43), Matthen (2017: 9)).

<sup>9</sup> A similar notion of judgment or evaluation is either implicit or explicit also in Budd (2003), Hopkins (2011), Lopes (2014) (2018) and others.

<sup>10</sup> I also propose that it can be responsive to reasons for feeling, but argue for this claim more substantially only in Gorodeisky and Marcus (2018), and Gorodeisky (2018).

<sup>11</sup> E.g., Beardsley (1982), Levinson (1996), (2002), Matthen (2017) (2018).

<sup>12</sup> In this paper, I remain largely neutral about what makes artworks of value, that is, about the source of their normativity. The main commitment I make in this regard is negative: what makes them so is not their power to please. Other than that, the proposed affective view is committed only to the claims that the values of artworks *qua* artworks (1) supervene on the specific aesthetic and non-aesthetic, mind-independent properties each particular work has (e.g., its particular compositions, colors, pace, ways of acting, allusions etc.), and (2) are *marked* as values *of artworks qua artworks* (are distinguished from economical, practical etc. values) by being those that merit PA. These commitments are compatible with a variety of accounts of the source of art’s normativity, as I explain in fn. 51.

<sup>13</sup> Shelley (2010) (2011). See also, Gorodeisky (forthcoming).

<sup>14</sup> Gorodeisky (forthcoming).

<sup>15</sup> I agree also with broader criticisms against what has been named “value empiricism in aesthetics:” the view that the relevant value is a matter of the final value of the experiences that artworks afford. E.g., Davies (2003), Shelley (2010) (2011), Lopes (2015).

<sup>16</sup> This section and 3.5 largely overlap with two sections in Gorodeisky (forthcoming).

<sup>17</sup> On the theoretical advantages of this grouping, see Gorodeisky (forthcoming).

<sup>18</sup> As we’ll see, beliefs like Melissa’s may constitute a correct *theoretical* evaluation of a work (a correct ascription of a value property), but this is not an *aesthetic* evaluation of the work (either correct or incorrect).

<sup>19</sup> Nor is belief the aim of *criticism*, as Cross (2017) convincingly shows. Cf. Gorodeisky ms(b).

<sup>20</sup> E.g., Hopkins (2011), Gorodeisky and Marcus (2018), Nguyen (forthcoming).

<sup>21</sup> For a full version of this argument, see Gorodeisky and Marcus (2018).

<sup>22</sup> Danto (2003: 93).

<sup>23</sup> Cf., Carroll (2000, 2002) and Matravers (2013).

<sup>24</sup> Ryle (1954: 58).

<sup>25</sup> Ryle’s sharp distinction between sensation and pleasure goes a little too far insofar as pleasures are partly sensory, some more than other. But no matter how sensory some pleasures are, many central pleasures in a mature life, including the pleasure in art, cannot be identified with sensations. Cf. Brewer (2004).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Strohl (2012), Sizer (2013), Aydede (2018).

<sup>27</sup> This take on pleasure is inspired by Moran (2000).

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<sup>28</sup> For a defense, see Gorodeisky and Marcus (2018).

<sup>29</sup> Raz (2011).

<sup>30</sup> I cannot engage here in the debate concerning the nature of reasons, but just assume that reasons are facts. The relevant reasons that the pleasure in art is responsive to when it is properly responsive to reasons are facts like the ones just mentioned: the novel's tone of voice, its sentences, characters etc., when serving to explain why pleasure is called for, e.g., why the work is excellent.

<sup>31</sup> The inspiration for this argument comes from Michael Milona's fine argumentative strategy (2016).

<sup>32</sup> Matthen suggests that an affective-style view provides no information about the pleasure at stake: "Saying that you like something because it is good . . . offers nothing informative about the mental process by which you came to your evaluation" (2017: 14). But my characterization of PA in this section and the rest of the paper shows that the affective view can be as informative about pleasure as its hedonic competitor.

<sup>33</sup> See Sizer (2013: 220) for empirical evidence in support of this characteristic of pleasure.

<sup>34</sup> This is *not* a necessary condition of PA: we may correctly feel PA in the beauty of a simple shade of color, or the elegance of a simple curve in virtue of nothing other than their simple and analyzable beauty and elegance. But, it seems to be true of most instances of PA because of the ubiquitous holistically complex nature of most artworks that are valuable *qua* artworks.

<sup>35</sup> When successful, PA reveals the value of a work as a whole *by* revealing both the aesthetic and non-aesthetic features that it supervenes on. For example, my enjoyment of *The Ambassadors* reveals the novel's aesthetic excellence *by* revealing, even if inchoately, that certain things about it (its loaded sentences, intricate characters, tone of voice) make it valuable in the way that it is.

<sup>36</sup> For empirical support of this cognitive nature of PA, e.g., Christenson, 2018, section 7.

<sup>37</sup> This by no means entails that the affective experience of a work is sufficient for proper evaluation, as Davies's common sense empiricist would have it (Davies 2003: 6). Even though, once the work is in view, feeling PA in it does not depend on an accompanied belief about this value, being in the position to feel this PA may require many beliefs *not* about its *value* but, for example, about the artist, the genre, the tradition etc. Hence, the eighth characteristic of PA, and my claim below (n. 51) about the plausibility of a cognitive penetration of the affective in this case.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Goffin (2019: 11) on representing aesthetic properties merely through affective experiences. Though I am very sympathetic to Goffin's view of the representational nature of the *affective* experiences of aesthetic properties, our proposals still significantly differ (e.g., concerning the nature and structure of the relevant affective experiences, the value of a sentimentalist approach in aesthetics, aesthetic reasons).

<sup>39</sup> For details, see Gorodeisky (2018).

<sup>40</sup> I believe that this defeasibility undermines possible worries about the universal scope of PA, particularly, worries that the value of artworks *qua* artworks cannot merit pleasure from *everyone* due to (1) the deep cultural differences among us and among artworks (Matthen 2018), and (2) our meaningfully different personalities, which, as meaningful, should remain different and distinct (Nehamas 2007). Briefly, I respond that, even though valuable artworks merit everyone's PA, different people may have practical, pragmatic and personal reasons not to put themselves in the position to enjoy some of these valuable artworks (e.g., since it would take too much time, effort and possibly even pain, say, to learn the relevant cultural background, cultivate the required sensibility etc.). And so people may be justified in not enjoying a great variety of valuable artworks. In other words, universal merit is fully compatible with (1) cultural and personal diversity of artworks and of people (people from different cultures, in different ages and with different sensibility), (2) the greater and lesser difficulty that different people often face in trying to enjoy the same artworks, and (3) the fact that not enjoying certain valuable artworks is thus often justified. For an explanation, see Gorodeisky (forthcoming).

<sup>41</sup> These same characteristics shape displeasure in art: demerit of a work *qua* artwork calls for and warrants a feeling of displeasure that is a complex feeling (with *an* affective phenomenology) that tends toward its discontinuation. This displeasure reveals the work to merit itself (the same feeling of displeasure), it is not private but universal, it depends neither on the failure of the work to fulfill any additional ends nor on its failure to meet any requirement, law or rule, and it typically requires certain background experiences and familiarity.

<sup>42</sup> The main differences between moral (and other intellectual) pleasures and AP concern (1) the fact the moral (and other intellectual) pleasures are taken in the fittingness of an action or a character to a particular requirement, principle, rule, law or another end, while PA is independent of its objects manifesting any

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such fittingness and (2) the different backgrounds required in order to be in the position to feel moral (and other intellectual) pleasures and PA respectively.

<sup>43</sup> For other structurally analogous pleasures that are taken in partially painful experiences, see Strohl (2012: 210).

<sup>44</sup> Some proponents of the objection are willing to accept that valuable painful art is non-contingently related to ‘liking’ but not to ‘pleasure.’ But if your felt experience of painful art is self-maintaining in the way explained in 3.5, and directed to the work as a whole in light of some thing(s) about it, there is no reason not to regard it as a feeling of *pleasure* (and not merely of liking). To think that experience has to have a more thrilling felt oomph to be *pleasure* is to fall back on an unjustifiably narrow conception of pleasure.

<sup>45</sup> For an argument to the conclusion that the only viable definition of the ‘aesthetic’ is in terms of the form of evaluation rather than its content or set of properties, see my ms.(a).

<sup>46</sup> Clearly, this view calls for an explanation of the exact continuity and the exact difference between the content of the pleasure (or the aesthetic kind of evaluation) and the content of the belief (or the doxastic kind of evaluation). After all, the *same* value can be the object of both. Do they have the same content? And if so, can PA still *reveal* anything when it is subsequent to a testimonial belief? Since this explanatory task would require its own essay, I will confine myself here only to a few remarks. First, the relevant belief is an attitude towards a proposition that contains a value predicate; to believe it is to take it to be true. PA, in contrast, is not a mediating representation of a state of affairs that might or might not depict reality accurately. Rather, it presents the artwork directly as bearing a certain value property, in something like the sense in which—at least according to direct realist accounts—perception presents objects as bearing certain properties. (Thus, both PA and perception may be incorrect if they present their objects in a way that they are not, and they can therefore either conflict or align with certain beliefs, but not contradict or affirm beliefs.) For example, by enjoying the *Birth of the Cool*, I have a feeling that presents the album directly as excellent, while Melissa, the cousin from the example above, has the belief that the proposition “*Birth of the Cool* is excellent” is true. Thus, though (re)presenting the same value, the belief and PA (re)present them in *different ways*. Moreover, while the content of the belief refers to PA (to a state that is external to it) as the state that is merited by the value property ascribed by the belief, the content of PA is self-referential: it includes an awareness of *itself* as merited by the value so revealed. As such, the contents of the two are continuous but different. Now, while it might first seem odd that the same (value) property can be the object of both an affective experience and of a belief, this is in fact a very common feature of our affective lives. For example, while your pity can directly reveal Oedipus to be pitiful, you can also come to believe that he is pitiful independently of feeling any pity for him.

<sup>47</sup> Still, this is *not* to deny that valuable artworks merit *also* many actions in support of their values (e.g., preservation, exhibiting, editing, compiling), and the beliefs that the relevant values obtain. On the affective view, they do *also* merit actions and beliefs. But, as I argue in my forthcoming, their meriting such beliefs and actions counterfactually depends on their meriting PA.

<sup>48</sup> PA can reveal value and, *at the same time*, be responsive to what this value merits mainly due to its self-awareness. On the affective view, the content of art’s value is very thin: what is common to all valuable artworks (and thus what instantiations of PA reveal) is just that this value merits PA. But PA is self-reflexive; and so, when PA reveals this value, it reveals it as that value that merits itself. So PA immediately involves an awareness of itself both as a correct presentation of a value and as the kind of responsiveness owed to this value. This dual revelatory and responsive nature of PA may be hard to acknowledge given that we often focus on non-evaluative perceptions and doxastic judgments. We thus tend to think, erroneously, that an attitude or an experience can only be *either* revelatory of the world but not also responsive to reasons and merit (as most philosophers think non-evaluative perception is), *or* responsive to reasons but not also open to the world (as doxastic judgments are widely regarded). But this disjunction is not forced on us. Though I cannot challenge this disjunction here (for that, see Gorodeisky ms(b)), I’d note that an increasing number of philosophers hold that emotions are both (re)presentational and responsive to reasons (e.g., Epley (2018) and Benbaji (2018)). I believe that PA, like the emotions, is *both* disclosive of value and responsive to reasons for feeling it and to merit.

<sup>49</sup> Here I only present this primacy. For a full defense, see my forthcoming and ms.(a). In these, I show that, just as “there is no way to specify what is funny, for instance, except by reference to amusement” (D’Arms & Jacobson 2000a: 736), so there is no way to specify the values of artworks *qua* artworks except by reference to the pleasure they merit, the pleasure that constitutes the affective kind of evaluation. No action,

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belief or any list of properties can capture what is common to these as the kind of values that they are. Thus, PA figures in any attribution of these values.

<sup>50</sup> E.g., Sibley (1965), Lopes (2005), Shelley (2009).

<sup>51</sup> This phenomenon may plausibly be a kind of “cognitive penetration of the affective,” where your knowledge penetrates your *immediate enjoyment*.

<sup>52</sup> This is an assumption that anti-affectivists share with an aesthetic value-hedonist, like Mohan Matthen. Matthen claims that the pleasure in art involves no awareness, and is distinct from (it is only the basis for) what Matthen calls, “reasoned positive appraisal” (2017: 9).

<sup>53</sup> Hopkins (2010: 101-02; my italics).

<sup>54</sup> Note that denying this conception is rejecting the long tradition of thinking about pleasure as “a mode of value-cognition” or “value-perception,” as, for example, Moss takes Aristotle to hold (2012: 30).

<sup>55</sup> According to Mark Johnston (2001), if we deny that affects can disclose the world, many of our actions would appear ill-motivated and even unintelligible. I don’t use the same argument to motivate the disclosive nature of PA in part because actions regarding valuable artworks can also be motivated by testimonial judgments and beliefs.

<sup>56</sup> Other than in the context of interpreting historical figures (e.g., Moss (2012), Shapiro (2018)), even outside aesthetics, very little work is done on the putative cognitive nature of pleasures in spite of the growing consensus about the cognitive nature of the emotions (Cf. Schroeder (2006: 255).

<sup>57</sup> Whether affective experiences can present *or* represent depends on whether you are representationist or a certain direct realist about experiences more generally. I will not take a stand on this issue here, but I still aim minimize the term ‘representation.’ This is mainly because ‘representation’ is often understood as a propositional attitude, which is subject to the same accuracy conditions that beliefs are subject to, but PA, on my view, is not propositional or subject to these very same conditions. Still, as long as we allow for a broader conception of representation (that includes non-propositional disclosure of properties etc.), I am happy to use the term ‘representation’ too.

<sup>58</sup> The objections I am considering were explicitly directed against the so-called “perceptual theory of emotions,” which is the view that emotions (re)present values just as, or at least analogously to the ways in which, non-affective perceptions (re)present their corresponding non-evaluative properties. E.g., McDowell (1998), Goldie (2000), Johnston (2001), Milona (2016), Tappolet (2016).

<sup>59</sup> The disagreement is not about the putative *representational* character of pleasure if you understand ‘representation’ to be a mediating representation of a state of affairs that reveals its object propositionally, and is subject to the same accuracy conditions as belief is. As I noted in n. 57, I wish to defend no representationalism of that sort. Rather, the issue concerns whether feelings in general and pleasures in particular may directly reveal their objects’ values, and thus give us epistemic access to how they are.

<sup>60</sup> For the view that emotional phenomenology is representational, see, for example, Montague (2014).

<sup>61</sup> I do not claim that this is the *only* way to distinguish between different pleasures, only that it is elegant and straightforward.

<sup>62</sup> He mentions it as a possible objection that he attempts to respond to.

<sup>63</sup> The difference at the heart of this objection might also be explained by the fact that evaluative properties supervene on non-evaluative properties, and so the non-evaluative properties need to be cited in support of the experience or ascription of the evaluative properties.

<sup>64</sup> The affective view might also face some metaphysical objections. For example, Matthen briefly accuses an affective-style view of being “ultra-Platonic” (2017: 14). Due to limited space, here I can respond to this worry only by clarifying that the affective view is response-independent only in two senses. (1) It is axiologically response-independent insofar as it holds that artworks are not valuable *because* they give pleasure. Rather, they merit pleasure insofar as they are valuable *qua* artworks. (2) It is metaphysically response-independent in the sense that it holds the relevant value to be a value that artworks themselves have by supervening on other aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties that these artworks also have (e.g., on their compositions, shades of color, wit, perceptiveness, pace, camera movements, comic relief, fine acting etc.). But these two commitments are fully compatible with this value being anthropomorphic: with it not having existed as a value independently of human beings and independently of the essentially human (and largely contextual and cultural) practices of art. For this reason, the affective view is not ultra-Platonic (e.g., not committed to the relevant value being human-independent). Nor does it deny the contextual and cultural genealogy of different practices of art (as mentioned, this cultural diversity is compatible with the claim that each instantiation of this value merits the pleasure even of those who do not belong to the culture

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in which the work originated, i.e., with the pleasure's universal merit). Finally, other than denying that this value is explained by its hedonic benefits, I said nothing about the *source of the normativity* of this value, nothing about what makes it a value. The affective view is compatible with various different accounts of the source of art's normativity: it is compatible with a primitivist account (on which it makes no sense to ask a further question about what makes it a value), with a pluralist account (on which many different factors explain what makes it a value), with a Kantian-inspired account (on which the source of the value lies in human communicability and judgmental powers) and others. The affective view is incompatible only with empiricist (including hedonist) accounts of the source of this value, namely, with accounts on which the source of this value lies in the value of the experiences it affords.

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