

The Fragility of Aesthetic Knowledge: Aesthetic Psychology and Appreciative Virtues

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Introduction

It is a commonplace that collectors such as Larry Gagosian and Charles Saatchi have a big influence on the contemporary art market. Established investors and new collectors alike pay attention to their tastes. Indeed more generally across the arts, dealers, distributors, and commercial producers have a massive influence on taste in terms of what they put on, publish, or promote within the public domain. Public institutions and galleries are often not far behind and it is no coincidence that publicly funded work often bears all the hallmarks of marketplace trends. This is nothing new. Whilst the forms of commercial support often differ, from the Florence of the Medici through Victorian Britain to the present day, patronage and the marketplace have often dressed up the accoutrements of power and social prestige in the finery of taste.

Analytic aesthetics has standardly been uninterested in such matters. An empirical concern with what influences people's actual taste is one thing, a philosophical interest in what constitutes good taste and the role of aesthetic expertise seems to be quite another. Nonetheless in what follows it will be argued that attention to empirical work on judgements of taste and appreciative claims presents a particular challenge to traditional aesthetics. Recent work in the empirical sciences suggests that we are extremely bad at recognizing when, where, and why we like something (or at

least think we do). We think we know why we like the art we do. Yet all sorts of subconscious factors from status cues and subliminal familiarity to social signals influence appreciation and judgement. Working out how we can avoid such pitfalls will itself suggest the importance of a new approach within traditional aesthetics, one that puts character centre stage and involves elaborating the nature and role of particular aesthetic virtues and vices.

1. Aesthetic appreciation and justification

We take it as a mark or indeed constitutive of something's being aesthetically valuable that, at least under certain conditions, an object gives rise to pleasure in our appreciation of it. Thus where we derive pleasure from our appreciative engagement with a work we have defeasible reason to judge it to be good as art. We also recognize that our appreciation and judgements can go awry. The conditions under which we are apprehending something or the state we are in can distort aesthetic judgement and there is a crucial role for expertise (Hume 1993). Aesthetic appreciation draws on the cultivation of a wide range of perceptual capacities, cognitive-affective responses and relational knowledge. Hence appreciation is in principle always open to further refinement and discrimination.

A work's aesthetic features depend not merely on its directly perceivable non-aesthetic ones but also on its relational ones. What it is to identify a work as belonging to a certain appreciatively relevant category and thus what its relevant representational, expressive, and cognitive features are, often requires a large amount of relational knowledge (Walton 1970). Devoid of background knowledge we might be unable to identify and thus appreciate appropriately something as an Impressionist

painting, a late Titian, an ironic pastiche of a particular literary style, or bluegrass music. Furthermore judgements of creativity and originality depend upon historical and comparative judgements.

Aesthetic objects designed to reward appreciative activity are typically complex and dense so small differences in tone, marking, or articulation can affect the aesthetic character of a piece. Hence the more discriminating and flexible an appreciator is, the more likely she will be able to pick up on aesthetically relevant features of a work—ones the less discriminating amongst us might miss. This is, after all, why we often pay attention to critics or friends whose judgement we trust. Expert appreciators can and sometimes do point us towards aspects of a work we may have missed in ways that transform our experience and judgement of the object concerned.

Whatever else is true the above is something that any adequate account of aesthetic value and appreciation must do justice to. Furthermore it is a desideratum of any such account that it precludes certain kinds of reasons as playing a justificatory role in underwriting aesthetic judgements. If someone judges a work to be artistically good because it is worth a certain amount of money, from a particular time, or people from a certain class like it then something has gone wrong. Aesthetic evaluations cannot be justified in virtue of reasons such as financial value, historical date of origination, or the preferences of certain social groups. This is not to deny that there might be complex relations between such things and the fundamental reasons that justify why a work is aesthetically good. It is just to say that at base such explanations cannot in and of themselves constitute justifying reasons. Thus to the extent that such factors contribute towards a subject's aesthetic appreciation as such and formation of a judgement that a work is good as art, both the appreciative activity and the judgement arrived at may be suspect. This is, no doubt, what prompted Hume to say

that true critics must not only possess delicacy of imagination and sympathy but they must also be free from the dictates of prejudice and fashion. Thus far so unproblematic one might think. As long as we attend carefully to an aesthetic object and consciously reflect on the reasons why we like what we do then we should be in a good position to arrive at a good aesthetic judgement. We may lack the expertise that others possess but nonetheless it is presumed we can be sure enough that our appreciative activity and judgement is not being distorted by extraneous considerations. The problem is that as recent psychological work shows, we are often particularly bad at knowing when our appreciation and judgements are being driven by aesthetically irrelevant factors.

2. A challenge from psychology

Scientists at the California Institute of Technology and the University of Stanford recently conducted a distinctive wine tasting (Plassmann *et al.* 2008). Subjects were told they would be asked to sample five different cabernet sauvignons to study the relationship between tasting time and perceived flavours. The wine was administered via a set of tubes to a subject contained within an fMRI scanner. As each putatively different wine was administered to a subject it was identified by its supposed price, ranging from \$5 to \$90. However, there were only three different wines involved. Two wines were administered twice, one marked with its actual price (\$5) and alternatively a 900% mark up (\$45), another with its actual price (\$90) and a 900% mark down (\$10). All subjects reported being able to taste five distinct wines and the more expensive the price cue for a wine was the more subjects liked it. The pleasure

apparently derived by the subjects in tasting the wine was significantly affected by its perceived price.

Subjects in the above experiment were screened for liking and occasionally drinking wine. It might be thought that perhaps the undue influence of perceived price was related to subjects' relative inexperience. However, the original inspiration for the experiment suggests this is not straightforwardly the case. A few years earlier Brochet (2001) conducted a renowned series of experiments with oenology students. One experiment involved asking fifty-four subjects to give their appraisal of a red and a white wine. Unbeknown to the subjects the 'red' wine was the same as the white, though its colour had been changed to red with a tasteless food dye. No one spotted the difference. Indeed subjects used descriptors typical of white wine in characterizing the taste of the unmodified wine and descriptors typical for red wine in relation to the coloured wine. In a related experiment Brochet asked subjects to appraise wine from a vin de table bottle and an expensive grand-cru one. The subjects' descriptions and appraisals diverged according to the nature of the bottle. Forty subjects thought the wine from the grand-cru bottle was worth drinking, whilst only twelve rated the wine from the vin de table bottle worth drinking. It was the same wine. Brochet had decanted a middle-of-the-road Bordeaux into both bottles. Even those with a fair degree of expertise enjoy wine more just because they think it is more expensive whilst assuming, falsely, this is because it is aesthetically superior.

Indeed, as remarked upon elsewhere (Kieran 2010; Prinz 2011), familiarity itself can afford pleasure and we often mistake the pleasures afforded by familiarity for something else. In an experiment at Cornell University, James Cutting taught an introduction to psychology module exposing subjects to slide reproductions of Impressionist paintings. He had previously established that students generally

preferred the more commonly reproduced paintings over more rarely produced ones, even though many students could not remember having seen them before. During the psychology module Cutting then exposed subjects more frequently to the less publicly reproduced works and less frequently to the more widely reproduced ones. When the module finished students were then asked to rate Impressionist paintings. Despite having no reliable recall of whether or not they had seen the works before, the exposure effect meant that the previously established preference for more commonly reproduced works had disappeared (Cutting 2006).

We might not realize that features of the environment are doing any work or even that we have seen or heard of something before, and yet subconscious recognition can trigger greater pleasure and deceive us into thinking we are enjoying something more because it is highly aesthetically valuable—rather than being a function of status cues, the environment, or because we have seen something in a magazine or as a poster on a friend’s wall. Identifying and evaluating aesthetically relevant features can be cued and significantly shaped by factors we are not consciously aware of. The fundamental problem is that in the aesthetic realm we are particularly susceptible to going awry because of the epistemic role that pleasure plays in relation to aesthetic judgement. It is all too easy to mistake the pleasures of status and recognition with pleasure gained in appreciation.

The recognition that pleasure plays a distinctive epistemic role in the aesthetic realm does not require commitment to substantive claims often taken to constitute or fall out of the autonomy of aesthetic judgement. One can hold that aesthetic knowledge is transmissible by testimony (contra Kant 2000: sect. 32–3), acquirable without first-hand experience (contra Wollheim 1980: 233), and that aesthetic judgement can be undermined as easily as some other kinds of judgements by others

(contra Hopkins 2001) whilst nonetheless recognizing that pleasure in appreciation is a fundamental ground of aesthetic value. Appreciating a work involves deriving pleasure in the activity of apprehending and responding to aesthetically relevant features as realized in and through the work. Thus where someone takes pleasure in appreciating a work in aesthetically appropriate ways, there is a strong epistemic ground for judging it to be good. At the very least, pleasure is a first-personal epistemic route to an object's aesthetic value and it is a requirement of the adequacy of any putative account of aesthetic value that it recognize this to be so. Even on the weakest plausible conception of the role that pleasure in appreciation plays, namely that where pleasure is taken in appreciation it is a prima facie epistemic indicator of value, problems arise because, as the experiments show, we are extremely bad at identifying defeaters even in the first-person case.

3. Psychological and aesthetic explanations

Human beings are social animals and from an extremely early age onwards we define ourselves partly in terms of our relations with others. Indeed many of the most fundamental goods available to us are partly constituted by and through relations to others. Furthermore, intra-group hierarchical relations and in- and out-group identifications are central to our development and self-conceptions. It is not only important to us that we perceive ourselves to be and indeed are perceived by others to stand in social relations to various groups but that we have a certain social status or standing relative to others (Buss 2007: 355–83; Abrams and Hogg 1999).

As argued elsewhere one primary mechanism for realizing the drive for social status is defining oneself as superior relative to other individuals or groups. Indeed

such a drive is likely to be exacerbated the greater the degree to which a culture emphasizes the importance of competition and individuality of self-expression. This explains the drive towards snobbery and unfortunately the aesthetic realm is particularly susceptible to snobbery (Kieran 2010). Snobbish judgements are ones where aesthetically irrelevant social features play a causal role in shaping someone's appreciative activity such that the judgement arrived at, alongside the relevant rationalizations, are to be more fundamentally explained in terms of the drive to feel or appear superior relative to some individual or group. The aesthetic realm is easily exploitable in such terms not just because it is a realm where expertise plays a large part, given one could in principle always be open to ever greater degrees of discrimination and relational knowledge, but due to the role that pleasure plays.

The end goal of the practice includes pleasure in the activity of appreciation. Hence pleasures derived for aesthetically irrelevant, social reasons can easily be confused with or dressed up as pleasures derived from proper and indeed more expert aesthetic appreciation. The situation is compounded by the lack of straightforward publicly available regulative norms. If someone is making mathematical or philosophical snobbish judgements it is easier to spot since it is hard to do these things well and not be guided by the right sorts of reasons. If you start trying to fool yourself or others you are more of an expert in mathematics, science, or etiquette than you really are, you'll be easily shown up much more quickly in these areas than in the aesthetic arena. The norm of first-person authority, due to the role of pleasure, explains why this is not straightforwardly the case in the aesthetic realm. Aesthetic evaluations are less easily amenable to public justification and more epistemically opaque than scientific, mathematical, and even philosophical ones. It need not be thought that only pleasure has this kind of epistemic role in the aesthetic realm, since

there might be a range of sensations and emotions other than pleasure that do so, and, moreover, it might not even be distinctive of the aesthetic realm that this is so. After all, perhaps the emotions play a similar epistemic role in relation to certain kinds of moral, characteric, or social judgements. Rather the point is that the role of pleasure is sufficient to explain why an agent's aesthetic judgement is particularly susceptible to being driven by and confused with aesthetically irrelevant social factors.

The drive to cultivate and maintain a positive self-image both for one's self and with respect to the perceptions of others can manifest itself in other ways. Fundamental drives associated with cultivating satisfying social relations are also involved in explaining the nature of situational cues and the role of social influence. The drive towards conformity, for example, is important in establishing membership of certain groups (Latane 1981; Latane and Bourgeois 2001). Actions at odds with the attitudes of a group identified with often bring social costs with them. The extent to which this is so and how it is manifested will itself depend upon variables such as the relevant norms operating within the groups identified with and how significant the group is to the person concerned. Indeed there is a tension between the drive for conformity in order to establish group membership and non-conformity in order to establish superiority.

The issues are complex but nonetheless the point is that our basic social drives—especially for reasons concerning social group identification and status—are commonly realized through defining ourselves as belonging to some groups rather than others and as superior relative to other individuals or groups. Hence we are particularly susceptible to being influenced by factors that enable us to appear more knowledgeable or discriminating than we really are. The thing about taste is that it is so much easier to deceive one's self or others that you are getting things right—taking

the pleasures of recognition or status to be those of refined appreciation. Hence the huge amounts of money, market research, and promotion multinational corporations spend on branding and product placement.

Traditionally, we assume that we know when and why we're making the aesthetic judgements we do. It is the taste of the wine, the look of the painting, or the profundity of the text. However, if the science is sound, then this is not quite right. It can be extremely difficult to tell why we like something since we are often being pushed one way or another by situational cues and social influences we are not even aware of. Ordinarily people are much more influenced by subconsciously processed environmental features and social considerations in forming aesthetic judgements than we realize. Even aesthetic experts or rather those with some expertise—despite being such—are often more influenced than they think. Moreover, expertise brings with it a greater capacity for rationalization. At least for those who know something but are not ideal critics (many of us) there will be a tendency to go awry due to irrelevant subconscious factors much more often than is presumed. This does not underwrite aesthetic scepticism as such but it does underwrite the following—if we are interested in aesthetic appreciation and justifying our judgements we need to be much more careful about attending to what is driving our appreciation and why.

4. Facilitators versus distorters

It is tempting to think that the tricks our minds can play on us simply distort aesthetic appreciation and judgement. Yet matters are not so straightforward. First, whilst being driven by snobbery or conformity may often constitute an appreciative vice, it is important to realize that judgements issuing from such are not necessarily wrong.

Second, the cultivation of expertise and appropriate appreciation in some given aesthetic area often involves making use of the very situational and social markers we are concerned with. Although far from infallible in lots of contexts such factors can be useful heuristic guides. This is not to say that high prices in the art markets, the environment of a gallery, or social convergence in judgements are finely discriminating guides to artistic value. After all, we are familiar enough with the recognition that today's 'genius' may be tomorrow's also ran. Fashionably pricey art can end up seeming pretty mediocre taken out of its social context. In 1882 Edwin Long, the one-time doyen of the Victorian art world, sold his *Babylonian Marriage Market* for a record-shattering 6,300 guineas at Christie's. Yet we hardly hear of him now and why indeed should we? The huge, laboured, static canvases of biblical scenes that were his stock in trade and upon which his reputation was built are far from compelling. Nonetheless, those influencing the art market, setting up galleries or who take some interest in appreciating art tend to know a fair amount. The marketplace, gallery, or social convergences of opinion are often rough guides to something. It is no surprise that in seventeenth-century Amsterdam, Rembrandt was one of the most popular and indeed expensive of contemporary artists. Financial and social indicators are far from infallible, but they are not worthless. The high cost of a bottle of wine or work of art, the setting in which we are presented with them, or social opinion are grossly simplistic if taken as having a direct relation to the appreciative worth of an object. Nonetheless when construed in terms of whether a wine is worth tasting or a work worth looking at they can be useful markers.

How useful such rough indicators are depends upon the level of expertise someone already has. If someone has only just started drinking coffee or is new to the visual arts, then a nice looking café with a Gaggia machine or an art gallery that

people are going on about are not bad places to start from. There is some reason to believe that people who have some expertise and interest have gone to the trouble of presenting for appreciation the kind of coffee or art they think has some value.

Indeed, more often than not there are a cluster of markers and the valences involved might not all point in the same direction. When looking for somewhere to have a coffee you might come across two cafés virtually opposite each other. Whilst one of them looks nicer than the other (pro), with fancy coffee signs in the window and espresso china, and is slightly more expensive (pro), it might be virtually empty when compared with the one across the road (con). How to weigh such considerations will depend upon one's estimation of the likely explanation. Perhaps the more crowded café seems to be populated by students who have less money to spend, or perhaps the empty one seems more like a chain.

Nonetheless, to the extent that such contingent markers do more work in shaping our judgements than we think they remain problematic. Drinking coffee surrounded by the superficial sheen of the more expensive place might afford pleasure even though the taste of the coffee affords little and I might mistake the former cause of my pleasure for the latter. Yet it is important to recognize that, especially from the viewpoint of the naïve or recently inducted, such markers are often useful albeit extremely rough and ready guides. Indeed, even where the naïve coffee drinker knows that she derives pleasure via an appropriate aesthetic route from the taste of the coffee, such markers can sometimes give reason to be agnostic about or undermine the aesthetic judgement the pleasure apparently underwrites. The fact that the café's popularity has recently become a thing of the past and a renowned London coffee blog reveals people's dissatisfaction with it might give reason to suspect that the appropriate but naïve pleasure taken in the coffee is insufficiently refined. Thus

though the pleasure taken may incline one to judge that the coffee is superb, various markers conjoined with the recognition that one is not particularly well versed in coffee drinking may rather underwrite the judgement that it is not bad.

The situation can be more rather than less problematic where we are concerned with someone who has some knowledge and expertise. A little knowledge can often be a dangerous thing. The more aware someone becomes of the complexity of potentially aesthetically relevant features and relations regarding an aesthetic object and their markers the more ways there are in which someone's appreciation and judgement can go wrong. First, in contrast with the barely inducted naïve appreciator, if someone is fairly used to drinking decent coffee or appreciating art then the usefulness of markers such as an Illy sign or being a much talked about gallery goes down. Second, as aesthetic expertise and knowledge is acquired there is a natural tendency to fixate upon and fetishize the aspects the subject has acquired knowledge and expertise about along with their attendant markers—sometimes at the expense of carefully attending to other features of the object or indeed the resultant responses.

It is not uncommon, for example, to find someone who has begun to acquire some appreciation of wine to fixate upon region, appellation, and year. In general as one acquires a passion for and some expertise in any given aesthetic area, it is all too easy and very tempting to allow the pleasures of exercising the expertise one has acquired to overgeneralize or shape one's judgements for the reasons glossed above—we feel pleasure in the recognition that we can classify works or draw on knowledge that others may lack so that we can belong to groups we identify with or indeed feel superior to. If anything, without undue care those with some expertise and knowledge are more likely to be prey to underlying irrelevant social and situational factors driving their aesthetic pronouncements because they are more likely to think, in

contrast with the naïve appreciator, that they really know something that in turn justifies their judgement. A little knowledge and expertise exponentially increases the capacity for effective rationalizations. It is easier to be an effective snob if one can talk with some knowledge concerning whatever one is being snobbish about.

5. Self-insulation and appreciative virtues

How can we avoid such pitfalls? We can be motivated to appreciate a work for a host of non-aesthetic reasons ranging from the desire for distraction or the desire for social status to the desire to improve one's mind and gain knowledge. Nonetheless we must come to be motivated in the activity of appreciation to attend to and respond to the work's aesthetically relevant features for appropriate sorts of reasons in order for our appreciation to be aesthetically virtuous and properly ground our aesthetic judgements. Indeed this must be the governing motivation in our appreciative activity. Where this is not the case then our appreciative activity is likely to go awry in fixing on irrelevant features or responding inappropriately for non-aesthetic reasons.

Fair Francesca may be motivated to appreciate wine over beer or go to the Hans Bellmer exhibition instead of the Chapman brothers show due to social reasons. Yet as long as her responses to what it is she engages with are guided by an interest in the object's aesthetically relevant features then her appreciation is, at least in this respect, unproblematic. By contrast, Flawed Frederick's judgement that Andy Goldsworthy's work is no good is driven by a desire to appear superior to those who like what is popular. Furthermore, the drive for superiority causally explains why his appreciation fixes on elements of the works with mass appeal and thereby derides the obvious technical engineering feats involved whilst failing to apprehend the ways in

which the work can be sculpturally light and minimal. Indeed Frederick's overblown praise for contemporary artists that are deliberately superficially difficult and devoid of mass appeal is to be similarly explained.

If someone's motivation for social status feeds through into appreciative activity and plays a causal role in explaining why aesthetically irrelevant social features shape responses to and the formation of aesthetic judgements about the work concerned, we have a case of appreciative vice. It is one thing to come to engage with and be interested in works for non-aesthetic reasons. It is quite another for such motivations to feed through into and drive someone's aesthetic appreciation and judgement. Awareness that we have social drives and biases that can distort aesthetic appreciation and judgement should itself help to put us on our guard with respect to our own aesthetic pronouncements and those of others. But is there anything else more concrete we can do to insulate ourselves from being prey to such errors?

We can look out for the tendency to go in for selective attention, comparison bias, confabulation, or pejorative characterizations. We can critically reflect on the particular biases someone is especially prone to and look out for the fetishizing of heuristics, use of aesthetic principles out of context, or a tendency to overgeneralize for aesthetically irrelevant reasons. In doing so we should consider the situation and ask what, aesthetic interest apart, might be doing the work in driving appreciation and judgement. Where there is a social drive or desire that might be doing some work such problematic strategies might be indulged in for the sake of self-aggrandizement in ways that could render our own judgement or the testimony of others epistemically and appreciatively suspect.

Cultivating critical awareness about such strategies might help us to insulate ourselves against the effects of undue social influences in striving to become what Hume terms a true critic. We should seek to cultivate critical sympathy for what an artist is trying to do, be able to take up different points of view in imagination, be perceptually and emotionally discriminating, free from the dictates of prejudice and fashion, seek out comparative experiences, compare our own appreciation with that of others, and seek to give appropriate reasons which underwrite our aesthetic judgements. Yet such critical awareness is not enough since, apart from anything else, such critical awareness could enable someone to exploit aesthetic judgement even more effectively for social reasons. What is also crucial is that the motivation to appreciate an aesthetic object for its own sake must govern the activity of appreciation. This is perfectly consistent with appreciating an object for other reasons since appreciation need not be *solely* for its own sake. Motivation can and often does make a difference to what we attend to, why, and how we come to form our judgement. Thus aspiring to be a good aesthetic appreciator depends upon cultivating a range of aesthetic virtues, several of which we will briefly consider in order to elucidate how this is so.

One important appreciative virtue is humility. Humility involves having a modest sense of the nature of one's appreciative activity in striving to do justice to a work rather than taking one's self to be the measure of the work. It also involves openness to the appreciative activity and judgements of others whilst simultaneously acknowledging that irrelevant factors might be shaping one's own appreciation and judgement. Pride in aesthetic expertise can not only blind us to aesthetically relevant features but can tempt us into falsely dismissing the possibility that we are influenced by market value, fashion, or gallery presentation. The self-aggrandizing estimation of

one's appreciative activity and judgement that constitutes aesthetic pride also explains the ways in which the opinions of others are often too easily dismissed as the result of lack of expertise. Humility, by contrast, involves remaining open to the possibility that the appreciative activity of others may have picked up on something worth considering and thereby reveals something importantly new about a work. This is not to say that humility involves the abjection of one's own responses in favour of others or the assumption that one cannot but be unduly influenced. Humility does not involve thinking less of ourselves than others. This would be to err too far the other way. Rather it involves recognizing that we may be unduly influenced and that others may possess appreciative responses and indeed virtues we may lack—and where they do so, we should recognize them.

Another closely related appreciative virtue is critical self-honesty. Aesthetic self-deception is a constant temptation for the reasons given above and thus critical self-honesty is required in order to be appreciatively virtuous. One must never be afraid to admit one's judgement might be incomplete or wrong. Indeed one should be prepared to admit where one has hastily overgeneralized, been dismissive, or failed to attend carefully enough either to one's appreciative activity or the grounds for appreciative judgements arrived at. It is all too easy to allow drives and desires concerning our self-image and how we would like to be seen by others to drive our appreciation and concomitant rationalizations. All this achieves, however, is both a lack of fidelity to the formal object of appreciation and an undermining of the possibility of strengthening the motives and capacities required for virtuous appreciation. It is related to an abjection of one's self in favour of the views of others. What is required is the genuine motive to appreciate a work for what it is worth

irrespective of whether or not in so doing one exposes one's self to the ridicule of others.

Articulating the importance of honesty in this way naturally leads into acknowledging the importance of another appreciative virtue. Courage is crucial in having the fortitude to be true to one's own responses and not cave in to received opinion or social influence without appreciative justification. It also involves being able to refrain from taking one's self or one's own appreciative activity too seriously at the right time. Where it turns out one has been unduly influenced one should have the capacity to laugh at oneself rather than give in to the temptation to reach for rationalizing explanations. Courage is also required to maintain critical sympathy and openness. It is all too easy to consider works in terms of preconceived schemas and assumptions. Yet the mere fact that a work does not conform to our expectations does not automatically show that it is no good. Hence the need to think about what an artist is attempting to do and what reasons might drive an artist to think that what is being presented for appreciation rewards such. Indeed courage thus links up with the virtue of patience. Worthwhile works often require discipline and perseverance. Aesthetic appreciation is sometimes hard and it is often tempting to reach for quick and easy judgements because we are tired or lazy. Yet at least where there are reasons for thinking it worth persevering we should do so or at the very least withhold from dismissive judgements.

Whilst recognizing the role of the aesthetic virtues (and vices) is amenable to an Aristotelian particularist understanding of the nature of appreciation and judgement, such that it is a matter of an appropriate response, at the right time, in the right degree, towards the right kind of features in a way that is at odds with the notion of aesthetic principles, it need not disavow the possibility of aesthetic principles. It

could be held that there are or could be aesthetic principles that govern virtuous appreciation and judgement whilst nonetheless recognizing that virtuous appreciation naturally accords with whatever the appropriate aesthetic principles are. The greater the security and strength of the aesthetic motivation in our appreciative activity the less likely we are to be susceptible to irrelevant social influences and the more likely we are to fix on appropriate aesthetic features which figure in the right sort of roles to underwrite aesthetic judgement and claims.

The challenge presented by experiments in the psychology of taste can be met if we pay attention not just to the strategies that cultivate greater critical self-awareness but also to motivation itself and thus the importance of aesthetic virtue. Aesthetic education should not only focus on appropriate aesthetic engagement and judgement on particular occasions but should also explicitly seek to cultivate the aesthetic virtues. More generally, as individuals we should strive to be sensitive to our own aesthetic virtues and vices as part of our aesthetic development and self-realization. If we do so then in both epistemic and appreciative terms we will thus be less likely to go awry and come much closer to the right sort of achievement qua aesthetic appreciator.

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