BUT IS IT TESTIMONY?

Coady (1992: 42) argues that it is a necessary condition on testimony that the putative testifier be competent in the relevant domain. The unreliability account explains the epistemic weakness of aesthetic testimony by appeal to widespread incompetence. So the unreliability account seems to have a problem – if it is correct that there is a great deal of aesthetic unreliability, then there will, in fact, be very little aesthetic testimony. More to the point, if the epistemic weakness of a piece of putative testimony is explained by the incompetence of the speaker, then such an utterance will not count as testimony. The unreliability account undercuts its own explanation – it cannot explain the epistemic problem with aesthetic *testimony*.

Two things can be said in response. The first is that even if Coady were right, the unreliability account would still have the resources to explain why we do not typically gain aesthetic justification or knowledge from the utterances of others. Whether or not this need be understood in terms of testimony is irrelevant. The second point is that Coady's claim looks to be false. Testimony does not require competence – it requires only that the utterer intends her audience to believe that she is competent (Graham 1997). So the unreliability account need not fear undercutting itself.

A Humean-inspired account of the weakness of aesthetic testimony, rooted in an assumption of widespread aesthetic unreliability, is the most plausible approach to solving the puzzle of aesthetic testimony. Moreover, such an unreliability account is consistent with full-fledged aesthetic realism; hence it serves to undermine a distinctive argument for aesthetic anti-realism. Aesthetic realism may face other significant challenges, but the puzzle of aesthetic testimony should not impel us to give up on the reality and objectivity of aesthetic value.

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Chapter 9

CRITICAL COMPATIBILISM

James Shelley

1. What is the distinction between particularism and generalism in aesthetics? I hope to convince you that the answer to this question is harder to come by than we have thought. Particularism, whatever it is, is thought to have received its classic articulation in Arnold Isenberg's 1949 essay, "Critical Communication." Generalism, whatever it is, is thought to have received its classic articulation in Frank Sibley's 1983 essay, "General Criteria and Reasons in Aesthetics" (2001*c*). So if we wish to understand what particularism and generalism are, these are the essays to which we should turn.

2. Isenberg offers definitions of neither particularism nor generalism; nor does he refer to his position as 'particularist.' (Sibley seems to have been the first to apply the terms 'particularist' and 'generalist' to theories of criticism.) The theory of criticism he develops in his essay, however, he develops in contrast to another, which he describes as "widely held in spite of its deficiencies," and which he characterizes as dividing the critical process into three parts: "There is the value judgment or *verdict* (V): 'This picture or poem is good –.' There is a particular statement or *reason* (R): '– because it has such-and-such quality –.' And there is a general statement or *norm* (N): '– and any work which has that quality is *pro tanto* good"' (1949: 330). The point of contrast between the "widely held" theory and Isenberg's, according to which we may now aptly refer to the former as 'generalist' and the latter as 'particularist,' concerns N. According to the former theory, reason R functions as a premise (or something very like a premise) from which verdict V may be inferred (or something very like inferred). But since V does not follow from R simply, the widely held theory

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must posit a tacit appeal to a general principle, N, which links the quality specified in R with the value specified in V. According to Isenberg's theory, R functions not as a premise for V but as a guide to a perception of the work that allows for the value specified in V to be grasped directly. Since on this view it is an act of perception that mediates R and V, as opposed to an inference (or something very like one), there is simply no role for N to play.

So if there are definitions of particularism and generalism to be derived from Isenberg's essay, they take something like following forms:

> Particularism is the view that in criticism no appeal is made to general principles.
> Generalism is the view that in criticism appeal is made to general principles.

3. Sibley, by contrast, offers a fairly explicit definition of particularism and, by extension, of generalism:

> Throughout his writings Beardsley has steadily fought to uphold the view that in criticism there are and can be general reasons for aesthetic judgments. On this point I stand and have always stood on the same side as he does. Thus, basically, we face together those many writers over several decades – I dub them 'particularists' – who have argued that in criticism there are no such general reasons (2001*c*: 104).

We may say, then, that Sibley defines particularism and generalism as follows:

> Particularism is the view that there are no general reasons in criticism.
> Generalism is the view that there are general reasons in criticism.

But these definitions tell us little unless we know what it is for a reason to be general, and on this point Sibley says only that general reasons "must have a consistency about them" (2001*c*: 104). This in turn tells us little unless we have some idea what it is for a reason to have a consistency about it, and on this point Sibley says nothing. Our only recourse is to consult the text for examples of the sort of thing he has in mind. I find three such examples. The first is the strong form of consistency adopted by Beardsley, according to which a reason is general only if the quality it specifies counts in one direction, as either merit or defect, in every circumstance. But Sibley worries that to opt for such a strong form of consistency is to play into the particularist's hand, since there is no quality that is a merit in one work that

may not be a defect in some other, and vice versa. So Sibley introduces a second, weaker form of consistency. Though no quality, citable as a reason, is everywhere a merit or defect, certain qualities, citable as reasons, have inherent positive or negative tendencies or 'polarities.' The qualities having such inherent polarities are those whose *tout court* attribution to works implies merit or defect. Examples include: elegance, gracefulness, and tragic intensity on the positive side; garishness, sentimentality, and bombast on the negative.

But to say that these qualities have inherent polarities is of course to acknowledge that the polarities can be reversed under the right conditions. And I claim that this "reversibility phenomenon" (Sibley 2001*c*: 110) forces Sibley to acknowledge a third and yet weaker form of consistency. For consider those aesthetic judgments involving polarity reversals – judgments to the effect that works are so much the better or worse because they have inherently negative or positive qualities whose polarities have been reversed. Are there general reasons to be given on behalf of such judgments? To answer in the negative is to concede a bit of territory to particularism. It is to concede that particularism is true, so to speak, with respect to judgments involving polarity reversals. And perhaps it is to concede more, since if we get by without appeal to general reasons in polarity-reversed cases, why not suppose we always get by without them? It is to head off such worries, I conjecture, that Sibley answers (or seems to answer) the above question in the affirmative. This comes out, I think, in the following: "But if the critic does decide that the comic elements are defects in this work, a *perfectly general reason* can be given. A work that might otherwise have excelled by its tragic intensity is marred by certain (inherently valuable) comic elements that dilute and weaken that (inherently valuable) tragic intensity" (Sibley 2001*c*: 108, my italics).

The critic can give a general reason for the judgment that the inherently valuable comic elements have had their polarity reversed, which in turn allows him to give a general reason for the judgment that the work is so much the worse because of its inherently valuable comic elements. But whatever consistency this general reason has about it, it cannot be Beardsleyan one-way-always consistency, since that is the sort of consistency had by reasons that cite qualities whose polarities cannot be reversed. And it cannot be Sibleyan inherent-polarity consistency, since that is the sort of consistency had by reasons that cite qualities whose polarities have not been reversed. What sort of consistency is it, then? Sibley does not say, but perhaps he has in mind what might be called 'relevant-similarity' consistency (or perhaps 'universalizability' consistency). When you judge that a work is so much the worse because of its comic elements, you do not commit yourself to the

principle that any work having comic elements is so much worse, nor do you commit yourself to the principle that any work having comic elements is so much the worse unless the polarity of the comic elements has been reversed. But you plausibly do commit yourself to the principle that any work having comic elements in relevantly similar circumstances (i.e. circumstances in which those comic elements dilute tragic intensity, and in which tragic intensity matters more than the comic elements, and so on) is so much the worse. If this sort of consistency is sufficient to confer generality on reasons having it about them, then even reasons citing polarity-reversed qualities will qualify as general.

4. Sibley's definitions can now be lined up against their Isenbergian counterparts:

> Isenbergian Particularism (IP) is the view that in criticism no appeal is made to general principles.
> Sibleyan Particularism (SP) is the view that in criticism there are no general reasons.
> Isenbergian Generalism (IG) is the view that in criticism appeal is made to general principles.
> Sibleyan Generalism (SG) is the view that in criticism there are general reasons.

There are two obvious differences between the Isenbergian and Sibleyan distinctions: one is that the Isenbergian distinction concerns principles whereas the Sibleyan one concerns reasons; the other is that the Isenbergian distinction concerns what there is appeal to, whereas the Sibleyan one concerns what there is. In light of these differences you may rightly wonder whether the two distinctions are logically equivalent. They are not. You can infer back and forth between the existence of general principles and the existence of general rules, since the generality that a principle articulates just is the generality that a reason has. But while you can infer from what there is appeal to to what there is, you cannot infer from what there is to what there is appeal to. This means that while SP does entail IP, and while IG does entail SG, IP does not entail SP, nor does SG entail IG. That there are no general reasons in criticism (SP) entails that there are no general principles in criticism, and this entails that we do not appeal to general principles in criticism (IP). That we appeal to general principles in criticism (IG) entails that there are general principles, which entails that there are general reasons (SG). But that we do not appeal to general principles in criticism (IP) does not entail that there are no general principles in criticism, and so does not entail that there are no general reasons in criticism

(SP). And while the claim that there are general reasons in criticism (SG) entails that there are general principles in criticism, the claim that there are general principles in criticism does not entail that they are appealed to in criticism (IG).

It may seem, however, that there is an easy way to patch up the failed entailments from IP to SP and from SG to IG. The problem has been that we have been unable to overcome the gap between what there is and what there is appeal to. And it may seem that we can remove this gap simply by reformulating the Sibleyan definitions such that they concern not what there is but what there is appeal to. For it is not as if Sibley is committed merely to the existence of general reasons to which, for all we know, appeal is never made. He is committed to the generality of reasons to which appeal is made. So there is no harm in re-working his definitions as follows:

> SG* is the view that in criticism appeal is made to general reasons.
> SP* is the view that in criticism no appeal is made to general reasons.

But inferences from IP to SP* and from SG* to IP will still fail, if not for the same reason. The problem now is that while you can infer from the claim that *there are* general reasons to the claim that *there are* general principles, you cannot infer from the claim that *we appeal* to general reasons to the claim that *we appeal* to general principles. You can appeal only to that to which you have cognitive access, and you can have cognitive access to a reason that is general without having cognitive access to the principle that articulates that generality. So the claim that in criticism appeal is made to general reasons (SG*) does not entail the claim that in criticism appeal is made to general principles (IG). Nor of course does the claim that in criticism no appeal is made to general principles (IP) entail the claim that in criticism no appeal is made to general reasons (SP*).

I see no reason to believe that IP, the particularism Isenberg sets out to defend, and SG, the generalism that Sibley sets out to defend, are incompatible. Indeed I think they are compatible. Indeed, I think they are both true.

5. *Critical compatibilism*, the view that IP and SG are both true, will have two chief competitors: *strong particularism*, the view that both forms of particularism, IP and SP, are true, and *strong generalism*, the view that both forms of generalism, SG and IG, are true. To my knowledge, every defender of particularism is, as a matter of fact, a strong particularist (Mothersill 1961, 1984; Cohen 1998) and every defender of generalism is, as a matter

of fact, a strong generalist (Beardsley 1962; Dickie 1988; Bender 1995; Conolly and Haydar 2003). That Isenberg should be a strong particularist and Sibley a strong generalist may come as a surprise, given that the former merely sets out to defend IP and the latter merely sets out to defend SG. But each, by his essay's end, and in almost parallel fashion, seems driven to defend the other variant of the theory he holds.

Why ought we prefer compatibilism to its rivals? Here I will attempt only the beginnings of an answer by appealing to an expanded version of what Isenberg calls "the critical process:"

S_1: W_1 is good. (verdict or judgment)
S_2: Why? What makes it so? (reason-request)
S_1: Because W_1 has Q_1. (reason)
S_2: But W_2 also has Q_1 and is not made better for having it. (consistency-challenge)
S_1: (1) Yes, but W_1 also has Q_2, which W_2 lacks. (refinement)
(2) Yes, but W_2 also has Q_2, which W_1 lacks. (refinement)

I hope you discern, in the above, a pattern to which many critical conversations patently conform and to which perhaps many others arguably do. For convenience, I will divide it into the three stages: (1) the verdict; (2) the reason-stage, in which a reason is requested and given; and (3) the consistency-stage, in which the reason is apparently challenged on the grounds that it is inconsistent with other reasons that have been or ought to be given, and in which a refinement of the reason is offered in response.

My aim in enumerating these stages is not to suggest that critical conversations invariably pass through all three and in order. I doubt they even tend to. The reason- and consistency-stage can each be found to be unnecessary. Each can also be found to be insufficient and hence in need of repetition. What then determines which course a conversation takes through these stages? Much is determined by the character of the quality (Q_1), which is cited as a reason for the verdict. Suppose S_1 gives a reason citing a comparatively evaluative quality – elegance, for example. The chances are almost none that S_2 will issue a consistency-challenge (unless, of course, the work is held to be *bad* because elegant, in which case S_2 will almost certainly issue a consistency-challenge). But the chances are comparatively high that S_2 will treat such a reason as if it were yet another verdict, standing in need of a reason of its own. If so, there will be another pass through the reason-stage in which S_2 this time asks what is it that makes the work elegant and in which S_1 gives a new reason citing some new, and presumably less evaluative, quality.

Suppose, by contrast, that S_1 gives a reason citing a comparatively descriptive quality – possession of a wavelike contour, for example. Now the chances are almost none that S_2 will treat this as yet another verdict – here the question 'what makes it have a wavelike contour?' (meant in the same sense as 'what makes it good?') borders on unintelligibility. But the chances are now higher that S_2 will be unable to find her way from the wavelike contour to the goodness. If she is unable, there will likely be another pass through the reason-stage in which S_2 this time asks how it is that the wavelike contour makes the work good and in which S_1 gives a new reason citing some new, and presumably more evaluative, quality mediating the wavelike contour and the goodness. The chances are also now higher that S_2 will issue a consistency-challenge, since the more descriptive the quality, the easier it will be to spot apparent inconsistencies between the reason citing it and other reasons S_1 has given or ought to be prepared to give. If S_2 does issue a consistency-challenge, S_1 will offer a refinement of the reason that seems calculated to demonstrate, not that the reason is consistent with other reasons that have been or ought to be given, but rather that it is not inconsistent, in the way the challenge specifies, with other reasons that have been or ought to be given. (So, 'consistency-stage' is perhaps a misnomer: 'not-inconsistency-stage' is more accurate.) It is because S_1's refinement aims at demonstrating no more than this that the possibility of a second consistency-stage remains open, should inconsistencies become apparent between S_1's now refined reason and other reasons S_1 has given or ought to be prepared to give. In this manner the consistency-stage may be repeated any number of times within a single conversation, the reason increasing in refinement each time.

The reason for preferring compatibilism to its rivals can now be given: compatibilism makes better sense of the whole of the critical process than does either of its rivals. We ought to prefer compatibilism to strong generalism because it makes better sense of the reason-stage. We ought to prefer compatibilism to strong particularism because it makes better sense of the consistency-stage. Moreover, the sense compatibilism makes of one stage is only clarified by the sense it makes of the other.

6. If strong generalism is true, then IG is true. If IG is true then S_1, in offering 'W_1 is Q_1' as reason, must be counting on S_2 to make tacit appeal to a general principle linking the quality to the goodness S_1's verdict attributes to the work, and then to make an inference (or something like one), from that reason and that principle to that verdict. But to the degree that the quality is evaluative, it becomes difficult to see how S_2 could have

need for such a principle. And to the degree that the quality is descriptive, it becomes difficult to see how S_2 could have access to such a principle.

If we suppose the quality to be evaluative – elegance, for example – then there are two cases to consider, according to the kind of generality we suppose the reason has. We may suppose it to have what I have called Beardsleyan generality, in which case the principle will state that any work having elegance is so much the better. Or we may suppose it to have what I have called Sibleyan generality, in which case the principle will state that any work having elegance is so much the better unless the elegance has suffered a polarity reversal. If we suppose the reason to have Beardsleyan generality, then presumably this is because we suppose elegance to be a kind of goodness. But if elegance is a kind of goodness, then to judge that the work is elegant is to judge that it is good, just as to judge that the work is red is to judge that it is colored. But if to judge that the work is elegant is to judge that it is good, then to accept the reason is to accept the verdict, and there remains nothing for an appeal to a general principle to accomplish. If we suppose the reason to have Sibleyan generality, then an appeal to the principle picking out this generality will serve to link the reason and the verdict only if S_2 also has been able to judge that in this work elegance has not had its positive polarity reversed. But to judge that in this work elegance has not had its positive polarity reversed is presumably to judge that in this work elegance is good. But if S_2 has already judged that in this work elegance is good, then there again remains nothing for an appeal to a general principle to accomplish.

If, by contrast, we suppose the quality to be descriptive – possession of a wavelike contour, for example – then it will seem that the general principle to which S_2 must appeal will be easily countered: there will be many works having a wavelike contour that are not made so much the better for having it. It may seem that we can calm this worry by allowing the principle to be as complicated as is necessary to safeguard it from counterexamples. But the worry now will be that the degree of complication necessary to place the principle beyond threat of counterexample will surely also place it beyond S_2's cognitive reach.

So I think that something like Isenberg's positive account of what I am now calling the reason-stage has to be right. S_1's reason functions not as a premise but as a guide to a perception of the work that allows the truth of the verdict to be grasped non-inferentially. The degree to which the quality S_1 cites as a reason is evaluative or descriptive will depend, in part at least, on what sort of difficulty S_1 expects S_2 will most likely encounter in finding her way to the work's goodness. The advantage in citing an evaluative quality is that the distance between it and the goodness, so to speak, is narrow – chances are comparatively slim that S_2 will find her way to the elegance without finding her way to the goodness; the disadvantage in citing an evaluative quality is that chances are comparatively high that S_2 will have difficulty finding her way to the elegance. The advantage and disadvantage in citing a descriptive quality are the inverse: chances are comparatively slim that S_2 will have difficulty finding her way to the wavelike contour, but comparatively high that she will find the wavelength contour without finding the goodness. (I should add, however, that if there is as much truth in Isenberg's account of critical communication as I believe there to be, then much of what I have just said will require qualification.)

7. If strong particularism is true, then SP is true. If SP is true, then the reasons to which we appeal in criticism are not general. But if the reasons to which we appeal in criticism are not general, then one reason cannot be inconsistent with another. And if one reason cannot be inconsistent with another, then the portion of the critical process I have been calling the 'consistency-stage' will have to be explained away, either as an empty exercise or as one whose aims are not what they seem. So unless some strong particularist can provide an account explaining away the consistency-stage that is as compelling as an account that takes it at face value, we have reason to reject SP.

Has any strong particularist provided such an account? I believe not. Consider the account that Isenberg – who unfortunately embraces SP – gives of the consistency-stage. While acknowledging that the consistency-stage occupies "hundreds of pages of our best modern critics," he rejects it as "a waste of time and space:"

> You have, perhaps, a conflict of opinion about the merits of a poem; and one writer defends his judgment by mentioning vowel sounds, metrical variations, consistent or inconsistent imagery. Another critic, taking that language at its face value in ordinary communication, points out that 'by those standards' one would have to condemn famous passages in *Hamlet* or *Lear* and raise some admittedly bad poems to a high place.... This procedure, which takes up hundreds of pages of our best modern critics, is a waste of time and space; for it is the critic abandoning his own function to pose as a scientist – to assume, in other words, that criticism explains experiences instead of clarifying and altering them. If he saw that the *meaning* of a word like 'assonance' – the quality it leads our perception to discriminate in one poem or another – is in critical usage never twice the same he would see no point in 'testing' any generalization about the relationship between assonance and poetic value (1949: 338–9).

I want to grant much of what Isenberg says in this passage. I want to grant the distinction between ordinary and critical communication. I want to grant the claim that the illusion of an inconsistency across reasons might arise – perhaps sometimes does – because of a crossing up of these two forms of communication. But I see no reason to grant the claim that "the *meaning* of a word like 'assonance'... is in critical usage never twice the same." A word like 'assonance' is a word that refers to the quality that a reason cites. So to say that the meaning of such a word is never twice the same is to say that no two critical reasons cite the same quality. But if no two critical reasons cite the same quality then there can be no inconsistency across critical reasons.

But why believe that "the *meaning* of a word like 'assonance'... is in critical usage never twice the same"? This claim does not seem to follow from Isenberg's distinction between ordinary and critical communication. Communication is critical, according to that distinction, only if the meaning it transmits is "'filled in,' 'rounded out,' or 'completed' by the act of perception" (Isenberg 1949: 336); otherwise communication is ordinary. It follows that any critical utterance will transmit a meaning of greater particularity than will its ordinary counterpart since to 'fill in,' 'round out,' or 'complete' a meaning is to particularize it. But that any critical utterance will transmit a meaning of greater particularity than will its ordinary counterpart does not imply that any critical utterance will transmit a meaning of absolute and utter particularity: that the meaning of a word like 'assonance' is more particular in critical than in ordinary usage does not imply that the meaning of such a word is in critical usage never twice the same. Nor can I see that such a view follows from any other element of Isenberg's theory of criticism. I can only conjecture that Isenberg believes, wrongly, that it follows from IP, perhaps because he believes that it does follow from SP, and either believes that SP follows from IP or fails to distinguish between them.

Until the strong particularist at least explains why she need not be able to explain the consistency-stage, we have reason to dismiss strong particularism in favor of any theory of critical reasons able to explain it.

8. Suppose I am granted that if we consider the reason- and consistency-stages in isolation from one another, then we have reason to prefer compatibilism to strong generalism and to strong particularism. From this it will not follow that we have reason to prefer compatibilism to strong generalism or to strong particularism. For – as the strong generalist and strong particularist may for once agree – the elements constituting strong generalism and strong particularism make sense in combination in a way the elements

constituting compatibilism do not. In affirming SG, compatibilism requires generality in the reasons to which we appeal in criticism. But in affirming IP, it seems to deny to those reasons the only function to which generality could have any relevance. If critical reasons function not as premises but merely as perceptual guides, why should it matter whether they are general? The answer is that while critical reasons function as perceptual guides, it is *as reasons* that they do so, and, as Sibley rightly says, "reasons, to be reasons must have a consistency about them" (2001*c*: 104).

I will attempt to explain how it is that a critical reason is at once a reason and a guide to perception by invoking a pair of distinctions. The first is the distinction between doing something in justification of a belief and giving a justificatory reason. Suppose I wish to justify to you my belief that we have mustard on hand. I may remind you that you yourself bought some last week; I may direct you to open the refrigerator and look on the bottom shelf, behind the horseradish; I may open the refrigerator myself and produce the mustard for your inspection. In each case I do what I do in justification of my belief, but only in the first do I give a justificatory reason, since only in the first do I intend the content of what I say (in combination with certain tacit assumptions I count on you to make) to do the justifying. The second distinction is the familiar one between a justificatory reason and an explanatory reason. If I am asked why I believe we have mustard on hand when what is in question is *not why but whether* we have it, I am likely to offer a justificatory reason: 'because you yourself bought some last week.' But if I am asked why I believe we have mustard on hand when what is in question is *not whether but why* we have it on hand, I will offer an explanatory reason: 'because we were going to be grilling.'

Now take the reason S_1 gives in justification of her verdict that W_1 is good: 'because W_1 has Q_1.' There is no disputing that it is a reason that she gives, nor that her giving of it is something she does in justification of her verdict. So it may seem as if S_1's reason must be justificatory, particularly if you also consider that what is in question is not why but whether the work is good. But if the arguments given against IG in section 6 go through, S_1's reason cannot be justificatory – there is simply no justificatory burden that her reason can be presumed to be carrying.

So if S_1's reason is a reason, and not a mere guide to perception, it must be explanatory. That it is an explanatory reason gains support from the kind of consistency we seem to be demanding in the consistency-stage: the consistency we demand across critical reasons looks very much like the consistency we demand across explanatory reasons. A critical reason you have given may be challenged on the grounds that it is inconsistent with other critical reasons you have given or ought to be prepared to give; a

challenge to a critical reason you have given may be answered by your offering a refinement of that reason. If you have claimed that *The Burial of Count Orgaz* is good because of a wavelike contour, and have been challenged on the grounds that other paintings have wavelike contours and are not good, you may answer that challenge by noting a relevant difference between *The Burial* and the other paintings. But this is just what we ought to expect if critical reasons are explanatory reasons. An explanatory reason you have given may be challenged on the grounds that it is inconsistent with other explanatory reasons you have given or ought to be prepared to give; a challenge to an explanatory reason you have given may be answered by your offering a refinement of that reason. If you have claimed that the Roman Empire fell because of internal dissent, and have been challenged on the grounds that other empires have housed internal dissent and have not fallen, you may answer that challenge by noting a relevant difference between the Roman Empire and the others. In both cases the reason you give is general. In both cases your giving of the reason commits you to the principle that picks that generality out. But in neither case need you be able to articulate the principle, as you would were the reason justificatory.

But what sense can we make of an explanatory reason being given in justification of a verdict? If what S_2 wishes to know is *whether* W_1 is good, why should she be told *why* W_1 is good? The answer is perhaps obvious by now. To be told why W_1 is good just is to be told what makes it good, and to be told what makes it good it also to be told where its goodness may be found.

9. So Isenberg was right: we do not appeal to general principles in justification of critical verdicts. And Sibley was right: we do appeal to general reasons in justification of critical verdicts. And any account of critical reasons that allows both Isenberg and Sibley to be right is *pro tanto* good.

Chapter 10

CRITICAL REASONING AND CRITICAL PERCEPTION

Robert Hopkins

TWO INSIGHTS

An old issue in aesthetics concerns the nature of critical debate. On one side are those who see critical discussion as a form of argument like any other. In defending a critical judgment, be it of nature or art, we appeal to what Kant (who rejected the idea) called 'principles of taste.' These are general claims to the effect that anything possessing some feature F thereby, or at least to that extent, possesses a different feature G, where this second feature is of aesthetic interest. We can then argue that the object under discussion is G on the basis of both this general principle and the claim that the object is F (Beardsley 1962, 1969; Dickie 2006). The opponents of this view have usually made two claims in response. They have denied that there are any principles of taste from which aesthetic conclusions could be informatively derived. But they have also made a positive claim about what critical debate involves, that its purpose is to bring one's audience to see the object in a certain way. There are no critical arguments, if that means deductive reasoning from general claims, for no such claims are available. In any case, the point of critical discussion is not the formation of belief, but the engendering of perception (e.g. Isenberg 1949; Hampshire 1970; Strawson 1974; Sibley 2001*a*, 2001*b*; Mothersill 1984).

In my view, each side to this debate grasps an insight. The proper outcome of critical discussion is indeed a perception, and to that extent I condone the second position. But the first position also seeks to preserve a very appealing thought, namely that critical discussion is a rational activity – it

R. Hopkins, Critical Reasoning and Critical Perception, 137–153. *Requests to reproduce this chapter should be made in writing to R. Hopkins.*