

AESTHETIC REASONS AND AESTHETIC OBLIGATIONS

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It is with deep sadness that the editors of *Estetika* announce the sudden loss of its Editor-in-Chief, Fabian Dorsch, who passed away unexpectedly on 21 February 2017, just as the present issue was about to go to press. Fabian had been Editor-in-Chief since 2012 and played an indispensable role in raising its international recognition. With his death, the profession has lost a brilliant philosopher, a discerning editor, and a sharp yet generous interlocutor – and many of us have lost a friend. His vision of *Estetika* was to make it a leading journal in philosophical aesthetics, pluralistic in its scope, while retaining the argumentative rigour familiar to anyone who has read Fabian's own philosophical work. The editorial staff remains committed to his vision and vows to continue on that path true to Fabian's principles.

From its inception to its final shape, this special issue of *Estetika* on 'Aesthetic Reasons and Aesthetic Obligations' was of Fabian's making. The following Introduction, sadly, remains the last text Fabian wrote on the topic, one that was dear to his heart and to which he had contributed substantially in the past. The editorial staff dedicates this issue to his memory.

I. THE GENERAL BACKGROUND

While the topic of aesthetic normativity has always been central to aesthetics, the focus of the respective debates has usually been rather narrow. In particular, due to the pivotal and continuing influence of Hume's and Kant's writings, the discussions about aesthetic normativity have been concentrated on the objectivity and justification of experience-based or emotion-based aesthetic judgements. This narrow focus has typically been accompanied by explicit scepticism about the role of reasoning in aesthetics, and about the existence or importance of inferential aesthetic reasons. In fact, Hume and Kant already shared this kind of scepticism, albeit with different motivations.¹ It was part of Hume's

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¹ David Hume, 'Of the Standard of Taste', in *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, vol. 1 (London: Longmans, 1875), 266–84; Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

general empiricist perspective to be wary of reason and rationality, irrespective of whether the aesthetic, the epistemic, or the practical was concerned. Kant, on the other hand, who overall preferred a rationalist outlook over Hume's empiricism, still stressed the specifically sensory and non-conceptual nature of our aesthetic engagement with the world, thus drawing a stark contrast between the aesthetic realm, on the one side, and the theoretical and the practical realms, on the other.

This scepticism about the place of the rational in aesthetics is still prevalent in contemporary thinking. There is wide agreement that our aesthetic interaction with objects – whether in the shape of appreciation, criticism, creation, or other forms of agency – is not a matter of inferential aesthetic reasons or reasoning about aesthetic properties, values, or norms, partly because there seem to be hardly any general aesthetic principles.² Accordingly, aesthetic judgements are assumed to be grounded not in inferences but in experiences.³ Similarly, philosophers commonly doubt the presence or significance of inferential aesthetic reasons that are not merely explanatory but favour certain responses or establish certain norms.⁴ In particular, even though aesthetic considerations might sometimes figure in our deliberations about what to do, their normative force is standardly assumed to derive from practical value (for example, moral or instrumental) rather than aesthetic value.⁵

The resulting orthodoxy claims that genuinely aesthetic normativity (if there is any at all) is limited to experience-based or emotion-based aesthetic attitudes and actions. In other words, it is maintained that there are at best only *non-inferential* aesthetic reasons, as well as corresponding aesthetic norms, while any other reasons and norms within the realm of the aesthetic are either epistemic or practical in nature. The aim of this special issue of *Estetika* is to offer and assess alternative perspectives on aesthetic normativity which go beyond this traditional view in that they allow for reasons and norms

² Kant, *Critique*; Malcolm Budd, 'Aesthetic Judgements, Aesthetic Principles and Aesthetic Properties', *European Journal of Philosophy* 7 (1999): 295–311; Fabian Dorsch, 'The Limits of Aesthetic Empiricism', in *Aesthetics and the Sciences of Mind*, ed. Gregory Currie et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 75–100; Frank Sibley, 'Aesthetic Concepts', *Philosophical Review* 68 (1959): 421–50.

³ Hume, 'Standard of Taste'; Kant, *Critique*; Robert Hopkins, 'Critical Reasoning and Critical Perception', in *Knowing Art: Essays in Aesthetics and Epistemology*, ed. Matthew Kieran and Dominic Mclver Lopes (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), 137–53; Elisabeth Schellekens, 'Towards a Reasonable Objectivism for Aesthetic Judgements', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 46 (2006): 163–77; Sibley, 'Aesthetic Concepts'.

⁴ For a discussion, see Sibley, 'Aesthetic Concepts'; Hopkins, 'Critical Reasoning'; and Schellekens, 'Towards a Reasonable Objectivism'.

⁵ Kant, *Critique*; Torbjörn Tännsjö, *From Reasons to Norms* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), chap. 7.

which are both distinctively aesthetic and pertain to inferential or deliberative forms of reasoning. In particular, the respective positions make a case for the existence of inferential reasons for aesthetic judgements or actions, the existence of corresponding aesthetic obligations, or the existence of regulative aesthetic reasons.⁶ Before introducing each of the contributions to the special issue in more detail, I shall highlight certain themes that are central to their discussions.

II. SOME COMMON THEMES

Two of the essays address the traditional question of how aesthetic judgements are justified. They do so, however, in ways that go beyond the traditional approach of Aesthetic Empiricism. While Guy Dammann and Elisabeth Schellekens's aim is to show how this view can – and should – accommodate the idea of aesthetic reasoning and inferential aesthetic reasons, Andrew McGonigal proposes a more radical departure from the Humean and Kantian orthodoxy by treating proper aesthetic responses as skilful accomplishments that cannot be reduced to justified aesthetic judgements (or actions). In addition, McGonigal stresses that aesthetic reasons may play not only the rational role of speaking for or against certain responses, but also the rational role of identifying practical ends that are choice-unworthy because their attainment would decrease the amount of aesthetic value in the world.

Indeed, another prevalent topic in most of the contributions is the link between aesthetic reasons and agency. One central idea here is that aesthetic reasons may not only justify attitudes (for example, judgements or evaluations), but also actions (such as those concerning the creation or treatment of artworks). This raises the question of how to account for this rational impact on agency. While McGonigal again suggests an explanation in terms of skill and accomplishment, Maria Alvarez and Aaron Ridley formulate their answer by reference to an Anscombe-inspired theory of what it is to act for a reason.

⁶ Because of this difference in focus on non-inferential experience and on inferential reasoning, the two pictures may reasonably be labelled *Aesthetic Empiricism* (the orthodoxy) and *Aesthetic Rationalism* (the reason-centred alternative), respectively. I discuss and defend Aesthetic Rationalism in more detail in a series of articles, as well as in a recently started research project with the same name, based at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland). See Fabian Dorsch, 'Sentimentalism and the Intersubjectivity of Aesthetic Evaluations', *Dialectica* 61 (2007): 417–46; 'Non-Inferentialism about Justification: The Case of Aesthetic Judgements', *Philosophical Quarterly* 63 (2013): 660–82; and Dorsch, 'Limits of Aesthetic Empiricism'. See also Frederick C. Beiser, *Diotima's Children: German Aesthetic Rationalism from Leibniz to Lessing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) for an overview of some of the historical roots of Aesthetic Rationalism.

A further important thought is that, in general, reasons are intimately connected to norms, especially obligations. By their very nature, reasons are facts or considerations that speak for (or against) certain attitudes or actions. But this favouring relation may vary in its normative strength. Some reasons speak for an attitude or action by permitting it; others do so by recommending or even demanding it. Hence, if there are aesthetic reasons, the attitudes or actions that they are reasons for should be governed by corresponding aesthetic norms.⁷

The contributions by Anthony Cross and by Alfred Archer and Lauren Ware argue for the existence of aesthetic obligations with respect to the appreciation or treatment of aesthetically valuable objects. Both do so, however, with different foci. Archer and Ware's main goal is to defend the idea that such obligations may be surpassed by us in ways that are best described as instances of aesthetic supererogation. By contrast, Cross asks how aesthetic obligations acquire their normative authority and, in particular, why they are valid for many different – if not all – rational subjects. His main idea is that at least certain aesthetic obligations (for example, that we should not needlessly destroy valuable artworks) are duties of love, rather than norms deriving from the rights of artists or other people linked to art, or norms deriving from the aesthetic values or rights of the artworks themselves. More specifically, we should treat artworks in certain ways because we love them ourselves or, if this is not the case, because others love them and we should respect their love.

Interestingly, Dammann and Schellekens provide a very similar answer to the question about the scope of the authority of aesthetic reasons for aesthetic judgements. Their suggestion is that people who do not care much about certain artworks should still appreciate them if these works count as aesthetically valuable according to the standards of the relevant cultural group. That is, if other members of our community legitimately love and value a given artwork, we should do so, too, out of respect for our shared culture.

III. DAMMANN AND SCHELLEKENS

Guy Dammann and Elisabeth Schellekens begin their discussion with the observation that our practice of supporting or defending aesthetic

⁷ One famous example of such a norm is the so-called 'principle of acquaintance', which requires that (justified) aesthetic judgements be grounded in first-hand experience and therefore constitutes a prime example of an endorsement of Aesthetic Empiricism. See Kant, *Critique*; Malcolm Budd, 'The Acquaintance Principle', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 43 (2003): 386–92; Alan H. Goldman, 'The Experiential Account of Aesthetic Value', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64 (2006): 333–42; Richard Wollheim, 'Art and Evaluation', in *Art and Its Objects*, 2nd. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 152–61.

judgements by reference to relevant features of artworks appears to beg the question of justification. For while these features may indeed constitute reasons for the aesthetic judgements in question, they seem to do so only if the subjects concerned are already compelled to accept the truth of these judgements. To illustrate this point, Dammann and Schellekens introduce the example of two equally skilled and trustworthy critics, who agree on all the relevant underlying features of a given work of art, as well as on their general relevance for justifying suitable aesthetic judgements, but whom the recognition of these features does not compel to form the same aesthetic judgement. That is, while one critic finds the features to be compelling reasons for judging that the work is a masterpiece, the other does not. Hence, when the first critic tries to justify his or her own judgement by pointing to the commonly recognized features of the work and, on the basis of this justification, expects the agreement of the second critic, this critic appear to beg the question. For the second critic is simply not in a position to recognize the reason-giving power of these features, presumably because he or she does not already share the aesthetic opinion of the first critic.

This observation, according to Dammann and Schellekens, raises two questions. First, how can we best explain the question-begging character of our practice of supporting aesthetic judgements by reference to relevant features of the works concerned? What, in other words, is the best account of the psychology of aesthetic reason-giving? And, second, does the question-begging character really succeed in undermining the reason-giving power of the works' features?

In response to the first question, Dammann and Schellekens discuss the idea that aesthetic judgements derive their primary justification from experience (for example, from what Sibley has called 'aesthetic perception'), while features of the works possess reason-giving power for aesthetic judgements if – and at least partly because – those judgements enjoy prior experiential justification. Accordingly, the features of the works, to which we appeal in defence of our aesthetic judgements, are compelling as reasons only for those subjects who already have some experiential justification for the judgements concerned.

But this still leaves open the second question. As Dammann and Schellekens note, there are some non-aesthetic cases in which the absence of rational compulsion is accompanied by the absence of normative authority. If we generally have no liking for pudding, we are unlikely to appreciate a given pudding, even if we notice all its relevant features and even if it is universally judged to be good by those who care about pudding. Moreover, we are under

no obligation to appreciate this particular pudding, even though those who care might be under obligation to do so because of its goodness. Dammann and Schellekens argue, however, that the situation is very different in the aesthetic case. Even those who have no inclination to like (certain) artworks that are judged to be aesthetically good by those who care ought to try to appreciate those works. In other words, if the features of an artwork rationally compel art lovers to form a certain aesthetic judgement, they constitute aesthetic reasons even for subjects who remain insensitive to their rational force.

This, however, gives rise to a further question: how is it possible that the normative force of aesthetic reasons extends to subjects who do not care about the artworks concerned? Schellekens and Dammann's answer points to an analogy with friendship and love, concerning which the provision of reasons may also be seen to be question-begging. Consider the case in which a good friend fails to appreciate one of our other good friends or, indeed, one of our beloved, even though they are aware of all relevant features of the latter. This failure is bound to harm our friendship to the first person because, in not appreciating some of the people that we like or love, they fail to appreciate some part of us and our friendship with them. It is in this sense that our reasons for liking or loving a person also become reasons for our friends to like or love this person, as a consequence of our shared friendship and the fact that it is embodied in our relations of liking and loving. These considerations can then be applied to the aesthetic case, according to Dammann and Schellekens. The idea is that the normativity of aesthetic reasons extends to all those subjects that have a common culture, which is partly defined by shared standards of aesthetic excellence. Even though one of the two critics fails to be rationally compelled by the features of the artwork in question to judge it to be a masterpiece, they ought to be rationally responsive to them because the two critics are members of the same cultural group with the same aesthetic standards.

IV. McGONIGAL

In his contribution, Andrew McGonigal contrasts two fundamentally different ways of understanding the relationship between aesthetic reasons and the reason-sensitive responses that they provide justification for. According to the traditional picture, these responses are independent of the reasons. That is, they consist in aesthetic judgements, evaluations, actions, and so on, which can occur in the absence of any reasons for them and therefore may not be justified. We can judge a given object to be beautiful and value it accordingly even if none of its features speaks for this assessment and treatment. This means that the responses are in themselves normatively neutral: whether they

are justified, reasonable, valuable, and so on, is completely external to them. Indeed, the main aim of aesthetic reasoning is to identify the responses that are best supported by the external reasons. By contrast, McGonigal's alternative picture maintains that the proper aesthetic responses are partly constituted by the relevant reasons. As a result, these responses amount to rational aesthetic accomplishments that differ essentially from unsuccessful attempts at aesthetic appreciation or creation. What is characteristic of these accomplishments is that they are normatively non-neutral in that they always involve sufficient reasons and cannot fail to be inherently justified. Correspondingly, the primary function of aesthetic reasoning is to identify responses that are genuine aesthetic accomplishments (for example, the skilful appreciation or creation of aesthetic value) and to distinguish them from responses that merely seem to be such accomplishments (for instance, unjustified aesthetic judgements or actions). In his essay, McGonigal presents four considerations that cast doubt on the traditional picture and favour his own alternative.⁸

First, the traditional picture has difficulties in ensuring that aesthetic reasons are distinct from both epistemic and practical reasons. The general strategy has been to argue that kinds of reason differ in the kinds of response that they are reasons for, as well as in the kinds of question that they help to settle about those responses. A reason is epistemic, for instance, because it is a reason for belief and tells us whether a certain belief is true; while a practical reason is one that favours performing a certain action by presenting this action as moral, prudent, or otherwise of practical value. These observations have moved proponents of the traditional picture to claim that there is a distinctively aesthetic kind of reason-sensitive response (for instance, aesthetic judgement or appreciation), with respect to which there is a certain question that can be settled by reference to reasons (such as whether the objects concerned merit this kind of response).⁹ But, as McGonigal points out, it would be very difficult

⁸ It is important to note that Kant's view is somehow in the middle of these two pictures. What it has in common with McGonigal's view is the claim that proper aesthetic responses are partly constituted by reasons, given that Kant believes that only properly grounded judgements can constitute judgements of pure taste, while improperly grounded judgements (for example, judgements based on interested pleasure or pleasure in the matter of objects) count as judgements of the agreeable. But Kant's view shares with the traditional picture the inability to accommodate the regulative role of aesthetic reasons to be discussed presently. At best, Kant might be read as allowing our respect for the moral law to fulfil such a regulative role. See Barbara Herman, *The Practice of Moral Judgment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), chap. 1; Christine M. Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), chap. 6. Thanks to Andrew McGonigal for making me aware of this point.

⁹ See John Skorupski, *The Domain of Reasons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

to ensure that the best candidates for such aesthetic responses do not turn out to be epistemic or practical responses after all. For example, it is highly unclear what kind of response appreciating the aesthetic merit of something could be if not the judgement or belief that it is of value or the action of valuing it. McGonigal's own proposal does not necessarily face the same problem since it need not assume that there are distinctively aesthetic responses. Instead, accomplishments count as aesthetic – and differ from epistemic or practical accomplishments – because of their inseparable link to aesthetic value. In particular, the fact that they are accomplishments in the appreciation or creation of aesthetic value does not prevent them from involving all sorts of judgements, evaluations, actions, and so on.

Second, the traditional picture cannot easily explain the universality of the normative authority of aesthetic reasons – that is, why they possess normative force for all rational subjects. At least since Hume's and Kant's writings on the subject, it is a commonplace in aesthetics that our aesthetic judgements come with the demand that others should agree with them, and that at best only one of a pair of contradictory aesthetic judgements can be correct. If we say that a painting is beautiful, we do not express a personal preference or opinion, but make a claim that we take to be valid for all rational beings. Furthermore, if others reply that the painting is ugly, at least one side has to be wrong, meaning that we should start to settle the debate by a closer inspection of the work and its context. But it has been notoriously difficult to demonstrate that aesthetic reasons are binding for all rational subjects and demand universal agreement, let alone to show how they manage to do so. As McGonigal illustrates, this difficulty becomes apparent even in Kant's sophisticated, but ultimately unsuccessful account of the justification of aesthetic judgements. The traditional picture faces this problem because it takes the justification of aesthetic judgements to be external to them, and because it identifies some special kind of pleasure as the only plausible source of this external justification. For there is no good reason to assume that all rational subjects should – or even can – have the same emotional responses to the relevant objects.¹⁰ McGonigal's own view avoids this problem by rejecting the claim that proper aesthetic responses are externally justified.¹¹

Third, one of McGonigal's main motivations for rejecting the traditional picture is that it appears unable to account for the regulative role of aesthetic reasons. We can distinguish two rational roles that aesthetic reasons may play.

¹⁰ See Dorsch, 'Sentimentalism'.

¹¹ In 'Non-Inferentialism about Justification', I put forward an alternative solution to the problem, according to which the fundamental source of external justification for aesthetic judgements is a special kind of abductive reasoning.

On the one hand, and as we have seen, they may speak for or against certain responses of aesthetic appreciation in the context of settling the question of whether appreciation is merited by the object concerned. In particular, they may guide us in our pursuit of the aesthetic end of appreciating only objects that do merit appreciation. To use an example of McGonigal's, the aesthetically relevant properties of the Grand Canyon indicate that appreciation is the right (permissible) response from an aesthetic point of view. On the other hand, aesthetic reasons may help us in our preselection of practical ends or projects as worthwhile options of choice. When we rationally deliberate about what to do, we consider which of the choice-worthy options available to us is best (if any). Aesthetic reasons (among many other factors) may contribute to this process by filtering out ends that are not choice-worthy because their attainment would diminish the presence of aesthetic value. To return to McGonigal's example, strip mining parts of the Grand Canyon in search of rare minerals is not a worthwhile end, given that it would lead to the destruction of a beautiful landscape. The problem with the traditional picture is that it cannot accommodate this regulative role of aesthetic reasons. According to this picture, aesthetic reasons provide rational support for independent responses that can occur in the absence of aesthetic reasons and are consequently in themselves normatively neutral. But because of their inherent lack of normative import, they cannot be used to distinguish choice-worthy from choice-unworthy practical ends. What has normative bearing on whether strip mining in the Grand Canyon is a worthwhile option, say, is not whether we (justifiedly or unjustifiedly) judge it to be beautiful and act accordingly, but whether it is in fact beautiful (which is also why we may have good aesthetic reasons to appreciate it as beautiful). Again, McGonigal's own picture is immune to this difficulty because it treats our proper aesthetic responses as accomplishments with normative import, notably by highlighting the presence of aesthetic properties and values.

Fourth, McGonigal argues that, more generally, rationality is aimed at producing reason-constituted responses (that is, rational accomplishments), which cannot be reduced to the conjunction of reason-independent responses and justification by external reasons (plus possibly other factors). As a result, we should take reason-constituted responses to be primitives that do not allow for further analysis, but at best allow for the abstraction of 'distinct' responses as reason-dependent parts of a unified whole. McGonigal's starting point is Williamson's complex argument for the view that knowledge is a primitive that cannot be analysed in terms of reason-independent beliefs and belief-independent epistemic reasons (plus other factors, like truth or safety). Modelling his own argument on Williamson's, McGonigal defends the claim that aesthetic

accomplishments (like the skilful appreciation or creation of aesthetic value) are also primitives that cannot be reduced to externally justified, reason-independent aesthetic judgements or actions. The traditional picture might still be right in claiming that there are also reason-independent aesthetic responses that may even be sometimes justified by reasons external to them. But McGonigal's point is that such responses cannot amount to aesthetic accomplishments and thus are not the kind of responses that we aim to have – and should have – when engaging aesthetically with objects.

V. ALVAREZ AND RIDLEY

In their contribution, Maria Alvarez and Aaron Ridley aim to defend the idea that artists can be guided by reasons in their creative activity. Starting from the assumption that there are aesthetic reasons for action, they offer an account of how artists can act for those reasons. The idea is that if they are faced with different options on how to proceed, artists respond to facts or considerations about which results would be aesthetically valuable and which not. For example, that a certain configuration of marks of paint on a canvas is more beautiful than another is an aesthetic reason to bring about the first configuration rather than the second.

Alvarez and Ridley's defence of this view is primarily focused on showing how it can successfully reply to an objection that derives from R. G. Collingwood (and may also be implicit in Sibley's writings). The main point of this objection is that artists generally do not seem to have any clear and distinct conception of which potential results would be of aesthetic value. Painters, say, have no prior grasp of which specific configuration of marks of paint would be aesthetically good, let alone the best. Rather, what happens is that they first produce a certain configuration and only then judge its aesthetic quality, before trying out and assessing another configuration, and so on, until they (hopefully) end up with an aesthetically satisfying final product. This does not entail that Collingwood denies that artistic creation is intentional, or guided by reasons, or directed at some end, or involves means-end reasoning. All that he claims is that artists do not have a very explicit preconception of the ends and means involved in their artistic creativity.¹²

¹² It is fair to argue that Collingwood's objection is in line with Sibley's widely accepted conclusion that there are hardly any aesthetic principles that could tell us which arrangements of non-aesthetic properties (for instance, which configurations of marks of paint on a canvas) possess which aesthetic properties and values. See Sibley, 'Aesthetic Concepts'; Dorsch, 'Limits of Aesthetic Empiricism'. For a key explanation of the fact that we do not have any prior grasp of which results of creative agency are aesthetically good seems to be that we usually cannot tell which sets of non-aesthetic properties are sufficient for aesthetic goodness.

Alvarez and Ridley's main strategy in dealing with the Collingwoodian objection is to argue that it loses traction once we give up a Davidsonian conception of what it means to act for a reason and replace it with one inspired by Anscombe. According to the Davidsonian picture, we act for a certain reason if our action is caused in the right way by a desire towards a certain end and a belief that performing the action concerned is a means to this end. When applied to the aesthetic case, this picture appears to fall victim to the Collingwoodian objection because it suggests that acting for a reason requires relatively specific beliefs about the end we are trying to attain, as well as the means conducive to this end.

Alvarez and Ridley suggest employing a different, Anscombian conception of what it is to act for a reason.¹³ According to this picture, acting for a reason involves acting with practical knowledge of what we are doing. Having practical knowledge consists in having awareness both of the identity of the end we are pursuing in acting and of the intrinsic or instrumental value of pursuing this end, which is given by our reasons for acting. We enjoy such knowledge whenever our actions constitute the execution of an intention aware of an intrinsically or instrumentally valuable end. For example, the intention to go to the supermarket specifies an end (namely, to reach the supermarket) which is instrumentally valuable because it helps us to feed ourselves and thus, ultimately, to survive.

What renders this intention-constituted and reason-constituted knowledge practical is that it provides a standard of correctness as well as a justification for acting. This means, first, that failures of practical knowledge are due to a mistake in our performance, and not in our understanding of what we are doing, and, second, that what ought to be corrected when things go wrong is our behaviour, so that we end up doing what our practical knowledge justifies. In other words, if we do not attain the intended end (that is, if what we actually end up doing does not match our intention), the problem is that we acted wrongly, and not that we somehow misunderstood what we were doing. Consider the example in which our practical knowledge determines that what we are doing in walking down the street is performing the action of walking to the shop. If we then fail to reach the shop because we take a wrong turn, we should correct our mistake by redirecting our steps towards the shop, given that that is the end justified by our reasons.

But practical knowledge of this kind is special in another respect – namely, it need not consist in propositional knowledge, but may constitute some other form

¹³ See also Maria Alvarez, *Kinds of Reasons: An Essay in the Philosophy of Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

of knowledge (for example, an ability). Having practical knowledge of what we are doing means being able to tell whether, and when, we succeed or fail in attaining the intended end, and also being able to correct our performance if required, or to abandon it if reasonable. But this awareness of which goal we are pursuing, and of how we may achieve it, does not imply that we can describe the end or the means in any detailed way.

Because of this feature, Alvarez and Ridley believe that spelling out acting for a reason in terms of practical knowledge renders the idea that artists act for aesthetic reasons when creating artworks immune to the Collingwoodian objection. The painters in our example aim to produce a beautiful configuration of marks on the canvas. This end is valuable because of the value inherent to beauty. It guides the painters in their creative agency in so far as their intention-based awareness of this end enables them to recognize when they are getting closer to or further away from attaining it (that is, how much the configuration of marks corresponds to their end) and to adjust their actions accordingly. But this knowledge-constituting ability does not require that they have a detailed (or even any) propositional description of what their end is and how to achieve it.

VI. CROSS

In his contribution to this special issue of *Estetika*, Anthony Cross focuses his attention on obligations to refrain from certain forms of engagement with artworks, where engagement may mean performing certain actions on, developing certain attitudes towards, or experiencing certain emotions about those artworks. A plausible example of such an obligation is that, everything else being equal, we should not deliberately destroy artworks. Of course, there may be circumstances in which the destruction of an artwork is allowed or even required (for instance, if it is the only way of saving the life of someone). But, in normal circumstances (say, while visiting an art museum), we should refrain from spoiling or wrecking the artworks before us.

It is commonly accepted that some obligations of this kind derive (part of) their authority from their link to the rights of relevant people. For instance, we are legally – and perhaps also morally – obliged not to destroy the possessions of others; and artworks are usually in possession of someone, whether they are individuals or institutions. More interesting from an aesthetic point of view, in destroying an artwork, we may also violate the rights of the artist to the integrity of their work. In other words, even if we own an artwork, we may not be free to do with it what we want, but have to respect certain rights of the artist (say, not to change it against their wishes).

What is much more contentious, and much less often addressed, is whether some of our obligations towards artworks hold independently of the rights of people. Cross's main thesis is that there are such aesthetic obligations. But he distinguishes two possibilities. On the one hand, we may have certain obligations concerning artworks because they themselves possess rights (moral, legal, or other), irrespective of how we are related to them. For instance, it may be suggested that we are required not to destroy an artwork even if we are its creator, owner, and only audience, simply because artworks possess autonomy and have a right to remain unharmed, in much the same way as people do (or animals, trees, landscapes, and so on). On the other hand, the respective obligations may be due to our specific relationship with the artworks in question. In particular, we may be required not to unnecessarily wreck artworks that we love. Cross argues in his paper that there are obligations of the second kind, but not obligations of the first kind.

Central to Cross's line of reasoning is his rejection of Alan Tormey's case for the existence of rights of artworks. Tormey observes that we tend to feel some kind of pain if we notice that artworks are not treated in accordance with their purpose or function as artefacts (for example, if a piece of music is played completely out of tune, a dance performed very clumsily, or a painting smeared on). This pain indicates, in Tormey's view, that artworks can be 'mistreated'; and the best explanation of this seems to be that they possess 'interests' that give rise to obligations that may be violated by our actions in ways that are painful to experience. But, as Cross points out, the problem with Tormey's view is that it seems to lead to a proliferation of rights of artefacts and of our corresponding obligations to them. Nothing prevents some rational subjects from feeling pain towards certain ways in which we treat contact lenses, say. Does this mean that contact lenses have rights that engender obligations for us to behave towards them in certain ways? As Cross notes, it does not help to introduce the additional requirement that rights and obligations come into being only if all rational subjects are inclined to feel the kind of pain described. People who do not understand (or value) a certain kind of artwork (like a dance performance) are unlikely to feel pain if instances of this kind are 'mistreated' – meaning that these artworks do not possess rights, after all.

Instead, Cross's suggestion is that our aesthetic obligations are duties of love: we are under the obligation not to destroy artworks if, and because, we love them. This explains, for instance, why we are usually hurt by the 'mistreatment' of artworks only if we love them. And this suggestion is compatible with the fact that our love for artworks differs greatly from our love for persons, in important normative respects too. In particular, while our love for persons

may be enough to ensure that we should not abandon them, Cross argues that our obligations to artworks require a further commitment – namely, our reflective endorsement of our love to them. So, the ultimate source of our aesthetic obligations is our own love of, and commitments to, art. Moreover, since love is in itself a valuable relationship, lovers have the right not to be deliberately and unnecessarily frustrated in their love, meaning that others are obliged to respect their love and its object. Hence, just as we should respect the people who are loved by others, we should also respect the artworks that are loved by others. In this way, not only art lovers, but other people too are subject to aesthetic obligations and should, for instance, refrain from spoiling or wrecking them.

VII. ARCHER AND WARE

Alfred Archer and Lauren Ware are also concerned with aesthetic obligations. But whereas Cross focuses on 'negative' obligations to refrain from certain actions and asks what the source of their normative authority is, Archer and Ware concentrate on 'positive' obligations to perform certain actions and inquire whether we can actually surpass these obligations. As they note at the beginning of their contribution, there has been a vigorous and fruitful debate about whether there are cases of moral supererogation and, if so, what the conditions are for moral obligations to be surpassed. In contrast, the question of whether aesthetic supererogation is possible, and when, has rarely been raised. Archer and Ware's main goal is to remedy this omission and to show that there are indeed cases of aesthetic supererogation.

Part of the reason why aesthetic supererogation has not been much in the focus of philosophers is that the existence of aesthetic obligations itself is controversial, in stark contrast to moral obligations. Accordingly, Archer and Ware begin their discussion by arguing that there are aesthetic demands on us in the first place. Following Eaton and Press, they list three kinds of example. First, they maintain that we have a *prima facie* obligation to rescue artworks of (sufficiently high) aesthetic value which are threatened by destruction. The existence of such demands becomes especially apparent in aesthetic dilemmas where we can only save one of several artworks (for example, when they are threatened by fire, or when one painting has been painted over another) and, all other things being equal, are disposed to choose the aesthetically most valuable one. Second, when we are given the task to deliver a eulogy or write an obituary, we normally seem to be required to tell a good story about the person concerned, that is, a story with style and other aesthetic properties. Indeed, we may even have the obligation to ourselves to turn our own life into a narrative

and perhaps also to communicate it to others (for instance, as part of explaining or justifying it). Third, Archer and Ware note that it is plausible to say that, all other things being equal, we should appreciate the beautiful in the sense that we should seek it out and try to improve our skills in appreciating and creating it. In particular, gifted people should not waste their aesthetic talents, but develop them, presumably more so than people with less ability.

These obligations are aesthetic, according to Archer and Ware, because they are ultimately concerned with aesthetic value. We should try to preserve artworks in so far as they are aesthetically valuable; we should tell stories about others and ourselves which possess some aesthetic merits; and we should develop our creative talents to the extent to which they promise to lead to the production of aesthetically valuable works. Archer and Ware also counter the potential objection that some, or all, of these obligations are in fact just moral obligations with aesthetic content, rather than genuinely aesthetic obligations (that is, obligations that derive their authority from aesthetic normativity). Their reply is primarily to say that, even in cases that do (also) involve moral obligations, there are certain normative aspects that cannot be captured in moral terms, but require the postulation of aesthetic obligations.

After presenting their case for the existence of aesthetic obligations, Archer and Ware move on to the core claim of their article – namely, that each of the three kinds of aesthetic obligation noted can be surpassed by us, which means that aesthetic supererogation is possible. Again, the comparison with the moral case is instructive. We have an obligation to save people in danger, but not under all conditions. For example, we are not obliged to rescue a person from a fire if our attempt would put our own lives at risk. Similarly, although we are generally required to save valuable artworks from a fire, we are exempt from this obligation if we would have to endanger our own lives in the process. But such exemptions leave room for supererogation. It is not required of us that we risk our lives in order to save someone else's; but we are to be commended if we still try to do it. In such cases, we do not just satisfy our moral obligations to ourselves, but actually surpass them. Equally, in risking our lives in order to rescue a beautiful artwork from a fire, we do more than is aesthetically demanded from us. According to Archer and Ware, very similar considerations apply to the other two kinds of aesthetic obligation. While we are expected to tell a good story about others or ourselves, we need not come up with an extraordinarily beautiful or grand story. Hence, if we do come up with such a story, we exceed the aesthetic demands on us. Similarly, we can spend so much time and energy on developing our aesthetic talents that our efforts go well beyond any aesthetic obligations on us.

Again, the objection may be raised that doing more than our duty in this way is an instance of moral rather than aesthetic supererogation. And Archer and Ware respond to the complaint in the same way as before: there are at least some cases in which we surpass our obligations only from an aesthetic standpoint, but not from a moral one. Artists like Van Gogh, for instance, sacrifice so much for their art that they fail to live up to many moral demands (say, concerning their own well-being or that of their close relatives and friends). But their actions still exceed what is aesthetically required from them.

Archer and Ware close their discussion by highlighting some philosophical consequences of the possibility of aesthetic supererogation. For example, it is often assumed that what we are required to do is determined by what we have most reason to do. But this cannot be correct if there are supererogative actions that are even better than 'mere' conformity to our duties. One question is how this problem can be solved in the particular case of aesthetic normativity. In addition, the contemporary debates about moral supererogation ask about the limits of moral demandingness and the nature of agent-based categories like moral sainthood or moral heroism. This raises the question concerning the extent to which there should be similar discussions in aesthetics, and also which direction they should take. What Archer and Ware show with their contribution is that aesthetic supererogation should perhaps receive the same kind and amount of attention that moral supererogation already receives.

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