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Aesthetic Hedonism and the Problem with Aesthetic Akrasia

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> "There is hardly a thing I can say in its favor, except that I was cheered by nearly every minute of it. I cannot argue for the script, the direction, the acting or even the mummy, but I can say that I was not bored and sometimes I was unreasonably pleased."—Roger Ebert, on *The Mummy* (1999)

Introduction

What gives a work of art its value? At a first pass, one might be tempted to equate its value with its potential for pleasurable experiences. When we reflect upon the reasons why we pursue aesthetic experiences—whether it is pouring over the details of a painting, or watching a film—we often find ourselves motivated by the enjoyment such encounters afford. On this view, the degree of pleasure that a work of art generates—its hedonic value—is synonymous with its aesthetic value, and it is this value that gives us reason to engage with art. This intuition also provides support for other aesthetic activities—namely

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aesthetic learning, the process of refining our appreciative abilities. After all, if we want to extract deeper, richer pleasures from our encounters with art, should we not then learn how to experience art in a more optimal way? This line of thought—affirmed by aestheticians and lay art appreciators alike—lies at the heart of *aesthetic hedonism*.[1]

At the same time, it seems plausible for an art appreciator to proclaim that "*Citizen Kane* is a brilliant work of art; it's just not to my liking." This statement is deceptively simple, and one might be tempted to brush it aside without dispute. However, a closer inspection reveals a discrepancy between two appreciative states: judging and liking.[2] This statement suggests that the art appreciator *judges Citizen Kane* as a good work of art—an object with high aesthetic value, while implying that he does not *like* it—he receives little pleasure from it. This phenomenon has been termed "Aesthetic Akrasia" (AA henceforth), which occurs when one's aesthetic value judgement and aesthetic liking about the same object fail to cohere (Marín 255). AA reveals a blind spot that has not been addressed by the hedonist: the separability of judgement from feeling in aesthetic appreciation. For the hedonist, a correct aesthetic judgement ("X is good") should necessarily and non-contingently coincide with a corresponding affective response ("I like X"), given that pleasure *makes* aesthetically valuable objects valuable (Gorodeisky 262). Yet, if pleasure is supposed to track aesthetic value, then the failure of pleasure to follow appropriately from a correct judgement is troubling for a hedonic account of aesthetic value. Here, I introduce the problem of AA into the aesthetic value debate, demonstrating how it problematises hedonic conceptions of aesthetic value.

I begin by sketching out a general theory of aesthetic hedonism. I then turn to the phenomenon of aesthetic akrasia, clarifying its form and features, before drawing it into the hedonism debate. I then argue that AA reveals a disjunct between aesthetic value and hedonic responses, which threatens the hedonic account of aesthetic value. In closing, I sketch out some insights that AA offers for rethinking the nature of aesthetic value.

1 Henceforth, all references to "hedonism" will refer exclusively to aesthetic hedonism.

21 use "liking/disliking" and "feeling" somewhat—though not strictly—interchangeably to describe different facets of the same affective state. "Feeling" emphasises the broader range of affective responses one may have towards a particular work. This not only encompasses evaluative affects such as pleasure and displeasure, but also those such as repulsion, shock, and irritation, which are more ambiguous in their evaluative force. "Liking/disliking" fits into this broader category, emphasising the evaluative charge of these responses, and will be used as the key "feeling" phenomenon for this paper.

II. Aesthetic Hedonism

Despite sustained objections from critics such as Shelley (2010, 2011, 2019), aesthetic hedonism remains a resilient theory of aesthetic value. As Shelley (2019, 1) observes, it continues to function as a "default setting for thinking about aesthetic value." In order to critique hedonism effectively, one must first grasp its features and theoretical appeal.

Following Beardsley (1982), virtually all iterations of aesthetic hedonism define the aesthetic value of an object as the value it possesses in virtue of its capacity to afford aesthetic pleasure. Essentially, the aesthetic value of an object is constituted by its potential for a certain type of pleasurable experience. While works of middling value may only offer a low-to-moderate amount of pleasure at most, full appreciation of a masterwork such as *Citizen Kane* would yield a far greater degree of aesthetic pleasure. Importantly, an individual appreciator's inability to derive pleasure from *Citizen Kane* is not evidence against its value, but rather a failure to experience its full capacity for pleasure—potentially caused by a misunderstanding of the work, or a failure to attend to certain pleasure-producing qualities.

Aesthetic pleasure, in turn, is construed as a species of the genus *pleasure*—with its differentia identified in an extrinsic, non-circular manner. While hedonists disagree on the exact features of aesthetic pleasure, there is consensus that aesthetic pleasure is an object-oriented pleasure evoked from *the right object*, and for *the right reasons* (Beardsley 1982, Levinson 1992). Levinson embodies this view, arguing that aesthetic pleasure "must stem from, and be focused on, merely the specific qualities and meanings of the art work as apprehended, the observable structure in which they are based, and the relationships of dependence and mutual involvement among them" (298). To take aesthetic pleasure in an artwork such as *Citizen Kane*, then, is to respond pleasurably to its intrinsic qualities—whether in its use of jump cuts and montages, or its examination of the titular character. In contrast, pleasure *solely* grounded in reasons extrinsic to the object do not qualify as genuinely aesthetic—these include personal reasons (liking a play because it was directed by a friend), biographical reasons (liking a painting for its use of orange, which one associates with sentimental memories), or social reasons (liking a film because it was acclaimed by a critic); they do not testify to an object's intrinsic potential for pleasure, but the pleasure that these extrinsic connections afford.

The attractiveness of hedonism stems from how straightforwardly it conceives of aesthetic value. Shelley notes that any attempt to define aesthetic value must grapple with two fundamental questions: (1) what makes aesthetic value *aesthetic*, and (2) what makes aesthetic value *value* (2019, 2)? He terms the former "the aesthetic question" and the latter "the

normative question". Hedonism provides clear answers to both questions (Van der Berg 2). Hedonic approaches to the aesthetic question point towards a theory of aesthetic experience; aesthetic value is aesthetic because it is grounded in a distinctly aesthetic species of pleasure. Meanwhile, hedonism provides an explicit answer to the normative question: aesthetic value is valuable because it is grounded in hedonic value—or pleasure. As such, we have good reason to pursue aesthetically valuable experiences.

Despite the strengths of the hedonic account, it is not invulnerable. The Problem of Painful Art presents a challenge to aesthetic hedonism: if the aesthetic value of a work of art is dependent on its capacity for pleasure, then how should we, and why do we value works of art that primarily evoke painful feelings such as Picasso's *Guernica*? As Shelley notes, "taking pleasure from works designed to cause shock, horror, despair, or moral revulsion may seem perverse; surely, it may seem, such works do not have whatever aesthetic value they have in virtue of any pleasure they give" (2022, §2.5.1) This is compounded by the fact that for the hedonist, pleasure grounds the normativity of aesthetic value—it is what makes aesthetic value valuable. If aesthetic value is a type of hedonic value, the appreciator has a teleological reason to engage with art: to attain a certain type of pleasure, which the hedonist views as a fundamental good in itself. Pursuing art that evokes unpleasant feelings seems counterintuitive to this goal; yet many appreciators nonetheless seek out art that precisely arouses such feelings (Smuts 60).

Crucially, the Problem of Painful Art shows that difficult cases of art that obscures, complicates, or severs the relationship between pleasure and aesthetic value pose a problem for hedonism. In order to account for a multiplicity of difficult cases, the hedonist has to endlessly redefine aesthetic pleasure, or otherwise augment the structure of aesthetic value beyond recognition.[3] AA does this precisely—it severs the causal relationship between aesthetic value and pleasure, even despite the appreciator's apprehension of an object's aesthetic value.

III. Aesthetic Akrasia

Akrasia has been traditionally used to describe actions taken against one's better judgement (Theriault 2017, Reid 2022). In a similar vein, aesthetic akrasia is a type of akrasia which occurs when one's aesthetic

3 See Walton (1994), Matthen (2017, 2018).

value judgement[4] and aesthetic liking about the same item fail to cohere (Martínez Marín 255). Crucially, Reid points out that the appreciator experiencing AA understands what they are disregarding—they are informed of an object's aesthetic value (or lack thereof), or are aware of the aesthetic reasons to respond in a particular way (193). Hence, one's "liking bad art" or "disliking good art" are informed responses, not mistakes stemming from ignorance or bad taste.

Furthermore, AA is not a matter of being unable to maintain one's intentions but about being unmoved by one's evaluative judgements (Martínez Marín 255–56). In this regard, AA departs from conceptions of akrasia that characterise it as 'weakness of will.' While one is weak-willed when one reconsiders one's plans and intentions against reason, AA need not involve the formation of intention. Someone who continues to like *Family Guy* despite judging it as aesthetically mediocre experiences an akratic discrepancy between two appreciative states. Yet, there is no formation of intention in this process; one does not 'intend' to like in a way that diverges from one's judgement. This contrasts with weak-willed cases in which one forms an intention, yet fails to act accordingly – e.g. where someone committed to only watching aesthetically valuable films intends to watch Louis Malle's *Le Souffle au Coeur*, yet through 'weakness of will,' switches back to *Family Guy*.[5]

The phenomenon of AA is intuitive. We occasionally find ourselves pleased by art that we judge poorly; similarly, we find ourselves making statements such as "The artwork is good, but it's not for me." At first glance, this provides strong evidential support for separating the judging and liking of aesthetic value, which problematises the hedonic account. Most discussions of AA, however, do not meaningfully explore the implications of AA on aesthetic value, instead revolving around (1) whether AA is plausible[6] and (2) the normative status of AA, or whether it gets in the way of proper aesthetic appreciation.[7]

Before moving on to the next section, I outline four varieties of AA. The first two varieties can be classified as "positive" forms of AA that involve liking bad art, while the next two are "negative" forms of AA that involve disliking good art. These cases are:

4 I define *aesthetic value judging* as the act of discerning an aesthetic object's value.

5 Martínez Marín (2023) observes that AA can motivate weakness of will; for example, one's akratic liking of *Family Guy* may lead one to shirk from his resolution to enjoy more aesthetically valuable art. However, AA occurs prior to the formation of any intention.

6 See Martínez Marín (2023), Thériault (2017).

7 See Herzog (2000), Silvers (1972), Martínez Marín (2023).

(1) Good-Bad Art: a work is in poor taste; with no intention to subvert artistic conventions, it is incoherent, contrived, garish and/or self-absorbed. You judge such a work as an aesthetic failure; it does not merit enjoyment. Despite this, you enjoy that artwork precisely *because* of these traits; either you enjoy laughing at its failures—manifesting in the form of ridicule, or schadenfreude, or perceiving the 'massive failure' of such an artwork overwhelms aesthetic reasons to be displeased. Examples of this include so-bad-it's-good media such as *The Room*.[8]

(2) Guilty Pleasures: a work is mediocre and merits little enjoyment; it is dull, monotonous, and/or thematically simple. You are aware of the existence of more aesthetically valuable alternatives. Despite this, you overenjoy the artwork *in spite* of these blemishes, even as you are aware that it does not merit the pleasure you derive from it. This is often accompanied by a meta-response of guilt. For example, you might continue taking excess pleasure in *How I Met Your Mother*, despite knowing that it is aesthetically mediocre.[9]

(3) Morally Objectionable Art:[10] a work has excellent aesthetic qualities. However, a theme or thesis presented by the work of art espouses a view that one finds repugnant and/or morally objectionable. Hence, despite possessing strong aesthetic reasons to enjoy the artwork, you cannot bring yourself to do so. Examples include Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of The Will*.

(4) Aesthetic Incontinence: a work has aesthetic qualities worthy of merit. Consequently, you judge it as a valuable work of art. Nonetheless, you cannot bring yourself to like it. This may be attributed to preferential

8 Strohl (2022) and Dyck and Johnson (2017) provide an examination of this phenomenon.
9 See Reid (2022).
10 The debate on the aesthetic value of morally objectionable art is unsettled. Some, following Hume (1777), argue that the moral values of an artwork should configure within its overall aesthetic value. On this view, a moral flaw would be construed as an aesthetic flaw, thus the displeasure produced would align with the judgement. Under such a construal, such cases may not be accepted as genuinely akratic. Still, if we accept that moral deficiency does not depreciate a work's aesthetic value, this is a clear-cut variety of aesthetic akrasia featuring a separation between aesthetic value judging and liking. See also Gendler and Liao (2015).

> or biographical reasons, or simply the failure to respond to an artwork's qualities in a way one knows it merits. One might struggle with *Pride and Prejudice* due to similarities between Elizabeth Bennet and one's sister; likewise, I may feel ambivalent towards Wes Anderson's filmography, despite my appreciation of his technical craft.

These cases operate on a similar structure: (1) The appreciator evaluates a work of art as good/bad, having proper aesthetic reasons to do so. (2) Prior to the stage of liking/disliking, an element interferes with his liking/disliking, causing it to misalign with his aesthetic judgement. (3) The appreciator maintains his judgement of the artwork as good/bad—still possessing strong aesthetic reasons to do so, but the support that one's judgement would normally provide for liking/disliking the work has been overridden.

IV. The Problem with Aesthetic Akrasia

Anticipating the Problem

Carroll (2016) and Gorodeisky (2019) come closest to drawing the AA debate into the hedonism debate. While they make no reference to AA, they each conceive of a plausible discrepancy between two distinct appreciative modes, one of which serves as the locus of aesthetic value. I use both views to draw out certain insights about aesthetic liking, judgement, and value, which will enable me to fully sketch out the problem.

Carroll conceives of two modes of art appreciation: "appreciation-as-sizing-up" and "appreciation-as-liking." Carroll defines the former as "[isolating] the intended purpose or purposes of the artwork and assessing the adequacy or inadequacy of the way in which the artist has elected to realize or to articulate those purposes" (6). He endorses this view over the latter, which is concerned with our personal liking or disliking of the object of our attention. I depart slightly from Carroll's definition of *sizing up*, as I consider more than an artwork's formal choices and their articulation of the artwork's purposes. Rather, I put forth a broad working definition that to size up an artwork is to simply assess the entirety of an artwork's choices, qualities and features, and to consider the way that they articulate and evoke a range of purposes, sensibilities, and responses.

Sizing up resembles the process that precedes an aesthetic judgement. An aesthetic judgement, after all, would be inadequate if it was just based on our liking or attraction to the object *tout court*. When judging an aesthetic object—or discerning its value, it is relatively uncontroversial to say that the appreciator relies on *aesthetic reasons*[11] (Levinson 298). While the hedonist may argue that an artwork is aesthetically valuable simply in virtue of its capacity for pleasure, when pressed on why the work is capable of producing such pleasure, they must nonetheless refer to qualities and features of the work which give rise to such pleasure. Likewise, when we debate an artwork's aesthetic value, we insist on our correctness by appealing to such features. To size up an aesthetic object, then, is to evaluate it for aesthetic reasons that justify an aesthetic value judgement. Given that these reasons stem from the intrinsic qualities of the aesthetic object, both these reasons and the judgement that stems from it are impersonal and objective—essentially, they are cognitive.

Some may argue that we need not necessarily advert to aesthetic reasons to establish an object's aesthetic value—the presence or absence of pleasure itself suffices as proof of value. But doing away with aesthetic reasons poses another problem for the hedonist. Recall that aesthetic pleasure counts as *properly aesthetic* because it is based on the right reasons —namely object-oriented aesthetic reasons. Rejecting aesthetic reasoning would thus entail a rejection of a 'properly aesthetic' aesthetic pleasure. In this case, the aesthetic value of an object would be grounded in its capacity to produce pleasure *tout court*—including extrinsic means unrelated to the object itself, leaving aesthetic value in free fall. Such an outcome would entail a total collapse of answers to both the *aesthetic* and *normative* questions, which the hedonist seeks to avoid.

For the hedonist, then, aesthetic reasons are necessary and sufficient to establish the presence of aesthetic pleasure. If one sizes up a sonnet as being rhythmic and vivid, one judges it as pleasurable on that basis, and valuable in virtue of being pleasurable. Likewise, for one to derive pleasure from the sonnet, one would need to perceive relevant aesthetic reasons to do so. This, however, exposes a dependent relationship between judging and liking: whereas the pleasurable nature of the sonnet is elucidated through one's reason-based judgement, one's liking stems from the

11 Levinson notes that "in order for pleasure to serve as even a partial measure of a work's worth as art it must have both the right cause and the right object" (298, emphasis added). His use of 'right cause' and 'right object' invokes aesthetic reasons in effect—they provide evidential support for us to (1) value an object and (2) establish our valuation (or in the hedonist's case, our pleasure) as aesthetic.

apprehension of this pleasurable character. Simply put, aesthetic liking responds to and often depends on judging. This account persists in cases of displeasure, horror, despair and other responses: aesthetic judgement elucidates an appropriateness to feel, or respond in a certain way; one's liking coheres by responding in that exact way.

Yet, even though liking responds to judging, AA demonstrates that the two do not always align. This poses a problem for the hedonist's account: while the hedonist may acknowledge judgement and liking as two distinct appreciative states, the hedonist's commitment to aesthetic value as a type of hedonic value commits them to a non-contingent connection between the two. If aesthetic value is just the capacity to produce pleasure, then accurately judging a work as valuable should necessarily entail liking it. Yet AA shows that this is not the case. Carroll provides some explanation for this: when one sizes up an aesthetic object, one does not consider how the object relates to his own individual psychology or preferences; rather, one considers how the object manages to articulate or realise its own purposes (6–7). While our definition of sizing up differs, Carroll's account is right in that it centres the features of the aesthetic object as the locus of aesthetic value, rather than the appreciator's response. However, it is Gorodeisky's (2019) characterisation of liking's relation to aesthetic value that will clarify how the appreciator moves from aesthetic value judging to liking, while accounting for the mismatch between aesthetic judgement and liking characteristic of AA.

Gorodeisky characterises the connection between aesthetic value and pleasure as a meriting relation. Under such a view, an aesthetically valuable object—by its nature as aesthetically valuable—merits, or calls for a specific type of pleasure, much in the way that pitiful people merit a feeling of pity. Importantly, a meriting relation does not wield the same normative force that an obligating relation such as moral value has; whereas an action's moral value compels you to act accordingly, an object's aesthetic value merely notes the appropriateness of, and normatively supports taking a certain type of pleasure—or a certain liking/feeling—in the object.

Gorodeisky notes that the *meriting* relations between aesthetic value and affective responses[12] are defeasible. Like Carroll, she characterises aesthetic value as being metaphysically mind-independent, supervening on the specific properties residing in the object, rather than acting as a projection of the appreciator's feelings. However, she notes that while the facts

12 I substitute "affective responses" in place of just "pleasure", noting that I part company from Gorodeisky in that I take aesthetic value to possess a meriting relation to a whole range of affective responses, rather than pleasure alone.

that bear on aesthetic value are unconditional—being based in particular, indisputable properties (eg: a particular shade of colour, the use of allusion), they may be defeated by other considerations. As Gorodeisky notes, "[the connection between aesthetic value and the response it merits] may be defeated by pragmatic, moral, political and social considerations, or outweighed by what might be called 'sensibility' or 'personal' considerations (those that are grounded in our particular sensibilities and life-styles). Such considerations might normatively support not liking an aesthetically valuable object in specific circumstances" (267–68).

This construal of aesthetic value's relation to pleasure accommodates AA in a way that the hedonist's does not. Both Gorodeisky and the hedonist implicitly acknowledge that one can know that an object is aesthetically valuable independent of experiencing pleasure by adverting to aesthetic reasons; in fact, the hedonist needs these aesthetic reasons to ground his pleasure as *properly aesthetic*. This puts pressure on the hedonic account: that one can identify aesthetic value without feeling it, and identify an affective response to a work as improper without basing it in one's own (for instance, it would be easy to refute sincere appraisals of *Twilight*'s bizarre dialogue), demonstrates that one does not need to exclusively rely on pleasure to discern value. The akratic appreciator's inability to be pleased by what he judges positively further problematises the hedonic account. Hedonism entails that aesthetic value is to be unconditionally experienced with pleasure when apprehended, since aesthetic value is a type of hedonic value. Yet, AA shows that this does not line up with reality. By construing aesthetic value's relation to pleasure as a meriting one, Gorodeisky manages to account for the fact that correctly judging aesthetic value often supports liking an artwork, while recognising that this support may be defeated by other considerations, allowing for AA. This, however, comes at the expense of the hedonic construal of aesthetic value. While perceiving aesthetic value may lead to downward hedonic experiences, the fact that such experiences do not follow unconditionally, and that the support aesthetic value provides for feeling pleasure can be defeated, shows that aesthetic value and hedonic value are not synonymous.

Crucially, these considerations merely serve as causal explanations, not normative justifications, for the gap between judgements and feelings. The appreciator experiencing akrasia is fully aware of the aesthetic value of the object and recognises that his response does not align with what its value merits. This is exemplified by cases of guilty pleasures, where the appreciator derives excess pleasure in a work of art that does not merit it. In such cases, the appreciator has a meta-response of guilt, reflecting his recognition that his response is an inappropriate one, yet his continued pleasure in the work nonetheless shows how he lacks intentional control over his

liking. This highlights a fundamental feature of liking: it is personal, particular, and beyond intentionality. While one's affective responses to an object are shaped by one's own understanding of the object's intrinsic features, as well as extrinsic and personal considerations, these factors only cause a feeling rather than constitute a reasoned choice. One cannot simply will oneself to feel pleasure, as feeling is a purely affective state, rather than a cognitive or rational act; as such, it resists direct volitional regulation.

The Akratic Challenge

Having sketched out the process of aesthetic judging and liking, and the way AA manifests within it, I now set out how AA poses a challenge to the hedonic account:

I have shown that there exist two distinct appreciative states: aesthetic judgement and liking. When one perceives an aesthetic object, one experiences it through both modes. Aesthetic liking refers to our personal, affective responses towards the object, and it is responsive to our judgements. Aesthetic judgement, in turn, is grounded in impersonal, object-oriented aesthetic reasons. This is the domain in which we locate aesthetic value; it is how we adduce an object's aesthetic value even when our liking fails to align.

AA demonstrates how both appreciative states do not always cohere. In ordinary, non-akratic cases, aesthetic liking fully responds to value judgement; we like what we judge as valuable. However, in akratic cases, aesthetic liking fails to cohere with value judgement—it is defeated by other considerations. This shows that we have neither a compulsion, nor the ability to make our aesthetic liking align with our aesthetic judgements all the time. The phenomenon of AA cannot be explained by the hedonist, who presupposes that one who apprehends aesthetic value must necessarily experience aesthetic pleasure.

This requires us to reconsider the relation between aesthetic value and liking; a *meriting* relation explains why we often like what we value, while noting that our liking is not inherent to what we value—it is defeasible. This also helps us clarify the nature of aesthetic liking—in contrast to judgement, it is particular and lacks intentional control. While likings respond and often correspond to judgements, the interjection of other considerations may defeat the pleasure—or the affective response—that an artwork merits beyond one's own control. If aesthetic value is located in reason-based judgement, and pleasure is a non-cognitive affect of one's own liking, it follows that aesthetic value cannot be reducible to a type of hedonic value.

Aesthetic akrasia thus presents a serious problem for the hedonist. The akratic hedonist must choose between two options to explain this phenomenon:

> (1) Admit that they have not fully apprehended the artwork. Yet this is implausible: on the AA account, the appreciator has already carefully and rationally engaged with the work, and is attentive to the aesthetic reasons which normatively supports one's taking aesthetic pleasure. If they still do not feel the appropriate pleasure, what more can be done? The failure is not cognitive but affective; as Gorodeisky notes, it is a "failure of responsiveness" (266).
>
> (2) Admit that aesthetic value is not merely equivalent to, or a species of hedonic value. In doing so, the hedonist would concede that aesthetic value can persist independent of hedonic responses—undermining the central claim of aesthetic hedonism.

Like painful art, aesthetic akrasia serves as a thorny test case that exposes the limits of hedonism as a theory of aesthetic value, leaving much more for hedonism's defenders to account for.

V. Concluding Thoughts

This paper is an attempt to induct the phenomenon of aesthetic akrasia into the aesthetic value debate. More narrowly, it is a sustained challenge to the hedonic account of aesthetic value; it shows how the presence of AA contradicts the hedonic claim that aesthetic pleasure tracks aesthetic value. If we accept the separability of aesthetic judgement and liking and acknowledge that both appreciative states do not always cohere, then the aesthetic value of an artwork—located through aesthetic judgement—cannot be construed as the work's capacity to produce pleasure.

What, then, is aesthetic value? And how does pleasure relate to aesthetic value? I make no attempt at an answer, although the akratic account and what it reveals about aesthetic judging and liking has implications for the aesthetic value question. We have seen that aesthetic value is best understood objectively and impersonally; it exists in—and is derived from—the object itself. Shelley (2010) has written in support of this view, which he dubs the *object theory*, in contrast to *value empiricism*—a broad family of views, including hedonism, which construes an artwork's value as the value of experiences it affords. The akratic account likewise rejects

value empiricism, simply by demonstrating how we identify and justify the presence of aesthetic value by referring to object-oriented aesthetic reasons.

Furthermore, the akratic account maintains that feeling—and by extension, pleasure—should be understood as distinct from, and only contingently connected to aesthetic value. Aesthetic value provides normative support for the appreciator to like what he judges valuable. Yet, because feelings are inherently personal and affective, they remain susceptible to a range of considerations—intrinsic and extrinsic, but ultimately beyond one's control—that can produce a misalignment between one's liking and judgement. This has implications for our understanding of pleasure's role within art appreciation. Pleasure is inextricably tied to our subjectivities; it is attuned to and constituted by us as individual appreciators. For this reason, it can diverge from our impersonal aesthetic judgements and fails at tracking aesthetic value. Perhaps then, we are not simply judging aesthetic value when we respond affectively to a work—we are articulating something more personal.

The debate on aesthetic value remains unsettled, and the presence of aesthetic akrasia adds another layer of difficulty for the hedonic account, rendering it increasingly untenable. Furthermore, the introduction of AA impels those seeking to provide alternatives to hedonism to reflect on the distinct roles of aesthetic liking and judging. In this regard, AA offers not only a challenge to hedonism, but also a valuable test case for aestheticians, providing another set of phenomena against which to evaluate and refine theories of aesthetic value.

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