Disagreement About Beauty

by

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Abstract

I aim to give an original account of how we should respond to disagreement about beauty. The recent debate about ‘peer disagreement’ in epistemology offers two rough positions for how to respond when a peer disagrees: 1) remain ‘steadfast,’ maintaining confidence in my belief due to the fact that, from my first person perspective, I take her to be mistaken, and 2) be ‘conciliatory,’ revising confidence in my belief if I find no reason to think I am more likely to be right from a third personal step back. I argue that neither of these options captures what we need for the case of beauty. What has not yet been considered is that imagining the first person perspective of another may be important for responding rationally to disagreement, and may give disagreement some other kind of epistemic significance than simply lowering or maintaining confidence in one’s judgment.

First, following Kant, I argue that the first person has special importance for judging beauty; we want to judge a thing’s beauty for ourselves, and we want others to come to agree with us on the basis of their own experience. In that case, stepping back to the third person would remove us from the arena wherein we could find the kind of agreement we are looking for. This supports a ‘steadfast’ response to disagreement, but that alone is not enough. Judgments of beauty are made in the plural first person, a perspective that speaks for everyone in voicing my own pleasure. That means others are always relevant as first person perspectives who ought to feel and judge in community with me. I am under
some rational pressure to help them see what they are missing when we disagree, and I will argue that this requires an imaginative effort to better understand their aesthetic experience ‘from the inside’. While our aim in this imagining is to correct one another, it simultaneously opens each of us to the possibility of unexpected insights that could revise our own judgments instead.

On the two options given in the peer disagreement debate, there doesn’t seem to be much room for the idea that I could both maintain confidence in my judgment and continue to take the other’s disagreement to have epistemic significance. I argue that this combination is possible and appropriate for beauty, for in that case it is the very confidence I have in my judgment that motivates me to try to imaginatively understand the other, and opens me to the epistemic vulnerability that comes with such an exercise.
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Chapter One: Introduction

Disagreement over what we should find beautiful is a familiar problem to most of us (although perhaps not as rampant as is sometimes assumed, if we think about the natural beauty of the stars, waterfalls, and cherry blossoms). What kind of problem is it? First, there is an epistemological question about how I should adjust the confidence I have in my judgment. Second, there is the more practical matter of how I should engage with the other person in response to her dissent (such as trying to convince her, understand her, or just let it be). I will argue that when we disagree about beauty the appropriate epistemological response is to maintain confidence in our own judgment, but not with the result of dismissing the other as epistemologically irrelevant. Instead, I will argue that confidence in a judgment of beauty carries rational pressure to better understand the other’s claim by imaginatively ‘putting on’ her aesthetic experience.

On the account I give, this kind of imaginative work is not just a practical decision about how to engage with the other once the epistemological question has been settled, but part of what is required to adequately grasp the content of our dispute, as well as part of what it means to be confident in this kind of judgment. The central claim supporting my account is that when we make judgments of beauty we not only seek agreement in our level of confidence, but also in the first personal pleasure that grounds it. In other words, an epistemological concern with what to believe about beauty must remain rooted in the kind of community these judgments lay claim to, a community of shared aesthetic feeling. If not, our efforts to revise our beliefs will miss the point of the very judgments we are trying to get right.

To start us off, let’s consider this case:

Louise and I attend a party hosted by a mature Nine Inch Nails fan who is determined to expose us all to Alessandro Cortini’s solo album Sonno. Quite unlike the melodic, folky pop music Louise and I both enjoy, Sonno is an experiment in electronic drones and ambient sound, created by Cortini carrying a MC 202 synthesizer around his hotel room while out on tour. Trapped in a corner by a press of bodies, we are equally trapped by the sustained sound that swells and skitters, but rarely breaks its oppressive drone. At least, that is how we both
experience it at first. But slowly I start to find something moving and interesting in the gradual changes in tone and rhythm, all the more powerful for the slight margin by which they are noticed. By the time we reach the end of the fifth track, “Di Passaggio,” I am amazed by how I can be unsettled and soothed at the same time, like I have stepped into the humming echo chamber of some dystopian temple. I get up to go find the host and enthuse about this new beauty I have found, but I find Louise pulling me towards the door saying, “Yes, let’s go! I can’t take this anymore!”

Out in the hall, Louise and I might wonder many things – are we hearing the same sounds? Is one of us in a bad mood that would make her overly critical or easily swayed? Are we being influenced by a desire to fit in with various social crowds by accepting or rejecting this music? But we could have good reason to think that both of our hearing is working properly, we are hearing roughly the same thing, she isn’t in that bad a mood, and I’m not that eager to get what the other hip people appear to enjoy. What is different between us is that I found “Di Passaggio” subtle, moving, powerful, even beautiful, and she did not. What is more, the pleasure I took in “Di Passaggio” does not seem to be an idiosyncratic footnote in my taste, but something important. Something about our shared world is at stake in my disagreement with Louise. Not only do I want her to have an enriched aesthetic experience and further satisfaction, but I feel that the music ought to be found beautiful and that she is missing something if she cannot recognize this for herself.

If her disagreement persists, my sense that we live in a shared world would be challenged along its aesthetic dimension. I do not think I would be comforted by the idea that she could happily live in her world of aesthetic experience and I in mine and the two never meet. I would continue to think some serious disconnect had been discovered between us and that if I could only understand her experience of “Di Passaggio” better, I might find a way to show her she is mistaken in her judgment of it. Far from indicating the privacy of our aesthetic experiences, I take my sense of a disconnect to indicate an assumption that we ought to agree, a sense of community that gives force to our puzzled looks at each other, our protests that the other ought to hear something that grounds a different judgment.
This suggests two commitments I have about disagreement and beauty. First, the disagreement is not just a matter of the judgments we hold, but the aesthetic experiences that ground them, and our response to disagreement concerns both. If Louise gave in and agreed with me that “Di Passaggio” is beautiful out of some kind of deference to me as a judge, it would ring hollow. We would not yet have reached the kind of agreement in feeling I think she ought to share in response to the music. I will not be satisfied that we really agree in the way my judgment demands until she hears the beauty of “Di Passaggio” for herself. Until she can, I will ask her to try to hear the music as if it were beautiful, and I in turn will try to imagine that it is not, in a mutual effort to understand one another and work towards agreement. But when that agreement comes (if it does), in either my disillusionment or her revelation, the change will be from something imagined to a correct response to the object and its properties.

Second, in this case (and others like it) a rational response to disagreement with a judge I take to be just as competent as myself does not call for suspending judgment about whether or not the music is properly heard as beautiful. This locates me in the ‘steadfast’ camp of the present debate in epistemology about what a rational response to disagreement requires. Roughly, the idea steadfast views have in common is that I can rationally maintain confidence in my beliefs even when they are challenged by the disagreement of those I consider my epistemic peers. While I may have started out thinking of the person who disagrees as my epistemic equal and just as likely as myself to be right, discovering she disagrees with something true (from my perspective) provides evidence she has made a mistake in this case.

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1 For example, see Kelly (2005), Enoch (2011), and Wedgwood (2010).
2 An ‘epistemic peer’ is someone who I believe is just as likely as myself to arrive at the correct belief about the matter under dispute. As Christensen (2009) puts it, we encounter peers when we have “good reason to believe that the other person is one’s (at least approximate) equal in terms of exposure to the evidence, intelligence, freedom from bias, etc.” (756) As Elga (2011) describes it, “you count your friend as an epistemic peer with respect to an about-to-be-judged claim if and only if you think that, conditional the two of you disagreeing about the claim, the two of you are equally likely to be mistaken.” (179, endnote 21)
If it sounds like this response privileges my own belief for no good reason (simply because it is mine) then your sympathies may lie with the opposing ‘conciliatory’ camp. This view points out that the disagreement of someone I take to be my epistemic equal gives me just as much evidence that I may have made a mistake as that she has made one. If I really took her to be just as likely as myself to come to the right belief, this cannot be changed merely by discovering we disagree (if it could, I could become more and more confident that I am the better judge just by noting numerous disagreements between us). A rational response to disagreement will require revising confidence in my view in light of the evidence I may be mistaken. In fact, to stay consistent with my equal confidence in both our abilities to judge, I should be no more confident in my own view than I am in hers.

There are many arguments that can be given for or against these two rough camps in the disagreement debate, and those general reasons for thinking one or the other has merit are worth considering (as I will do in Chapters 4 and 5). However, we might also think that the topic of our disagreement could make an important difference to whether a steadfast or conciliatory response is appropriate. This is acknowledged at times in the disagreement debate, but I think it deserves far more attention than has been given to it thus far. I will argue that it makes a considerable difference to how we should answer the epistemological question of how to respond to disagreement to know that we are disagreeing about beauty, and not how to split a dinner bill or predicting the weather. In fact, my own account of how we should respond to disagreement about beauty does not map easily onto either the

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3 For example, see Christensen (2007) and Elga (2011).

4 Elga (2011) makes this point in response to the idea that one should give one’s own view extra weight in response to disagreement. “[S]uppose that it was legitimate to give your own evaluations more weight than those of a friend who you initially count as a peer. Then it could be legitimate for you to ‘bootstrap’ – to come to be confident that you are a better evaluator than the friend merely by noting cases of disagreement, and taking it that the friend made most of the errors. But that is absurd. So it is not legitimate to give your own evaluations more weight than those who you count as peers.” (168)

5 For example, Enoch (2011) suggests that there is room to be steadfast in relation to beliefs that we come to by rational reflection, whereas a conciliatory response is more appropriate for disputes over ‘mere seemings’. To give another, Lackey (2008) argues that being steadfast or conciliatory hinges on our level of rationally justified confidence in the belief under dispute. However, these are still offered as general accounts of disagreement without looking in detail at the peculiarities of different subject matters that could effect how we should respond to disagreements about morality, aesthetics, religion, etc. While offering general views is appropriate for a debate in epistemology that may not be able to go into all of these details, it does show the importance of writing at the intersection between epistemology and other philosophical areas of inquiry on this issue.
steadfast or conciliatory options. I will argue that we should resist the dilemma of either accepting others as peers and significantly reducing confidence in our challenged beliefs, or rejecting others as peers by granting some privilege to our own views that allows maintaining confidence. I think there is room for a rational response to disagreement that can accommodate both our continued confidence and our continued recognition of others as peers – a recognition that involves rational pressure to try to understand the other’s point of view rather than an immediate reduction in confidence. I will call this kind of response to disagreement being ‘empathetically steadfast’.

There are particular features of judgments of beauty that lead to this result, such as the importance of grounding and revising judgments of beauty on first personal feeling and experience. To the extent that other kinds of disagreement may share those features, the discussion to come may be useful beyond the scope of beauty alone. In the next part of this introduction and in further chapters, I will argue that there is an important structural similarity between disagreements about beauty and deep ‘framework’ disagreements where we are challenged on basic assumptions or standards that shape how we understand our world and evaluate truth. The structural similarity is that in both cases we cannot turn to rules or criteria available outside the scope of the dispute to help settle which person’s view is more reasonably accepted. In the case of beauty, this is because our judgments must be based on a first personal feeling of pleasure, not by the application of a rule or concept that can be stated independently of the judgment itself (as Kant would say, the judgment exemplifies a rule we cannot state). We cannot settle what it is most reasonable to believe by third personal considerations, for we must look at the object and see how it strikes us first personally (or try to imagine how it strikes the other).

In the case of framework disagreements, there is no dispute-independent criteria that can help us decide what is rational to believe because these disputes challenge such basic assumptions relating to the subject matter that there is nothing beneath them or outside of them that can really help. I will

6 The term ‘framework disagreements’ is used by Feldman (2006), 426: “the idea [is] that people have some more global outlook on the world, a general view that shapes much of what they believe.”
argue that when it is fruitless to turn to dispute-independent considerations, or doing so would remove us from the kind of grounding we require for the judgments under dispute, we can remain first personally engaged in response to disagreement. This means our first personal reasons for believing one way or the other will also remain engaged, leading us to maintain our judgments about what is beautiful, or about what framework commitments we should keep. Nevertheless, we are not cut off in individual towers of first personal experience. We have the complex ability to imagine not only what it would be like for ourselves to be in another’s shoes, but also what it is like for her to stand there. I will argue that this ability to try to imagine the other’s perspective ‘from the inside,’ or in the way that she experiences it, plays an important role in responding to disagreements that must remain rooted in first personal grounds for revision.

My project breaks into roughly three parts. The first is concerned with establishing an account of judgments of beauty based upon Kant’s aesthetics in order to give us a starting place for a discussion of disagreement about beauty (Chapters 2 and 3). I will explain why I believe it is fruitful to turn to Kant in the context of contemporary work on this problem, and give an account of the most important ideas I take Kant to offer. Other aesthetic theorists such as Dewey, Isenberg, and Cavell will also play an important role in fleshing out the ramifications I think a Kantian view of beauty has for responding to disagreement.

Second, as we have already seen, my arguments about disagreement engage with the recent debate about peer disagreement in epistemology. I believe that thinking about aesthetic disagreement can turn a new critical lens on the ‘conciliatory’ and ‘steadfast’ positions offered in that debate. In Chapter 4 I will discuss two problems faced by the conciliatory view, first the possibility that this view could lead to widespread suspension of judgment on those matters where we frequently find peers who disagree. I argue that this would be a particularly troubling result for beauty, because it would not be

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7 In Chapter 7 I will draw upon Nussbaum (2001), Coplan (2011) and Goldie (2011) who discuss this distinction between different ways of imagining other people.
easy to suspend judgment without giving up the pleasure that grounds it, or altering the kind of judgment being made (one where the pleasure does not feel like it grounds a universally valid claim). This means that an epistemic outcome in response to disagreement could potentially leave us holding back from the source of our interest in making these kinds of judgments in the first place, namely, the pleasure that grounds them.

In the second half of Chapter 4, I will consider the arguments that conciliatory theorists such as Christensen and Elga give to avoid a conciliatory response to deep disagreements about fundamental aspects of our worldviews. Being conciliatory about framework disagreements is a quick way to reach widespread suspension of judgment, and while Christensen makes some interesting moves in an effort to avoid this result, I don’t think he is ultimately successful. Over the course of this discussion, the importance to the conciliatory view of avoiding responding to disagreement from within the first person perspective will become specially apparent, and we will be primed to consider the steadfast views of Kelly and Enoch that give a larger role to the first person perspective.

In Chapter 5 I will consider the benefits and drawbacks of Kelly and Enoch’s steadfast views, with particular attention to Enoch’s suggestion that remaining first personally engaged in response to disagreement allows us to maintain confidence in our disputed beliefs because we do not just consider them to be one belief set against another, but the truth (as I believe) set against the other’s mere belief. I will take up this idea in my own account of responding to disagreement about beauty, with a few important developments. Enoch gives us the basic idea that remaining first personally engaged is relevant to what is rationally required of us in response to disagreement, but he does not adequately explain when we can remain first personally engaged, and why. I will go on to supply the answer to that question for the case of beauty in Chapter 6, and I will argue that exploring the aesthetic case can help us to better understand the role the first person perspective plays for steadfast views in the epistemology debate.
The third main task of my project is to develop an original argument that a rational response to disagreement about beauty should include maintaining confidence in one’s belief, along with an effort to imaginatively understand those who disagree. The argument for maintaining confidence primarily appears in Chapter 6, together with a discussion of the kind of community we look for in making judgments of beauty. Since this community is concerned with judgment and critique that is inherently first personal, revising our confidence on the basis of dispute-independent reasons would steer us off-course from the kind of agreement we are looking for. In Chapter 7 I argue that understanding one another’s claims about beauty requires an imaginative engagement with the other’s aesthetic experience, an attempt to see or hear the aesthetic object in the way she does. I will engage with recent work on empathy and imaginative perspective shifting in an effort to clarify the kind of imaginative engagement I have in mind, and to argue for the importance of imagining what the other’s experience is like for her, not just imagining what it would be like for me to stand in her place (Coplan describes this as the difference between other-oriented and self-oriented perspective shifting). Finally, in Chapter 8, I will explore several important implications of my view, including the risk of (or invitation into) further development of aesthetic experience that we accept by imaginatively seeking to understand others. I will argue that fearing I have made a mistake is not the only motivation we can have for taking on this epistemic vulnerability. In the case of beauty, we take it on as an extension of the confidence we have that something is beautiful (or not). Rather than being motivated to imagine her perspective because I fear I have made a mistake, I do this because I genuinely believe that we ought to be in community in the feeling of pleasure I have, and that she is missing something important in her disagreement.

1.1 Is disagreement about aesthetics specially troublesome?

To start us off, in this section I will introduce a parallel between disagreement about beauty and deep framework disagreements that will provide food for thought throughout the project. Dealing with
disagreements about aesthetics may strike us as particularly problematic if we accept that there are no set rules for applying aesthetic concepts or awarding merit. However, I think considering aesthetic disagreement special in this respect underestimates the difficulties we face in many other kinds of disagreement. Not all disagreements are hard to address. If they are about a simple math problem, the temperature of the room, or where a restaurant is located we can appeal to rules and evidence all parties likely accept: the rules of addition, a thermometer, a map. Then there are more complicated disagreements that depend not only on finding evidence for claims, but evaluating the methods by which we weigh and prioritize the evidence found. We can disagree about how to interpret the results of studies for the effectiveness of a certain drug, or what conclusions to draw about the predictive power of a scientific theory given a set of observations and comparisons with other theories. These methodological disagreements could still be settled by appealing to higher principles both parties accept, such as that studies are only useful if they have a large representative sample (and this was ignored by one of us), or that one should look at all of the predictive attempts of a theory, not just the famous ones. Disagreements about how to go about drawing conclusions from facts can be settled in a straightforward manner if there is some further relevant standard for forming beliefs we hold in common.

But there are more troublesome disagreements that cannot obviously be addressed by a rule held in common, such as disagreements about the standards themselves. You might believe only predictive power is important for deciding which scientific theory to provisionally accept as true, while I believe other factors such as simplicity are also important. I might believe a subjects’ condition should not be treated with drugs regardless of the effectiveness shown in the studies for bringing about a small increase in reported happiness, while you think the subject’s condition counts as a worthy medical problem that should be addressed with medication. We could try to appeal to a broader

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8 We can find this kind of idea argued for by Kant in the Critique of the Power of Judgment (hereafter CJ) but also by other prominent aesthetic theorists such as Mothersill (1984), Sibley (1959) and Isenberg (1949).
standard, perhaps an idea of what the aim of science is, or a definition of illness, but it seems likely that a disagreement at this higher level is responsible for our difference of opinion about how to weigh predictive power or when to medicate. And what higher standard are we going to appeal to as common ground for resolving these disagreements, for deciding who is right or who is more able to judge? In these cases we are dealing with different ways of seeing the matter that do not trace back to common ground like the thermometer provided in the case of disagreement about the room’s temperature (this is not to say there isn’t any common ground, but none that can be applied as a standard to adjudicate the dispute).

It is particularly challenging to decide what a rational response requires of us in these sorts of disagreements. How are we supposed to know who is more likely to be right, or since that might inappropriately suggest a factual disagreement, how are we to decide whose method is most appropriate to the spirit of the enterprise (scientific, medical, aesthetic)? It might be suggested that in these cases we can revert to practical considerations: does caring about simplicity as well as prediction lead to increased technological advances, does medicating this kind of behaviour lead to some measurable increase in reports of happiness or better functioning in society? Perhaps the aims of science and medicine can be reduced to these practical concerns. Perhaps not. How is this to be decided? I will suggest that when we reach these kinds of deep disagreements, where we have no adjudicating standard or rule that can be stated in a way that is external to the case, we are forced to hold up our own judgment as exemplary of a rule we cannot explicitly formulate. If I think we should not medicate a behaviour just so there is some small measurable increase in reports of happiness, the fact that there is no standard I can appeal to that a dissenter would share with me does not, I think, prevent me from taking my conviction to be more than my own personal response or opinion. I still very much take my belief to genuinely capture the spirit of medicine, or what should be taken to be the spirit of medicine. I cannot produce the spirit of medicine itself as a rule or a definition in some way
that is external to or independent of my own judgment about whether to medicate in this case or not, but still the spirit of medicine is exemplified in my judgment. If I want to show that my judgment expresses the spirit of medicine and my dissenter’s does not, I must somehow bring her to share my understanding of the spirit of medicine so that she would *herself* offer my judgment as an example of it.

I will leave it open whether we could in principle formulate a rule that captures the spirit of medicine, or science, what I want to say is that when we disagree about those rules themselves, we are in the position of being unable to turn to some further, deeper rule that could help us. In this way, we are in a similar position to those who disagree about beauty, at least according to theorists such as Kant who believe that we cannot judge what is beautiful by applying a concept or rule in principle. He writes, “a necessity that is thought in an aesthetic judgment … can only be called exemplary, i.e., a necessity of the assent of all to a judgment that is regarded as an example of a universal rule that one cannot produce.”

Now normally we require the assent of everyone to the judgments we make because the concepts we have used ought to work the same way for every judge. According to Kant’s account of cognition, the power of judgment ‘feels out’ a fit between manifolds given in experience and concepts of the understanding. In regular cognition, judgment finds a ‘feeling of fit’ between a given concept and a particular (and this must be a feeling or else the application of rules would be governed by further rules and it would lead to a troublesome regress). In these cases, I can say that the rule I am working

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9 CI, 5:237.
10 For a brief overview of the power of judgment and its operations, we can look to CJ, 5:179. There Kant describes the power of judgment as “the faculty for thinking of the particular under the universal” and describes the difference between determining judgment (the understanding provides a concept and judgment applies it to a particular in experience) and reflecting judgment (judgment takes a particular and looks for a concept it does not yet have in hand).
11 Kant notes the threat of such a regress when he defines the role of judgment in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. As a result, he finds that “judgment is a peculiar talent which can be practised only, and cannot be taught. It is the specific quality of so-called mother-wit; and its lack no school can make good. For although an abundance of rules from the insight of others may indeed be proffered to, and as it were grafted upon, a limited understanding, the power of rightly employing them must belong to the learner himself; and in the absence of such a natural gift no rule that may be prescribed to him for this purpose can ensure against misuse.” (A 133 B172)
with is ‘chair’ and you could dispute with me that the thing I see really is a chair. Obviously, how we define ‘chair’ itself might come under dispute here, but we can try to set out the rule we are applying.

However, Kant also thinks there are times when reflective activity arrives at a ‘feeling of fit’ with itself, as it were, a feeling that it is doing something lively and purposive without further subsuming the particular under a concept.\(^\text{12}\) This is, roughly, what he thinks happens when we find something beautiful. It is the feeling of this ‘free play’ between our cognitive faculties in response to a beautiful object that grounds our judgment that others ought to agree.\(^\text{13}\) In this case, I cannot spell out the rule I am working with if another disagrees with me, for there isn’t one, at least in the usual sense. We may disagree, but it is about the exercise of a capacity (the power of judgment) that underpins all application of concepts and rules, and so cannot be crystalized around whether or not we are applying a specific, given rule the same way or the right way, or what that rule really is.

Kant thinks that judgments of beauty reveal something about the way our cognition works, namely that the reflective activity of the understanding and the imagination functions with a principle of purposiveness, a presupposition that the world will be found amenable to our cognitive processes and judgment will be able to find the right fit between sensory information and concepts. We can assume that our cognitive judgments are the result of a successful interaction between the imagination (bringing sensory information together) and the understanding (applying concepts to that information), for we have the positive result of cognition as proof.\(^\text{14}\) However, Kant claims the cognitive activity sparked by beautiful objects reveals that principle of purposive activity even more directly through a

\(^\text{12}\) For example, his description of the subjective grounds of judgments of beauty: “Here the representation is related entirely to the subject, indeed to its feeling of life, under the name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, which grounds an entirely special faculty for discriminating and judging that contributes nothing to cognition but only holds the given representation in the subject up to the entire faculty of representation, of which the mind becomes conscious in the feeling of its state.” (CJ, 5:204, my emphasis)

\(^\text{13}\) CJ, 5:217: “The powers of cognition that are set into play by this representation are hereby in a free play, since no determinate concept restricts them to a particular rule of cognition. Thus the state of mind in this representation must be that of a feeling of the free play of the powers of representation in a given representation for a cognition in general.”

\(^\text{14}\) Here is a brief summary Kant offers for the process of cognition: “by means of the senses, a given object brings the imagination into activity for the synthesis of the manifold, while the imagination brings the understanding into activity for the unity of this synthesis in concepts.” (CJ, 5:238)
feeling of playful engagement between the imagination and the understanding that is free from the task of applying a particular concept to the object. In beauty, we catch the purposive activity of our faculties in action and can linger in the feeling of their working together because the activity will not be brought to a close by settling on a particular concept to apply.

The free play of imagination and understanding in response to beautiful things shows us that working purposively together is a cognitive aim in itself, and a subjective condition that is required for cognition to be possible in general (otherwise the right fit between sensory information and concepts would not be felt out). Kant claims that judgments of beauty have universal validity if they really do arise from a feeling of the free play, for the purposive interaction between the faculties must work the same in all subjects if this subjective condition of cognition is to result in our sharing a common world of cognized objects. We hold others who have the same cognitive structure as ourselves to finding the same things beautiful, just as we hold them to judging the same things to be one or many, extended, etc. Rather than having universal validity by deploying concepts that must be common to all, judgments of beauty have it by deploying a ‘common sense’ that governs the imagination and understanding in their free activity, and is another subjective condition for the possibility of cognition.\textsuperscript{15}

The freedom of the free play means that we cannot provide an explicitly stated rule for when this activity should be elicited by an object’s form. We cannot say for sure that an object’s having a certain set of properties will spark the free play and we cannot say for sure that it will not: judgments of beauty depend entirely upon discovering a first personal feeling that arises when we consider an object’s form and aesthetic attributes.\textsuperscript{16} We cannot state the common sense (in other words, the rule)

\textsuperscript{15} Kant on the universal validity of the free play: “someone who feels pleasure in mere reflection upon the form of an object, without regard to a concept, rightly makes claim to the assent of everyone else, even though this judgment is empirical and is an individual judgment, since the ground for this pleasure is to be found in the universal though subjective condition of reflecting judgments, namely the purposive correspondence of an object … with the relationship of the cognitive faculties among themselves (of the imagination and understanding) that is required for every empirical cognition.” (CJ, 5:191)

\textsuperscript{16} Kant claims that “one cannot determine a priori which object will not suit taste, one must try it out” (CJ, 5:191).
that is presupposed by judgments of beauty, except by offering our own individual judgments about which objects *are* beautiful (illustrating that rule).

This means that when we disagree about beauty, we cannot pull out a dispute-independent rule or set of criteria to determine who is right and who is mistaken. Instead, we must turn to the arena wherein aesthetic judgments are properly tested, confirmed and transformed – first person aesthetic experience. I must use my own response as a gauge for correctness since that is my only access to the rule that is being applied in the other’s judgment. *I* am the measure of the object’s universally valid aesthetic value, and in turning to my response in this way I treat it as something common that can stand for the response all judging subjects ought to have.

It looks like this means the appropriate response to disagreement about beauty will always be dogmatic. After all, the experience by which I test the other’s judgment is the same one that supported my own, differing judgment in the first place. However, I believe there is an open-ended possibility for transforming aesthetic experience and judgment that comes with seriously testing another’s judgment against ourselves, a possibility of transformation that grows out of the confidence we have in our original judgment and in the competence of the other who disagrees (otherwise why would we be testing her view). This is a very different way of arriving at the chance for revision than immediately questioning one’s judgment in response to disagreement, and for that reason I think it is an important new perspective to add to discussions about disagreement, and disagreement about beauty in particular. My aim is to flesh out that new perspective here, at the intersection of work that has been done in both aesthetics and epistemology on the question of how to respond to disagreement.
Chapter Two: Intersubjectively Valid Aesthetic Claims

In the coming chapters I will argue that we should respond to disagreement about beauty by continuing to examine and explore our own first personal experiences of the aesthetic object and imaginatively consider that of the person who disagrees. In this chapter, I will clear some ground for this project by considering a few different ways aesthetic theorists have argued we can resolve disputes over aesthetic value judgments. Although the views I have selected largely have to do with evaluating the aesthetic value of artworks, not beauty, I still believe it will be an instructive exercise. Beardsley and Margolis argue in different ways that critical evaluations can be justified by appealing to established principles, whereas Aiken and Harrison argue that claims of aesthetic worth come down to probability judgments that a work will offer a certain kind of valuable experience. Both of these general strategies could potentially be applied to beauty, and so it is worth while to examine their weaknesses to see why an account like Kant’s might be attractive.

In the first section, I will briefly present Beardsley’s view and then draw upon Isenberg and Mothersill to argue that it misses the mark in two ways. First, as Mothersill points out, it is difficult to find laws or principles of taste that do not turn out to be either innocuous or obviously false, limiting their usefulness as justifications for critical judgments and as a means of resolving disputes. Second, Isenberg argues that searching for general principles to justify a critic’s claim makes a crucial mistake about what the critic is trying to do by describing the features of a work. Rather than taking the critic to be picking out qualities that could serve as the object of a general rule or principle, Isenberg argues the critic aims at directing first personal perception of the artwork in question. According to Isenberg, we will gain a clear understanding of what the critic means only by looking at the artwork again in the way he suggests, not by trying to find general principles that could link this particular feature to a certain effect in general. Not only does looking for such general principles seem fruitless (as Mothersill
argues) it also seems besides the point for the kind of communication we aim at in taking and giving critical judgments. This second criticism is the more important one for my own project.

Despite it not being useful to try to find general principles in support of aesthetic claims, I still believe we are frequently concerned with disputes over whether or not the features of an object merit a certain aesthetic response. This is a central aspect of both casual and professional discourse about the arts (and beauty) that is avoided by Aiken and Harrison’s emphasis on judgments concerning the probability that a work will bring pleasure or reward further attention for a specified target group.

Harrison makes a particularly interesting attempt to incorporate our tendency to call out others as right or wrong for enjoying what they do without committing himself to the idea that we actually make such claims and try to defend or challenge them in disputes. However, I argue we should only twist about what we mean by such claims as a last resort. If it is at all possible, we should try to make sense of the idea that we do make and defend claims about which aesthetic responses are warranted by the features of an object, without the help of general principles.

### 2.1 Resolving Disputes via Rules: Beardsley’s General Canons

The most straightforward way to resolve disputes about aesthetic claims would be to find a set of rules we could all agree on for what counts as an aesthetic merit and what does not. As a good example of this kind of view, Beardsley argues that a critic’s judgment of aesthetic merit can only be supported by citing objective reasons. In other words, reasons that offer descriptions or interpretations with reference to “some quality or internal relation, or set of qualities and relations – within the work itself, or to some meaning-relation between the work and the world.”\(^\text{17}\) He argues that genetic reasons relating to the circumstances of the artwork’s creation, and affective reasons relating the work’s effect upon an audience member, are not suitable for supporting an evaluative claim because they do not in

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\(^{17}\) Beardsley (1958), 462.
themselves provide needed information, such as whether the artist’s intention was worth realizing, or what exactly is responsible for the audience’s reaction. Only objective reasons are able to explain why or how an aesthetic object deserves or merits a certain judgment.

Beardsley is quite clear that something counts as a reason in a critical argument only if it is backed up by a justifying principle. To that end, he suggests three canons for good-making features of artworks that all objective reasons should trace back to: unity (well or poorly organized, possessing or lacking inner logic of structure and style, formal perfection or imperfection), complexity (issues with scale, contrasts and repetitions, imaginative elements, crude or sophisticated internal relationships) and intensity of human regional qualities (is it vital, insipid, forceful, weak, beautiful, ironic, tragic, dynamic). In short, the evaluative claims critics make can be supported by the presence of objective features that contribute to a work’s unity, complexity, or intensity, according to the principle that such features count towards the aesthetic merit of the work.

Beardsley is careful to make it clear that he does not take principles such as ‘vague themes are always a defect in poetry’ or ‘grand imagery is always a merit in poetry’ to identify any necessary or sufficient conditions for aesthetic value, or provide principles that could serve as premises in deductive arguments for evaluative conclusions. Rather, the principles that trace back to the general canons justify taking a certain objective feature to be a merit or a defect of a work – something that counts towards or detracts from the value of a work without indicating what the overall value might be. In other words, the general canons and the specific principles they support “cannot be formulated universally, but only as general tendencies, or in an alternative language, as statistical generalizations.” The key claim remains that once we have identified a merit or a defect, it will always count towards or detract from the value of artworks in the same way for works of that kind.

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18 Beardsley (1958), 458, 461.
19 Ibid, 463.
20 Ibid, 472.
It may seem quite difficult to identify features of artworks that always count as merits and never defects, but Beardsley stops up this potential problem by pointing out that context will often play an important role in determining whether a certain feature counts as a merit or not. He points out “[i]t does not seem that the contribution of each feature of an aesthetic object can be considered in an atomistic fashion.”\textsuperscript{21} Including such contextual constraints within principles that connect objective features with the general canons might considerably complicate finding and specifying those principles, but Beardsley reminds us that we do not have to be able to state principles in order to commit ourselves to their existence. The idea here seems to be that I don’t have to be able to provide a complete account of the contextual elements required for grand imagery to count towards the value of a poem in order to be committed to the principle that such imagery is a merit in poetry, given the presence of those unspecified elements. At the end of the day, “an adequate justification for saying that any feature is a defect or a merit in any work would include an explanation in terms of some general principle about the value-contribution of that feature, alone or in combination with others.”\textsuperscript{22}

Having addressed these two problems, Beardsley expresses confidence that the general cannons and the more specific principles in each artistic domain can support critical evaluations and settle potential disagreements in much the same way other measures like rulers and thermometers can settle empirical disputes about length and temperature. Beardsley suggests that on reflection, they “are widely accepted standards,” and that they “have a public and stable character to which appeal can be made.”\textsuperscript{23} In addition, he holds that, while quite general, the three main canons are “not too vague to be testable and usable” and are not merely “free-wheeling rationalizations” that could be made to back up any claim that an artwork is good by finding some feature that increases unity, complexity, or intensity.

However, theorists like Isenberg and Mothersill give us reason to think the general canons Beardsley suggests, or others like them, are a dead end for justifying evaluative claims and settling

\textsuperscript{21} Beardsley (1958), 465.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid, 465.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, 486.
disputes. Isenberg rejects the idea that critics must be able to support their claims with principles that
generalize about which features will count towards the positive value of the work. He argues that such
principles are besides the point because in reality, critics do not refer to properties that could appear in
general principles when they communicate about artworks.\textsuperscript{24} Standards like the general canons must
specify good-making properties that can be instantiated by several different artworks. Yet Isenberg
argues critics’ descriptions of artworks do not pick out properties that could be found across different
works, they use general terms and concepts to guide our perception of \textit{particular} works in order to
achieve perception of properties that are particular to the work in question.

He argues that “It is reasonable to suppose that the critic is thinking of another quality, no idea
of which is transmitted to us by his language, which he \textit{sees} and which by his use of language he \textit{gets us to see}.”\textsuperscript{25} For instance, whatever sort of property comes to my mind upon hearing the description of
a “violently rising and falling wave,” it is not the property that the critic describing the wave present in
\textit{The Burial of Count Orgaz} has in mind, for that property is specific to that work and to know what he
means I must look at the painting and see the particular wave he is trying to communicate about. When
we understand that the critic’s meaning is only taken when we actually perceive the quality he has
brought to our attention by his description and our looking, we can appreciate that a critic’s
descriptions never help us to find the same quality twice, across different artworks. If this is the case,
there will not be much point in isolating a certain feature of a work and generalizing about whether or
not it is good-making, since that same feature will not appear in other works. If this account of critical
communication is on the right track, Beardsley’s faith in the general canons is undermined.

Mothersill has further important criticisms to make of Beardsley’s claim that the general canons
are testable and usable – in other words that they are principles that can really help us justify what we
like and why we like it. She argues that no one actually believes there are laws or principles of taste,

\textsuperscript{24} Isenberg (1949).
\textsuperscript{25} Isenberg (1949/1995), 367.
and proposes that any potential law or principle we can come up with will ultimately either prove uninteresting (innocuous) or obviously false.\textsuperscript{26} This is because to be believable, laws must focus on qualities that are specified as what we find enjoyable. For example, a law that states ‘I will enjoy any detective novel insofar as it shares that special Agatha-Christie-quality I enjoy’ is uninteresting because it can never lead me astray. Whatever satisfies the condition of having that special quality is guaranteed to satisfy pleasing me insofar as that quality is present.\textsuperscript{27} Yet if the law is made more general to make it more interesting, such as ‘I will enjoy any detective novel with canny, elderly protagonists,’ I will no longer find it compelling, for I can easily imagine failing to enjoy a novel that meets the condition.

Mothersill argues that the problem extends to principles.\textsuperscript{28} If we say ‘the special Agatha-Christie-quality is a good-making feature of detective novels,’ this is an innocuous principle in that it cannot be confirmed or disconfirmed (how could we confirm that the feature is present without simultaneously confirming that insofar as the feature is present the novel is good?). Yet if we make the principle more interesting by identifying a less specific good-making feature, say ‘having canny, elderly heroines is a good-making feature of detective novels’ then again, we will not be too optimistic about the truth of this principle, quickly realizing that many novels could have that feature and not be made any better for it.\textsuperscript{29}

\textit{2.2 Resolving Disputes via Rules: Margolis on Evaluative and Appreciative Judgments}

Given the reasons we have seen above for thinking that general rules will not be much help in justifying critical judgments, and that critics aim at a different kind of communication anyway, we may want to give up on the idea of general rules that could explain how features of an aesthetic object

\textsuperscript{26} Mothersill (1984), 105.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 119.
\textsuperscript{28} We could reject the existence of laws of taste and still hold out hope for there being principles, but Mothersill (1984) points out it becomes a bit of a pressing problem in that case where the principles derive their authority (112).
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 119.
support a certain judgment. But this leaves us in a bit of a pickle. Abandoning general principles can seem like reason enough to reject as misguided our sense that aesthetic responses can be supported by reference to the object’s qualities.

Perhaps a better idea would be to follow Margolis in detaching aesthetic evaluations from our responses of liking or not liking them (in all the various shades these come in) so they can be supported by reasons we expect other judges to share. Like Isenberg, Margolis separates what a critic is capable of bringing us to accept and his own feeling about the work, although the two disagree about what the reasoning of critics can compel: Isenberg holds it is only a sameness of perception while Margolis thinks it is a value judgment, a verdict that is separate from feeling. Judgments of technical skill already largely appear to work this way; my admiration for the craftsmanship of a painting, pottery jug, or carved rocking chair doesn’t require feeling one way or another about the overall aesthetic merit or beauty of these items. Perhaps we can extend to further kinds of critical judgment this independence from actually appreciating the object in any particular way. Margolis writes,

> If I judge a particular work of art to be good, I am bound, on demand, to supply the justifying reasons … if the justifying reasons are admitted to be true and to be the proper sort of reasons sufficient for the finding, one cannot withhold the finding on the presentation of reasons. The finding, or judgment (or verdict) is not an expression of taste and is only contingently related to our actual taste.\(^{30}\)

Margolis believes that the professional practice of art critics has well-established standards that can be drawn upon in making evaluative judgments, standards that can be accepted and used regardless of what one personally likes or dislikes. Critics need not be able to “formulate sufficient conditions for the ascription of the appropriate qualities; it is quite sufficient that a range of stock specimens be professionally acknowledged.”\(^{31}\)

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\(^{30}\) Margolis (1965), 138.

\(^{31}\) Ibid, 142.
established well enough that “one may expect to find value judgments that approach the decisiveness of legal verdicts, medical and factual findings.”

If Margolis is right, we could draw a line between evaluative judgments that assign value independently of liking or disliking and that are justified by reasons others should find compelling, and appreciative judgments that do involve our own likes and dislikes and that we do not ultimately expect to be able to make others agree with us about. Margolis does think we require some measure of reasonableness even in our appreciative judgments. Our likes and dislikes should make sense given facts about the aesthetic objects in question and facts about our own histories of appreciating things, and others can challenge our appreciative judgments on those grounds. Still, at the end of the day differences between appreciative judgments that meet both these minimal requirements of reasonableness can be put down to people appreciating things differently, with little more to be said.

There is some merit to this approach, as I think we do sometimes set specific criteria for critical judgments (as can happen in competitions) that allow us to assign value to objects independently of our own responses. And we do care about whether our appreciative responses meet the minimal requirements of fitting the facts about the object’s properties, details of its creation, and our own patterns of taste. At the same time, employing established criteria or standards when making critical judgments seems to require endorsing the standards as correct or appropriate (perhaps one does not have to do this if asked to join the judging panel for a competition without being able to set the terms of judgment, but this is not often our situation when making aesthetic claims). It is hard to see how we would justify endorsing a certain standard for judgment without at some point drawing support from aesthetic responses of liking or disliking. Aesthetic enjoyment seems to be the point of searching out and making judgments about aesthetic objects, and it would be odd if our reasons for endorsing standards for judgment made no contact with the aesthetic enjoyment of anyone, anywhere. It strikes

\[^{32}\] Ibid, 142.
\[^{33}\] Ibid, 140.
me that the traditions of the artworld would seem rather empty if they were entirely separated from felt responses, in other words if no one cared about them as relevant to how we feel in response to works.

As far as I can see, there are two options for personally endorsing specific (perhaps historically passed down) standards of judgment: either these standards make contact with the responses of many people (we use the standard for its reflection of how people actually do or likely will respond with liking or disliking) or the standards make contact with one’s own responses (we use the standard as an explanation or account of a response that strikes us as correct from our own perspective, regardless of how many people in fact respond that way). I do not think Margolis intends his evaluative judgments to depend upon observations and predictions of the satisfactions people have in fact, nor on our own assessments of what ought to be found satisfying given our likes and dislikes. Rather, he means to suggest that critics take up standards of evaluation just because they are the established standards within a certain frame of critical work, like the jewellery assessor assigning value to diamonds he cares nothing about. In other words, he envisions critics working a job with a certain set of rules for judgment that do not require personal endorsement to employ.

I agree that this seems possible. The artworld is an established arena of discourse and one could potentially try to enter it just like the disenchanted jewel assessor and use the apparent standards without judging for oneself whether they are worthy standards to uphold, assigning value to things that really deserve being considered valuable. One could certainly argue and resolve disagreements by referring to standards accepted this way. But this person I imagine seems more like a time-card-punching employee who doesn’t mind making a living off a system that could be bankrupt, its standards selected arbitrarily, rather than a conscientious judge who cares about the worth of the system itself and employs the established standards because she thinks they identify things of real value.

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34 Margolis (1965), 130.
Mothersill criticizes Margolis by noting that “What Margolis says is not exactly false but, so to speak, out of touch. … I do, on occasion, try to show what it is about a particular work that leads me to think it a good work of art, but unless I liked the work in question, this exercise would be bizarre.” I too feel that Margolis is more out of touch than strictly speaking mistaken, although I would not go so far as to say that the idea of the time-card-punching art critic is bizarre. I can imagine such a person, but I hope the artworld is not largely populated by people like her, and I would not want the validity of critical claims to rest upon taking up such an attitude. The value of art appears to lie in the rich, varied and challenging sorts of appreciative experiences works make available, and making evaluative judgments according to standards that do not match up to some extent with one’s own experiences of appreciation strikes me as a hollow enterprise. In other words, we have the option of making aesthetic evaluations in the way Margolis describes, but it is not an option we will want to take unless we wish to become art critics for some reason other than endorsing the system and its standards. (Possibly for money? A dubious prospect at best.) If we do want to actually endorse the conclusions we arrive at through aesthetic evaluation as of some worth and not just the rational result of standards that might as well be arbitrary, we need to justify endorsing the standards we use with a more substantial reason than ‘they are well established’. To do that, we will need to refer at some point to felt responses (liking and disliking in various forms), whether these are the felt responses that a certain group will likely have to the object, or one’s own felt responses taken as an indication of what the object ought to receive.

2.3 Resolving Disputes via Probability Judgments: Aiken’s Judgments of Inherent Value

Let’s consider the first option for how one could justify endorsing standards for aesthetic evaluation. Like Margolis’ wine critic, we might endorse a standard if we know that it reflects the tastes of most people the critic has in mind making her judgment. Even if the wine critic’s own taste

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35 Mothersill (1984), 114.
does not line up with that of people generally, she can still justify endorsing the standard if she
considers facts about public opinion to indicate a value aesthetic objects really do have. She is not just
using the standard, she also believes in it because she thinks it is appropriate to place a certain weight
on statistics about what is enjoyed when making such judgments. And, if that is the standard, anyone
who accepts it will also have to accept the judgment the critic comes to (assuming her taste is
discerning and her application of the standard astute).

For an example of such a view we can consider Aiken’s account of what is at stake in claims
that artworks are ‘good’. He argues when we say this we make a judgment of inherent value, a
judgment that claims the artwork has a certain likelihood of producing a satisfying experience (what he
calls intrinsic value) for the group of qualified observers we have in mind.\footnote{Aiken (1950), 503-504.} The view has the benefit
that claims based upon predictions of likely satisfactions are empirical and present no special difficulty
for verification. On this view, when I say to Louise that the drones are subtly dramatic I claim that
there is a good chance they will lead to a satisfying or intrinsically valuable aesthetic experience for
other qualified observers, presumably others who share roughly my own capacities as a judge. Louise
disagrees, she thinks it is unlikely the drones will offer a satisfying aesthetic experience to others like
us. We could settle our disagreement by learning what the probability for a satisfying aesthetic
experience from the drones really is for audience members of the sort we have in mind.

What is unsatisfying about Aiken’s view is that judgments of inherent value seem to be silent
about whether or not the satisfying experience predicted is one that people \textit{should} have in response to
the object. These judgments claim that a certain satisfaction \textit{will} result, not that the object \textit{warrants}
such a response. The reason for the prediction appears to be left open – we could believe many people
will find an artwork satisfying because that kind of thing is ‘hip’ right now, or because they are
impressed by the artist’s reputation. Yet if someone gave me these reasons to back up her claim that the
artwork is good I would feel that she misled me initially. When someone says ‘this artwork is good’ we expect the satisfaction that grounds the judgment to result primarily from the artwork and its features, not from a reaction to something else related to it extraneously like the artist’s reputation, how much effort went into its production, or what is trendy at the moment.

A supporter of Aiken could accept this and try to restrict inherent judgments of value to only those judgments that assess the likely satisfaction of a given group in response to the artwork and its features, and not in response to extraneous factors. But I’m not sure the problem is so easily avoided. Someone whose satisfactions track what is trendy, for instance, will not feel satisfaction just by being told what the trend is, she will have to go out and observe some of the trendy works in order to have experiences of intrinsic value. Her pleasure is still in response to the artwork, even though that response is conditioned by her preference for what is trendy.

Preferences of various sorts condition most of our aesthetic responses so this is not unusual, it is just that we allow some preferences (such as Beardsley’s canons of unity, complexity and intensity) to have a legitimate place in judging the value of aesthetic experiences and not others. Although it is challenging to say exactly why we take some conditioning preferences to be relevant for judging aesthetic value and not others, being sensitive to the difference is an important part of being competent to make, challenge and defend aesthetic claims of value. If all that is at stake in a claim that an artwork is good is that it is probable observers of a certain sort will enjoy it, there doesn’t seem to be adequate means for distinguishing between relevant and non-relevant reasons for that enjoyment. Yet if Aiken expands the claim made by judgments of inherent value to include not only the likelihood of enjoyment but also the appropriate grounds for it (features of the object) he will have left the safe arena of empirical claims that can be verified like any other statistic and forged into the murkier terrain of justifying aesthetic responses by citing features of the object. The difficulty Aiken faces is that judgments of probability for causing enjoyment are attractive for how straightforward they are to
verify, but un-attractive for how much of our discourse about art and aesthetic experience they do not address.

Yet perhaps we can incorporate talking about the features of the object when challenging and defending claims of aesthetic value without straying too far from Aiken’s main strategy. Harrison expands a view quite like Aiken’s in this way, so we must consider whether he manages to solve the problem more effectively.

2.4 Resolving Disputes via Probability Judgments: Harrison’s ‘Appraisive Discussion’

Like Aiken, Harrison considers one of the main ways that ‘good’ is used in criticism to be directing others towards works of art that are likely to repay our attention with satisfaction, although he characterizes the satisfaction involved as experiences of ‘critical development’: when we find our initial experience of a work is deepened and changed positively by investing further time and effort in appreciating it. These directive judgments line up with Aiken’s judgments of inherent value, for “[t]hey refer, in the directive sense, not to states of mind, or even to qualities of works of art, but to probabilities of works providing critical development, or repaying sympathetic attempts to understand them.” Again, the benefit of this approach is that directive judgments are empirical and verifiable like any other statistical statement.

A further benefit of his view, Harrison thinks, is that it allows us to make sense of those who endorse claims of aesthetic merit while holding back from personally claiming they are good. I can say that Picasso is a good painter although I don’t particularly find his work stimulating. Reporting a trend in what most people find rewarding does not require me to personally fall within the trend. Ways of seeing artworks and gaining experiences of critical development from them are not given prescriptive

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37 Harrison (1960), 216.
38 Ibid, 221.
force as right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate, but Harrison argues this does not detract from our interest in sharing the ways of seeing that critics describe for it will (presumably) be rewarding to follow their directions. So it is not that the critic’s judgment is any more perceptive about the artwork in a special way, or more correct, than anyone else’s, but that they should generally be more reliable guides to finding rewarding aesthetic experiences than most others.

Harrison comes closer than Aiken to addressing the fairly frequent sense we have that aesthetic judgments call for justifications that refer to features of the works themselves. At one point he appears to accept that we may sometimes consider the general trend of what people find rewarding mistaken in some way: if I come to the conclusion that Mantegna “has been grossly overrated, then I shall issue only a very qualified affirmative, in some such terms as ‘he is generally thought good, but I have never been able to see why’.”39 Here he presents trends in aesthetic satisfaction not only as statistics we use in directive judgments but also as states of affairs we judge critically from our own point of view and experience – is the trend justified? Depending on whether or not the general reaction to a work rings true with our own experience we give a more or less qualified directive judgment based upon it.

This is quite fascinating. The comment ‘but I have never been able to see why’ could have several different sorts of failures in justification inspiring it. Perhaps I have never been able to see how satisfaction in this artwork is possible given the other works these same people generally find satisfying – it is the fit between this statistic and others that puzzles me. Or maybe I am registering a deficiency in myself – I know I lack some crucial disposition that the others possess which excludes me from sharing their otherwise perfectly acceptable reaction. But it seems quite plausible, and perhaps most natural, to take this as a comment about the relationship between the object and the general trend in response to it. Based upon what the object is, I can’t see why so many find it ripe for a rewarding experience. In thinking the work is grossly overrated I judge that the features the work has do not explain the reaction

39 Harrison (1960), 217.
it gets. But how can the features of an object explain (support, justify, make understandable) aesthetic reactions? We have wandered off Harrison and Aiken’s map again into the more challenging terrain of justifying critical judgments with reference to objective features of the work.

Harrison does make more of an effort to chart that rocky terrain than Aiken. He suggests that challenging a directive judgment of what is good will sometimes open what he calls an “appraisive discussion” with the aim of converting others to one’s judgment by discussing the qualities of the work involved.\(^{40}\) He rejects the idea that we do this by employing common rules, emphasizing that it is quite a bit harder to show how a pattern of lines repeats than that they have a certain length and spatial relationship. He argues we are never brought to a bewildered standstill in appraisive discussions as we are when others reject the standard ruler or thermometer. When someone fails to be convinced that the lines repeat there is always something more to try – a different metaphor, gesture, or comparison to try to get them to see it our way.\(^{41}\) When we succeed in this we have effected a conversion. However, he holds back from putting at stake through appraisive discussion claims that objective features of artworks support different critical responses – rather, what such a discussion commits me to is “the attempt to convert my hearers to [the superiority of a certain artwork over another] by means of appraisive discussion.”\(^{42}\) And if someone half convinces me that my previous comparative judgment may be wrong, what I have come to doubt is that I could successfully carry off such an attempt to convert others to my view by appraisive discussion, in other words that I have been taking on a project (by issuing directive judgments) that I really would not care to take on.

Harrison’s account of appraisive discussion seems to side-step what is really going on in these situations, if we take what is going on to be the challenge that an object with these features does not merit that response. Since Harrison suggests we might respond to the challenges that begin appraisive discussions by discussing the features of the object, it would seem appropriate to think that the original

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\(^{40}\) Harrison (1960), 219.
\(^{41}\) Ibid, 219-220.
\(^{42}\) Ibid, 220.
challenge questioned something about the relationship between the object’s features and the directive judgment. Yet Harrison has not really put that kind of challenge on the table. Given his account of what is at stake in directive judgments and appraisive discussions, there are two kinds of challenges to be met. I could be challenged to harden or soften my directive judgment, perhaps the reality of the trends in rewarding aesthetic experience do not support my directive judgment to the degree I thought. Or, my commitment to converting others through appraisive discussion could be challenged by discovering a particularly recalcitrant discussion partner who is un-moving by my attempts to change her view and so undermines my confidence in this project. Responding to the first sort of challenge requires going over the statistical data, responding to the second sort of challenge requires beefing up my efforts or resources for converting others – perhaps this will involve articulating more convincingly how I see features of the object, but perhaps not. Neither challenge requires justifying my response by referring to the object’s features, because Harrison is reluctant to discuss commitment to claims that we ought to find certain responses justified by the object’s features.

The way Harrison presents our priorities in appraisive discussion seems turned around. He suggests we try to give justifications that refer to qualities of the object in order to carry out our commitment to trying to convert others (this commitment to converting is what is really at stake, and what might be changed by the discussion), rather than trying to convert others because we are committed to justifying our response with reference to the object’s qualities (a judgment about the connection between the object and our response is what is at stake, and what might change through the discussion). I don’t quite see why we would be committed to trying to convert others if we were not committed to a claim that the qualities of the object support our response. If we aren’t committed to such claims, it is not clear why challenges that ask for that kind of justification would be interesting or pressing at all. But if we are committed to such claims, there is a lot more to think about than Harrison or Aiken have offered us.
Perhaps someone supporting Harrison could argue that talking about features of the object \textit{as if} they could support our judgment has a pragmatic purpose for the sake of converting others and increasing their aesthetic satisfactions, even if it does not serve an epistemic purpose justifying the judgment that a certain response is supported by the object’s qualities. This may be true, but I don’t think it captures in large part our motivation for issuing the sort of challenges that begin appraisive discussions. Those challenges do not seem to merely say ‘please do whatever it takes to give me access to this pleasant experience you think is possible here’ or even ‘show me you are right that a pleasant experience is possible for me here’ – because these can both be met without justifying one’s experience on the basis of the object’s qualities. Rather, it seems to me the challenge that starts an appraisive discussion says ‘this object and its qualities do not warrant the experience you claim to have had, now show me how I may be wrong about this’ and this is precisely the sort of challenge Harrison avoids addressing.

\textbf{2.5 The Need for Normative Claims Warranted by the Object}

By discussing Aiken and Harrison’s views I have tried to show what is unsatisfying about the idea that we could endorse the established standards of the artworld by assigning value to those works that are likely to cause satisfaction for many people, regardless of what our own response might be. We can call artworks good based on the probability they will be rewarding for many, and these judgments do have the attraction of being straightforward to challenge and verify, but they seem to miss many of the concerns we have when we challenge and defend aesthetic judgments, such as whether or not the artwork really does merit the response it is likely to get. The problem is that speaking just about the probabilities that different sorts of people will respond to an artwork one way or another does not take us deeper into \textit{why} those people have the responses they do. Searching out those reasons might reveal that the response is conditioned by factors we do not consider relevant to aesthetic judgment, but it may
also reveal that there is an aesthetic experience publicly available through the object and its features that is worth pursuing.

It is small help just to know what another group is likely to enjoy, in order to really communicate with them about the aesthetic dimension of our lives we need to explore their reasons and see if they take up features of the object in a way that we too can make sense of. Holding the standards and judgments of others up to our own experience of things is the beginning of understanding and entering into different viewpoints for ourselves. I think doing this is a sign of taking those viewpoints seriously, as the art critic who holds the established standards up to her own sense for what should be valued is taking the artworld more seriously than the critic who accepts those standards without critical reflection just because they are well established. For this reason, I prefer the second option for endorsing the accepted standards of the artworld, where this acceptance depends on how they fare in relation to one’s own sense of what is valuable. Since the value of artworks ultimately rests on the value of having rich and rewarding aesthetic experiences, it is appropriate for this assessment to draw upon one’s own sense for which artworks merit that sort of response at some point. We have come around again to Beardsley’s position, although this time we know it is misguided to look for general rules in our efforts to justify aesthetic claims of merit.

For Margolis this could just mean something he already appears to accept: most of our aesthetic judgments are appreciative, and are made with a lower expectation of being found reasonable than evaluative judgments. He argues we only expect appreciative judgments to be reasonable in the sense that they meet the minimal requirements of being coherent with our own history of likes and dislikes, and not relying on straightforward mistakes either about the object’s non-aesthetic properties, or its historical circumstances. There does seem to be some truth to his observation that we are often content to leave disputes with, ‘Well, we just appreciate things differently.’ Judgments about what is sensually gratifying are certainly like this (for example, if you ‘just like’ feeling scared, and I ‘just do not’, this
could peacefully explain the difference that you like horror movies and I do not). Sometimes these differences are surprising, but usually we take them to indicate personal idiosyncrasies that might be fortunate or regrettable for one or either of us, but not right or wrong. When our differences are at this level they are understandable in the sense that there is nothing to *not* understand about them, they are not under a demand to ‘make sense’ beyond meeting Margolis’ minimal requirements for reasonableness.

But there are many appreciative judgments that do engage imaginative, intellectual and emotional capacities we expect others to be able to exercise with us. Margolis’ minimal constraints on reasonableness leave open quite a range of ‘reasonable’ appreciative judgments, some of which we might want to challenge as not as on-track, perceptive, insightful, well-rounded or sharp as others. I may produce a judgment that is not mistaken in relation to general facts about the work’s origins or its non-aesthetic features and is in line with my own taste, which you nevertheless consider to be wayward, indulgent, obscuring, presumptuous, or misguided in some way. It is tempting to stress the presence of personal differences and faultless disagreement when faced with the theoretical and practical difficulties of defending judgments of appreciation, but I think a large part of the aesthetic discussions we have in our daily lives center on (perhaps frustrated) attempts to challenge and vindicate this sort of appreciative judgment. Perhaps we will have to give up the idea that there is anything really at stake in such discussions beyond faultless personal differences, or try to construe what is at stake in some less obvious way (such as Harrison’s idea that our commitment is really to a project of converting others). But I believe we shouldn’t do so without repeated attempts to see how we *can* challenge and defend appreciative judgments in ways that go beyond questioning whether they meet Margolis’ minimal requirements for reasonableness, just as it seems we so often try to do. To give up on our ability to dispute appreciative judgments as more perceptive, insightful or on-track than others would silence a lively part of aesthetic discourse that demands more of us than mere curiosity or tolerance of
others, a kind of discourse that puts rational pressure on us to try to enter into and understand how others see the world.

In the coming chapters I will use Kant’s account of judgments of beauty as a starting place for discussing disagreement about appreciative judgments that we do think others ought to share, not as a matter of statistical generalizations (either about the object or the audience), but as a matter of feeling a pleasure we believe the object ought to elicit in others. Kant’s account will point us towards the importance of the first person perspective for grounding this kind of judgment, which will go on to play a central role in the arguments I give for how we should respond to disagreement about beauty.
Chapter Three: Kant and the Free Play

The aim of my project is to argue that a rational response to disagreement about beauty can remain steadfast (maintaining confidence in one’s judgment) due to the first personal nature of the grounds for this kind of judgment, while also actively engaging in an attempt to better understand the other’s perspective. Kant offers a fruitful starting place for this discussion, for he argues that the appropriate grounds for a judgment of beauty is essentially first personal (the feeling of a special kind of pleasure), and yet also universally valid, something we judge others ought to share.

The idea that a feeling of pleasure could itself carry the normative weight required to demand agreement from others isn’t an easy position to argue for. For this reason, I will discuss how we should understand Kant’s claim that the pleasure of beauty is an awareness of a ‘free play’ between the imagination and the understanding. I will defend Allison’s view that we should take this pleasure to be an evaluative faculty in its own right, one that assesses how well or poorly the mental activity in response to a given representation is going.

Next I will address the problem that Kant appears to endorse a narrow idea of what can inspire the free play and thus, the pleasure of beauty. If Kant’s account only applies to a small range of things we call beautiful (such as configurations of black and white lines), this would make it difficult to bring him into a contemporary discussion about aesthetic judgments and disagreement. However, I will argue that we can retain Kant’s central idea that the free play responds to the form of an aesthetic object while accepting a wide range of things as potentially beautiful, basically any kind of experience that involves growth and complexity, including those that develop emotional qualities. My argument will draw upon Allison’s efforts to broaden Kant’s formalism, Dewey’s account of aesthetic experience, and Kant’s own work on appreciating the aesthetic ideas expressed by artworks.
Next I will turn to the lessons we can draw from Kant that are specifically related to responding to disagreement. The first lesson is that disagreement about beauty will naturally lead us to wonder if the pleasure that grounds our judgment is really an awareness of the free play. This seems like a heavily introspective response, little connected to the lively discussions about the object itself we would expect to follow disagreement. I will argue that paying attention to the pleasure that grounds our judgments should actually lead us back into the aesthetic experience it is responding to, rather than away from it into some kind of separable ‘gush’ of feeling.

The second lesson is that learning to become a better aesthetic judge is a matter of learning how to make judgments that are properly grounded on one’s own feeling of pleasure or displeasure. As such, we shouldn’t assume that setting aside our own feelings and deferring to the opinions of others, even experts, is always going to be helpful for those starting out (this could actually show a confusion about the kind of judgment one is learning to make). What is more important is to take others’ advice into one’s first personal experience of the object and see if something changes in the feeling that appropriately grounds such judgments. This requires a kind of humility, but also a kind of confidence in one’s own response, and a good teacher will be able to assess which one needs to be encouraged in a beginner. I relate this lesson to Kant’s comments about the difference between succession and imitation – an artist (or person exercising taste) can learn from the example of others, but by re-creating their methods or grounds for themselves, rather than simply imitating them.

3.1 The Aesthetic Nature of Judgments of Beauty and Speaking in a Universal Voice

In Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment* he makes a strong claim that it is possible to make judgments of aesthetic feeling that require or demand the agreement of others. He claims that judgments of beauty “lay claim to necessity and say, not that everyone does so judge – that would
make their explanation a task for empirical psychology – but that everyone ought to so judge”. The question, as far as Kant is concerned, is not whether we do or will both find the musical drones or other objects beautiful, but should I find the music beautiful if I take myself to speak on behalf of every judging subject. Kant believes that when we are solely concerned with an object’s beauty we speak with a universal voice, which is to say we think that anyone else standing in our shoes ought to feel the same way in response to the object. When judging beauty,

One wants to submit the object to his own eyes, just as if his satisfaction depended on sensation; and yet, if one calls the object beautiful, one believes oneself to have a universal voice, and lays claim to the consent of everyone, whereas any private sensation would be decisive only for him alone”.

He considers speaking in a universal voice to be an essential part of what it means to call something beautiful: “one cannot say, ‘Everyone has his special taste.’ This would be as much as to say that there is no taste at all, i.e., no aesthetic judgment that could make a rightful claim to the assent of everyone.”

I agree with Kant that judgments of beauty are spoken in a universal voice, offered as intersubjectively valid. For instance, when I consider a blanket of freshly fallen snow in the moonlight, and turn to my partner looking for him to agree with me that it is beautiful, I would not just be puzzled if he disagrees, as I am by his preference for drinking hot water. How each of us likes our water is happily accepted as a personal quirk, but the beauty of the snow is not just an idiosyncratic feeling of mine. Nor is it a claim about the peculiarities of a certain kind of audience. I take it as something there to be seen in the scene before us, publicly accessible by others who care to look (possibly in combination with learning more and looking again). In other words, the claim is not merely a statement of empirical fact about myself – ‘this pleases me’ – it is normative, demanding this response ought to be elicited by the object so long as one is not letting something get in the way.

43 CJ, 20:239.
44 CJ, 5:216.
45 CJ, 5:213.
The example I gave illustrates Kant’s point that there is an important difference between making a judgment of beauty that ought to be valid for other judges and merely stating that something pleases an individual. Kant contrasts judgments of beauty with what he calls the agreeable – the kind of aesthetic pleasure that is available to us through the gratification of the senses.\footnote{CJ, 5:205.} Kant does not think we are inclined to demand that others agree with us about what is sensuously pleasurable, for we recognize that differences at the level of sensory operation might lead us to enjoy different sensations (the taste of olives, the extreme heat of hot tubs, and being tickled, are all sensations that may faultlessly be delightful to some and awful to others). These likes and dislikes are empirical facts about us and cannot be judged correct or incorrect; in these cases “to each his own” is an appropriate attitude to take.\footnote{As we have seen, Aiken (1950) would call these reports of satisfaction ‘intrinsic judgments of aesthetic value’ and believes we only seek to go beyond them by making predictive judgments about who and how many will actually respond with pleasure to an aesthetic object. However, for reasons I presented in the last chapter I think we should carry on past this potential stopping point for understanding what is at stake in aesthetic judgments generally. CJ, 5:207.} In contrast, judgments of beauty carry a normative force that extends to everyone.

By carrying normative force, aesthetic claims are similar to moral judgments, yet Kant also distinguishes judgments of beauty from claims about what is morally good. Kant defines the good as that which “pleases by means of reason alone, through the mere concept.” A concept is necessary, for “[i]n order to find something good, I must always know what sort of thing the object is supposed to be”.\footnote{Ibid, 5:204.} Kant claims the pleasure we take in recognizing the goodness of things follows a judgment that is made by applying a concept of what the thing should be, without any reference to feeling. Kant is quite clear that to be \textit{aesthetic}, judgments must not be based upon the application of a concept to the object, but solely upon a feeling of pleasure or displeasure in the subject that is elicited by the object’s representation.\footnote{Sometimes we can integrate a judgment of beauty with a judgment that an object is a good specimen of the kind of thing it is (Kant thinks we can do this for human beauty, for instance). He calls these adherent judgments of beauty (5:229). But if we are concerned with \textit{pure} judgments of beauty, it does not matter to our judgment whether the object is a good example of its kind, or good for some practical or moral purpose.}
The aesthetic nature of judgments of beauty means that beauty is not recognized by applying a rule; there is no concept ‘beauty’ that we use to compare objects and decide which ones fit and which do not. For Kant, concepts are rules for cognition that are present either a priori or learned empirically; a priori concepts of the understanding, such as unity and causality, make experience of objects possible in the first place, and empirical concepts allow us to find systematic order within the wealth of detail we encounter in empirical experience. By applying concepts we gain information about a shared world, such as what a thing is, how many there are, and whether it has to be like that necessarily or not. But this sort of information does not encompass or inform us about how we will feel in relation to the objects known, and Kant maintains there are no inferences that take us from applying concepts to feeling a certain way about the object.\(^5\) According to Kant, we know an object is beautiful by the immediate feeling of pleasure we get from direct experience of it, not from drawing comparisons and similarities between it and other things, or by noting key features it shares with all other beautiful things. We may be able to say something beautiful falls within the class of all other particular things that have led to this kind of pleasure without saying anything further about commonalities or differences – but what kind of concept or rule would this be? If we consider concepts to be the sort of thing for which we can identify necessary and sufficient conditions, it is understandable that Kant stops short of calling beauty a concept.\(^5\)

Because there is no concept for determining what is beautiful, Kant argues there can be no principle of taste, no “fundamental proposition under the condition of which one could subsume the concept of an object and then by means of an inference conclude that it is beautiful.” Continuing this point, Kant thinks such a thing is “absolutely impossible. For I must be sensitive to the pleasure

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\(^5\) Kant holds that “no transition from cognition to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure takes place through concepts of objects … and one thus cannot expect to determine a priori the influence that a given representation has on the mind” (CJ, 20:229).

\(^5\) We could choose to extend the meaning of concept to include “aesthetic concepts” for which necessary and sufficient conditions cannot in principle be found, as argued by Sibley (1959), and I don’t think this would interfere with the point Kant is trying to make by denying that beauty is a concept.
immediately in the representation of it, and I cannot be talked into it by means of any proofs.”⁵² A rose may fail to inspire, a sunset may be dull. Beyond knowing what sort of thing an object is, we have to look for ourselves and see whether this particular whatever-it-is is beautiful. So it is not by applying concepts and gaining more thorough or sophisticated cognitive knowledge of an object that I arrive at a judgment of beauty. No matter how exhaustively I can detail what a thing is I will not, by that sort of activity alone, discover how I feel about it.

How can we attribute universal validity to a connection between a representation and a feeling that does not actually give us any knowledge of the object’s properties? Kant answers this challenge in the third Critique by drawing a tight connection between the feeling that grounds judgments of beauty and the power of judgment that plays an important role in cognition. In the first chapter I touched on Kant’s observation in the first Critique that cognition must involve a faculty for fitting particulars to rules (concepts) that is not itself governed by further rules.⁵³ Kant considers cognition of objects to be a process employing three faculties of mind: understanding (supplies the concepts) imagination (synthesizes the manifold of sensation so there is something to apply concepts to) and judgment (fits manifolds with concepts, facilitating transactions from imagination to understanding or vice versa). The faculty of judgment has two directions for finding a fit between the imagination and understanding, in determining judgments it applies a concept of the understanding to a manifold synthesized by imagination, whereas in reflecting judgments it takes the manifold to the understanding in search of a concept to apply (a process that is important for facilitating learning empirical concepts from experience).⁵⁴

At some point, judgment must feel its way rather than be guided by the explicit direction of rules or else it will always need a further rule determining how it should follow the last one. For this

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⁵³ Critique of Pure Reason, A133/B172.
⁵⁴ For a brief overview of this breakdown of the cognitive faculties, see CJ, 20:220.
reason, Kant identifies a power of judgment that evaluates the aptness of concepts for experienced particulars through feeling as a necessary condition for the possibility of cognition. Kant writes that in the power of judgment understanding and imagination are considered in relation to each other, and this can, to be sure, first be considered objectively, as belonging to cognition . . . but one can also consider this relation of two faculties of cognition merely subjectively, insofar as one helps or hinders the other in the very same representation and thereby affects the state of mind, and [is] therefore a relation which is sensitive (which is not the case in the separate use of any other faculty of cognition).  

The power of judgment evaluates the fit between a concept and an experienced particular by a sensitivity to whether the interaction between understanding and imagination is going well or poorly. It is important to emphasize that the sensitivity of the power of judgment does evaluative cognitive work that is critical for our ability to subsume particulars under concepts and is not a normatively neutral response that is simply triggered or not triggered by something in experience. As Allison remarks, the feeling “is not a mere receptivity, but an active faculty, indeed a faculty of appraisal.” And what is judged or appraised “is the capacity of the representation to occasion an enhancement or diminution of one’s cognitive faculties in their cooperative activity.”  

Although the sensitivity or feeling at work in the power of judgment is not itself a rule, as are the concepts found and applied to particulars, it is nevertheless a feeling for rules and so it must work the same way for everyone. The only thing that comes close to a rule employed by the power of judgment (rather than one found by it in the understanding) is a regulative principle that governs its own activity, not one that governs how things are in the world.  

Kant calls this a ‘principle of purposiveness’ that gives judgment the aim of bringing about a purposeful and productive activity between the understanding and imagination for bringing concepts and particulars together. Without knowing for sure that cognition will be successful in a possibly chaotic empirical world (we do not possess any a priori concept that

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56 Allison (2001), 69.
57 The special principle of the power of judgment “must not be derived from concepts a priori; for they belong to the understanding, and the power of judgment is concerned only with their application. It therefore has to provide a concept itself, through which no thing is actually cognized, but which only serves as a rule for it” (5:169).
constrains the world to an orderly empirical system) the power of judgment works toward cognition with a built-in expectation or hope that concepts and particulars will fit together and give us empirical experience that is orderly and comprehensible.\textsuperscript{58}

How does the power of judgment and its feeling for purposive cognitive life help us understand aesthetic judgments? As I outlined in the previous chapter, one way Kant’s account of judgment is helpful is by loosening up our sense of what can stand behind a claim for agreement. If a universally shareable (sometimes Kant uses the term ‘communicable’) feeling is a crucial part of applying concepts and rules, then it is easier to accept a rule-like feeling as justification for applying terms and making evaluations in aesthetics that we cannot justify by stating rules with necessary and sufficient conditions. For instance, for many aesthetic terms such as ‘delicacy’ I may not be able to give necessary and sufficient conditions for application (as argued by Sibley), but I may exercise a sensitivity in responding to a given representation that leads me to use ‘delicate’ for a flower, and not a concrete slab.\textsuperscript{59} Kant’s discussion of the power of judgment is helpful because it points out that even if I did have necessary and sufficient conditions for applying terms like ‘delicate’ (making it a bona fide concept) my correct application of the rule to the flower would be made possible by a rule-like feeling of fit between the concept and the particular, a feeling of fit that must operate in a similar way for others who are able to use the concept as I do. Possessing concepts does not relieve us of the need for an intersubjectively shareable or communicable sensitivity to orderedness or appropriateness, using concepts and rules actually always relies on such a sensitivity.

The power of judgment sets the stage for Kant to introduce the idea that sometimes a representation will prompt a reflective activity between the understanding and imagination that does not have the explicit purpose of cognizing a property of the object, or applying a concept that notices

\textsuperscript{58} See for example CJ, 5:184: “Now this transcendental concept of a purposiveness of nature is neither a concept of nature nor a concept of freedom, since it attributes nothing at all to the object (of nature), but rather only represents the unique way in which we must proceed in reflection on the objects of nature with the aim of a thoroughly interconnected experience, consequently it is a subjective principle (maxim) for the power of judgment”.

\textsuperscript{59} Sibley (1959).
similarities between it and other things. When we encounter something beautiful, “The powers of cognition that are set into play by this representation are hereby in a free play, since no determinate concept restricts them to a particular rule of cognition.”60 Usually the determining or reflective activity of the power of judgment results in cognitive judgments that provide information about objects – tall, round, two, baseball bat – but beautiful things also inspire reflective activity that lingers in the purposiveness and life that belongs to mental activity and the power of judgment generally.61 For this reason the free play, and hence the object’s beauty, is not recognized by subsuming the faculties’ activity under a particular concept (say, a concept of the ‘free play’), for that would make it a determinate judgment and no longer free. Rather, we become aware of the indeterminate reflective activity of the free play only by a feeling of this cognitive state.

Kant uses the universal validity we must attribute to the activity of judgment in regular cognition to argue for the universal validity of the feeling by which we become aware of the free play and judge something beautiful. For Kant, the role universally valid feelings of reflective judgment play in regular cognition shows that a feeling of reflective judgment can carry universal validity, even in the case of the free play where cognition of the object is not the purpose of the reflective activity. For example, Kant writes

The subjective universal communicability of the kind of representation in a judgment of taste, since it is supposed to occur without presupposing a determinate concept, can be nothing other than the state of mind in the free play of the imagination and the understanding (so far as they agree with each other as is requisite for cognition in general): for we are conscious that this subjective relation suited to cognition in general must be valid for everyone and consequently universally communicable, just as any determinate cognition is, which still always rests on that relation as its subjective condition.62

60 CJ, 5:217.
61 Kant claims that “taste, as a subjective power of judgment, contains a principle of subsumption, not of intuitions under concepts, but of the faculty of intuitions or presentations (i.e., of the imagination) under the faculty of concepts (i.e., the understanding), insofar as the former in its freedom is in harmony with the latter in its lawfulness.” (CJ, 5:287)
62 Ibid., 5:218.
At the heart of Kant’s deduction for judgments of beauty is the claim that the free play has universal validity because a feeling of fit between concepts and particulars must have universal validity in regular cognition.

The basic structure of a transcendental deduction is to look for the a priori conditions that make a certain sort of judgment possible. For instance, in the first Critique Kant finds that unity and causation are concepts we must possess a priori because they are necessary conditions for the possibility of experiencing objects and making judgments about them, as we all routinely do. The deduction for judgments of beauty looks for the a priori conditions that make it possible for us to judge through a subjective feeling of pleasure that this pleasure ought to be shared by everyone.63

Kant finds the possibility of such judgments to depend upon the power of judgment having an a priori principle regulating its activity that sets the goal of feeling out a productive relation between imagination and understanding for applying concepts, a relation that must be universally valid for all cognizers and hence provides a subjective condition for the possibility of cognition in general. Kant uses the term ‘common sense’ to refer to these subjective conditions.64 These a priori conditions, or common sense, make it possible for us to claim that others ought to agree with our judgments of beauty, so long as we correctly take our feeling to be “the effect of the free play of our cognitive powers.”65 Kant summarizes the deduction as asserting “only that we are justified in presupposing universally in every human being the same subjective conditions of the power of judgment that we find in ourselves; and then only if we have correctly subsumed the given object under these conditions.”66

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63 Here is Kant’s own characterization of the question driving the deduction: “How is a judgment possible which, merely from one’s own feeling of pleasure in an object, independent of its concept, judges this pleasure, as attached to the representation of the same object in every other subject, a priori, i.e., without having to wait for the assent of others?” (CJ, 5:289)
64 It is an interpretive issue whether Kant takes there to be two separate common senses at work in regular cognition and aesthetic judgment, or whether there is a single common sense that accounts for the purposive relation between imagination and understanding in both kinds of cognitive activity. For discussion, see Longuenesse (2006), 286-289, and Allison (2001), Chapter 7.
65 CJ, 5:238.
66 CJ, 5:290.
3.2 The Free Play as an Active Faculty of Evaluation

The most important idea I will draw from Kant is that beauty engages our cognitive faculties in a free play, a mental activity that has ties to our general ability to organize our experience and make sense of a shared world. But what exactly happens in a free play of the cognitive faculties, what sort of mental activity is this? Rogerson considers several options for how we can understand the activity of the free play in his book *The Problem of Free Harmony in Kant’s Aesthetics*. While I won’t look at Rogerson’s own positive account here, I am going to consider the misgivings he presents for Allison’s interpretation, since it is the view I find most attractive at present. Rogerson’s criticisms will help us to clarify the kind of evaluation the free play is supposed to carry out – does this feeling measure the efficiency with which a manifold can be subsumed for cognition? Can we understand it in a way that explains why only some, and not all, objects are found beautiful? I will address these questions after giving an initial sketch of how I would elaborate Allison’s idea of the free play as an active faculty of appraisal.

First, let’s hear Allison on the kind of feeling the pleasure of the free play is: “it seems clear that Kant understands by pleasure and displeasure something like a sense of the increase or diminution of one’s level of activity, particularly one’s activity as a thinking being.”67 If the pleasure (or displeasure) that grounds aesthetic judgments is a feeling of the level of activity in one’s mental life, the feeling cannot be considered a “mere receptivity” but carries an evaluation of how the cognitive faculties are working together, whether they are enhancing or diminishing one another in their activity.

There are likely many ways we could think of this enhancement or diminution, but for now I will offer the idea that both faculties can offer too much or too little to the other; the generality offered by the understanding could be too rigid, shutting down opportunities the imagination may have in synthesizing the particular details and qualities of the manifold, or the understanding may not provide

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67 Allison (2001), 69.
enough order to stimulate further inspiration for synthesis (taking the model of personal creativity, sometimes limiting our options prompts the most original ideas). In its turn, imagination could provide such a ferment of activity in synthesis that generality can’t easily step in to give guidance, or the synthesis of imagination may be too sparse for generality to have much to organize. However we think of the mutual enhancement or diminution of the faculties, Allison points out that the faculty of appraisal through feeling and judgment “must be viewed as intimately linked in the judgment of taste; for whereas it is judgment that reflects, that is, compares, it is feeling that appraises the results of this reflective activity.”

We might wonder exactly how intimate the link between felt appraisal and the reflective work of judgment is. Should we think of this feeling as merely a sort of psychological cheerleader reacting to the ups and downs of mental life from the sidelines? Just as cheers from the sidelines are not required to know who is winning if the scoreboard is turned on, the evaluative feeling seems to play a perfunctory role when productive mental activity is indicated by coming to a predicative judgment (and indeed, we usually do not notice how the work of judgment feels in everyday cognitive life). However, when the scoreboard is turned off and the game is just for fun, the sound of the cheers may take on new importance for reporting amazing plays or blown chances – similarly, the evaluative feeling takes center stage for our awareness of purposive mental activity when that activity lingers in

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68 We can find support for this kind of description of the free play in Kant’s discussion of the interaction between taste and genius in producing beautiful artwork. Taste is the ability to judge beauty, whereas genius is the capacity to produce aesthetic ideas and express them in beautiful artworks (CJ, 5:311). Kant writes that “Taste, like the power of judgment in general, is the discipline (or corrective) of genius, clipping its wings and making it well behaved or polished; but at the same time it gives genius guidance as to where and how far it should extend itself if it is to remain purposive; and by introducing clarity and order into the abundance of thoughts it makes the ideas tenable, capable of an enduring and universal approval” (CJ, 5:319). Although Kant is describing the process of creating beautiful artworks here, it gives us an insight into the kind of relation between the imagination (the faculty responsible for the overflowing thought of aesthetic ideas) and understanding that leads to a harmonious free play. We could imagine an object inspiring a free play that fails to remain purposive, perhaps because not enough “clarity and order” is prompted to make the activity of the imagination “tenable”. Allison (2001), 70.

70 In the Introduction to the third Critique, Kant comments on how the pleasure associated with attaining the end of cognizing an orderly world has diminished in the ordinariness of everyday life: “To be sure, we no longer detect any noticeable pleasure in the comprehensibility of nature … by means of which alone empirical concepts are possible … but it must certainly have been there in its time, and only because the most common experience would not be possible without it has it gradually become mixed up with mere cognition and is no longer specially noticed.” (5:188)
itself, answering only to the general conditions of cognition and not a specific task (‘let’s not play a
game, let’s just play’). I think such a reading is suggested by passages such as,

Now the judgment of taste, however, determines the object, independently of concepts, with
regard to satisfaction and the predicate of beauty. Thus that subjective unity of the relation can
make itself known only through sensation. … Of course, an objective relation can only be
thought, but insofar as it is subjective as far as its conditions are concerned it can still be sensed
in its effect on the mind; and further, in the case of a relation that is not grounded in any
concept (like that of the powers of representation to a faculty of cognition in general), no other
consciousness of it is possible except through sensation of the effect that consists in the
facilitated play of both powers of the mind (imagination and understanding), enlivened through
mutual agreement.71

Here Kant claims that we are aware of the activity between the faculties in regular cognition both by
the thought of their objective relation, and by sensing “its effect on the mind”, whereas in the case of
the free play of beauty we are only aware of it by the sensation of its effect.

However, this strictly cheerleader role for a felt appraisal of mental activity is strained when we
think about other places evaluative feeling comes into Kant’s account of judgment. We have already
seen that he is open to the idea that at some point judgment comes down to a felt appraisal that a
particular fits a rule in order to avoid a regress of rules for applying rules. This can’t just be a feeling
that looks on, as it were, while a good fit is found between imagination and understanding through
some other means (presumably another rule), for then it wouldn’t help us avoid the regress.

To help avoid the regress, the felt appraisal for how reflection is going actually has to do some
work, the reflective activity of the faculties must be responsive to the feeling in some way. My present
strategy for making sense of this idea is by thinking of the felt appraisal along the lines of the responses
‘hot’ and ‘cold’ in a guessing game – it doesn’t help with the reflective work of judgment (just as
saying ‘cold’ doesn’t offer the next suggestion) but indicates that activity is going in a more or less
promising direction. In the guessing game we ask ‘am I getting closer to the answer?’ whereas in

reflection the question is, ‘is this mental activity getting more harmonious and productive?’ and an evaluative feeling answers.

In fact, the felt appraisal has to be capable of delivering more than a general thumbs up or thumbs down to the activity of the faculties; to really be able to stop the regress for the case of regular cognition it has to indicate a stopping point, a point at which the mental activity is not only heading in a harmonious direction but has arrived at the right rule for subsuming the particular. A different sort of stopping point must be felt to arrive in the case of the free play – this will not be a stopping point at which the mental activity ends because the appropriate rule has been found, but a feeling that indicates the on-going mental activity is exemplary of purposive reflective activity itself (the general conditions for that activity serve as the ‘appropriate rule’).

Rogerson terms Allison’s approach the ‘precognitive’ interpretation of the free play. On Rogerson’s description, this approach holds that Aesthetic contemplation and ordinary empirical judgments are similar in that both are concerned with finding rule orderedness in a manifold. The difference between the two is that aesthetic contemplation is concerned with orderedness per se while an empirical judgment is further interested in determining a similarity with other objects.\textsuperscript{72}

On this presentation of the view, the felt appraisal of judgment always does the same task: find orderedness in a representation that could serve the application of rules, it is just that when we are concerned with beauty we don’t carry through and finish the job of actually applying whatever rule the felt appraisal would prime us to find. ‘Finishing the job’ would involve taking the orderedness found in a manifold and comparing it to the orderedness of other examples to find similarities that would provide a basis for applying a concept. According to Rogerson, this means that on Allison’s account, the main difference between aesthetic and empirical judgments is just the absence or presence of looking for comparisons between the present case and others. ‘This seems to imply that we could very well say that an aesthetic object displays a rule orderedness; it’s just that we are not concerned as to

\textsuperscript{72} Rogerson (2009), 15.
whether or not that rule is instantiated anywhere else. For all we know or care, the ‘rule’ could be uniquely instantiated in the case we are presently observing.” 73

Rogerson’s criticism of the ‘precognitive’ interpretation of the free play is that it does not draw a great enough difference between aesthetic and empirical judgments. “It seems entirely possible that we could consider any object ‘aesthetically’ and that any object could suit Kant’s free harmony requirement.” 74 It seems quite possible to consider the rule-orderedness of any old object “in abstraction from our knowledge of whether this rule is multiply instantiated or not.” And if so, “Kant loses the distinction between ordinary objects and special aesthetic objects that the free harmony criteria seems to establish.” To press the problem even further, Rogerson is worried that “if any object could be considered aesthetically, in the fashion suggested, it is not obvious how one would distinguish between good aesthetic objects and those not so good.” 75

I think Rogerson’s worries can be dispelled by bringing a few subtleties of Allison’s view to light, and in the process, give as a clearer idea of the free play as a faculty of evaluation. Let’s start with the worry that on Allison’s view everything will turn out beautiful. Any object can be considered insofar as it exhibits rule orderedness as a single instance, without drawing comparisons to other cases, and so if this cognitive attitude is equated with a free harmonious play of the mental faculties (and its pleasure), everything would turn out to be beautiful. In addition, this would mean the potential for aesthetic pleasure is constant and doesn’t vary between objects, leaving us without a way of distinguishing between better and worse. However, I think we can understand the lack of comparison highlighted by Allison’s view as a matter of finding a sense of orderedness that could not be anticipated according to the rules and concepts we have ready for determinate judgments. So it is not just that we are unconcerned with the comparisons needed for cognition (which we could apply to any object), but that the orderedness we find in a beautiful object is in excess of those comparisons, it cannot be fully

73 Ibid., 15.
74 Ibid., 16.
75 Ibid, 16.
captured by the rules we have. This means there is something more to finding a free harmonious play of the mental faculties than simply abstracting from the comparisons we could make.

To carry this point further, Allison points out that Kant appears to have a three-value aesthetic system, which means we can make negative, neutral and positive aesthetic judgments.76 The term ‘free play’ is used to describe the cognitive attitude of finding the rule orderedness a manifold exhibits as a single instance, without looking for comparisons that would bring us to apply a certain concept – but this attitude can find manifolds differently disposed for producing lively, harmonious mental activity. Sometimes when we try testing an object for the free play it affords, we find a jarring, uneven, or frustrating result and judge the representation to be ugly. Other times the free play may be simply uninspiring, nothing puts up resistance to finding order but the order found is not very stimulating. Finally we may find that objects offer a free play that is lively and endlessly engaging in its search for orderedness – these things we judge to be beautiful.

It is important to note that a ‘lively and endlessly engaging’ activity does not seem to be required for quick and smooth cognitive judgments. The productivity of the cognitive faculties when they are working to bring a particular under a determinate concept is ideally efficient, and this efficiency may be what we mean when we say the faculties are in harmony in the case of reaching a cognitive judgment. If so, we must mean something different by ‘harmony’ in the case of the free play of beauty, or else Rogerson’s worry will haunt us: even without looking for comparisons that would facilitate applying a concept, if the harmony brought about in free reflective activity is a matter of finding order that would make for efficient cognition, any manifold that can be easily brought under a concept will be harmonious in free reflection and found to be beautiful.77 Not only would this lead to

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76 See Allison (2001), 71-72.
77 If the harmony of the free play is judged in relation to how quickly or smoothly the representation could be subsumed under particular concepts, we also get the problem that this would provide a rule for judging which things are beautiful, and a rule that gives counter-intuitive results to boot. Easily cognizable representations, such as geometrical figures, may have no connection with what we find beautiful. Rogerson (2009) rightly levels these two criticisms against an ‘abstractive’
finding almost any empirical object beautiful, the reason for it does not look right: the beauty of a rose seems to have nothing to do with how smoothly or easily it can be classified as that kind of flower.\textsuperscript{78}

In light of this, the productivity of the cognitive faculties in a free play must not be judged on the standard of efficiency (alone, at least). If we return to the suggestion I offered for thinking about how the understanding and imagination might enhance or inhibit their mutual activity, there is something besides efficiency that could count as a harmony of the faculties: finding a rich and stimulating balance between the resources offered by each. This sort of harmony would be much rarer than efficiently subsuming a particular under a concept, for the latter might be due to the fact that synthesizing the manifold does not yield very elaborate or complex material for the understanding to take up.\textsuperscript{79}

It should be noted that Kant rarely indicates there could be a free play that is not harmonious, and so to a certain extent Allison’s three-value aesthetic system has to be read into Kant’s view based upon a few comments. Still, I find Allison’s argument for the compatibility of the free play with a three-value system plausible. By responding to Rogerson’s criticisms, we have clarified that the free play is not evaluating the possibility of taking up a free reflective attitude towards different things (this is a constant possibility that is the same for everything), nor is it evaluating the ease with which an object can be brought under concepts (this differs, but does not track beauty). Instead, we can think of the free play as evaluating the richness, variety, spontaneity, playfulness, etc. in the activity the representation affords between the imagination and understanding in their search for order and sense, a harmony that is in excess of that required and accounted for by cognizing it.

\textsuperscript{78} There is a pleasure Kant believes is connected to the reflective use of judgment when it efficiently finds a concept for a particular, particularly when this occurs as a surprise when we are first learning a new way of classifying and finding order. He holds that pleasure is always produced by achieving an aim, and this applies to achieving cognitive aims as well. However, he thinks the pleasure of successful reflective judgment fades as use of a concept or hierarchy becomes routine and we stop noticing it as a surprising accomplishment. (5:187)

\textsuperscript{79} The ideas in this section about how to understand the harmony of the faculties in the free play of beauty are indebted to conversations with Ulrich Schloesser.
Now that we have a view in hand about the nature of the free play, we can assess the tools Kant offers for thinking about how to rationally respond to disagreement about beauty. What kinds of mistakes should we suspect at least one of us has made, and how do we recognize our fallibility in learning to improve as aesthetic judges? Before answering these questions we need to consider two problems that would appear to limit the usefulness of Kant’s ideas for talking about disagreement. The first is that he appears to set peculiar limitations on what features of an object or experience can be relevant to its beauty (his ‘perceptual formalism’). The second is that Kant’s emphasis on pleasure encourages the idea that responding to disagreement will largely be a matter of introspectively scrutinizing the nature of one’s feeling, to the detriment of a broader range of critical concerns with the object itself.

I will address both of these concerns, but the second is particularly important for the coming conversation about disagreement. This is because it raises a question about the relationship between the first and third person perspectives in responding to disagreement, which will be a central concern for the view I go on to develop. One of the main tools Kant offers for responding to disagreement is to think about the nature of the pleasure felt and its source in either interested or disinterested attention to the object. How helpful such thinking can be for epistemic revision will depend upon how we conceive of the pleasure of the free play. If we think of it as a sort of inert raw feel, it does not seem like we will get very much out of continuing to place importance on close attention to the pleasure itself. The task of guiding our revisions of confidence will fall to other considerations, such as third personal assessments of our track records for correctly identifying these kinds of pleasures without letting ‘polluting’ factors get in the way. But, if the pleasure is responsive to and woven within a dynamic, growing experience of an object, I will suggest that paying attention to it can involve an active first
personal engagement with the object that leads to new confirmations, insights and corrections to our judgment.

I will support the importance of thinking about the pleasure of the free play in the second way with the help of a few ideas from Dewey’s aesthetics that will continue to be referenced throughout the project. It is appropriate to bring Dewey into the conversation at this point, because we would expect expanding Kant’s formalism to bring his view into closer contact with wider ranging accounts of aesthetic experience such as Dewey’s, according to whom things like eating a good meal and playing a board game can be experiences that have important aesthetic qualities (even if his main concern is not with beauty). It will also give us the chance later on to refocus what I think we should retain from Kant’s account after all this expanding and updating, why it is important to keep talking about judgments that could be right or wrong and not just about experiences that can grow in more or less rewarding and intelligent directions.

The first barrier to finding Kant useful for a discussion about responding to disagreement is that his view can be taken to cover a rather narrow slice of the things we find beautiful. Notoriously, there are places in the third Critique where Kant offers quite specific ideas about the formal properties pure judgments of beauty can take up: composition of line and shape is allowed, while the mere ‘charms’ of colour and emotion are not. The idea is that iron clad universal validity can only be had if our judgments respond to properties everyone can be expected to cognize the same a priori – which means no empirical habits, experiences, or anything else that might be different between people can contribute to the source of the free play. Emotions and colour experiences are influenced by empirical factors – different temperaments and sensory sensitivities – so they cannot be properties of a representation that inspire a truly universally valid feeling of indeterminately active mental life.

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80 CJ, 5:225.
Kant wouldn’t be much of a springboard for discussing disagreement if it turned out that on his view we can only really disagree about the beauty of black and white compositions of line. Such a perceptual formalism also flies in the face of the intuitive importance color and emotion have for many experiences of beauty. Mothersill captures the problem by suggesting that if the free play was strictly a matter of taking up the visual elements of a representation a priori, it would be a ‘mindless’ mental activity and pleasure. It would lack any connection to the thoughts, feelings and memories that provide meaning in our experiences. She clarifies the concern that if we are required to cut out all contingent associations from our aesthetic response there will be nothing left over (in contrast to the ethical case where cutting away personal associations at least leaves us with the commands of duty).81

I am not as dissatisfied with the idea of such ‘empty’ pleasure as Mothersill. After all, on Kant’s picture, we would still be left with the hum of free, purposive mental activity and the pleasure of having our general drive to find the world meaningful met with striking (if indeterminate) gusto by the object. The principle of the power of judgment to find the world purposive for mental activity is what is left over when associations are stripped away, akin to the commands of duty. Mothersill has not shown anything incoherent about the idea of a free play arising just from the purposiveness of mental life we have a priori and the bare visual elements of a representation.

The more worrying problem is that it looks like we never run across this kind of response to an aesthetic object in reality, we are too thoroughly permeated by the empirical experiences and rhythms of our lives to ever see a clear bottom through the silt.82 This places on the side lines the question of whether there could be aesthetic responses that only depend on mental faculties we have a priori – we could talk more about it, but it wouldn’t really help us get a grip on the possibilities for

81 Mothersill (1984), 400. 82 For example, here is Dewey (1934) on the empirical associations we have just with lines: “lines express the ways in which things act upon one another and upon us … For this reason, lines are wavering, upright, oblique, crooked, majestic … The habitual properties of lines cannot be got rid of even in an experiment that endeavors to isolate the experience of lines from everything else. The properties of objects that lines define and of movements they relate are too deeply embedded.” (105)
intersubjectively valid judgments of beauty we actually make, which are unavoidably informed by empirical experience. As I see it, the problem with Kant’s view is not that he is saying something obviously wrong, but that he appears to have concerned himself with such a small slice – perhaps non-existent in actual fact – of aesthetic experience that he has removed himself from the conversation we wanted help with.

To get back into that conversation, the formalism required by the free play must be broadened beyond spatiotemporal patterns that have no connection with empirically gained meaning or concepts. This is a task shared by most commentators interested in making Kant relevant to present day aesthetics, and so there is already a well-beaten path to tread here. I will offer Allison’s brief and lucid argument for the two-part claim that there is an important formalism built into Kant’s account, but not one limited to spatiotemporal patterns:

[T]he connection with form follows directly from the reflective nature of the judgment of taste. Since the harmony of the faculties must be one in ‘mere reflection,’ the sensible data must provide something on which to reflect, and this can only consist in a certain order or arrangement, which counts as ‘form’ in Kant’s sense. For only such an order or arrangement of the sensible data (qua apprehended by the imagination) could be suitable for the exhibition of a concept (though no concept in particular). Consequently, only an engagement with form could occasion a free harmony of the faculties.83

I agree with Allison that Kant’s formalism is an integral part of his argument for the universal validity of judgments of beauty, but it only lays down the basic requirement that the free play must be engaged in making something of what is given in sensation, finding it meaningful in a way that can’t be captured by a determinate cognition. What the free play plays with, the matter that is formed, is only rejected as a source of beauty when considered in isolation from the ordering and arranging activity of reflection.84 Connections, interactions – these are the stuff of the imagination’s free play with the understanding, whether they are connections between elements of sense perception, intellectual ideas, emotional

83 Allison (2001), 288.
84 Here is Dewey (1934) making a similar point: “Qualities of sense, those of touch and taste as well as of sight and hearing, have esthetic quality. But they have it not in isolation but in their connections; as interacting, not as simple and separate entities.” (125)
developments, etc. This minimal formalism throws the doors wide open for what can be taken up and ordered by the imagination while still preserving the basic nature of the free play and its grounds for requiring universal agreement.

Why is it important to continue talking about Kant’s ‘formalism’ here? If we think of ‘formalism’ as contrasting with an idea of aesthetic experience that emphasizes content and cultural context, ‘formalism’ has lost much of its meaning, as such things are now up for grabs in the free play. However, talking about ‘engagement with form’ still brings out an important contrast between the pleasure of the free play and gushes of feeling that simply spill out upon encountering an object, without turning back to reconfigure or recast the object in a new light (for example, a lurch of disgust, a flash of panic, or an attack of giddiness). Talking of Kant’s ‘formalism’ reminds us that the free play feels as if it were making sense of some property of the object. Even if it is free of determining any particular property, the free play is still an awareness of an intelligent and active response to the relationship between parts and whole in an object’s form.

This contrast is important because we can learn a lot more about what might be going right or wrong with our judgment of beauty by scrutinizing an active, sense-making sort of feeling than we can from staring down a raw gush, and that could make a difference to the usefulness we attribute to paying close attention to the pleasure of beauty in responding to disagreement. Dewey’s account of aesthetic quality as the force that binds together all meaningful, significant experiences is helpful here for clarifying the difference I have in mind. According to Dewey,

> life is no uniform uninterrupted march or flow. It is a thing of histories, each with its own plot, its own inception and movement toward its close, each having its own particular rhythmic movement; each with its own unrepeated quality pervading throughout.\(^{85}\)

The emotional quality Dewey describes as pervading every notable, unified experience is indispensable for an intelligent response to one’s environment, for he thinks it is this quality that pulls together and

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\(^{85}\) Dewey (1934), 37.
relates different parts in an organically developing whole (and this kind of work is basically what he
takes ‘intelligence’ to mean\textsuperscript{86}). However, Dewey is aware that often when we talk about emotions we
do not have in mind this kind of “esthetic quality that rounds out an experience into completeness and
unity”.\textsuperscript{87} Instead,

Joy, sorrow, hope, fear, anger, curiosity, are treated as if each in itself were a sort of entity that
enters full-made upon the scene, an entity that may last a long time or a short time, but whose
duration, whose growth and career, is irrelevant to its nature. In fact emotions are qualities,
when they are significant, of a complex experience that moves and changes. I say, when they
are significant, for otherwise they are but the outbreaks and eruptions of a disturbed infant. All
emotions are qualifications of a drama and they change as the drama develops.\textsuperscript{88}

The “outbreaks and eruptions of a disturbed infant” are what I had in mind above by ‘mere gushes’ or
‘inert raw feels’.\textsuperscript{89} There would be little point in scrutinizing a raw gush of feeling in response to
disagreement, for doing so would be unlikely to show us something more about its grounds. Such a
feeling has no resources for growing into a new confirmation of its validity or taking a turn that shows
us something flimsy about it that we hadn’t noticed before. Raw gushes are capable of being supported
or undermined in other ways (the reference to an infant is helpful for imagining them), but not by
intelligent attention to and development of the feeling itself. If this kind of development begins to take
place, we are no longer dealing with a mere gush, but a feeling that is organically adapting, ordering,
and moving in engagement with something.

\textsuperscript{86} See for example Dewey (1934), 47: “Because perception of relationship between what is done and what is undergone constitutes the work of intelligence … [a painter] has to see each particular connection of doing and undergoing in relation to the whole that he desires to produce. To apprehend such relations is to think, and is one of the most exacting modes of thought.”
\textsuperscript{87} Dewey (1943), 43.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 43.
\textsuperscript{89} Kant offers an account of emotion that is quite like this kind idea of a ‘raw gush’ when he writes that emotion is “a sensation in which agreeableness is produced only by means of a momentary inhibition followed by a stronger outpouring of the vital force,” and claims that it “does not belong to beauty at all.” (CJ, 5:226) I think Dewey is convincing that emotional quality can play a more nuanced role in developing and organizing experience than this, and so could be part of the form of an aesthetic experience that inspires the free play. However, above I am using Dewey’s contrast between aesthetic quality and raw gushes of emotion to help clarify what kind of feeling the pleasure of the free play is (it is more like aesthetic quality than a raw gush). It is important to clarify that I do not wish to lump together aesthetic quality and the free play, although they are both distinct from raw gushes of emotion, for they are both feelings that search for orderedness in an experience. They differ in that aesthetic quality gives a particular character to an aesthetic experience, while the free play is free from that kind of function.
Dewey talks about this moving engagement in terms of drama and narrative, but the important point is that aesthetic or emotional quality is needed to connect the parts of a whole if an experience is to grow organically and not merely follow a mechanical procedure for classifying the things around us. The sense of narrative and drama we should keep in mind, then, is not so much a matter of narrative form with beginning, climax and resolution, but of perceptive attention to the world around us rather than rote recognition. According to Dewey, when I perceive something I invest an active effort into paying attention to its particularities, staying open to the possibility that the experience will not just be an occasion for applying my past store of information and expectations about this kind of thing, but also for refreshing and restructuring that past store itself. In perception there is a back and forth between my own activity and receptiveness to the object in light of an emerging whole (what Dewey calls ‘doing’ and ‘undergoing’), and also a mutual adaptation between what I bring to the experience from the past and what the present experience gives back to that funding, making something new of it. When I merely recognize something, in contrast, I only need to pay attention long enough to slot it into a category I already have, and need not revise anything in response to the present application, like a cookie cutter in an assembly-line machine.

For Dewey, perceptive attention is involved in all kinds of meaningful experiences, not only those he would consider specifically ‘aesthetic,’ and so it is certainly not the case that perceiving things

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90 See Dewey (1934), 54: “Recognition is perception arrested before it has a chance to develop freely. … It is arrested at the point where it will serve some other purpose, as we recognize a man on the street in order to greet or to avoid him, not so as to see him for the sake of seeing what is there. In recognition we fall back, as upon a stereotype, upon some previously formed scheme.” Whereas in perception, “There is an act of reconstructive doing, and consciousness becomes fresh and alive.”

91 Dewey (1934) speaks of this kind of organic adjustment between past funding and present experience in many places, perhaps most interestingly for what is coming, in relation to imagination. He claims that not only is aesthetic experience imaginative, but all perceptive experience is: “experience becomes conscious, a matter of perception, only when meanings enter it that are derived from prior experiences. Imagination is the only gateway through which these meanings can find their way into a present interaction; or rather, as we have just seen, the conscious adjustment of the new and the old is imagination. … There is always a gap between the here and now of direct interaction and the past interactions whose funded result constitutes the meanings with which we grasp and understand what is now occurring. Because of this gap, all conscious perception involves a risk; it is a venture into the unknown, for as it assimilates the present to the past it also brings about some reconstruction of that past. When past and present fit exactly into one another, when there is only recurrence, complete uniformity, the resulting experience is routine and mechanical; it does not come to consciousness in perception.” (283-284)
and finding them beautiful always coincide. Nevertheless, Kant’s idea that the free play responds to form, and so there must be some minimal sort of complexity in the beautiful thing, places it on the ‘perceptive experience’ side of the contrast. Dewey’s distinction between mere recognition and perception reminds me of Mothersill’s articulation of what she thinks the difference between ‘agreeable’ and ‘beautiful’ pleasure amounts to. She suggests it is a difference, one might say, of attitude on the part of the subject. If his enjoyment of, say, background music in a cocktail lounge, is entirely casual, he will not bother about correctly identifying the cause of his pleasure nor about determining which particular aspects of the case affect him. … By contrast, someone who takes an item to be beautiful has been struck by something that captures his attention and makes him think; he believes, truly of falsely, that the item has extraordinary qualities and that it will be a cause of pleasure to anyone who attends them.92

We can take pleasure in the things we breeze over (merely recognize) or leave as an unexamined throb or sigh (a mere gush), but it is not the pleasure of beauty unless we are paying attention to something for itself, not merely to categorize it in some handy way, but as a site of possible development of a more involved experience. Not everything has the resources for such development, nor yet for the kind of open-ended, on-going play of beauty, but perceptive attention is a prerequisite for finding out. For example, if I look at the sky and pay attention to its expansive blue only as a sign that it is not about to rain, I have not put myself in a position to appreciate its beauty. However, I could also pay attention to the sky for the sake of the experience that could develop from my perception of it, drawing upon past associations with this overwhelming visual field that re-shape how it looks and feels to me at present. This experience could be something I find beautiful. In this way, Dewey’s idea of perceptive experience helps us to throw the doors open for what can be found beautiful, without losing important content to Kant’s idea that beauty is a response to form – now the form of an organically developing experience of the object.

92 Mothersill (1984), 336-337.
I have used Dewey to suggest that we can consider the form of an experience to be the object of a judgment of beauty, and expand Kant’s formalism beyond the narrow range he appears to endorse in places. However, it should also be noted that Kant’s formalism looks a lot less narrow in some parts of his own text, such as his account of aesthetic ideas. He gives detailed attention to the possibility of judging the beauty of artworks that express aesthetic ideas such as love, envy, death, and the kingdom of heaven, to name a few of his examples. Paintings and poetry often represent their themes, like love or the kingdom of heaven, by images and descriptions that are not, strictly speaking, logical attributes of those concepts or ideas. To take something of a trite example, cherubs with tiny bows and arrows do not actually appear when we fall in love, but they have been consistently used to express romance. Perhaps less trite, although the music rarely swells at opportune moments in real life romance, the musical score could be an important aesthetic attribute of the romance depicted in a great cinematic love story. Kant himself gives the example that “Jupiter’s eagle, with the lightning in its claws, is an attribute of the powerful king of heaven”.

Aesthetic attributes are suggestive, they lead our imaginations along richer, more varied and spontaneous paths of association than we would otherwise discover. This seemingly boundless ability to keep thinking and associating on a given theme is an imaginative activity that goes beyond what occurs when we recognize an empirical example of love by applying the concept, or when we grasp the rational idea of the kingdom of heaven. Kant captures this excess of mental life by saying that the aesthetic attributes express aesthetic ideas of these things. He writes,

In a word, the aesthetic idea is a representation of the imagination, associated with a given concept, which is combined with such a manifold of partial representations in the free use of the

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93 CJ, 5:324.
94 CJ, 5:315.
95 In the case of a rational idea like the kingdom of heaven, we have no empirical experience to match this idea, so whatever images and feelings we associate with it will go beyond what belongs to the idea itself. In the case of concepts like love and envy, our associations can go beyond the concept by giving a sense of completeness that isn’t possible in empirical experience. See CJ, 5:314.
imagination that no expression designating a determinate concept can be found for it, which therefore allows the addition to a concept of much that is unnameable …

The expression of an aesthetic idea makes one feel that one’s imaginative uptake of this image or line of poetry exceeds what could be said or captured by a concept, something ‘unnameable’.

Now the free play could itself be described as an excess of mental activity beyond the determinate purpose of cognition, and so we might think of aesthetic ideas as another way to describe the free play (albeit with a new emphasis on the kind of play that occurs in response to artworks). However, there are places where Kant appears to distinguish between aesthetic ideas and beauty. For example, he distinguishes between judging an artwork to be ‘inspired’ and ‘beautiful’, the first relating to genius (the ability to craft aesthetic ideas) and the second to taste (judging beauty). We find him claiming that

To be rich and original in ideas is not as necessary for the sake of beauty as is the suitability of the imagination in its freedom to the lawfulness of the understanding. For all the richness of the former produces, in its lawless freedom, nothing but nonsense; the power of judgment, however, is the faculty for bringing it in line with the understanding.

Here it sounds like aesthetic ideas are part of the object/event that is judged beautiful, and should not be identified wholesale with the mental activity of the free play that carries out that judgment. Aesthetic ideas are “representations of the imagination”, and it is the task of the power of judgment to see how fruitfully the imaginative activity generated by an aesthetic idea can be brought to harmonize with the understanding (in other words, to evaluate the beauty of its expression).

Another reason to resist identifying the imaginative activity of an aesthetic idea directly with the free play is that we may wish to assess how competently associations are being carried out. For example, if we are given the aesthetic attribute “Juliet is the sun” and my imaginative activity leaps to

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96 CJ, 5:316.
97 Exactly how aesthetic ideas relate to the free play as described in the earlier sections of the Analytic is a matter of interpretive dispute. For an example of someone who argues Kant’s description of aesthetic ideas is an extension of his earlier descriptions of the free play, I would look to Allison (2001). In contrast, Rogerson (2009) believes we can use aesthetic ideas to address problems with Kant’s initial description of the free play, which requires seeing some important distinction between them.
associations about recent scientific work on sunspots, I would have missed the point of the metaphor. Someone could then correct me, trying to spur the right kind of association by saying ‘Try thinking of it in terms of what she means to him, such as that his day begins and ends with her.’ Our imaginative up-take of aesthetic ideas can go awry and be guided back on track as a matter of adequately grasping the aesthetic object/event that is at issue. Whatever role this same associative activity plays in the free play itself (and it is likely going to be hard to distinguish them, after all the free play is playing with that activity), it comes under a different kind of assessment there, one that is given solely by means of a pleasure that is universally valid just in how it feels. It would be out of place to assess the free play for how well it fits a given theme or concept, as the only rule guiding its play is the principle of purposive activity between the imagination and understanding in general. I don’t think it is a problem that the imaginative activity of an aesthetic idea can come under two different kinds of assessment (one in relation to adequately grasping the point of an aesthetic attribute, and one in relation to the free play and beauty), but I think it is important not to simply identify aesthetic ideas with the free play.

The main point I wish to take away from this discussion is that Kant himself took the free play to respond to a much broader range of aesthetic objects than configurations of black and white lines alone. What kind of thing can be given aesthetic attributes, and what kind of thing those aesthetic attributes can be, appears to be left wide open. I am particularly struck by this example Kant gives:

even an intellectual concept can serve as the attribute of a representation of sense, and so animate the latter … Thus, e.g., a certain poet says in the description of a beautiful morning: ‘The sun streamed forth, as tranquillity streams from virtue.’ The consciousness of virtue, when one puts oneself, even if only in thought, in the place of a virtuous person, spreads in the mind a

99 I take this suggestion for what the metaphor means from Cavell (1969), 78-79.
100 I have made two assumptions here that are worth noting. The first is that we can and often do distinguish aesthetic experience from aesthetic judgment (rather than considering the judgment to be part of the experience). This is a basic assumption in my project, as it makes it possible to take an aesthetic experience as the object of a disagreement about beauty. Second, I have assumed that we can and often do judge competence in how an an aesthetic object is experienced. I agree with Mothersill that it is difficult to spell out exactly what conditions must be met to have ‘adequate knowledge’ of an aesthetic object, but I do take us to frequently make such judgments (such as ruling out the person who glances at artworks while zooming by on roller skates). See Mothersill (1984), 334.
multitude of sublime and calming feelings, and a boundless prospect into a happy future, which no expression that is adequate to a determinate concept fully captures.\textsuperscript{101}

In this passage, Kant comes quite close to recognizing \textit{having an experience} as an aesthetic object/event that can be found beautiful. Aesthetic attributes need not only be things we can see, hear or read, they can also be concepts we think, such as a “consciousness of virtue”. We are not limited to giving aesthetic attributes to concepts like love, death, or the kingdom of heaven, we can give them to something as simple as “a representation of sense,” such as the morning sun on your face. Now, it is not the sensory experience of a sunrise that is beautiful in this example, but the sunrise as presented in poetry by this particular aesthetic attribute. And then, it is only beautiful if the attribute expresses an aesthetic idea that can be freely but purposively brought in line with the understanding by the power of judgment. Nevertheless, Kant’s account of aesthetic ideas opens up the possibility that the imaginative activity taken up by the free play could include associations that are wide open to elements of sensory, intellectual and emotional experience.

\textit{3.4 Kant and Dewey: A Good Fit?}

I have drawn upon Dewey’s account of aesthetic experience in my efforts to fill out an argument for expanding Kant’s formalism. However, Kant and Dewey have aesthetic theories that point in opposite directions, in that Kant is concerning with making correct judgments on the basis of individual feeling, and Dewey is concerned with integrating aesthetic experience with the intellectual, practical and social concerns of life. Is it really possible to use Dewey in a discussion of Kant as I have suggested, particularly given Dewey’s own criticisms and rejection of Kant’s view? I will address a few of those criticisms below and argue that Kant and Dewey are less diametrically opposed than we might think, and there are fruitful points of resonance between them that justify placing them side by

\textsuperscript{101} CJ, 5:316.
side. To start, I take Kant and Dewey to share the basic idea that rewarding aesthetic experience calls our attention to a pleasurable feeling of exploratory, organizing mental life, one that throws a promising light on our prospects for interpersonally shareable, meaningful experience in general.

Dewey himself is wary of Kant’s legacy, particularly the influence Kant seems to have had on views of aesthetic pleasure that make it something esoteric, cut off from ordinary feelings and concerns (as for instance, in Clive Bell). 102 And he does hit the free play on the head when he writes that after the first two Critiques it remained for Kant to tackle Pure Feeling, “being ‘pure’ in the sense of being isolated and self-enclosed; feeling free from any taint of desire; feeling that strictly speaking is non-empirical.”103 However, I think many of Dewey’s concerns could be addressed by a more sympathetic reading of Kant’s view than he takes the time to give.

For instance, Dewey insists that there must be room in aesthetic experience for perception that is directed and active, organizing and responding to an object through time. This type of perception is naturally described as motivated by an aim, need, or desire, factors that Kant forbids from playing a role in grounding judgments of beauty. It looks like Dewey and Kant butt heads on this issue, but I think if we look carefully at what both have in mind—Dewey in his insistence that need and active perception are involved in aesthetic experience, and Kant in his disallowing practical concerns from playing any role—we shall see they are actually not so far apart.

Kant is quite clear that practical concerns can play no part in producing a free play of the mental faculties: “All interest presupposes a need or produces one; and as a determining ground of approval it

102 I have in mind Bell’s theory that artworks possess “significant form” that leads to a special aesthetic emotion that has no connection to ordinary life. See Bell (1914/1995), 106: “to appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas or affairs, no familiarity with its emotions. Art transports us from the world of man’s activity to a world of aesthetic exaltation. … [T]he rapt philosopher, and he who contemplates a work of art, inhabit a world with an intense and peculiar significance of its own; that significance is unrelated to the significance of life. In this world the emotions of life find no place. It is a world with emotions of its own.” Dewey (1934) charges Kant with kicking off a tradition of reducing the attentive awareness to the object that is part of genuine perception to “the bare act of contemplation.” He continues, saying that “The effect upon subsequent theory was to give the separation of the esthetic from other modes of experience an alleged scientific basis in the constitution of human nature.” With Kant, “the psychological road was opened leading to the ivory tower of “Beauty” remote from all desire, action, and stir of emotion.” (263)

103 Dewey (1934), 263.
no longer leaves the judgment on the object free.”\textsuperscript{104} This means that any concern with the actual existence of the beautiful thing cannot be part of finding it beautiful or what makes it beautiful. However, we don’t want to interpret this in a way that comes out absurd.

Beauty must only depend on the representation perceived and the mental state it evokes, however making the representation available for appreciation is another matter. To have the chance to judge a representation’s beauty I may need to care about going to a museum, looking outside at the sunset, putting on music, and so on. The practical concerns needed to pay attention to something do not corrupt our judgment of beauty, they facilitate access to the proper grounds for judgment. Kant’s point is that I must not find something beautiful on the basis of some pleasure I take in the practical concerns that merely allow me to take up the aesthetic object – it would be bizarre to find something beautiful because my act of perceiving it was excellently carried out, for instance, or because my going to the gallery helped me get along practically in the world somehow.

For his part, Dewey expands this participation of sensory activity in aesthetic experience to a more full-blooded activity of making sense of the object that draws upon our past experiences and a sensitivity to relationships between parts that he thinks is required for developing an experience as a narrative whole. He describes perception as “a state of equilibrium” in which “the tendency to turn the eyes and head is absorbed into a multitude of other impulses and it and they become members of a single act”.\textsuperscript{105} I take this to be another description of the rhythm between doing and undergoing that brings our ‘funding’ from past experience to bear in a lively way on the present situation. Dewey even concedes that this talk of an ‘equilibrium’ achieved in the exercise of active perception might be described as a state of contemplation, for this state “is not practical, \textit{if} by ‘practical’ is meant an action undertaken for a particular and specialized end outside the perception, or for some external

\textsuperscript{104} CJ, 5:210. 
\textsuperscript{105} Dewey (1934), 267.
consequence.” Of course, this seems to me exactly the sense in which Kant himself uses ‘practical’ when he describes the free play as free of any practical aim or purpose. There is activity in the free play, after all, it is hardly an idle mental state. And an idle mental state seems to be what Dewey takes to be implied by talk of ‘contemplation,’ for he worries that using the term to describe the equilibrium of active perception “may suggest a balance so calm and sedate as to exclude rapture by an absorbing object.” The free play actually sounds a lot more like what Dewey thinks equilibrium should be taken to mean: “It signifies, in fact, only that different impulsions mutually excite and reënforce one another so as to exclude the kind of overt action that leads away from emotionalized perception.” If we leave out the bit about ‘emotionalized’ perception, we have a description that could suit the free play well as an active, harmonious, self-sustaining interaction of the cognitive faculties.

Now we do not want to identify the perceptual experience Dewey describes as finding an ‘equilibrium’ between doing and undergoing with the free play outright, since there are important differences between them. The first actively discovers an experiential whole while the second reflects with pleasure upon such an experience. Still, if the sort of practicality Dewey thinks is at issue in aesthetic experience lines up with the indeterminate purposiveness of the free play, it is easier to accept that aesthetic experience as Dewey describes it could be the sort of thing the free play occurs in response to. This wouldn’t be a case of taking pleasure in an experience for the sake of some particular practical, moral, or cognitive purpose. Dewey observes that

People who draw back at the mention of ‘instrumental’ in connection with art often glorify art for precisely the enduring serenity, refreshment, or re-education of vision that are induced by it. The real trouble is verbal. Such persons are accustomed to associate the word with

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106 Ibid., 267.
107 Dewey (1934), 268.
108 Ibid., 268.
109 To reiterate the point I made in an earlier footnote, I do not want to conflate the free play with aesthetic quality because I do not believe the free play can contribute to the distinctive character that gives this experience its identity, as aesthetic quality does. I think that would require certain concepts, comparisons, rhythms, or reveries on a theme to characterize the activity of the free play, which would compromise its freedom. A result of this is that all we can require of others is that they share a universally valid feeling of pleasure; how that pleasure feels – if it can vary – must be left open.
instrumentalities for narrow ends – as an umbrella is instrumental to protection from rain or a mowing machine to cutting grain.\textsuperscript{110}

Thus, although Dewey describes the active development of aesthetic experience as instrumental, he is careful to reject a definition of ‘instrumental’ that would make aesthetic experience the means to a ‘narrow’ end. One of Kant’s main motivations for arguing that beauty does not serve any particular purpose is to prevent it from being the sort of thing we can have rules for carrying out, or that we can say ahead of time what must be involved in order for it to count as serving that purpose. I think this largely lines up with Dewey’s rejection of ‘narrow’ instrumental ends, for those are the ones that give us straightforward direction for how to fulfill them. Purposes such as finding serenity and refreshment, or enriching present experience by paying attention to its aesthetic dimension, on the other hand, do not instruct us on how to pursue them in the same way. We can identify when such aims are satisfied, but even this does not generally give us anything like a set of rules for how to satisfy them again.

Still, Dewey himself does not talk about a special sort of pleasure reserved for aesthetic experience, such as the pleasure of the free play, all he says is that our pleasure is distinctly aesthetic when we are appreciating the general features of having an experience as they are manifested in the particular case at hand. It is the similarity between the ‘distinctly aesthetic’ attitude towards an experience Dewey describes and the attitude towards a representation present in the free play that allows me to see the thread of an idea between Kant and Dewey. On a general level, Dewey’s ideas about what we are concerned with in aesthetic experience – namely, the experience itself in its particular qualities, not something beyond or external to it – match the spirit of Kant’s own account.\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{110} Dewey (1934), 145.
\textsuperscript{111} To give the rest of the passage from Dewey (1934), 267: “In the latter case, perception does not exist for its own sake but is limited to a recognition exercised in behalf of ulterior considerations. But this conception of ‘practical’ is a limitation of its significance. Not only is art itself an operation of doing and making – a poiesis expressed in the very word poetry – but aesthetic perception demands, as we have seen, an organized body of activities, including the motor elements necessary for full perception.”
3.5 Responding to Disagreement about Beauty: Purely Introspection on a Pleasure?

Now that we have broadened Kant’s formalism so that the free play could be relevant to disagreement over the beauty of a wider range of things, we can consider how the free play figures in responding to disagreement, particularly a concern over its source. As we have seen, one of the starting places for Kant’s account of judgments of beauty is that they are spoken in a universal voice. Like Allison, I have taken the idea here to be something like Rousseau’s ‘general will’: “Like Rousseau’s general will, the universal voice does not err, since it constitutes the very norm of correctness. But also as in Rousseau, there is no assurance that one actually is speaking with such a voice.”\(^\text{112}\) This means that the pleasure of the free play does not appear to make mistakes, if it genuinely occurs. This frames disagreement as a matter of at least one person failing to make a pure judgment (one grounded on the free play, and not on idiosyncratic quirks or polluting interests). Disagreements are not explained by mistakes made by our aesthetic feeling, but mistakes we make about those feelings, namely that they are the right sort to ground a judgment of beauty.

Let’s consider the case Kant offers of a young poet who has written a poem he finds beautiful and then discovers that the public disagrees, and some of his friends as well.\(^\text{113}\) When this happens, it would seem appropriate for the young poet to wonder if the source of his pleasure is really the free play, and try to work out how likely that is. Many different factors would be relevant to this, including that he is young and inexperienced, some of the people who disagree may have a more reliable record of making aesthetic judgments that have stood up to testing. Thinking about his qualifications as a judge may recommend a modest assessment of the likelihood the source of his pleasure really is the free play. On the other hand, the poem itself may still give the same pleasure that moved him to speak his judgment in a universal voice.

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\(^\text{112}\) Allison (2001), 107.
\(^\text{113}\) CJ, 5:282.
How should the doubts raised by thinking about his reliability as a judge influence him? Should they directly reduce the confidence he has in his judgment? This is the question asked in the context of the peer disagreement debate that we will turn to in the next chapter. Without yet answering that question, it at least seems reasonable for the discovery of disagreement to make the young poet wonder if his pleasure really means what it feels like it does: how sure is he that his pleasure is an awareness of the free play and not some other, idiosyncratic or interested factor? There are two things to note about this question: 1) it is prompted by recognizing his fallibility in the face of disagreement, the fact that he has been wrong before, and 2) the activity it prompts in turn seems largely introspective, a matter of rooting about in the psychological factors at play in his response to see if any idiosyncrasies he can’t expect others to share are prominently featured. And there are two seeming consequences to match: 1) the recognition of his fallibility pushes him to assess the likelihood that the pleasure comes from the free play in some other way than just how it feels, and 2) this assessment involves a lot of thinking about himself and not a lot of thinking about the object and its properties, leaving out in the cold much of the critical discussion people actually do engage in upon discovering disagreement.

If we let these notable facts and consequences stand as they are, I think they encourage responding to disagreement by turning away from the pleasure itself in favor of other kinds of third personal considerations, such as one’s track record. In the coming chapters I will argue against such a result, suggesting that remaining engaged with the pleasure of beauty is an appropriate response to disagreement. To help clear the way for that discussion, I would like to address the above points here while we have Kant and Dewey at our fingertips.

To take the first notable fact, disagreement naturally prompts me to think about my own fallibility as a judge of beauty, and wonder how likely it is my pleasure is actually an awareness of the free play. As I mentioned above, if we are thinking of the pleasure as a raw gush, paying attention to the pleasure itself will likely not seem relevant to this probabilistic assessment. After all, a mere gush
cannot illuminate much about itself just by how it feels (recall Dewey’s description of a feeling “whose duration, whose growth and career, is irrelevant to its nature”\textsuperscript{114}). That would mean I can basically set the pleasure aside and get along just as well with thinking about the possibility of ‘polluting’ factors and my track record. This approach lines up well with the popular ‘conciliatory’ view in the epistemology debate that argues I should set aside the initial compelling grounds of my judgment in order to rationally respond when a peer disagrees.\textsuperscript{115} I will address the conciliatory view in greater detail in the next chapter, but the crucial thing to notice here is how the pleasure is being thought of, and the judgment of beauty in relation to it – the pleasure happens, and then I do a bunch of thinking and weighing evidence about it in order to reach a judgment of how probable it is this pleasure is of a free play, and hence how probable it is that the object is beautiful.\textsuperscript{116}

However, we do not have to think of the pleasure this way. If the pleasure is woven into a dynamic experience, being moved by it has the potential to develop into a recognition of its limitations (it is constrained by something, an interest, perhaps) or a confirmation of its promise as an on-going, lively and free activity. By digging further into the pleasure itself I can discover my judgment was a hollow reflection of pride, or a continuing joy that I cannot circumscribe by an idiosyncratic fact about me. In this way, revisiting the pleasure and how it feels could be relevant when my confidence in the source of the pleasure comes into question. It might do the young poet good to consider his inexperience, or his poor track record, but not necessarily because that is the best way to get at a true judgment of beauty in the present moment of epistemic consideration. It could also do him good as

\textsuperscript{114} Dewey (1934), 43.
\textsuperscript{115} Christensen (2007) and Elga (2011) are prominent examples of theorists arguing for this position.
\textsuperscript{116} On Guyer’s (1982) interpretation of Kant, judgments of beauty work quite like this, in two steps: first, a feeling of pleasure that cannot be distinguished just by the way it feels from other pleasures, and second, some kind of inner scrutiny that yields a judgment that this particular pleasure comes from a the free play and hence, can ground a judgment of beauty. However, I prefer interpretations like those given by Allison (2001) and Longuenesse (2006) according to whom the pleasure itself carries the evaluative motivation for judgment. Partly, this is because I find them to be more compelling as readings of Kant’s text, but it is also partly because I am interested in what happens to our ideas about disagreement when we take feeling to be integral to the evaluative force of a judgment. Kant himself (interpretations like Guyer’s aside) sets out beauty as the place to think about this kind of judgment, and I aim to follow suit.
encouragement to sincerely pursue his pleasure in a way that is open and responsive to the opportunities (or lack thereof) his poem offers for an organically developing experience.

Now we turn to the second point and its consequence, the idea that scrutinizing the pleasure of the free play will largely be introspective, cutting off a response to disagreement from the full range of critical discussion that seems relevant to it. However, scrutinizing a pleasure would only be strictly introspective if we think of the pleasure as something we can break off from the experience of the beautiful thing and get under the microscope of our attention by itself. In other words, if we think of the pleasure as a mere gush.

It is much harder to think of separating the pleasure from the experience that gives rise to it if we are thinking of it along the lines of an aesthetic feeling that binds together and moves forward a dynamic, growing experience of something. In that case, scrutinizing my pleasure will not lead to an exclusive focus on myself but will quickly return me to the object, and make a wide range of critical discussions of its properties relevant to thinking about that pleasure. I think this rings true in our experiences of beauty – I am not even sure how I would address the pleasure of a particular beauty in some concrete way apart from addressing the beautiful thing itself. If I am scrutinizing the pleasure, rather than the psychological setting around it, I am really scrutinizing something outside myself, trying to explore and describe and know better the features of that thing. Even psychological considerations will be pretty abstract unless they are brought to bear in first personal engagement with the pleasure (and thing) itself. It would be hard to think only of the pleasure a rose gives, or a moving piece of music, without thinking at all about the experience of the thing that offers it.

3.6 Responding to Disagreement and Learning to be a Better Judge

Now I want to return to the case of the young poet and consider what Kant has to say about learning to become a better aesthetic judge. The epistemic question of whether one should revise
confidence on the spot in response to disagreement is separate from the practical issue of learning to become a better judge. However, our thinking about these matters is often intertwined, for disagreement is a ripe site for learning. Whatever epistemic reasons we might have for reducing confidence, such revision also seems to be in the spirit of humility we often think learning requires, an openness to guidance and correction. Thinking about how we improve as aesthetic judges can also help to prepare us for the coming discussion of disagreement, for it sheds light on the kinds of mistakes we expect to explain disagreement, and the kind of growth in aesthetic experience we look for in seeking agreement. Because epistemic and practical concerns do seem to naturally overlap here, I want to say something more about this before moving on to a tighter focus on epistemic concerns.

Let’s consider what Kant has to say about the development of the young poet. Kant writes that he may let others influence him, not because he thinks they are right (indeed he may continue to think that “the entire public has a false taste”) but because he desires their approval. “Only later, when his power of judgment has been made more acute by practice, does he depart from his previous judgment of his own free will, just as he does with those of his judgments that rest entirely on reason.”\textsuperscript{117} Despite the fact that the poet is young and perhaps less experienced than those who disagree, Kant seems happy to let him keep his judgment until he can ground a change aesthetically, on the way the poem makes him feel. Making the right kind of judgment – grounded on a feeling – continues to be the most important thing, and Kant does not appear to allow in other kinds of grounds, even when disagreement occurs: “The judgment of others, when unfavorable to our own, can of course rightly give us reservations about our own, but can never convince us of its incorrectness. There is no empirical ground of proof for forcing the judgment on anyone.”\textsuperscript{118} What kind of reservations are compatible with an aesthetically based judgment?

\textsuperscript{117} CJ, 5:282. 
\textsuperscript{118} CJ, 5:284.
To those of us used to thinking about belief in terms of degree, we might think of having reservations as a matter of adjusting our credence in some way, say from .9 to .7. Without yet arguing against the idea that shifting credence on the basis of others’ opinions is reasonable, we should try to make out what kind of educative trajectory Kant thinks our reservations can further. One thing he clearly does not mean, is that the poet should start assessing the probability his judgment is right on the basis of how many others agree and disagree.

It is required of every judgment that is supposed to prove the taste of the subject that the subject judge for himself, without having to grope about by means of experience among the judgments of others and first inform himself about their satisfaction or dissatisfaction in the same object, and thus that he should pronounce his judgment not as imitation, because a thing really does please universally, but \textit{a priori}.\footnote{CJ, 5:282.}

Whatever kind of reservations Kant has in mind, they must come into play while leaving the judgment resting on the aesthetic grounds of his own feeling, not on the grounds of another’s judgment.

The educative trajectory Kant offers is that revised judgments of beauty will follow revised aesthetic feeling. Other people’s judgments are not irrelevant to this change in the aesthetic grounds of the poet’s judgment, for they can indirectly influence how he experiences the poem and other things around him. What does ‘indirectly’ mean here? It means that the poet can be influenced by others as a successor to their practices and judgments, but he should avoid direct imitation. Kant allows a place to the models of great artworks in aesthetic education, but on the condition that they not be used to make their successors into mere imitators, but rather by means of their method to put others on the right path for seeking out the principles in themselves and thus for following their own, often better, course. … Succession, related to a precedent, not imitation, is the correct expression for any influence that the products of an exemplary author can have on others, which means no more than to create from the same sources from which the latter created, and to learn from one’s predecessor only the manner of conducting oneself in doing so.\footnote{CJ, 5:283.}

An imitator simply take the fruits of another’s labor for his own, whereas a successor learns how to produce the same fruit for himself, as his own, with the changes and improvements this re-invention is bound to bring. Kant’s endorsement of succession in aesthetic learning shows us something important.
about the role of experience and feeling in aesthetic judgment, namely that these cannot be given up for
the sake of the efficiency of imitation.

The importance of creating something from the same sources as another, rather than just
repeating what he did on the surface, is perhaps more obvious for creating aesthetic objects than for
judging them. We are all familiar with criticizing drawings, poems and student papers by saying ‘But
it’s basically just a copy of so-and-so’s work.’ We are less familiar with applying this kind of criticism
to judgment, where it is often perfectly acceptable to adopt another’s belief on her say-so, without
doing the work that lies behind it oneself. However, I do think Kant means to include aesthetic
judgment in his embargo against imitation. He raises the issue of how to properly follow the model of
great artists just after presenting the case of the young poet, and brings his explanation of succession
back to aesthetic judgment at the end.121 For Kant, the judgment of a poem, as well as the poem itself,
should be influenced by the precedent of others in the form of learning how to conduct oneself in a
similar way and drawing upon the same sources, not simply copying what they say.

The humility required by aesthetic learning is not, then, a willingness to copy the judgments of
others in place of one’s own, but a willingness to be directed in one’s experience so that the appropriate
judgment can be generated on aesthetic grounds. There is humility required for aesthetic learning, but it
is not the kind that recommends revising confidence in order to more closely match the judgment of
another before the learner has come to see or hear the aesthetic grounds for that revised judgment
herself.

In fact, describing an openness to being directed in one’s aesthetic experience as humility could
be misleading. As we saw earlier, Dewey points out that perceptive experience requires initiative and
active sense-making as well as receptivity to one’s environment. We cannot be entirely passive if we

121 Following his explanation of succession Kant writes that “among all the faculties and talents, taste is precisely the one
which, because its judgment is not determinable by means of concepts and precepts, is most in need of the examples of what
in the progress of culture has longest enjoyed approval if it is not quickly to fall back into barbarism and sink back into the
crudity of its first attempts.” (CJ, 5:283)
are to perceptively take something in. A learner could also fail to take direction well by being too timid and uncertain in his own ability to see and hear. The task of the educator is to determine what kind of encouragement a student needs in order to become a more acute, perceptive aesthetic judge – responsiveness to direction, or the courage to actively seize and order something. The aim will always be improving the student’s ability to make the right kind of judgment, one that must be based on her own experience – it is that experience, then, that is the educator’s target, and only indirectly the judgment that will be grounded upon that experience. Reminding a learner of his shaky track record in order to caution him about a present judgment might be a helpful educative strategy, but it also might not. The point here is that reducing confidence for non-aesthetic, epistemic reasons cannot be assumed to intersect with what is required for improving oneself as an aesthetic judge.

This means that for the purposes of learning to be a better judge, at least, it is not necessarily a detriment for the young poet to boldly maintain his claim that his poem is beautiful. After all, he is trying to learn how to make judgments spoken in a universal voice, if he lost sight of the importance of his own feeling as the grounds for his judgment he would be much farther away from making a true judgment of beauty than he is sticking his neck out for a poem others scorn. For he is right, at least, that so long as he feels this way about it, that feeling should guide his judgment. However, it would be detrimental to learning to be a better judge if he used the authority his feeling has for his own judgment as a way to avoid further experience that could undermine or change it. If he insulates himself from others and the influence their differing experiences could have on his own, he separates the authority of his feeling from its proper grounds in perceptive experience of the object judged, for such experience is always open to further seeing and hearing and potentially re-shaped by it. To protect the authority of one’s feeling by closing down further experience is a defensive reaction to criticism that is no longer true to the aesthetic grounds of one’s confidence.
I have emphasized aesthetic experience in this account of what is open to change through education, rather than the basic ability to judge beauty by a feeling of the free play. This is in keeping with Kant’s account of the free play as a capacity that speaks in a universal voice and so cannot be mistaken in itself, even if mistakes can be made about its occurrence. However, the idea of speaking in a universal voice carries a tone of finality that may sound at odds with Dewey’s descriptions of malleable, growing, perceptive experience. Dewey is quite wary of aesthetic judgments that are given as the last word on something, a tone he associates with ‘judicial’ criticism that passes judgment by applying a set of approved standards or rules. According to Dewey, “Judgment that is final, that settles a matter, is more congenial to unregenerate human nature than is the judgment that is a development in thought of a deeply realized perception.”\(^{122}\) While judgments of beauty are not made on the basis of standards or rules for Kant, they do take the form of a statement. They are not given as merely a guide for enriching another’s developing experience. Dewey thinks a good critic will offer a ‘survey’ of his experience to help steer others in fruitful directions, rather than simply state a verdict:

Hence the critic, if he is wise … will lay more emphasis upon the objective traits that sustain his judgment than upon values in the sense of excellent and poor. Then his surveys may be of assistance in the direct experience of others, as a survey of a country is of help to the one who travels through it, while dicta about worth operate to limit personal experience.\(^{123}\)

While Kant’s judgment of beauty can look like a ‘dictum about worth’ I hear an echo of Kant’s caution against imitation in our aesthetic judgments here, the idea that simply accepting or giving judgments in disconnection from one’s own experience is the wrong kind of approach. In fact, in an earlier passage, it sounds like this kind of disconnection between experience and judgment is Dewey’s target as well:

He [the critic] will realize that his assertion of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ in this and that degree is something the goodness or badness of which is itself to be tested by other persons in their direct perceptual commerce with the object. His criticism issues as a social document and can be checked by others to whom the same objective material is available.\(^{124}\)

\(^{122}\) Dewey (1934), 312.
\(^{123}\) Ibid., 322.
\(^{124}\) Ibid., 321.
This passage highlights that Dewey’s emphasis on experience does not mean he thinks a critic can do nothing more than record his passing impressions (a mistake we can make in rejecting judicial criticism), for the critic’s guidance is taken to map an experience between an organism and its environment that will have many common features with others.

In other words, a concern with enriching experience and growing it in promising directions is not distinct, for Dewey at least, from judgments about which directions are promising, and ‘surveys’ that seek to explain what makes them promising and whether they will be so for others as well. He writes that “critical judgment not only grows out of the critic’s experience of objective matter, and not only depends upon that for validity, but has for its office the deepening of just such experience in others.” Dewey pursues a middle path between a judicial approach to judgment that imposes a standard or structure on experience from without, and an impressionistic approach to judgment that assumes experience contains no objective criteria for judgment within itself at all, and I cannot do justice to the richness and complexity of his philosophical view here. The important point I want to stress is that a concern with growing experience extends into a concern with making judgments about a shared world, for Dewey, and should not be considered opposed to it.

Of course, we can try to separate these concerns. We could focus only on the potential an experience has for becoming significant and perceptive, and leave judgments of beauty aside (as I think Dewey does encourage).

125 Dewey (1934), 338.
126 For example, here is Dewey (1934) explaining why he rejects ‘impressionistic’ criticism alongside the ‘judicial’ sort: “Impressions, total qualitative unanalyzed effects that things and events make upon us, are the antecedents and beginnings of all judgments. … But to define an impression is to analyze it, and analysis can proceed only by going beyond the impression, by referring it to the grounds upon which it rests and the consequences which it entails. And this procedure is judgment.” (317) While Dewey does not emphasize, as Kant does, that there is a certain aesthetic feeling we ought to share with others, he does seem to hold that we ought to try to be discriminating about what is or can be shared in our experiences, and we ought to develop the impressions of aesthetic experience towards perceptive judgment.
127 For example, he writes that “In case the term [beauty] is used in theory to designate the total esthetic quality of an experience, it is surely better to deal with the experience itself and show whence and how the quality proceeds. In that case, beauty is the response to which reflection is the consummated movement of matter integrated through its inner relations into a single qualitative whole.” (135) And later on, “With respect to what the work of art does to us and for us, I see but two alternatives. Either it operates because some transcendent essence (usually called ‘beauty’) descends upon experience from without, or esthetic effect is due to art’s unique transcript of the energy of the things of the world.” (192) He presents this as a choice, with his own view clearly on the side of “the connection of esthetic effect with qualities of all experience as far as any experience is unified” (192).
However, if we are still attracted to the idea of judgments of beauty based on a feeling of pleasure that speaks in a universal voice, I see no reason to think we couldn’t make such judgments in relation to perceptive experiences that grow and are educated in the ways Dewey describes.

This does add new considerations for what could underlie disagreements about beauty. We must not only ask about the purity of our judgments, but also whether we really share the aesthetic experience of the object we think we do, and if not, whether there is normative pressure for us to do so. The last is an important question for thinking about how far we can extend the account of disagreement I will go on to give to aesthetic disputes beyond beauty, but I will leave that to some forward-looking comments in the conclusion. I will also leave aside the difficult question of what it means to say that my aesthetic experience is the same as another person’s (at least enough for talk of disagreement to be meaningful), and how to determine if that is the case. The purpose I have in mind at present is just to clarify these two aspects of aesthetic education:

1. Learning to correctly diagnose our feelings of pleasure so that we can recognize the influence of various kinds of satisfaction, including the free play.

2. Learning to experience the things we attend to in richer, more perceptive ways.

If I am right that scrutinizing our pleasure will lead us to scrutinize the experience which gives rise to it, these concerns are woven together in an intimate way, but I think we should be careful not to collapse either one of them into the other completely. Dewey himself argues that pursuing vitally developing experience leads to judgments about a shared world, not just individual impressions of the moment, and I would add that it leads us to make judgments of beauty as well. That means that if we only talk about guiding experience in fruitful directions, we will leave out one of the important fruits of that labor, and an important way in which we orient ourselves in relation to others by marking agreement or dissent about beauty. At the same time, if we ignore that our judgment is made through a feeling that grows and develops through perceptive experience – an experience that can evolve in open-
ended ways – we set up our judgment as an inflexible final verdict that will limit our vision and attention to further truth.
Chapter Four: Disagreement about Beauty and the Conciliatory View

In this chapter I will introduce the two main camps in the debate about the epistemological significance of peer disagreement, and discuss two problems I believe the conciliatory view faces in the case of disagreement about beauty. Before developing my own solution to the problem of peer disagreement about aesthetic claims in the coming chapters, I must show how present options within the debate are not attractive for dealing with the case of disagreements about beauty. In light of these problems, we need to keep looking for revisions or new alternatives in the debate, at least so long as we believe we can lead rich aesthetic lives without abandoning rationality, nor ignoring the disagreement of peers.

The first problem is that if the conciliatory view leads to widespread suspension of judgment (‘spinelessness’ as Elga terms it), I believe this be a more troubling result for beauty than for other areas of interest. I will argue that if we had to widely suspend judgment about beauty we would lose the substance of aesthetic life in a way we might not in other areas such as morality and science, where at least the questions and methods of inquiry can remain engaged with hypothetical claims.

The second problem is that the conciliatory view has not yet given a good argument for how conciliation can be avoided when we encounter deep disagreements that challenge basic frameworks we use for evaluation and belief formation. I think disagreements about frameworks and beauty have an important similarity in that neither a framework nor a judgment of beauty can be shown to be superior to alternatives by reasons that are independent of the matter under dispute. The standards by which we could make such an evaluation are found within the framework itself, or within the aesthetic response that grounds the judgment. Lacking an independent reason to think that one of the positions is more likely to be right than the other, disagreements about frameworks and beauty should lead to conciliation on the picture offered by Christensen and Elga. However, both of these authors try to find a way to avoid that outcome in the case of frameworks, because it would lead quite quickly to an unattractive
widespread suspension of judgment. I will argue that their efforts have not yet uncovered a convincing solution to that problem.

4.1 Disagreement about Beauty: A Case for Conciliation or Remaining Steadfast?

It is no secret that we meet with a lot of disagreement about our aesthetic claims. As Beardsley points out, the perception that disagreement is so rampant about aesthetic matters is often used as a reason for thinking there is no non-relative fact of the matter about what is beautiful or aesthetically praiseworthy. He also wisely points out this is a bad argument: “It by no means follows from the fact that people like different aesthetic objects that they cannot do any more in judging them than record their likings.” As we saw in Chapter 2, Beardsley himself considers critical judgments to have intersubjective validity on the grounds that they can be justified by appealing to general canons or principles for what counts as an aesthetic merit or defect. Others, such as Kant and Mothersill, reject Beardsley’s idea that we can identify principles for making aesthetic judgments and argue for their intersubjective validity in other ways. Nevertheless, these three theorists agree that aesthetic claims can have intersubjective validity, and so be the subject of disagreement. They also take a similar view on how we should respond to such disputes. For his part, Beardsley writes:

Now, if I find that my judgment is different from that of 90 per cent of my fellow Americans, I might think that the democratic thing to do, instead of saying they are wrong, is to fall back on a Relativistic mode of speech that will remove the conflict, by withdrawing any commitment to a general judgment about the value of the poems. But I am not compelled to do this, nor is it genuinely democratic; for if I believe I have better reasons for my judgment than the 90 per cent have for theirs, it is my duty to stick to my guns.

Kant, in his turn, holds that “the approval of others provides no valid proof for the judging of beauty …

The judgment of others, when it is unfavourable to our own, can of course rightly give us reservations

128 Beardsley (1958), 484.
129 It is controversial to assume that we can make intersubjectively valid judgments about what aesthetic response is merited or justified by the properties of aesthetic objects. See my earlier discussion of Aiken (1950) and Harrison (1960) for the arguments I make against their views.
130 Beardsley (1958), 485.
about our own, but can never convince us of its incorrectness.” To illustrate this he offers the case of a young headstrong poet who, as we considered in the last chapter,

does not let himself be dissuaded from his conviction that his poem is beautiful by the judgment of the public nor that of his friends … Only later, when his power of judgment has been made more acute by practice, does he depart from his previous judgment of his own free will, just as he does with those of his judgments that rest entirely on reason.

 Mothersill gives her own version of Kant’s view, allowing that disagreement can spark her to more or less elaborate pedagogical efforts aimed at bringing the other up to speed and around to her judgment, but little more than that. If her efforts prove to be a “total flop” she admits she would be disappointed and puzzled … Yet in seeking an explanation, there is one hypothesis that I would not consider, namely the hypothesis that Op. 59, No. 1 is, in fact, musically worthless, that, in claiming it to be beautiful, I had simply been mistaken. Whoever, so to speak, is at fault, it isn’t Beethoven.

From the passages just given, Beardsley, Kant and Mothersill appear to fall within the ‘steadfast’ camp of the debate in epistemology. The ‘steadfast’ view suggests that I can maintain confidence in my beliefs even when they are challenged by the disagreement of those I consider my epistemic peers because, from my point of view, I am right and those who disagree are wrong. While I may have started out thinking of someone as my epistemic equal, and so just as likely as myself to be right in her beliefs, discovering she disagrees with a belief I am confident is true provides evidence she has made a mistake and is not as competent as myself, at least in this case.

However, we might have reservations about the steadfast view. It seems reasonable that the disagreement of a peer would make me pause, and consider if perhaps I am the one who is mistaken. The conciliatory view argues that we should follow an ‘independence principle’ in responding to disagreement, setting aside our first personal reasoning about the belief in question and revising

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131 CJ, 5:284.  
133 Mothersill (1984), 161-162.  
134 For examples of arguments that support the ‘steadfast’ approach see Kelly (2010) and Enoch (2011). The terms ‘steadfast’ and ‘conciliatory’ are given to the two main positions in the debate by Christensen (2009) in his helpful overview of recent work on the problem.
confidence on the basis of a dispute-independent assessment of who is more likely to have gotten things right.\(^1\) If this dispute-independent assessment turns up symmetrical confidence in myself and my peer, I should follow through on those prior conditionals and take her belief to be just as likely to be correct as my own. This means that if I am very confident that P is true and she is very confident P is not true, a rational response to the disagreement would require me to adjust my confidence in P to .5 (in other words, suspend judgment).

The arguments of the conciliatory view cast an embarrassing light on our trio of aesthetic theorists who all appear to give a steadfast account of disagreement too quickly, without considering the rational pressure peerhood introduces to lower confidence in one’s own belief. Along with the steadfast view they run into the problem that the truth of my belief \(\text{from my own point of view}\) is not enough for me to escape the challenge of disagreement when I myself have acknowledged that a peer’s point of view is just as likely to be on the mark. This symmetry I recognize between myself and a peer is the crucial point the conciliatory view brings to the debate about disagreement in both epistemology and aesthetics. It is a compelling observation, and we might think it wise for our aesthetic theorists to move towards a conciliatory account of responding to disagreement in light of it. Nevertheless, in what follows I will argue it is not attractive to go this route.

4.2 Beauty and Judging Peerhood

Before assessing whether it would be best to respond to disagreement about beauty in a steadfast or conciliatory way, we need to think that peer disagreement is a significant issue for judgments of beauty. Do our trio of aesthetic theorists need to concern themselves with cases of peer disagreement in the first place? Beardsley talks about holding his ground when he believes he has better reasons for his judgment than do the ninety percent who disagree. This could indicate he does not

\(^{1}\) Christensen (2009), 758.
take them to be his peers, but not necessarily. Since our assessments of peerhood should be independent of the dispute in question, it is quite possible to consider another a peer without thinking much of the reasons she presently gives for her belief. Although Beardsley probably does not count many of the ninety percent he mentions as peers, it is unlikely he could reasonably maintain none of them are his equal as aesthetic judges. Similarly it seems reasonable to expect Kant and Mothersill would allow we recognize peers in aesthetic judging, despite not explicitly addressing this special sort of disagreement.

Still, we might think aesthetic judgments put up special difficulties for recognizing peerhood. Ordinarily, judgments of peerhood rest on having “good reason to believe that the other person is one’s (at least approximate) equal in terms of exposure to the evidence, intelligence, freedom from bias, etc.”¹³⁶ We would likely add further conditions for judging the peerhood of aesthetic judges, such as possessing comparable education, exposure, and life experience relevant to appreciating the sort of aesthetic object in question. However, the subjective conditions for aesthetic response (such as our capacity to appreciate unity, complexity and intensity that Beardsley emphasizes) are woven through with our complex and varying histories of education and exposure to different aesthetic objects and life experiences. How can we ever be sure another person shares the same resources for aesthetic response as ourselves? If we consider our experience of the aesthetic object to be the ‘evidence’ we have for our judgment, it could seem hard know if I share the same evidence as another person when I make my judgment (often considered an important aspect of peerhood), particularly if I am not skilled at articulating what that experience is like.

This problem is not unique to disagreement about aesthetic judgments. It is hard to unpack and articulate our aesthetic experiences, but we face similar challenges when we try to uncover our philosophical assumptions, what lies behind our moral intuitions, and what role our biases play in

¹³⁶ Christensen (2009), 756.
scientific work. In all these areas it takes work to uncover which parts of our responses and judgments we think others ought to recognize and share and which are idiosyncratic, and although it is tricky we have some measure of success at doing it. I think this is true of our aesthetic experiences as well. If I think another person is roughly as good as I am at judging whether or not her opinion rests on intersubjectively valid grounds or not, has comparable experience judging aesthetic objects of the sort at issue, and I don’t have a reason to think we are experiencing the object’s properties very differently, I think I face rational pressure to consider her my peer and be troubled by her disagreement.

Can I know for sure we are having exactly the same experience and bring exactly symmetrical histories of education and sensitivity to aesthetic properties to bear on the matter? That’s extremely unlikely. However, Lackey points out that idealizing the symmetry between peers in relation to all evidence and reasoning too far becomes problematic. If we require peers to share equally “everything even remotely relevant to the topic” disagreement between them becomes nonsensical; two epistemic clones would not disagree about which horse won the race, how to split the check, and so on. She points out that “many of our beliefs are supported by countless pieces of subtle and complex evidence acquired via multiple sources over a number of years … [and] it is often practically impossible to conjure up all of the evidence and arguments that we have that bear on these topics.” This description seems particularly apt for the resources drawn upon in having and making judgments about aesthetic experiences. But, as Lackey holds for disagreement generally, I don’t think this should be considered a barrier to making rough judgments of peerhood, which are really the only kind of peer judgment we are likely to make. If the debate in epistemology is going to address the disagreements we typically have about politics, philosophy, and I have added aesthetics, we have to pull back from a high level of idealization and talk about ordinary disagreements with those we roughly take to be peers.

\[137\] Lackey (2008), 311.
\[138\] Ibid., 312.
Once we have accepted this shift, I think it becomes obvious we will easily recognize many peers on aesthetic matters, and many who disagree.

This does not mean I will have to count everyone as my peer; I may leave a movie theatre and not take the overheard opinions around me seriously if I don’t think the people giving them approached their cinematic experience with a great deal of care, or even attention. But there are plenty of movie-goers who put roughly the same conscientious effort as myself into their aesthetic judgments, and I won’t always need an extensive re-cap of their movie history to believe their disagreement ought to present a significant challenge to my own conflicting views. Because it is difficult to sort out what is intersubjectively valid and what is not in an aesthetic response, even when I think I have done so carefully and insightfully there are lots of other people at my level of doing so who could disagree.

### 4.3 The Problem of Spinelessness: Extra Problematic for Beauty

Before we jump to apply the conciliatory view to disagreements about beauty, we should think about the problems it faces, and how they would play out for the aesthetic case. One problem is that it looks like a conciliatory response could require wide-spread suspension of judgment if we recognize many peers and frequently disagree with them. Elga calls this the problem of ‘spinelessness’: it seems implausible, even absurd, for rationality to “require you to suspend judgment on almost everything”.

For his part, Christensen observes that “many are quite averse to thinking that they should be agnostic about [philosophical] matters”, and the aversion may be even stronger when it comes to politics, economics or religion. As we already noted, frequent disagreement is readily acknowledged about aesthetic matters, and unless we are talking to an art expert, many of those with whom we discuss

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139 Elga (2011), 172.
140 Christensen (2009), 758.
movies and novels could be good candidates for peerhood. I will argue that spinelessness presents a particularly troubling problem for disagreement about beauty.

It is a good question whether widespread suspension of judgement (‘spinelessness’) should be a troubling result for an epistemic theory in general. Perhaps we can get along reasonably well without being confident in many of our beliefs, or perhaps this is just not a concern of strictly epistemic rationality (we could think epistemic rationality is only concerned with finding the beliefs our evidence justifies – anything further is a practical matter). If we have to suspend judgment about a scientific belief, we can carry on hypothetically in regards to what we believe is true, and still achieve significant practical gains. If we have to suspend judgment about a moral issue, we can fall back on more rudimentary ways of making practical decisions and continue to reason about whether or not they are best (the question ‘what should I do’ seems to persist no matter what situation we find ourselves in, even if I have no confident idea what moral theory to endorse, I still need to ask myself ‘should I decide what to do by flipping a coin?’).

I believe beauty presents an interestingly different, more intractable problem. We primarily care about making judgments of beauty for the sake of the felt experience that grounds them (while we want to have true beliefs about those experiences, and carry out practical aims that make them available, it is the experience that makes truth and practical achievement important in this realm). Hypothetically entertaining an experience of pleasure isn’t a substitute for actually feeling it, and insofar as a hypothetical relation to those feelings removes us from them, the purpose of our interest in making this kind of judgment would be lost. This means that applying a conciliatory view and arriving at widespread suspension of judgment has far more serious consequences for our interest in beauty than it does for our interest in science and ethics. We cannot pursue the motivating aim of making judgments of beauty at all if it has to be done hypothetically, whereas central questions and concerns relating to
science and ethics still have traction when commitment to particular scientific and moral beliefs is suspended.

What I have said might sound too dramatic. While a peer’s disagreement may lead me to suspend judgment about whether or not my experience is really finding aesthetic merit that is there in the object (it could be the work of my prejudices, or social desires, or lack of experience) I will nevertheless continue to see the object as beautiful, graceful, dynamic, what have you, until my peer has brought me to an experience of the object that shows me my error. Error or not, can’t I enjoy the beauty I see in the meantime?

Although this looks possible at first, I don’t think we can suspend judgment about a claim of beauty without holding back from the feeling of pleasure that grounds it. If we decided things are beautiful by applying a rule to the object, or to our own response, we could separate the act of judgment (rule application) from the object or response, suspend the former and still be left to enjoy the latter. Take a disagreement over classifying the red of a rose as crimson or not.Acknowledging you as my peer on the matter, I suspend judgment about how to classify the colour of the rose, but I can still enjoy my experience of it. Making the classification depends on certain comparisons I could make and have made in the past, and I could try to put that classificatory project aside while still taking pleasure in the sight of the rose.

However, as we have seen, both Kant and Mothersill argue that we cannot decide what is beautiful by applying a set of rules.\footnote{Mothersill (1984) makes this argument specifically in relation to Beardsley’s view that we can justify claims that a certain feature of an object contributes to its aesthetic merit so long as that feature counts towards the object’s unity, complexity, or intensity of human regional qualities (what he calls the three general canons) (462-463). To remind us, Mothersill holds that whatever laws or principles of taste we consider, we will find them to be either uninteresting or obviously false. For example, the law that ‘grand imagery is always a merit in poetry’ turns out to be uninteresting (we can’t separate confirming the presence of the quality specified, such as possessing ‘grand imagery,’ from a positive response to the object). Yet if we make the law more interesting, say ‘large-scale imagery is always a merit’ it is easy to imagine cases where a poem is none the better for having that quality (119). I think this is an important criticism of Beardsley’s rule-based approach.} They hold that we make aesthetic judgments on the basis of the pleasure we feel in response to an object, not by making comparisons with other cases for the sake of
bringing this particular under a general category. I think one consequence of this is that in order to suspend judgment about an aesthetic claim of merit or beauty I have to do more than hold back from determining how the object relates to other things, I have to hold myself back from the response that grounds the judgment itself. If the pleasure of aesthetic response carries its own sense of intersubjective validity (rather than coming to that validity by applying a concept or rule), I cannot preserve this response while giving up the sense that it is valid. If I try to suspend my judgment that it is beautiful while leaving the feeling alone I am in an irrational, contradictory state for my feeling would still carry the conviction of intersubjective validity. I would be in the position of holding back from the judgment in the sense that I would be hesitant to say ‘the rose is beautiful,’ yet thundering ahead with the feeling that carries the ground of that judgment within it. Something has to give here, and I will mention three options.

First, I could maintain my judgment of beauty as intersubjectively valid and accept that the disagreement of others cannot change my mind about what is beautiful. This would be returning to the initial view offered by our trio of aesthetic theorists, and (at least for the moment) remains unattractive due to the considerations of symmetry that come into play in peer disagreement, as the conciliatory view points out. Second, I could try to change the sort of pleasure I feel from the kind that carries a claim of intersubjective validity within it to a pleasure I can accept as merely a personal like or dislike; I could try to enjoy Beethoven’s Op. 59, No. 1 in the way I enjoy Michael Bublé’s Christmas album or sleeping with a firm pillow. However, both Kant and Mothersill argue there is a difference between aesthetic pleasures that carry universal validity, and more trivial aesthetic pleasures that can be explained by idiosyncratic preferences we don’t expect others to share.\textsuperscript{142} Kant makes this point by

\textsuperscript{142} To refresh our memory, one way Kant marks this difference is by distinguishing the pleasure of beauty from ‘agreeable’ pleasures of sensual gratification. A key difference is that pleasure in what is agreeable involves an interest in the existence of whatever causes the pleasure, whereas in judgments of beauty the possible interests we have in the actual existence of the thing play no role in determining whether it is beautiful or not (for example, it is not because the existence of the building serves my interests in any way that I find its architecture beautiful) (CJ, 5:209). Mothersill (1984) is not fond of Kant’s distinction between the agreeable and the beautiful, but she agrees with him to the extent that there is a difference between
noting there is something strange about saying an object is beautiful *to me.* He maintains that when one makes a judgment of beauty “one believes oneself to have a universal voice, and lays claim to the consent of everyone, whereas any private sensation would be decisive only for him alone and his satisfaction.” Kant believes that if we never felt compelled to make claims about aesthetic pleasure in a universal voice, there would be no reason to express ourselves by talking about beauty. If we think Kant is onto something here, resigning ourselves to experiencing beauty as an idiosyncratic pleasure amounts to resigning ourselves to beauty’s absence. If this is the way we should respond to peer disagreement about beauty, and peer disagreement is frequent, beauty has slipped through our fingers to an alarming extent.

Thirdly, I could try to suspend judgment as the conciliatory view requires by finding a way to distance myself from the feeling of pleasure that grounds my judgment and announces its validity – I could purposefully deaden or interfere with it for the time being, perhaps by trying to think of something unappealing when I see it or focusing on its flaws as an object of that type (as I might try to avoid being in love with someone). However, if rationality frequently calls for such measures across a wide range of our aesthetic judgments, the aesthetic domain would become a largely empty landscape that we struggle to try to keep that way, without the pleasures that give our efforts their purpose.

I have argued that the problem of ‘spinelessness’ would be particularly troubling in the case of peer disagreement about aesthetics, since it would not only require reducing confidence in our beliefs, but would significantly rob us of the experience of beauty we care about in seeking to make such judgments in the first place. But perhaps there are ways for a conciliatory view to avoid facing this unattractive result.

what she calls a ‘notable’ pleasure that “excites reflection and thought” and pleasures that are more trivial, such as the pleasure inspired by a “pleasing backdrop, say, for a group snapshot.” (375)

See CJ, 5:212: “It would be ridiculous if … someone who prided himself on his taste thought to justify himself thus: ‘This object (the building we are looking at, the clothing someone is wearing, the concert that we hear, the poem that is presented for judging) is beautiful for me.’ For he must not call it beautiful if it pleases merely him.”

CJ, 5:216.
4.4 Beauty and Frameworks: A Sticky Case for Conciliation

(Scene from the movie musical Camelot, King Arthur and King Pellinore walk across a sunny courtyard.)

Arthur: It is simple Pellinore, once you get it into that armoured head of yours that all disputes will be settled by law, not by bloodshed.
Pellinore: Wart, I understand that perfectly. I do not understand how it works.
Arthur: Oh Pelly … let us see, supposing you are accused of burning down a stable.
Pellinore: Whose?
Arthur: Let us say a farmer named William?
Pellinore: William? Well I wouldn’t of course, but get along.
Arthur: Now Pelly, you claim you haven’t. What does he do?
Pellinore: Well he holds his tongue if he knows what’s good for him or he’ll get a sword through his chest.
Arthur: Oh Pelly. Pelly, he takes you to court.
Pellinore: Ah, and we fight there.
Arthur: No Pellinore. In court there is a prosecutor for farmer William and a defender for you.
Pellinore: Oh I see! I see. And they fight.
Arthur: No Pellinore. A jury decides. That is why it is called trial by jury.
Pellinore: A jury? Who in thunderation are they? It’s none of their damn business in the first place.
Arthur: But you don’t know them Pelly, and they don’t know you.
Pellinore: Well if they don’t know me, and they don’t know farmer William, how can you expect them to care a fig who wins? How can you get a fair decision from people so impartial?
Arthur: That is precisely the point Pelly! They are impartial and there will be no bloodshed!
Pellinore: I tell you something, if that jury finds me guilty there will be plenty of bloodshed. I’ll have a whack at every last one of them!
Arthur: Then you will be charged with murder Pelly!
Pellinore: Well the ruddy thing’s endless! Another jury finds me guilty and I’ll have to have a whack at them, and so on and so on and whacking and –
Arthur: Oh Pelly … Pellinore forget it, you will never burn down a stable, you will never know a farmer named William and you will never ever ever be found in a court!
Pellinore: (Aside) Not without my ready sword I won’t.

In this scene from the musical Camelot the joke is on Pellinore, the curmudgeonly lost King who cannot escape the “might is right” mentality of the medieval age King Arthur is trying to civilize. The scene is both amusing and poignant for those of us interested in thinking about how to rationally respond to disagreement. At first it might look like Pellinore is a painful example of someone who remains ‘steadfast’ in his confidence without acknowledging the chance he has made a mistake and the subsequent rational pressure to reduce confidence disagreement can present. Each element of the jury system Arthur explains is seen through the lens of what Pellinore already understands and believes to be true about justice via sword-whacking, and we could think of this as a limitation of stubbornness or
stupidity that prevents him from leaving his own perspective long enough to consider the new system’s merits. Surely this is who we all hope not to be when we encounter disagreement. Better to retreat to an impartial standpoint and try to determine who is more likely to be right without the influence of the personally compelling reasons that have sparked the disagreement.

The amused dismay Pellinore inspires is in tune with the spirit of the ‘conciliatory’ account of disagreement, and while civilized (to use Arthur’s favourite word), this approach faces its own potential problems. One such problem is related to a deep insecurity that helps make the peer disagreement debate compelling: if I cannot give ‘dispute-independent’ reasons for preferring my own belief or framework, how can I rationally justify the greater confidence I place in myself over others who disagree? Consider Arthur’s helplessness in the face of his disagreement with Pellinore, whose very terms of engagement for dealing with the issue at hand are different than his own. His frustration is familiar to all of us who have felt our looming inability to give an independent justification for the frameworks we use to understand science, politics, ethics, or aesthetics; times when we lack reasons that could convince someone who is not already operating within our worldview. If Arthur cannot find a reason to prefer his view that is independent of his entire framework for understanding justice, should he be conciliatory in response to disagreement and reduce confidence in the jury system? Such a result seems counterintuitive even to those in the conciliatory camp, and I will argue that the efforts of Elga and Christensen to avoid this outcome are not yet satisfactory. I will also draw a parallel between disagreements about frameworks and beauty to show that these attempts to avoid conciliation over frameworks would also be unsuccessful for beauty.

First, we need to review what is meant by a ‘framework’ disagreement. According to Feldman ‘frameworks’ or ‘epistemic principles’ capture “the idea that people have some more global outlook on the world, a general view that shapes much of what they believe.”145 Frameworks allow us to discuss

the underlying assumptions, principles, beliefs and priorities that shape our perspectives. They provide a structure for judgment according to which certain kinds of things are acceptable as evidence, count as obviously true, as ambitious, out-dated, preposterous, etc.\textsuperscript{146}

In Camelot we see a shift in framework crystallize before our eyes in Arthur’s epiphany that “Might is right,” should really be “Might for right,” an insight that re-orders his whole moral framework: if power is not its own end, but an instrument of impartial justice, the knights must change everything from the way they fight (not just killing disposable foot soldiers, but other knights as well if they stand in the way of justice) to the way they sit (as equals at the round table who have given up vying for personal position). Perhaps most importantly, Arthur himself must accept the verdict of the jury system he created when his wife is sentenced to death for adultery.

How could he explain these changes and decisions to Pellinore, who cannot separate the idea of what is right from the physical power needed to achieve it? For Pellinore, Arthur’s efforts to civilize the world are just another expression of power creating its own right, and so he cannot appreciate the reasons behind Arthur’s tortured decision not to arbitrarily over-rule the jury’s verdict and save Guenevere. To Pellinore, saving Guenevere or the jury system are equally actions expressing Arthur’s might as King, whatever he chooses to make ‘right’ with it. Pellinore and Arthur’s frameworks simultaneously order the same world but do not intersect; their respective reasons get no grip, \textit{as} reasons, with each other. We can call framework disagreements like this ‘deep’ disagreements because they cannot be easily resolved by turning to a shared or underlying common ground that can adjudicate between them or even translate the terms of one worldview into those of the other.

It may be clear to us that Arthur’s vision of justice is better than Pellinore’s because the court system aims to give everyone the same treatment, regardless of prejudices based on class, strength, or

\textsuperscript{146} Here one might think of passages from Wittgenstein’s \textit{On Certainty} such as: “All testing, all confirmation and disconfirmation of a hypothesis takes place already within a system. And this system is not a more or less arbitrary and doubtful point of departure for all our arguments: no, it belongs to the essence of what we call an argument. The system is not so much the point of departure, as the element in which arguments have their life.” (§105)
personal interest. But getting Pellinore to see the weight of this reason, to appreciate it as a reason for endorsing the court system, is really just to get him to accept the court system itself. The ‘reason’ given for accepting it isn’t independent of the worldview proposed, but another way of presenting it. Part of the heroic quality of Arthur’s dream of the round table and its eventual collapse is that he cannot civilize those around him just by giving good arguments, or marshalling evidence for the benefits of his proposed way of life. Instead, he must have conversations like this one with Pellinore that seek to transform his friend’s worldview somehow from within. Pellinore’s failure to understand isn’t just stupidity or pig-headedness, as if he is already part of Arthur’s world and failing to see things he is already equipped to recognize. He is of a different world, on the terms of which he cannot yet register Arthur’s reasons in the same way.

That Arthur and Pellinore’s reasons are silent for each other as reasons is important because it affects the way we should think of correcting, revising or changing frameworks. Frameworks structure and ‘frame’ our efforts to find reasons for correcting and revising beliefs that fall within their scope, and we can’t assume there will always be larger or deeper frameworks we could use to repeat this story of correction for frameworks themselves. Nevertheless, our frameworks can evolve and change for good reasons – what sort of reasons would those be? In other words, what does it mean to say that frameworks must be ‘transformed from within’? For help with this, we can turn again to the parallel between frameworks and aesthetic judgments.

147 Again, passages from Wittgenstein’s *On Certainty* spring to mind, such as: “we can ask: May someone have telling grounds for believing that the earth has only existed for a short time, say since his own birth? – Suppose he had always been told that, -- would he have any good reason to doubt it? … And if Moore and this king were to meet and discuss, could Moore really prove his belief to be the right one? I do not say that Moore could not convert the king to his view, but it would be a conversion of a special kind; the king would be brought to look at the world in a different way.” (§92) And another: “And here the strange thing is that when I am quite certain of how the words are used, have no doubt about it, I can still give no grounds for my way of going on. If I tried I could give a thousand, but none as certain as the very thing they were supposed to be grounds for.” (§307) Talk of ‘converting’ rather than ‘correcting’ others is appropriate for framework disagreements, for the framework itself sets the terms for what counts as a mistake or a correction. Only from within Arthur’s framework for justice will Pellinore be able to see that deciding who is right by who is stronger is unfair (and getting him to see this may be how Arthur ‘converts’ him).
In the introduction I drew a distinction between disagreements we can settle by appealing to a rule we both agree on (we would share a deeper framework that can be used to decide who is right), and disagreements that encompass basic rules themselves – such as the spirit of science, or the definition of illness. I pointed out a similarity between ‘deep’ or ‘framework’ disagreements and those about beauty. To refresh our memory, I have taken up a view on which judgments of beauty are made based on a universally valid feeling that can’t be explained as appropriate or not by a set of rules or conditions; a claim on the agreement of others comes from the feeling itself. On this view then, it is in the nature of judgments of beauty that we can’t settle disputes or adjudicate who is right by appealing to a rule that can be located outside the particular disagreement, we have to make those assessments by the same power of judgment that gives us our individual judgments of beauty in the first place. Similarly, we cannot step back to an independent standpoint and weigh different frameworks against each other – the very terms such a comparison would use are part of the respective worldviews in dispute. This is the main feature that disagreements about beauty and frameworks have in common: the disagreement challenges a sense of what is right, appropriate, or fundamental that has to stand or fall by its own strength, since there is nothing that can justify it beyond itself.

In his paper “Aesthetic and Nonaesthetic” Sibley distinguishes between two uses of ‘reason’. On the one hand, a reason may be “a true statement or a fact such that, on the basis of knowing it, it would be reasonable, right, or plausible to infer, suppose, or judge that something is so.” Sibley argues that we can’t judge the presence or absence of aesthetic qualities on the basis of this kind of reason, since those judgments depend on an exercise of aesthetic sensitivity or perception that cannot be codified in a set of rules or conditions that could figure in inferences. When critics support their judgments they give a different kind of reason, one that states “why things are as they are.” He gives the example of a deck of cards that is incomplete for the reason that it is missing the ace of clubs. The

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148 Sibley (1965), 146.
149 Ibid., 146.
missing ace of clubs could fill the role of both kinds of reason, it could be offered as a reason for thinking the deck is incomplete, but it is also the reason why the deck is incomplete regardless of anyone noticing or believing it. Sibley proposes that critics give the second sort of reason to explain why an aesthetic object has the qualities they claim (‘this line over here balances that circle over there’), even if they could not be given as reasons to think the quality is there, or argue to that conclusion, independently of an exercise of aesthetic perception. In his own words:

In general, then, my suggestion is that two things are often confused: people insist that aesthetic judgments should be based on, in the sense of rationally derived or derivable from, supporting reasons; but all they can sensibly insist is that the critic, having realized why the thing is or is not graceful, should be able to say so.

I believe this distinction between kinds of reasons applies to justifications for holding frameworks as well, if for different reasons. Sibley’s discussion concerns the way that nonaesthetic features (such as dropping into a minor key) can explain aesthetic features (the music is sad), but only in the context of a particular aesthetic perception, without allowing for further generalizations or inferences. We can’t give reasons from which we could derive a framework either, in this case because of the way frameworks set the terms for what can count as a reason or not in the first place. However, given a framework, we can give reasons in the second sense for why it is as it is – Arthur can more clearly articulate and identify how his view of persons informs the idea of ‘fair’ at work in his impartial court system, for instance. These explanations are not useless, just as the critics are not:

Such explanations satisfy an interest and curiosity … When we see in detail how and why the work has its character, we may find our initial judgment strengthened and trust it more confidently … our appreciation is deepened and enriched and becomes more intelligent in being articulate.

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150 Sibley (1965), 148: “A may in fact be the reason why something is B, and yet the knowledge that that thing has A may provide no reason or justification for supposing that it has B.”
151 Ibid., 147.
152 To complete this thought from Sibley (1965), 148: “knowledge that a piece of music slows and drops into a minor key at a certain point … would be very poor reasons for believing or inferring that the music must be, or even probably is, sad … The music might instead be solemn or peaceful, sentimental, or even characterless”.
153 Ibid., 140.
Sibley has put the influence of this kind of reason positively here, but gaining a deeper or clearer understanding of something we already believe can have the opposite effect as well. Clarifying reasons why something is the case can change the way we understand it, leading us to new and different ways of seeing what we are engaged with, either aesthetically or in our commitments to justice, political views, whatever frameworks we have.

What is important is that these reasons do their work from within our engagement with a framework, not from outside it. I cannot change how I see an aesthetic work unless I am perceiving (experiencing) it, and similarly I can’t change my framework for justice by first trying to escape it into some neutral territory. If such a stance is really neutral on the nature of justice, what resources could it have for making one kind of justice or another more compelling to me? My views about justice and beauty can change – but not by the pressure of ‘independent’ reasons, rather by the reasons I come to see from within what I already understand as compelling. This makes the evolution of frameworks and aesthetic tastes specially disorienting; the ground moves beneath our feet, so to speak, rather than standing in a firm place deciding between two clear forks in the road.

What are we to do when we encounter framework disagreements? We can talk about the practical strategies Arthur could use to convert Pellinore to his worldview, but what effect should the disagreement have on Arthur’s confidence in what he believes, his sense that justice really is impartial and power its instrument, not as Pellinore believes, a power that justifies itself in taking what it wants? Should he be conciliatory and reduce the confidence he has in his understanding of justice, or remain steadfast, as confident as ever?

Even conciliatory theorists like Christensen and Elga acknowledge there are some disagreements that are so deep and broad, challenging such fundamental aspects of the way we think or
reason, that we intuitively resist the idea of being conciliatory about them.\footnote{See Christensen (2013) who resists the idea that conciliation would lead to wholesale skepticism, and Elga (2011) who suggests that suspending judgment on almost everything would be an absurd result, should it follow from the conciliatory view (172).} It is also troubling that reducing confidence in a framework would require reducing confidence in all the beliefs the framework supports and the threat of widespread suspension of judgment shoots up quickly. These potential problems raise two questions for the conciliatory theorist to consider: 1) How often will we encounter peer disagreement about frameworks (and beauty)? 2) When we do encounter peer disagreement on such matters is it rational to respond by being conciliatory? Spinelessness could potentially be avoided on both points; we have less reason to be worried about spinelessness if we rarely encounter peer disagreement about frameworks (or beauty), and the same goes if we don’t have to respond with conciliation when we do.

Do we have reason to think that we will often judge others to be our peers on framework issues? This is a substantial question because peerhood judgments are often discussed as a matter of assessing respective ‘track records’ for coming to true beliefs about the sort of thing under dispute, and other factors influencing the likelihood each of us is right that can be assessed from a ‘dispute-independent’ standpoint (without looking at the actual matter under dispute). This works quite well for the kind of belief we arrive at by merely using an underlying framework to count up or make sense of the evidence for a belief that comes our way. With respect to such beliefs we go through a repeated process of taking up information and forming a belief that can be ‘tracked’ for localized success or failure at giving a true result. While our frameworks do evolve and change in various different ways, I don’t think it is possible to assess a track record for holding them in the same way.

This problem becomes particularly clear when we notice it isn’t the track record of the \textit{framework} for generating true beliefs a peer judgment is concerned with, but the track record of the \textit{individual} for holding frameworks that generate true beliefs. Say I discover in high school a friend disagrees with me that abortion is morally permissible (to reference Elga’s example of Ann and Beth...
who disagree about abortion).\textsuperscript{155} We have accepted different moral frameworks for judging what counts as a morally weighty reason for or against a practice. As we go through life I may gain more opportunities to assess which framework helps shape true moral judgments more often than the other (judged of course from within my framework), but if we stay consistent in the basic underlying assumptions of our moral outlooks, I gain no new information to help me assess our track records for holding moral frameworks. We have both only done this once in a gradual process of absorbing attitudes and insights from family, education, and experience. It can also be hard to mark off how many frameworks one has held over time since they often evolve slowly, without the kind of sudden epiphany that makes Arthur a useful illustration.

Where does this leave us in terms of the likelihood of peer judgments for framework disagreements? There are several possible approaches, keeping in mind the end-goal for conciliatory theorists of making peer judgments about frameworks unlikely. However, I am not convinced the strategies I will present from Elga and Christensen successfully establish that peerhood will usually be withheld from those who disagree with us at the level of frameworks. Nor am I convinced that the conciliatory view has the resources to argue that a different response than conciliation should be given in such cases, despite the symmetry between peers. Because of this, I don’t think these will be promising strategies for avoiding conciliatory responses in the case of disagreement about beauty either.

The first approach is to argue that once everything connected with a framework is set aside in order to make a dispute-independent judgment of peerhood, there just isn’t enough left to go on to form a judgment of the other’s reliability. Elga argues for this using his example of Ann and Beth who disagree about a whole cluster of beliefs related to abortion, considered as “a single compound issue”\textsuperscript{156}. Because such a wide range of issues figure in the abortion cluster, “[t]o set aside Ann’s

\textsuperscript{155} Elga (2011), 172-173.

\textsuperscript{156} Elga (2011), 175.
reasoning about all of these issues is to set aside a large and central chunk of her ethical and political outlook. Once so much has been set aside, there is no determinate fact about what opinion of Beth remains.”

However, Kornblith makes a good reply to Elga here. He compares Ann’s disagreement with Beth to her disagreement with Zena, a homicidal sociopath who “disagrees with them about virtually every moral question one might care to raise.” The difference is that Ann and Beth take each other to be “basically decent, caring, thoughtful individuals” but this is not the case with Zena. Kornblith suggests this is why Beth’s disagreement is so much more disturbing to Ann than Zena’s (Zena herself might be disturbing, but her disagreement does not threaten Ann’s own beliefs). The point is that Ann does appear to have some prior conditional belief about Beth’s likelihood of arriving at reasonable beliefs about abortion, and it is this prior conditional belief that makes the difference in how she responds to Beth and Zena. This means that spinelessness could still be a serious worry at the level of disagreements about frameworks, especially if it looks like our independent evaluations of who is more likely to have the right framework will often turn up symmetrical results.

Kornblith’s point is useful because it shows that an assessment of track records need not be the center piece in a judgment of peerhood, such judgments can also be made on the basis of epistemic (or moral, or aesthetic) virtues that are a part of forming beliefs within one’s framework, but can be considered independently of the content of the beliefs involved. For an example from the aesthetic world, we can turn to music critic Carl Wilson’s engaging effort to challenge his taste in music, uncovering the factors that underlie his persistent dismissal of Céline Dion. He makes a remarkable effort to see if he can appreciate her music the way her fans do. His success in that department is mixed

157 Ibid., 176.
158 Kornblith (2010), 50.
159 Ibid., 50.
160 Christensen (2009) agrees with Kornblith on this point: “One might object that if Ann takes Beth to be honest intelligent, familiar with the arguments, and so on, and if she thinks that these are the attributes primarily responsible for figuring out the correct answers to difficult questions, she might well have enough dispute-independent information on Beth to arrive at some dispute-independent opinion about Beth’s likelihood of getting the right answer on abortion.” (760)
and of interest for its own sake, but along the way he meets passionate fan Sophoan Sorn whom he appears to acknowledge as a peer:

His other tastes include classical music, a lot of contemporary Christian singers, various stars from international Idol competitions, LeAnn Rimes, Josh Groban … Maybe this is a standard set of enthusiasms for a young, music-besotted Christian American today, but I feel as if I’m on the phone to a parallel universe. Sophoan is one of the nicest people I’ve ever talked to. And yet it is one of the most surreal “taste shock” experiences I’ve had: I couldn’t fathom where to begin challenging his perceptions or comparing them to mine. Nor would I want to. His taste world is coherent and an enormous pleasure to him. Not only does it seem as valid as my own, utterly incompatible tastes, I like him so much that for a long moment his taste seems superior. What was the point again of all that nasty, life-negating crap I like?161

I think Wilson’s description of this experience interestingly parallels the kind of features Kornblith thinks Ann and Beth could still base a peer judgment on: he is one of the ‘nicest people’ Wilson has ever met and his tastes are ‘coherent’. The way Sophoan engages his musical tastes can’t be faulted, and this is a strong enough reason to take his taste seriously that, at least for a moment, Wilson wonders if his own taste isn’t missing something important about the music he champions against the likes of Céline.

The likelihood of finding dispute-independent evidence of some kind for judging peerhood actually seems quite strong on a Kantian account of beauty. On a Kantian account, experiencing beauty is the work of a basic cognitive capacity for feeling a purposive ‘fit’ between imagination and understanding in the free play. If we take any case less extreme than challenging another’s common sense wholesale, it would be quite easy to have positive reason to think the other’s common sense is working alright – especially if we consider aesthetic and cognitive common sense to be one and the same, albeit with different functions (exploring a free play or cognizing something particular about an object). So long as I have positive reason to think the other person is a generally competent cognitive subject I have reason to expect her common sense to be competent for judging beauty as well, since they trace back to the same capacities.

However, as we saw in our discussion of Dewey in the last chapter, there must be more to our ‘frameworks’ for judging beauty than common sense alone. The proper object of a judgment of beauty is an interactive experience with an object that has a characteristic rhythm, development and felt quality – an experience we might need a certain education or history to be able to realize and appreciate.

Perhaps this is where we could potentially lack reason for thinking the other is likely to be right in her judgment of beauty. In fact, Meskin has recently argued that the reason we are unlikely to accept testimony as the basis for making aesthetic judgments is that we work with a general assumption others will be unreliable in making such judgments: “There is a long tradition of thinking in philosophical aesthetics that suggests that much ordinary testimony about art is likely to be unreliable and, hence, that belief forming processes that rely on testimony about art will be unreliable.”\(^{162}\) As examples of this long tradition, Meskin cites Hume’s high standards for the ideal critic, Danto’s argument that one needs to understand the theoretical context of the artworld to appreciate objects as works of art, and Walton’s theory that our experience of artworks changes depending on which categories we take them to fall under (‘painting’, ‘sculpture’, ‘Guernicas’ etc.).\(^{163}\) In light of these philosophical reflections, Meskin believes that

\[\text{in many cases audiences simply do not have the knowledge and training that is required to perceive works correctly. …} \]

\[\text{If Hume, Danto, and Walton are right, then we should not expect}\]

\(^{162}\) Meskin (2004), 86.

\(^{163}\) This is tangential to my main line of inquiry, but I don’t believe the arguments given by Danto (1964) and Walton (1970) help support Meskin’s point here. I take Danto and Walton to give philosophical explanations of judgments that come fairly naturally to those participating in the artworld. The difficulty isn’t so much in reliably experiencing Warhol’s \textit{Brillo Boxes} as a work of art, or experiencing Picasso’s \textit{Guernica} as a dynamic two-dimensional painting rather than a boring contribution to the ‘guernica’ category that could also be three-dimensional. The difficulty is in explaining how such familiar judgments are made to practices we are already involved in. Although we are meant to sympathize with Danto’s philistine Testadura who can’t tell the difference between ordinary objects and works of art for philosophical purposes, I don’t think we are presumed to be Testaduras, or seriously worried that many of those around us are. The difference between an ordinary object and the very same object presented in a gallery as a work of art is hard to explain philosophically, but not necessarily hard to judge. I think Meskin is confusing an unreliability in correctly making such judgments as we navigate the artworld with an unreliability in being able to give theoretical explanations for our judgments and practices. Meskin is right that the contemporary artworld can be baffling, but using this to generalize about our reluctance to accept testimony ignores the fact that the main bulk of aesthetic experiences (including a great deal of the history of art, along with popular music, movies, and novels) are not baffling in these ways, and equally explained by Danto and Walton’s theories.
aesthetic testimony about art to be largely true. Hence, a process of aesthetic testimonial uptake will not be reliable.\textsuperscript{164}

If we accept this explanation of the failure of testimony about art and beauty,\textsuperscript{165} it could also be useful for escaping a conciliatory response to disagreements about beauty: in both cases it comes down to rarely having strong positive reason to think others are reliable judges.

However, Meskin’s view runs into a problem that he shares with the conciliatory theorist’s attempts to resist conciliation in framework disagreements. The problem is that I am often roughly in the same position as others for judging beauty or coming to hold a framework, and if I don’t have strong positive reason to think they are likely on the right track, I don’t have much reason to think this about myself either. Insofar as Christensen and Elga take spinelessness to be a problem worth avoiding, I would not expect them to eagerly embrace a solution that winds up landing us in widespread suspension of judgment about our own frameworks anyway. On the other hand, if I do consider myself to have positive reason to think I’m on the right track, I will have to extend this optimism to others who disagree and seem to be roughly equally well positioned from an independent assessment.

Meskin acknowledges that accepting general unreliability in judgments about art could threaten our own ability to make warranted judgments. His response is that one can be a reliable judge, if one possesses “the requisite cognitive, affective, and perceptual resources” and restricts oneself to areas of expertise.\textsuperscript{166} Already this seems to open up quite a lot of room for recognizing other reliable judges – how far above the pack am I, or most others, in those requisite resources and expertise? Unless I have quite an inflated sense of myself as an aesthetic judge, thinking it likely my judgments are warranted will often make it reasonable to extend my confidence quite quickly through the crowd. Meskin embraces the possible skeptical outcome if this is the case, but for our purposes it lands us back where

\textsuperscript{164} Meskin (2004), 87.
\textsuperscript{165} It should be noted that Meskin is part of a long line of theorists who take Kant’s work on beauty as a position to reckon with in our thinking about a wider range of aesthetic beliefs, including those about art. While I have tried to avoid this by keeping my own arguments focused on beauty, I understand the need to run them together sometimes for ease of discussion.
\textsuperscript{166} Meskin (2004), 90.
we started in terms of worrying about spinelessness. All that a conciliatory response takes is having confidence in my own framework or aesthetic judgment and then recognizing that others who disagree have roughly the same credentials going for them from a dispute-independent standpoint. This does not seem unlikely to me, and is a continuing problem for conciliatory theorists trying to avoid spinelessness.

However, Christensen offers a more sophisticated solution. He takes an even more extreme case of disagreement as the starting point for making his case. Imagine you encounter a man wearing a foil hat who insists that anyone not wearing such a hat cannot trust her basic ability to reason.\textsuperscript{167} The disagreement imagined with Foil Hat Guy is so extreme there really is little left to work with for judging peerhood once we have bracketed everything the disagreement puts in question. But we can still recognize the symmetry such a dispute-independent assessment returns: neither Foil Hat Guy nor myself can produce any independent reason for thinking we are more likely to be right, we cannot produce reasons for much of anything at all. Do I need to be conciliatory with Foil Hat Guy and free fall into widespread suspension of judgment on almost everything I believe? Christensen does not think so.

To avoid that result, Christensen distinguishes between two formulations of the principle requiring conciliation. The first emphasizes symmetry, holding that we should be conciliatory when our dispute-independent evaluation fails to give any reason to favour our own belief over another’s.\textsuperscript{168} This formulation of the principle would problematically require conciliation with Foil Hat Guy. However little I have to work with to evaluate our respective epistemic credentials, it seems I have plenty to go

\textsuperscript{167} Here is Christensen’s more colourful elaboration: “Suppose he’s wearing an aluminum foil hat, and he tells me he’s just seen Elvis’s image in his morning waffle, and that Elvis told him that only those with foil hats can think straight at all. Clearly, Foil Hat Guy is denying a claim (that I’m not incredibly screwed up) confidence in which under-lay my response to repeated disagreement in the last section.” (2013, 15)

\textsuperscript{168} Christensen (2013), 15. It should be noted that failing to find any reason to prefer one’s own view (recognizing symmetry) is often presented as a motivation for conciliation. For instance, consider a remark White (2009) makes on our ability to judge peerhood, even considering the imprecision that often attends such judgments of reliability in actual practice: “None of this uncertainty of course gives me any reason to trust my judgment over yours in advance. For I have no more reason to suppose that I am more reliable than you than that you are more reliable than me.” (235)
on to judge that Foil Hat Guy and myself are in the exact same boat: we are equally unable to
determine our reliability when so much has been bracketed. As undetermined, my prior conditional
belief that either of us would be right is exactly the same.

However, Christensen’s second formulation offers a way out: “Insofar as the dispute-
independent evaluation gives me good reason to be confident that the other person is equally well-
formed, and equally likely to have reasoned from the evidence correctly, I must revise my belief in
the direction of the other person’s.”169 Neither I nor Foil Hat Guy meet this requirement in our
disagreement, since we have nothing to base an evaluation of our respective credentials on when so
much as been bracketed, including basic reasoning abilities. Thus we need not be conciliatory in this
case.

With the second principle in place, the conciliatory view says: first, when I encounter peer
disagreement, I must always go to a dispute-independent assessment of our credentials. Second, if the
assessment returns some positive reason to think the other could be right (and I could have made a
mistake), I must determine what is rational to believe according to that third personal assessment of
probabilities. In other words, once a question has been raised from this third person perspective, I
cannot answer it by begging the question in favor of my initial first personal reasoning on the issue. We
can avoid conciliation with Foil Hat Guy because the independent assessment of credentials fails to
return any positive reason for thinking he could be right, and so any positive reason for thinking I
could be mistaken that would put my view in question. Technically then, I am not begging any question by
remaining committed to the belief that I can trust my ability to reason; no significant question has been
raised against me. Anne and Beth have some reason to take each other seriously and doubt their own
views, but it is weak, and so the question raised is also weak. Christensen takes it to be a strength of his

169 Christensen (2013), 15.
view that it can explain a gradually increasing pressure to be conciliatory as dispute-independent evidence of the other’s credentials builds up.\textsuperscript{170}

Although revising the principle for conciliation can look like a stipulation to deal with a problem, I think it does fit well with the core motivation of Christensen’s view. One of the main motivations for conciliation is the fact that a peer’s disagreement gives me evidence I may have made a mistake. That worry seems to be crucially missing with Foil Hat Guy. I am bewildered by my disagreement with Foil Hat Guy, but if I am wrong about everything he puts in question this would hardly be ‘making a mistake’ in the way I usually understand and worry about epistemic blunders.\textsuperscript{171}

This solution would seem to extend to beauty. If someone challenges the operation of my basic ability to experience beauty, the sense in which I am ‘making a mistake’ would be that my common sense is deranged. This would mean every feeling of beauty I have is faulty and I cannot recognize mistakes in the usual way, by employing a healthy and well functioning common sense. Without trusting my own framework for making such judgments (my own common sense), it becomes much trickier to have the resources to judge when I should find disagreement in particular cases troubling and when not.

However, I will now argue that an exclusive focus on dispute-independent reasons for thinking the other is likely to be right can actually prevent us from giving the other person a fair assessment in the case of framework disagreements. First of all, Christensen is right that in a frameworks case I cannot accurately judge the likelihood that the other is right from a dispute-independent perspective,

\textsuperscript{170} See Christensen (2013), 16: “the ‘insofar’ in principle (B) should be understood as indicating that the undermining power of disagreement by apparent epistemic equals is not all-or-nothing. When one evaluates the epistemic credentials of another’s beliefs in a dispute-neutral manner, one may get varying strengths of reasons for thinking that the other person is as well-informed and as likely to have reasoned correctly as one is oneself. The stronger one’s reasons for thinking equally of the other’s epistemic credentials, the more one should revise one’s beliefs. And this, I think, is how it should be intuitively.”

\textsuperscript{171} Wittgenstein (1969), §217: “If someone supposed that all our calculations were uncertain and that we could rely on none of them (justifying himself by saying that mistakes are always possible) perhaps we would say he is crazy. But can we say he is in error? Does he not just react differently? We rely on calculations, he doesn’t; we are sure, he isn’t.” And another: “If Moore were to pronounce the opposite of those propositions which he declares certain [such as ‘Here is a hand’], we should not just not share his opinion: we should regard him as demented. … In order to make a mistake, a man must already judge in conformity with mankind.” (§155, §156)
but that is only an indication of the limitations that apply to my ability to judge how likely it is she is right, not an indication of what that likelihood actually is. I believe Christensen’s view leaves us in an agnostic position in frameworks cases – we do not know one way or the other if the disagreement should be given epistemic significance. As a practical matter, perhaps this means I can go on without wondering whether I have made a mistake. But the fact is, I don’t know if I should be wondering about that or not, at least not on the grounds of dispute-independent evidence. In such a case I do lack positive dispute-independent reasons to think the other could be right, but that is through no fault of her own, it is simply a structural feature of the kind of disagreement we are having – a large one.

There are two ways to lack grounds for an independent assessment of credentials: 1) I could have good evidence to go on, but I don’t happen to have any, and 2) it isn’t coherent or possible to even look for much evidence to go on. Ann and Beth fall into the latter category. Their disagreement encompasses so much of their moral views, they could not disagree about this same thing and have better evidence to work with for independently assessing one another’s credentials. Although the independent evidence for judging credentials diminishes as their disagreement deepens, I don’t think this is a smooth transition into not being bothered by it. In this case, I think the slim pickings for judging credentials actually indicates how deep and significant the disagreement really is.

When we lack independent evidence for judging credentials in the second way (it isn’t possible to have better evidence), this can indicate we have come to a divide between worlds of reason-giving, how we are moved by reasons in an important and systematic way. Anne cannot simply add Beth’s reasons to her own and stack them up to an outcome – when she tries to give Beth’s reasons a good go, she feels herself pulled into a different world of priorities and values, she feels the ground shifting beneath her feet. In this case, the scarce resources for an independent assessment that Christensen thinks should make another’s disagreement dismissible actually calls attention to the fact that whatever could be compelling about the other’s view cannot be easily dismissed by an impartial reason that
comes from outside it. There is not much dispute-independent common ground from which we can pass judgment between the two views, or between the two judges, but we can still recognize that a difficult challenge has been raised for both parties.

How will we recognize this challenge, if not by a dispute-independent assessment of credentials? It is still possible to assess the other as a judge by thinking first personally about the rational connections between her claims. The conciliatory view rightly cautions that a first personal assessment will be biased by my conviction that I am right and the other is wrong, but to my mind, an imperfect assessment may be better than nothing (or very little). If a dispute-independent assessment leaves me without an answer for what to make of the other judge, it is not clear to me that the fair and impartial thing to do is to insist that is the only kind of assessment that can be allowed, and without it, I need not worry about the significance of the disagreement. Insisting that dispute-independent evidence is the only kind that can be permitted for assessing how reasonable, informed or insightful the other is does avoid the bias present in my initial first personal reasoning on the matter, but in framework cases an exclusive focus on that seems to do the other a disservice. If thinking first personally about the other’s view shows me a coherent, reasonable, informed effort to work out a position on the matter under dispute, I think I ought to give her a fair trial of Pellinore’s kind, by thinking through her claims with the critical evaluation of my first personal perspective engaged. It is true that I will assess how reasonable I think she is while I am compelled by my own belief that she is mistaken, but my critical evaluation need not strike a single note, and could occur alongside an appreciation for the care and intelligence her view does exhibit in some way. When I step back to a dispute-independent assessment, I distance myself equally from both the positive and critical assessments that could be made of her view from a first personal consideration of the content of her claims.

It is important to point out that assessing the other as a judge does not yet settle how we should respond if we do find her reasonable and well informed, in other words, what the epistemic significance
of the disagreement should be. If I am not a conciliationist, I don’t have to accept that whenever I find another to be roughly as reasonable and well informed as I am, that means I should revise confidence in response to disagreement. Framework disagreements place the conciliationist in a particularly sticky situation because acknowledging peerhood in such cases would lead to revising confidence in a large number of beliefs in one fell swoop. This is an awkward outcome, but I think it would be even more awkward to avoid it by arguing that we just have little legitimate reason to take others seriously when disagreements are so large. Surely, that isn’t always the case. If we allow in first personal assessments of the other’s merits as a judge to explain our continuing sense that we should sometimes take framework disagreements seriously, that doesn’t yet tell us how to revise confidence once we have that assessment in hand, but it does indicate more will be relevant to such revisions than dispute-independent evidence alone.

In the above discussion I often talk about taking the other seriously. But what does this really mean? What I have in mind is that when I take the disagreement of another seriously, I take there to be something of epistemic significance to be gained by figuring out where the mistake that explains the disagreement lies. Crucially, this is not just what I may gain (I may have made a mistake, and so should revise), but what she may gain as well (she may have made a mistake, and should now revise). As I will discuss further later on, Burge has argued that it is an important part of understanding the concept of reason to recognize that reasons have a transpersonal function. A rational move in my process of belief formation or revision ought to hold for another’s process too. Reasons give us some standing motivation (if not very strong) to correct each other. What I have tried to argue here is that whether or not this kind of corrective effort will be worthwhile is something I can try to assess first personally if a dispute-independent assessment is thin on the ground.

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I believe this shows us a crucial difference between the case of Foil Hat Guy and the disagreement between Ann and Beth. On a first personal assessment, Ann may find both Foil Hat Guy and Beth to be mistaken, and so their disagreements lack epistemic significance in the direction of revising her own beliefs. But, depending on how thoughtful and informed she takes Beth’s position to be by thinking it through first personally, the disagreement may have epistemic significance in the direction of revising Beth’s beliefs. In contrast, thinking through Foil Hat Guy’s claim that wearing a foil hat is a necessary condition for rational thought leaves little reason to think that he can be reasoned with. Interestingly, this may not apply to skeptics who try to arrive at distrusting basic reasoning through reason itself. In that case, perhaps a little more reasoning could be injected at some point to illuminate what has gone wrong (hence, the sustained philosophical interest given to discussions about global skepticism).

There seems to be little hope of rational intervention with Foil Hat Guy, for his belief does not appear to be grounded, even in part, on an exercise of reason. When I try to think through his position first personally, I find myself imagining someone who is mentally ill in some way (even if his claims are sincere). An important shift happens in this imagining from re-creating a view that engages critical evaluation, to one that simply re-creates a set of psychological facts. Foil Hat Guy’s view is mistaken as a matter of fact, but there is a sense in which it does not rest on a mistake. It has a psychological, not a rational, grounding, and its correction will be psychological, not rational, as well.

As I will argue in more detail in the coming chapters, I believe that attempting to understand another in the hopes of illuminating a mistake carries the risk of casting a surprising light back on our

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173 With Foil Hat Guy, we are in a position like this one described by Wittgenstein (1969), §257: “If someone said to me that he doubted whether he had a body I should take him to be a half-wit. But I shouldn’t know what it would mean to try to convince him that he had one. And if I had said something, and that had removed his doubt, I should not know how or why.” In contrast, Ann and Beth, or the philosophical skeptic, could hold their views on the basis of reasons or intuitions that we could imagine making sense to someone. This opens the possibility that we could show them these reasons or intuitions do not make sense, or do not support their views. I find it difficult to imagine that someone could hold Foil Hat Guy’s view on the basis of some reasons or grounds that could make sense, it sounds like a brute commitment without justification. There could be people who hold views about abortion like this too (such as someone who believes it is wrong on the basis of a religious commitment that goes unquestioned), in which case the abortion example would be more like Foil Hat Guy.
own views. There is a vulnerability to engaging in critical evaluation that we cannot escape, for it is an active, exploratory process than can evolve in unexpected ways. My efforts to correct another will always open me to the potential realization that I am the one being corrected about something instead. We take on this vulnerability even when we critically engage with others because we think we are right. This is a kind of epistemic significance that a first personal assessment may recognize in the disagreement between Ann and Beth, but not with Foil Hat Guy.
Chapter Five: Disagreement about Beauty and the Steadfast View

As we have seen, there is an assumption in the epistemological debate that responding rationally to disagreement is a matter of revising confidence in light of new evidence, and that such revisions are largely informed by determining who is more likely to be right, or to have made the mistake that explains the disagreement. At the heart of the debate is a special problem about how to respond when I determine that we are equally likely to be right or to have made the mistake (the other is my ‘peer’). At this point, two broad answers may gain traction: 1) since I have determined that I have no reason to think I am more likely to be right, I should be conciliatory and reduce confidence according to this new evidence that I may be mistaken, and 2) since I am still compelled by my belief and the reasons that make me confident it is true, I can remain (at least somewhat, sometimes) steadfast in my confidence.

We can notice that right from the point where we judge peerhood according to who is more likely to be right, a third person perspective takes center stage in framing the issue. The idea is that I should assess the likelihood of who has made a mistake independently of the subject matter of the dispute, and the process of deliberation or weighing of evidence that brought me to my own view. One of the main motivations for the independence principle comes from the fact that disagreement with a peer raises the question of whether or not I have made a mistake, and to answer ‘no’ simply because I take myself to be right would beg the question against my peer. I need to find some other reason for thinking it likely that she is the one who has made a mistake than the clear and compelling truth of my own belief. This means I must step outside the first personal deliberations that brought me to that belief, and take up the view of a neutral third party – is there any reason such an onlooker could have for thinking I am more likely to be right? (Perhaps I am less distracted than my peer, or I haven’t had
ten cups of coffee, there are all kinds of factors that could be relevant from a third personal view.)  

Another motivation for the independence principle comes from the fact that I have already given my reasons their due in arriving at my belief and holding it with my present degree of confidence. To return to those reasons as further support for holding my belief in response to disagreement could amount to ‘double-counting’. As Enoch explains, the worry is that

All of this evidence was considered by you in coming to believe p (and by Adam, in coming to believe not-p). If at the second stage we think that you believe p (and that Adam believes not-p) to be evidence, this evidence arguably screens off the evidence that was already taken into account in the first stage.

From these concerns we can see that once I have recognized the symmetry between my epistemic position and that of a peer, it is going to be difficult to justify returning to the first person perspective as part of rationally responding to disagreement. Nevertheless, both Kelly and Enoch argue that the first person should play a role in assessing how to revise confidence in light of disagreement. In this chapter, I will explain why I believe that Enoch’s arguments are more successful than Kelly’s, and can provide us with a starting point for thinking about responding to disagreement about beauty in the following chapters.

5.1 The First and Third Person: What We Can Learn from Moore’s Paradox

One source of resistance to prioritizing the third person perspective in response to disagreement is that it switches one’s focus from thinking about the matter under dispute to the disputants. The steadfast views offered by Kelly and Enoch both try to inject thinking about the subject matter itself back into the considerations that are relevant for revising confidence in response to disagreement (particularly the initial reasons for my belief, and the fact that it seems plainly true to me). Rather than

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174 For a discussion of possible ‘symmetry breakers’ see Lackey (2008), 310: “Personal information is information that one has about the normal functioning of one’s own cognitive faculties. I may, for instance, know about myself that I am not currently suffering from depression, or not experiencing side effects from prescribed medication, or not exhausted, whereas I may not know that all of this is true of you.”

175 Enoch (2011), 969-970.
going directly into the details of Kelly and Enoch’s arguments, I first want to lay further groundwork for thinking about the role of the first and third person perspectives in the ways we attribute beliefs to ourselves and others. Heal offers a helpful distinction between two ways we can attribute belief in her work on Moore’s paradox, one that relies upon third personal observation of the believer’s behaviour, and another that relies upon first personal deliberation on the content of the belief. She argues that these two ways of attributing belief can be used to either maintain or dissolve the sense of paradox in a sentence like “I believe p, but not p.”

Heal takes it that an account of how we attribute beliefs should be able to explain why a sentence like “I believe p, but not p” troubles us. However, this is going to be difficult for views that take belief attribution to be a matter of working out what inner states would explain a person’s tendency to speak or act in the way they do. She uses the label “functionalism” to cover views of this sort:

The core of the functionalist strategy is the assumption that explanation of action or mental state through mention of beliefs, desires, emotions, and so on is causal. The approach is resolutely third personal. … We are said to view other people as we view stars, clouds or geological formations. People are just complex objects in our environment whose behaviour we wish to anticipate but whose causal innards we cannot perceive. We therefore proceed by observing the intricacies of their external behaviour and formulating some hypotheses about how the insides are structured.

Heal’s larger project is to argue against a strong functionalist approach in favor of a ‘replicative strategy’ for understanding our grasp of other’s thoughts and desires. At present, however, I want to

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176 Heal (2003), 11. Heal offers Putnam (1967) and Stich (1982) as classic examples of a ‘functionalist’ approach to understanding our grasp of others’ mental states.

177 The ‘replicative strategy’ argues that thinking about the thoughts of others includes replicating those thoughts in some way for ourselves. See Heal (2003), 13-14: “I can imagine how my tastes, aims and opinions might change and work out what would be sensible to do or believe in the circumstances. My ability to do these things makes possible a certain sort of understanding of other people. I can harness all my complex theoretical knowledge about the world and my ability to imagine in order to yield an insight into other people without any further elaborate theorising about them. Only one simple assumption is needed: that they are like me in being thinkers, that they possess the same fundamental cognitive capacities and propensities that I do.” She continues, “Suppose I am interested in predicting someone’s action. … What I endeavour to do is to replicate or re-create his thinking. I place myself in what I take to be his initial state by imagining the world as it would appear from his point of view and I then deliberate, reason and reflect to see what decision emerges.” A common idea for how this replication might happen is that we take pretend versions of the other’s beliefs or desires and run them through our own belief-forming mechanisms ‘off-line,’ so that we are left with a belief about what the other person is likely to believe or do, not a belief or action of our own. For a classic articulation of the ‘replicative’ or ‘simulationist’ view, see
focus on her criticism that the functionalist approach fails to generate anything paradoxical in the Moorean sentence. The difficulty is that there doesn’t seem to be anything paradoxical about attributing contradictory beliefs to myself in order to explain some rare but possible combinations of behaviour. For example, I might believe that two lines are really the same length in a Mueller-Lyer illusion, but still reach out to point at one of them when someone asks me which is longer. As an explanation of my behaviour, it would make sense to say, ‘I believe that A is longer than B, but it is not true that A is longer than B.’ The sense of paradox has been deflated here, since it seems possible (and even rationally commendable) for me to recognize that I have contradictory beliefs. As Heal puts it, on a functionalist account of belief, “Moorean claims are not conceptually quasi-contradictory but merely extremely unlikely to be true.”

This might sound like a nice outcome. On a functionalist view, we don’t have to worry about explaining a paradox here because there isn’t one. However, Heal thinks this result misses something important about our practices of attributing beliefs. For one thing, it can’t account for our inclination to say in such cases ‘But I really believe the lines are equal,’ or ‘It is only as if I believe one of them is longer.’ According to functionalism, both beliefs are attributed in the same way, and so there is no room for recognizing this kind of subtlety, the different ways we might relate to our beliefs.

To get the sense of paradox back and give a richer account of our practices of belief attribution, Heal thinks we need to add a second way of attributing beliefs that results from first personal deliberation. She proposes that our practice of using ‘belief’ includes three features. First, we do attribute beliefs as the functionalist view suggests: “beliefs are often attributed to people on the basis of

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Gordon (1986). Heal thinks this idea of ‘off-line simulation’ is only one way the replicative strategy could be cashed out. The more basic idea is just that “the ability to think about another’s thoughts calls upon and incorporates the ability to think about the subject matter of those thoughts.” (110) She calls this basic ability ‘co-cognition’. In Chapter 7 I will return to her account of co-cognition and the arguments she gives for it against the functionalist strategy.

178 Heal (2003), 261.
179 Ibid., 267.
observed patterns in behaviour.” However, we are “also trained to say ‘I believe that p’ sometimes as a substitute for the plain assertion ‘p’.” This means a person can attribute a belief “without his or her checking any criteria. In particular, the trained person does not check up on his or her behaviour. If any evidence is looked at, it is evidence as to whether p.” Together, these two practices of belief attribution can explain what is so odd about the Moorean sentence. If we stick with a strictly “third-person behaviour-based” approach, there is nothing problematic about recognizing that I hold contradictory beliefs, like a good mechanic diagnosing what is wrong with a malfunctioning machine. However, once a “first-person present-tense” practice of belief attribution is added, I am the malfunctioning machine, I’m inside it, at the same time as I am the good mechanic. I am carrying out the malfunction, not just observing it. This is what does not seem possible, particularly when we add the third feature Heal proposes as part of our practice of using ‘belief,’ namely that there should be a good fit between the beliefs we ascribe to ourselves using both practices. When I make a self-ascription of belief I also, by way of that ascription, offer a self-description that should line up with what can be observed third-personally from my behaviour. If they do not line up, something has gone wrong (and my sincerity in ascribing the belief might be questioned).

I believe that Heal’s discussion of these two ways of attributing belief can also help us to see what is odd about our epistemic situation when we face peer disagreement, and why we might find a conciliatory account unsatisfying. Here is a longer explanation Heal gives of the paradox, that I think is relevant to disagreement as well:

Thus we have in ‘I believe that p’ an utterance which is, at one and the same time, a member of two different classes. On the one hand, it is a self-description of me as a believer and as such has all the possibilities of grammatical transformation, entry into inference and possibility of incompatibility with behavioural evidence which that involves. On the other hand, it is an expression of belief that p, an alternative way of voicing what could also be voiced out as ‘p’.

180 Ibid., 268.
181 Ibid., 268.
182 Ibid., 269.
183 Ibid., 269.
184 Ibid., 269.
When we sense the contradiction in the Moorean utterance, we hear ‘I believe that p’ in this second role. When we become puzzled about why the utterance is contradictory, we hear it in the first role.\(^{185}\)

I believe Heal’s explanation of the paradox can also help us describe the tension of peer disagreement: when I sense the symmetry that holds between myself and a peer I hear ‘I believe that p’ in its role as a self-description, the same kind of description I give of my peer when I say ‘She believes that not p’. However, when it strikes me as important to continue thinking about my reasoning about the subject matter, I hear ‘I believe that p’ in its role as a self-ascription, an expression of belief that could also be voiced simply by ‘p’. As we have seen in the previous chapter, prioritizing a third person perspective is important for the conciliatory account of responding to disagreement. One way of challenging this view would be to look for times when it is important or necessary to continue hearing ‘I believe that p’ in its second role as a first personal self-ascription, even in the face of disagreement with a peer.

Heal gives a starting place for thinking about times when our epistemic situation cannot be adequately captured by hearing ‘I believe that p’ only as a third personal self-description. This would be inadequate, for example, when my self-description simultaneously constitutes the first-order states of belief I describe.\(^{186}\) She offers this case:

Consider the case where a person is asked ‘Do you believe that p?’ and has no ready answer to give, having as yet no view on the matter. To answer the question she needs to make up her mind, that is, to decide what to believe. It is plausible that this practical question about what she is to believe is transparent to, namely must be answered via answering, the theoretical question about how things are in the world. … Here we have a judgement that is both the judgement ‘p’ (since it results from deliberation on that issue and has those consequences) and the judgement ‘I believe that p’ (since it has that form and those consequences too). So it is a judgment which represents the world as being a certain way in representing the self as being a certain way.\(^{187}\) (my emphasis)

A judgment that results from this kind of deliberative process has a dual nature as both a self-description (a statement of fact about myself, ‘I believe that p’) and a self-ascription (a constitutive act

\(^{185}\) Ibid., 271.

\(^{186}\) Heal offers this case as part of her argument for a ‘constitutive’ account of first person authority, as opposed to dualism (authority comes from having private access to a special kind of fact about ourselves) and expressivism (authority comes from the fact that second-order beliefs express first-order psychological states). See Heal (2003), Chapter 14.

\(^{187}\) Ibid., 286-287.
that expresses the belief, ‘p’). Because of this dual nature, looking solely at my own behaviour and facts about myself to see what I do in fact believe would not entirely capture what is going on in my self-description, for that survey would miss the deliberative work that goes into the judgment as what I think I should believe. I can always choose to restrict my attention to a “theoretical and solely self-directed reading” of the question, ‘What do I believe?’ But, as Heal says, restricting myself to this approach would miss that the “event of judgement expressed in ‘I believe that p’ … is both an apprehension of the self and at the same time an apprehension of the world.”¹⁸⁸

What is notable about Heal’s example is that in this case simply surveying myself in a third personal way is not enough to answer the question, ‘What do I believe?’ I have to apply myself to an investigation of the subject matter in which I take my mental states (thoughts and perceptions) to not only figure as facts in descriptions of myself, but also to reveal a world, a subject matter, to me. In such deliberation my perspective is transparent, I see through myself to the matter at hand. I know my perspective is there, like a pane of glass, but I can’t make it opaque, merely a third personal fact about myself, because at this stage in figuring out what I believe I am thinking about the world and what is true about it (rather than merely what is true about myself). Perhaps a good way to explain why the conciliatory view seems inadequate for some kinds of peer disagreement would be to see if those disagreements are about beliefs we are reluctant to hear only as third personal self-descriptions, stripped of their role as expressions of belief that transparently show us a world or a truth.

Now, disagreement seems like a prime time when we would switch from hearing ‘I believe that p’ as a first personal self-ascription, to hearing it as a third personal self-description. When we encounter peer disagreement, it is natural to pause and think, ‘Maybe p is just a belief of mine, a fact about me and not the world.’ The role of ‘I believe that p’ as a transparent apprehension of the world closes down, leaving only its second role as a third person description of my mental state. In doing so, I

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 287.
have turned to a “theoretical and solely self-directed reading” of the question ‘What do I believe?’ 189

This is precisely what the conciliatory view points out: peer disagreement provides an exemplary case of a time where the transparency of the first person perspective collapses into a third personal self description. As I have framed the issue, the key question for the steadfast theorist is this: are there times we cannot collapse the self-ascription ‘p’ into the mere self-description ‘I believe that p’? I think this will be the case when a third person perspective is not adequate for grasping or addressing what is at stake in the disagreement. An obvious place where this might occur is disagreement that challenges fundamental aspects of significant frameworks we hold, and so touches on the kind of deep, persisting disagreement the conciliatory view struggles to exempt from a conciliatory response. I will argue that responding to disagreement about beauty is also a case where self-ascription should not collapse into self-description, in other words, where the first person perspective should not be eliminated from our response.

5.2 First Personal Ascription and Beauty: Not ‘What do I believe?’ but ‘What Do I Feel?’

Like the question ‘What do I believe?’ the question ‘What do I feel?’ can have two different readings, a “theoretical and solely self-directed reading” that answers based on a third personal survey of facts about me, and a world-directed reading that requires me to experience the world first personally and see what feelings I ought to have. Now ‘feelings I ought to have’ is a strange idea for much of our experience, where the role of first personal experience will merely be to confirm probability judgments about what I do or will feel that could be given from a third person perspective (for example: ‘How does it make me feel that I have just finished grading for a course and there is a bright sunny day waiting for me?’ Quite likely, the answer will be ‘Fantastic!’). As we saw in Chapter 2, a theorist like Aiken would extend this structure to aesthetic judgments as well, and I have argued

189 Ibid., 287.
earlier that this is an unsatisfying strategy. In contrast, by taking up Kant’s account of beauty we embrace the idea that a feeling of the free play is one I ought to have or not, and this sense of intersubjective validity is what makes the pleasure appropriate grounds for a judgment of beauty.

We can therefore draw a parallel with Heal’s case: if I ask ‘What do I feel?’ about something I haven’t experienced yet, a third personal survey could make a good guess about how the facts will turn out, but cannot address the question of what I ought to feel upon experiencing that thing. For that, I have to experience the object myself and perform the aesthetic equivalent of thinking through an issue: be attentive and open to the object’s aesthetic properties and feel whatever kind of free play is offered. In this case it is a feeling, rather than a process of deliberation, that compels my sense that this is what one ought to believe, but a third personal survey of my history is equally unable to capture the force of the ‘ought’ that is present.

The result of this parallel is that the first person perspective is necessary when I offer “I believe p is beautiful” as the culmination of aesthetically experiencing p; in this case “I believe p is beautiful” is a self-description that simultaneously constitutes an expression of belief. As Heal would put it, “it is a judgment which represents the world as being a certain way in representing the self as being a certain way.” The only thing I would add is a further twist to capture some of the nuance of Kant’s account: for judgments of beauty, it is by representing the self as being a certain way (having a feeling and belief) that one represents the community of judging subjects a certain way (we ought to have that feeling and belief), and so represents the object as being a certain way (this representation inspires the free play, even if I can’t point to a property of the object ‘represented’ in cognition by the judgment). Earlier I described first personal deliberation as using my perspective to see through to the world; in this case I use my perspective to see through to something sharable about us as judging subjects, and that in turn tells me something about the object experienced.

190 See Aiken (1950).
191 Heal (2003), 287.
But it is not only when we are first discovering what we think we ought to feel and believe that
the first person perspective is ineliminable, for this is the case whenever we ask ‘What do I believe? or
‘What do I feel?’ in a first-personal world-directed rather than third-personal self-directed way. And it
does not seem to be the case that I only care about world-directed deliberations or aesthetic experiences
in initially forming my judgments, and from there on out would happily restrict myself to third personal
considerations of what I believe. At least, the intuition that thinking about the subject matter of a
dispute still seems relevant in responding to disagreement is one that Kelly tries to make explicit in his
Total Evidence View discussed below.

In a basic sense, the conciliatory view asks us to take up an exclusively self-directed perspective
on what we believe in response to peer disagreement, giving us only our histories and facts about
ourselves that can be appreciated third personally as proper grounds for changing or maintaining
confidence. Discomfort creeps in from the fact that even when I encounter peer disagreement I
sometimes want to ask the question ‘What should I believe?’ in a well rounded way that continues to
think about the world, or about what any rational person should believe, and not just about what I \( \textit{do} \)
believe as is observable from my behaviour and history. In the following section, we will consider
Kelly’s view that the rational basis I have for my belief that comes from thinking about the evidence
(whether I have done this well or poorly) is still relevant to the rationality of holding it with a certain
level of confidence upon discovering disagreement.\(^{192}\)

\(^{192}\) Kelly (2010) points out that before discovering disagreement, we would all accept that the peer who did a better job
assessing the evidence is more justified in the confidence she has in her belief than the other, and we would not think she is
rationally required to revise her view – perhaps not at all, but certainly not as drastically as the peer who did a worse job.
“What is quite implausible, I think, is the suggestion that you and I are rationally required to make \textit{equally} extensive
revisions in our original opinions, given that your original opinion was, while mine was not, a reasonable response to our
original evidence.” (123)
5.3 Two Variations of the Steadfast View

Kelly’s Total Evidence View suggests that we should take both first order evidence about the matter at hand and psychological evidence about what I and others believe into consideration when revising our judgment in response to peer disagreement.\(^{193}\) Depending upon how strong each of these sides to the evidence pool is, I will face a range of revision possibilities: if my initial reasons are quite strong, and I encounter one peer who disagrees, it might weigh out in favor of largely remaining confident; if my initial reasons are weak and/or I encounter high numbers of peers who disagree (and have thought it through for themselves\(^{194}\)), the pendulum swings towards reducing confidence significantly. In this way, Kelly tries to give a role to both the third and first person perspectives in responding to disagreement. On the one hand, the psychological evidence that a peer disagrees should always give me some pause, in the same way it should give me pause if I have carried out a flawless piece of reasoning while intoxicated.\(^{195}\) On the other hand, my own assessment of what is a good reason, justification, or piece of evidence pertaining to the case at hand still counts for something. If I explain the reasons I have for my belief and you “come away unimpressed … there is a sense in which you have witnessed the malfunction occur. … In cases of peer disagreement, one gets to go underneath the hood, as it were.”\(^{196}\)

However, the problem of ‘double counting’ rears its head for Kelly. As Enoch puts it, there are times when it is epistemically appropriate not to count some of your evidence if it is ‘screened off’ by

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\(^{193}\) Kelly (2010) argues that a response to disagreement should recognize both the downward epistemic push of psychological evidence – how facts about what others believe should influence my assessment of the support a body of evidence gives to a belief – and the upward epistemic push of the original evidence if it really does provide strong support for a belief: “It is not only that one’s higher order evidence typically makes a difference to what one is justified in believing about the world; it is also the case that one’s first order evidence makes a difference to what one is justified in believing about higher level epistemic matters.” (159)

\(^{194}\) Kelly (2010) makes the helpful point that if most of the people who disagree with me are repeating what they heard from someone else (be it a popular opinion or a more reliable source of information such as a teacher) their opinions do not add much as additional evidence “over and above the psychological evidence offered by the teacher’s belief.” (148)

\(^{195}\) Kelly (2010), 140: “The fact that a peer has responded to the evidence differently should lead one to temper one’s confidence in one’s own response, just as the fact that one is inebriated should lead one to temper one’s confidence in the conclusion of one’s practical reasoning despite the actual flawlessness of one’s performance.”

\(^{196}\) Kelly (2010), 154.
another piece of evidence that already takes it into account. Kelly himself gives the example that if an insurance company gained detailed information about the risk factors for a particular individual, this should ‘screen off’ more general information about her in their calculations, such as her age or gender. Enoch uses this idea to sketch an objection to Kelly on the conciliationist’s behalf:

All of this [initial] evidence was considered by you in coming to believe $p$ (and by Adam, in coming to believe $\neg p$). If at the second stage we think that you believe $p$ (and that Adam believes $\neg p$) to be evidence, this evidence arguably screens off the evidence that was already taken into account in the first stage. The line of thought suggested [by Kelly] … is thus guilty of double counting.

A conciliationist could argue that my initial reasoning about the disputed matter should be ‘screened off’ in my response to disagreement because it is already adequately represented in the fact that I hold my belief with the amount of confidence I do. If this is right, Kelly’s idea that the initial evidence should continue to play a role in how I revise confidence in response to disagreement would be wrong-headed. Once I have higher-order evidence about what we both believe, to look again at the rational warrant the evidence gives for my belief would be to count that initial evidence and reasoning twice.

However, the price for taking up the conciliatory view’s thoroughly impartial, third person standpoint in response to disagreement is that I am cut off from my belief as a window on the world, and from any means of addressing the question ‘What do I believe?’ (or ‘What do I feel?’) in a world-directed way. My reasons and evidence are present only insofar as they are implicated in the fact that I believe as I do, they are mere facts about the person I am considering. Should this be the price of responding rationally to peer disagreement – that I must stop thinking about the world and think only about myself?

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197 Kelly (2005), 188. It should be noted that Kelly makes this point about double-counting in order to argue that I should not take the fact that another person holds a certain belief as an additional piece of evidence for believing it, if I also have access to the initial reasons that led her to that view. The point about double-counting can go both ways, either we should only count the initial reasons and not the psychological evidence about what each of us believes (as Kelly argues), or if we are going to count the psychological evidence, we should not count the initial reasons for holding those views (as a conciliationist might argue in reply to Kelly).
198 Enoch (2010), 989-970.
I believe Kelly is right to reject the idea that I must stop thinking about the world in response to disagreement, but his attempt to combine the third and first person perspectives has an awkward result. The problem with Kelly’s view is that he allows the third person perspective to be our starting point in responding to disagreement, but once we have prioritized this kind of impartial tallying up of points, one’s first personal reasons are no longer a window on the world, they are facts about oneself that can appear on such a list to be weighed against other factors.\textsuperscript{199} At least, it isn’t clear to me how one would weigh considerations like track records against a belief taken as a window on the world, in other words weighing a track record against the truth. What does it matter if either of us has a very good track record for judging colours if you say it is green when it \textit{is} turquoise?

Believing something as the truth and questioning its truth involve different attitudes towards the same content, the first presents the world to me unfiltered as it is, the second considers it as potentially just a fact about myself. We use these two perspectives in closely entwined ways, but still, it does not seem possible to take a belief as both a ‘window on the world’ and just an opaque fact about myself at the same time. If we have explicitly chosen to prioritize a perspective that impartially tallies up evidence of different sorts in two columns as Kelly accepts, we are firmly in the realm of considering first personal reasons \textit{third} personally, as facts about ourselves as epistemic agents. From this perspective, first personal reasons have already been counted in coming to our belief, and so cannot be counted again in order to weigh one side of the tally towards favoring one’s own view.

Enoch places at the center of his view the difference we have been discussing between thinking of a belief third personally as a fact about myself and thinking about a subject matter first personally (possibly as the clear truth). He charges the conciliatory view with asking us to always treat ourselves as ‘truthometers’ in cases of peer disagreement, in other words as “a mechanism with a certain probability of issuing a true ‘reading’ of theoremhood (or whatever)”\textsuperscript{200} Treating ourselves as

\textsuperscript{199} The ideas I present in this section were developed in conversation with Gurpreet Rattan.
\textsuperscript{200} Enoch (2010), 960.
‘truthometers’ amounts to taking a third-personal view on ourselves and the epistemic situation, and Enoch’s main point is that there is always a limit to how far we can push taking a third-personal view on our own epistemic deliberations. At some point we will have to rely on truths our own perspective transparently reveals to us.

This is particularly noticeable and important when it comes to our beliefs about who is a peer. He points out that Elga carefully avoids dealing with the matter of whether or not I am justified in taking another to be my peer; for Elga it is enough that those in his examples do in fact consider one another peers for us to work out how it is rational to respond in such cases. Enoch points out that updating beliefs based on prior conditional probabilities will only be rational if those prior conditionals are well justified, and this means a person who is trying to respond rationally to peer disagreement cannot simply take his belief that the other is a peer for granted, but must evaluate whether or not that belief is well founded. Often, this will involve judging the other’s track record for getting this kind of thing right, an assessment that is made from my own perspective, using what I take to be the truth about such matters. Enoch thinks this seriously undermines the idea that a strictly ‘truthometer’ approach to oneself is plausible, even in cases of peer disagreement, such as the conciliatory view encourages. He says that

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\text{in forming and revising your beliefs, you have a unique and ineliminable role. You cannot treat yourself as just one truthometer among many, because even if you decide to do so, it will be very much you – the full, not merely one-truthometer-among-many you – who so decides.}
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Enoch further argues against the conciliatory view’s claim that we should set aside the disagreement itself, and the reasoning involved in reaching the contested belief, when we judge how to respond rationally. He thinks this is an important claim for the conciliatory position, because it is all that prevents the view from being a trivial re-iteration of a basic conditionalization principle requiring us to revise confidence in light of new evidence to whatever our prior conditional probability says it

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202 Ibid., 962.
should be (conditional on that piece of evidence). According to Enoch, what gives substance to the conciliatory view is the idea that once you discover disagreement, that alone cannot change your prior assessment of how likely the other person is to get it right in case she disagrees; the moment of disagreement is not the time to re-think that prior conditional, but only to apply it. Enoch compares this to holding that when you accept a modus ponens argument ‘if p, then q’ and you discover p is true, you have only one option: accept q. However, we ordinarily think you also have the option of rejecting the conditional, and Enoch thinks this option should be available in the disagreement case as well. Upon discovering peer disagreement I should have two options for “restoring probabilistic coherence”: reduce confidence in line with my prior conditional, or revise that prior conditional by demoting the other from peerhood, at least to some extent.

Enoch defends the legitimacy of the second option in the case of peer disagreement by arguing there is no reason to deny that the disagreement itself might reflect poorly on your peer’s reliability (even though this violates the independence principle of the conciliatory view). After all, you used your own judgment to assess the mistakes she has made in the past on such matters in order to justify your belief in her peerhood, why wouldn’t a present mistake similarly be added to the scales of that judgment? If this seems problematic, the problem can’t be restricted to peer disagreement, for “[w]henever you try to decide how much trust to place in someone … your starting point is and cannot but be your own beliefs, degrees of belief, conditional probabilities, epistemic procedures and habits, and so on.” He even goes so far as to say that holding out hope for a kind of justification that escapes the problem of starting from your own perspective is “a part of epistemically growing up.”

Enoch thinks there is still more battle to go, however, to answer Christensen’s claim that in cases of peer disagreement I recognize a symmetry between myself and my peer: I can see that from his perspective it is also reasonable to demote me from peerhood. If I agree with Christensen that a rational

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203 Ibid., 977.
204 Ibid., 978.
205 Ibid., 980.
response will try to determine what I should do independently of my belief and my reasons for it (the ones that indicate my peer is wrong), I would still have no better reason for thinking I am the one getting it right in demoting my peer, than I have for thinking my peer is right to demote me. If I still face a stalemate like this, it would be reasonable to be conciliatory and divide my confidence evenly regarding who is more justified in playing the role of demoter. But that independence principle is exactly what Enoch does not accept. He argues for this by re-casting what my perceptions of the situation are. Rather than taking it that my peer’s belief in not-\(p\) is wrong because I believe otherwise, I take my peer to be wrong because \(p\) is true (as I believe). And “to insist that the ‘as you believe’ qualifier rules out that \(p\) as a reason for belief is precisely to ignore the ineliminability point, and to insist on the impossibly high standard that leads to scepticism more generally.”

Because it is unavoidable that at some point I must rely on my own perspective as transparently presenting me with the truth, it is not foul play to rely on the truth my perspective offers in direct opposition to my peer’s belief in order to demote her at the moment we disagree.

Of course, it remains the case that “Adam can likewise demote you, and his reason (in the same sense) for doing so is that you are wrong (as he believes). So in this way, something of the symmetry remains”. Now, recognizing this symmetry was an important motivation for accepting the independence principle in the first place, so we need to look carefully at how the asymmetry that comes from really believing my view is true could fit together on Enoch’s picture with this symmetry at the level of responding to the disagreement rationally.

At the level of responding to the disagreement rationally, Enoch claims that both I and my peer can take the apparent truth of our respective beliefs as legitimate evidence against one another’s reliability. Enoch claims the rationality of doing so does not depend on actually being right or wrong, “this reason is not factive – this can be your reason (what you take to be the normatively relevant

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206 Ibid., 982.
207 Ibid., 984.
feature of the circumstances) even if in fact Adam is not wrong.”208 It should be noted that if we are reflective about peer disagreement this would result in a somewhat peculiar attitude that holds, ‘I am demoting my peer because $p$ is true and he believes not-$p$, and this is a rational response to the situation even if $p$ is not true’. There are two reasons I could be demoting my peer: 1) I firmly believe $p$ is true, and 2) I recognize I must trust my perspective in cases of peer disagreement and so, whether or not $p$ is true, I can treat it as a reason to demote my peer. Which should we think carries the weight on Enoch’s view? Enoch is trying to combine a principled response to peer disagreement that does not depend upon whether one is actually right or wrong with a motivation for being steadfast that comes from being convinced one is actually right. This isn’t a combination that rests very easily.

The second reason for demoting one’s peer recognizes the symmetry between our positions and serves to highlight the role of my perspective, that I take $p$ to be true, but it might not be. This seems like a reasonable response to peer disagreement, which is a tailor-made occasion for wondering whether or not my belief is really as solid as I think. However, it also plays into the hands of a conciliatory response by undermining the first reason given for demoting my peer, the one Enoch seems to want to lean on the most: that $p$ is transparently true to me, not something I consider as merely one belief set against another. Recognizing the symmetry that we both take our beliefs to be true from our perspectives, and thus have reason for reciprocal demotion, makes it awkward to avoid a conciliatory response by focusing on how $p$ strikes me as more than simply a belief I have, but the transparent truth. That transparency is precisely what I distance myself from to some extent by recognizing the symmetry of our positions and thinking I can rationally remain steadfast even if I am actually wrong.

By itself, I don’t think the second reason for demoting is enough to get a satisfying steadfast result. Sure, I am rational in demoting my peer based on the evidence of my belief because I have to

208 Ibid., 984.
rely on my perspective in such cases, but so long as reflection leads me to believe she is equally rational in doing the same to me, I have no reason to prefer my own position as more rational, overall, than hers. At this point we can try to find a reason to prefer my own position as more rational overall. The conciliatory view follows the independence principle and suggests I look outside the disagreement for ‘symmetry breakers’ that would indicate my reasoning is more likely to be reliable in this case than hers. We have already seen Enoch’s criticism that this approach ignores the ineliminability of the first-person perspective for judging whether or not the other person is my peer, a judgment that could find her present performance relevant. Kelly’s ‘total evidence view’ suggests turning to who was in fact better justified in her initial response to the evidence. Enoch is not fond of this approach either since the question of who is actually right could only be answered from a God’s eye view I don’t have, and so does not provide very helpful guidance about what to do. Still, Enoch supports maintaining confidence in my belief by emphasizing its truth from my perspective, without going so far as to make the rationality of my steadfast response depend upon actually being right. One way this difference comes out is that on Kelly’s picture the response it is rational for me to give to the disagreement changes depending on whether or not I am in fact correct or mistaken, whereas for Enoch the same response is rational in both cases because, mistaken or not, I have to rely on my first-person perspective.

However, it isn’t clear Enoch can side-step Kelly’s view so easily. If demoting my peer and maintaining confidence in my view is really motivated by the transparent truth of my belief, it would make a difference if it turned out I was actually mistaken: my reason for demoting would be gone. I would look back on my response and say ‘shoot, I should have been more careful, I didn’t really have a good reason to dismiss her opinion so quickly’. If the truth of my belief is my reason for demoting, it doesn’t look compatible with accepting that, whether or not it is true, this is what I should do.
Enoch tries to avoid this drawback in his own solution: rather than taking up the independent standpoint and then adding the force of first personal deliberations back in as a consideration, he argues that I must always judge the weight and importance of these different factors for myself from my first person perspective. Sometimes, I will judge my best epistemic move to be remaining sure about the truth (as I believe), and not prioritizing a third person perspective that requires me to find some independent reason to prefer my own view or else reduce confidence. In this scenario the charge of double counting does not arise because I don’t let the challenge to my reasons and evidence take hold; in some sense I don’t recognize the disagreement as a challenge to my reasons and conviction (since the other is mistaken), and so I do not need to count them again to dismiss it. To be challenged by disagreement in a way that introduces pressure to be conciliatory, the disagreement must prompt me to turn ‘the truth (as I believe)’ into ‘what I believe is true,’ a mere psychological fact about myself. Even if I can always imagine the second to be the case, and consider it hypothetically, I am not always moved by the situation to prioritize that perspective in coming to my response.

However, in my view, the reason why I don’t recognize the challenge in this sense is important for whether or not responding that way could be considered rational. If I don’t prioritize the perspective that turns the truth into merely something I believe because I’m being stubborn, arrogant, refusing to listen, or in some other way deliberately avoiding the situation, this would hardly be a rational and fair response. I need some rationale for choosing the point at which I dig in my heels and cite the ineliminability of the first-person perspective as a reason to demote my peer instead of questioning the transparency of my belief.\textsuperscript{209} Should I consider my first-person perspective ineliminable in relation to the particular belief under dispute, or perhaps this inevitable reliance on the truths my perspective

\textsuperscript{209}Wedgwood (2010) takes up a similar line of argument to Enoch, and faces the same problem. Like Enoch, he does a good job of pointing out that when I am thinking about the content of some belief \(p\), and not about myself, there is an asymmetry between my belief and those of others. Wedgwood describes this asymmetry as coming down to the fact that I can \textit{directly} base beliefs and revisions on my own intuitions, experiences, memories, etc., in a way that I cannot with yours (243-244). However, as Christensen (2009) points out, we are still left wondering why this should matter for responding to disagreement (762). We can shift from thinking about the content of the belief first personally to thinking about the psychological fact that we hold this belief, so why should we resist doing so in certain cases of disagreement? We have been given a way to justify a steadfast response, but not an account of where and when it should be applied.
offers can be (and ought to be) pushed back to my disagreement-independent assessments of peerhood and symmetry breakers? Enoch is right to point out the ineliminability of the first-person perspective, but that alone is not enough to support further claims about where and when it is appropriate to draw on that ineliminability in response to peer disagreement. Without further argument, it isn’t clear Enoch has given us a solid reason against drawing the line as the conciliatory view suggests, at an independent assessment of who is more likely to be right.

What I think we should take away from Enoch’s view is that there are times I can’t avoid treating my beliefs as transparent presentations of truth about the world, as well as psychological facts about myself (in other words, the first person perspective is ‘ineliminable’). In these cases I must continue to see through my psychological states to the world they present, even when they are disputed by a peer. As a result, I don’t experience myself and my peer as occupying symmetrical positions, for it isn’t one belief set against another, but the truth (as I believe) set against the belief of another. I think it is natural to question, ‘Well, can’t I recognize that the truth (as I believe), may be just a belief of mine, set against a belief of the other, and that symmetry holds?” If the ‘may be’ in this sentence means I can imagine or suppose that what is true is just what I believe and in a symmetrical position with the belief of the other, the answer is ‘yes,’ I can imagine it. I can imagine and suppose all kinds of things I don’t think are actually the case. But if the ‘may be’ means that I think there is a good chance it could actually be the case that this truth is just something I believe, in cases where the first person perspective really is ineliminable, the answer is ‘no’ – I can’t recognize that there is a good chance the truth is just another belief of mine, at least not in a straightforward way. To recognize that would require shifting to a third person perspective that considers my belief to be just a fact about myself, not a transparent truth about the world, and that would be precisely to eliminate the first person perspective.

Enoch’s view needs to be supplemented in two ways: 1) we need a better idea of when and for what reason the first person perspective is ineliminable in response to disagreement, and 2) we need a
better idea of what significance peer disagreement has when the first person perspective is ineliminable; what kind of challenge *can* still be recognized, what form does that recognition take, and what does responding to it require of me? My task in the coming chapters will be to answer these questions for disagreements about beauty. The task of Chapter 6 will be to argue that the first person perspective is ineliminable for judgments of beauty. However, it will be important that I can *imagine* a truth about beauty is just a belief of mine, for my task in Chapters 7 and 8 will be to argue that the ineliminability of the first person perspective for disagreements about beauty does not make disagreement insignificant – we still face rational pressure to better understand one another’s perspectives.
Chapter Six: The Plural First Person

There are at least two options for how to think about the epistemic significance of disagreement about beauty: on the one hand the disagreement may lead me to wonder if I have made a mistake and reduce confidence in my judgment, on the other hand, the present beauty before me could compel me to maintain confidence, perhaps wondering what has happened to make her miss it. As we have seen, these two options line up roughly with the ‘conciliatory’ and ‘steadfast’ positions offered in the peer disagreement debate. Although in that context the examples of disagreements are more likely to involve splitting dinner bills than appreciating beauty, the issues addressed are familiar from discussions in aesthetics about the epistemic significance of others’ beliefs in the form of testimony and disagreement. For example, Kant offers what sounds like a steadfast view when he suggests that “it is required of every judgment that is supposed to prove the taste of the subject that the subject judge for himself, without having to grope about by means of experience among the judgments of others.”²¹⁰ And for a more contemporary voice, Hopkins has recently written that once I have seen for myself a film recommended by a friend, “For all that the recommendation rightly had weight with me before, I must now discount it altogether.”²¹¹

In this chapter, I will explore an important point of intersection between the discussions about disagreement in epistemology and aesthetics with the aim of enriching a steadfast view in both areas. That point of intersection is the idea that some disagreements require remaining first personally engaged with the grounds that compel belief, rather than retreating to third personal considerations about the likelihood that I or the other have got it right this time. As a helpful starting place, I will explain Enoch’s reasons for thinking that remaining first personally engaged or not is the crucial

²¹⁰ CJ, 5:282.
question for rationally justifying either a conciliatory or steadfast response to disagreement. However, we will need help from an aesthetic theorist such as Kant to see how his picture applies to the particular case of disagreements about beauty. I believe that defending the importance Kant gives to first personal engagement with the pleasure grounding judgments of beauty will in turn help to flesh out missing elements of Enoch’s view about responding to disagreement generally.

As we saw in Chapter 5, Enoch argues that there is an important structural difference between responding to disagreement with first personal engagement or third personal distance. When I distance myself third personally, I find a symmetry between two beliefs as psychological facts about others (one of whom is myself). I would have to find some reason for thinking I am the more reliable judge from this dispute-independent standpoint to justify maintaining confidence in my own view. If I find we are equally reliable I would have to put equal stock in our judgments, likely reducing confidence in my own. However, Enoch argues that if we could defensibly respond to disagreement from the first person perspective, the epistemic situation would be re-cast: rather than weighing one belief against another, I would find an asymmetry between the other’s belief and the truth (as I believe). A steadfast response to disagreement wouldn’t be a problematic matter of preferring my own belief just because it is mine, but a recognition that at some point I can’t treat my beliefs as mere psychological facts, I must take them to present the truth. Enoch argues there are times when the first person perspective and the asymmetry it introduces are ineliminable. He offers judging peerhood itself as such a case; I must judge another’s track record for reaching true beliefs by my own assessment of how often she has gotten things right. The question he leaves us with is how to identify and justify other times when it is

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212 See Enoch (2011).
213 Enoch (2011), 981-982: “your epistemic reason to demote Adam [from peerhood] … is not that he believes not-p whereas you believe p. Had this been your reason … the symmetry [would be] preserved, for this piece of evidence counts equally against Adam’s reliability and against yours. Rather, your reason for demoting Adam … is that he believes not p whereas p. The epistemically relevant feature of his belief that not-p is not that it differs from yours, but rather that it is false.”
214 Enoch (2011) particularly wants to argue that the first person perspective is ineliminable for judging whether you are justified in considering another a peer, “for even if you can treat yourself as a truthometer if you just ask what is your prior probability that Adam (or you) would be right, you can no longer do so when you ask what is the justified prior probability
rationally acceptable to remain first personally engaged in responding to disagreement and resist shifting to a third personal assessment of oneself in the epistemic situation.

To that end Enoch offers only a rough distinction between disagreements about ‘mere seemings’ and those that involve greater reflection. He suggests it is appropriate to distance ourselves third personally and be conciliatory when disputes are over mere seemings, such as judging the temperature of water by sticking a hand in, for

We can epistemically distance ourselves from our seemings in a way we cannot distance ourselves from our full-blooded rational (as opposed to a-rational, not irrational) beliefs, those that are based on a reflective consideration of the evidence, those in which the believing self is fully engaged.\(^\text{215}\)

What it means to say that the believing self is ‘fully engaged’, and why this would make the first person perspective ineliminable, are questions that go largely unexplored by Enoch, despite the crucial role this distinction plays in determining how we should respond to disagreement.\(^\text{216}\) Such questions become particularly interesting when we turn to the case of beauty, where immediate ‘seemings’ and the reflective activity of a ‘fully engaged believing self’ appear to coincide. According to Kant, judgments of beauty are grounded upon a feeling of pleasure, which might strike us as a seeming at first. And yet it is a pleasure by which we are aware of a free reflective activity between the cognitive faculties, a reflective activity that carries the same universal validity as regular cognitive judgments. I will now draw on Kant to make a specific case for the idea that we should remain first personally...

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\(^\text{216}\) Enoch does offer a further thought in a footnote, which is that we can distance ourselves from beliefs we came to through rational reflection in the past in a way that we cannot for beliefs that we come to through present reflection. See Enoch (2011), 963. It sounds to me like Enoch has in a mind a similar point to Heal’s observation that I can self-ascribe belief in \(p\) either by thinking about myself (such as remembering what I believed in the past), or by thinking about the grounds I have for believing \(p\) (working through a process of first personal deliberation and arriving at \(p\)). See Heal (2003), 269. Enoch appears to be pointing out that while I am presently and first personally moved by the reasons that support my belief I cannot distance myself from it in the same way I can when I later ascribe that belief to myself based upon observations such as my propensity to say I believe it, the fact that I remember presenting it at a conference, and so on. However, we should also remember that Heal thinks these two uses of “I believe \(p\)” need to fit together. What I can glean about my beliefs from observing myself should match up with the beliefs I arrive at through first personal deliberation. See Heal (2003), 269. I think this shows that there is still an important question about when we can prioritize the first personal use of “I believe \(p\)” over the third personal one in response to disagreement, a question that Enoch has not yet addressed.

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... Here you can no longer abstract from the question of what you take to be the truth of the relevant matters, that is, of what you take to be the truth” (973-974).

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engaged in response to disagreements about beauty, and then return to Enoch’s distinction in order to clarify exactly what I think he is getting at, and how it can be more clearly framed.

6.1 Responding from the First Person: Beauty and the Transpersonal Function of Reason

Taking our cue from Kant’s account of judgments of beauty, we could justify remaining first personally engaged in response to disagreement by pointing to the aesthetic nature of this kind of judgment – if feeling pleasure or displeasure is the only appropriate grounds for forming a judgment of beauty, those grounds are inherently first personal.217 Feeling pleasure is something I must do for myself, another’s testimony or disagreement cannot generate or change my pleasure (at least, not directly). And yet, we might wonder why any sort of revising confidence in a judgment of beauty has to refer back to its original ground. After all, once we have the judgment in hand, the original ground has played its role. It is entirely possible at that point to think of the judgment as a psychological fact about the subject (oneself or another) and assess how likely it is the belief is true based on other things we know about her, such as her track record for reaching true beliefs of this sort. Such third personal distancing is all that is needed for the symmetry of the conciliatory view to get traction.

However, one way we can interpret Kant’s view is that the pleasure of the free play is not just the initial ground of a judgment of beauty, it is also the source of our sense that others ought to agree with us and, in that role, sets the terms for what reaching agreement means: agreement in experience or feeling. On such a reading, our claim that others ought to agree with us is not the result of inferential thinking, but the result of a feeling for cognitive purposiveness and life that underlies cognitive activity

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217 For instance, we find Kant presenting this basic claim: “In order to decide whether or not something is beautiful, we do not relate the representation by means of understanding to the object for cognition, but rather relate it by means of the imagination (perhaps combined with the understanding) to the subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure. The judgment of taste is … aesthetic, by which is understood one whose determining ground cannot be other than subjective.” (CJ, 5:203)
as a condition of its possibility.\textsuperscript{218} The feeling (not my thinking about it third personally) tells me that others ought to be ‘with’ me in it. Our sense of what others ought to agree with us about, as well as our initial grounds for believing it, is a first personal pleasure. As Cavell puts it, this is a plural first person perspective we express by speaking our judgments in a universal voice.\textsuperscript{219} Kant writes that “if one then calls the object beautiful, one believes oneself to have a universal voice, and lays claim to the consent of everyone, whereas any private sensation would be decisive only for him alone and his satisfaction.”\textsuperscript{220}

One way to make sense of Kant’s account is to consider the content of judgments of beauty to include a reference to first personal pleasure. As a point of reference, let’s look at a formulation Longuenesesse gives for the content of Kant’s judgment of beauty:

Thus one might develop the judgment ‘this object is beautiful’ in the following way: ‘The object is such that apprehending it elicits in me a pleasure such that all judging subjects, in apprehending this same object, ought to experience the same pleasure and agree with my judgment.’\textsuperscript{221} (my emphasis)

Notably, the formulation is not: ‘The object is such that apprehending it elicits a pleasure such that all judging subjects, in apprehending this same object, ought to experience the same pleasure …’ It would seem that third personally acknowledging the existence of a pleasure in the free play is not enough to properly ground a judgment of beauty, it must be grounded on feeling the pleasure first personally.

Hopkins raises a straightforward objection to this line of thought: “if it is part of the content of someone’s belief that some object O is beautiful that he takes pleasure in it, he is no longer in a position genuinely to disagree with someone who denies O's beauty.”\textsuperscript{222} In other words, if the content

\textsuperscript{218} Allison (2001) offers a reading of the sort I have in mind. He suggests that the pleasure of the free play “is not a mere receptivity, but an active faculty, indeed a faculty of appraisal”, and what is appraised “is the capacity of the representation to occasion an enhancement or diminution of one’s cognitive faculties in their cooperative activity.” (69) There are other ways of reading Kant’s view, such as that given by Guyer (1982), who suggests that we need an additional act of judgment to categorize our pleasure as the right sort for grounding a judgment of beauty (how the pleasure feels isn’t enough for this). I can’t take up the dispute between these two readings here, but it is important to note that I have made a choice.

\textsuperscript{219} Cavell (1969), 95-96.

\textsuperscript{220} CJ, 5:216.

\textsuperscript{221} Longuenesesse (2006), 272-273.

\textsuperscript{222} Hopkins (2000), 218.
of my judgment of beauty is that I specifically feel pleasure in response to the object, the fact that you
do not feel pleasure is not really in disagreement with my claim. As a result, the normative claim of
judgments of beauty on the agreement of others appears to be forfeit.223

To answer this objection, I think it is helpful to consider a parallel between the role the first
person perspective plays in grounding judgments of beauty, and in feeling the force a reason has in
deliberation. This topic is discussed by Burge in his paper “Reason and the First Person,” where he
argues that the first person concept is required for fully understanding the concept of reason. He argues
it is not enough to be merely a third person observer of reasons, “For reasons necessarily not only
evaluate but have force in forming, changing, confirming attitudes in accord with the reasons. All
reasons that thinkers have are reasons-to, not merely rational appraisals.”224 To feel the force a reason
has for supporting or undermining belief we must attribute it to a locus of epistemic responsibility –
one’s own perspective or another’s.

While Burge’s main concern is with what is required for fully understanding the concept of
reason, his point shows us that there are two ways in which we can grasp the reasons offered by others.
First, I can assess another’s reason as part of a rational appraisal carried out in the third person (I do not
attribute these reasons to a particular perspective within which they would have force for forming or
revising belief). Second, I can consider the force her reason should have as a reason-to believe
something, and this requires thinking it through within a first person perspective (my own, or another’s

223 I will focus on addressing this point from Hopkins because I take it to be the most pressing objection to Kant’s particular
way of arguing for the importance of first person experience for aesthetic judgment. However, there are other ways of
arguing for the importance of first person experience, not only for judgments of beauty, but also for judging the presence of
aesthetic properties and the way they contribute to aesthetic merit, as seen in Sibley (1965) and Mothersill (1984). In turn,
there are classic objections to this line of argument, such as that we often do allow aesthetic judgments to be made on the
basis of facsimiles like pictures and postcards rather than first person experience of the original artwork, and that we just
have to wait for a rich enough aesthetic vocabulary and set of general principles to be developed in order to see that
aesthetic judgments can be made on the basis of detailed third person descriptions (see Livingston (2003) for a recent
presentation of these objections). I am not going to engage with this debate in detail, for I think that whatever explanation is
given for the central role of first person experience in aesthetic judgment, so long as we do aim at agreement in first person
experience, my account for responding to disagreement will have traction. So long as it would be disappointing for another
to respond to disagreement by adjusting her view without coming to see or hear or feel any differently in response to the
object, we need an account of disagreement that recognizes this feature of aesthetic life.

as I imagine it). Notably, locating a reason-to-believe within a first person perspective does not relativize its motivational force. As Burge puts it:

> Anyone who has a reason that evaluates any act or attitude, no matter who is actor or subject of the attitude, has some rational motive – however attenuated – to affect the act or attitude in accordance with the reason. That is, reason has the transpersonal function of presenting true thoughts and guiding thought to truth, regardless of individual perspective or interest.  

What we learn from Burge is that assessing the motivational force of a reason-to-believe requires more than thinking about it third personally; it requires the reason to play a certain role in a first personal experience of deliberation. This means that when I give a reason as a reason-to-believe something, I cannot divorce it from the first person, it must be presented as a reason-to-believe that has force for me. And yet, reasons still have a transpersonal function when we consider their motivational force as reasons-to-believe. I am under some rational pressure (however attenuated, as Burge says) to show others that they too ought to be moved by this reason in their own first personal deliberations.

My suggestion is that on a Kantian account of beauty, the pleasure of the free play functions in a way that parallels having a reason-to-believe. Just as an exclusively third personal appraisal of reasons is not enough to fully grasp the concept of reason, an exclusively third personal appraisal of pleasures is not enough to grasp what we do when we judge beauty. This would fail to account for the motivational force that reasons have in deliberation, and that the pleasure of the free play has in

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225 Ibid., 254.
226 Here I am reminded of Dewey’s (1934) account of reasoning as an experience, in his sense: “We say of an experience of thinking that we reach or draw a conclusion. Theoretical formulation of the process is often made in such terms as to conceal effectually the similarity of ‘conclusion’ to the consummating phase of every developing integral experience. … A ‘conclusion’ is no separate and independent thing; it is the consummation of a movement. Hence an experience of thinking has its own esthetic quality.” (39) Pairing Dewey and Burge suggests that in order to appreciate a reason as a reason-to-believe something, we have to appreciate first personally the role it plays in the developing whole of an intellectual experience, the way it moves us towards a conclusion or not.
227 I want to clarify that this does not mean the pleasure of the free play can function as a reason in a piece of argumentation. In what follows when I talk of the pleasure of the free play as a reason-to-believe, I mean that the pleasure is a reason only in the sense that it provides the motivating ground for judgment and we take this ground to be universally valid for all judges. This is why I will try to say “reasons or pleasures” as much as possible in what follows, since I do not wish to collapse the pleasure of the free play into reasons. “Pleasures” in this context also refers to the pleasure of the free play, not just any pleasure, but for ease of reading I won’t always spell that out.
To capture this motivational force, reasons-to believe and the pleasure of the free play must be located within a first person perspective (my own, or someone else’s as I imagine it). A reason-to believe, or the pleasure of the free play must be voiced as one’s own, and yet in doing so, we voice something that we believe ought to hold for others as well. They ought to ground and revise their own judgments in the same way.

Having made my case for this parallel, there are two important differences between reasons-to believe and the pleasure of the free play that should be noted. First, reasons-to believe operate according to rules and the free play is not governed by any rule (except for the principle of purposiveness between the faculties that is a condition of cognition in general). Still, if we accept Kant’s view that the cognitive activity of the free play carries universal validity for other judges, the feeling of the free play and reasons-to believe are similar in that they both require a first personal assessment of their force for grounding or revising judgment, and yet that force is still taken to be normative for others.

The second important difference is that assessing motivational force from within the first person perspective seems to be more central to our concern with beauty than it is for reason. Reasons-to believe something are not the belief itself. For a wide variety of beliefs, testimony about the existence of good reasons for believing is as good as having our own reasons from rational reflection on the evidence (what I take Enoch to mean by the ‘fully engaged believing self’). If it is only the belief I am interested in, as the product of someone’s good reasoning but not necessarily my own, then the first person perspective required for appreciating those good reasons is eliminable – testimony is on the table, and so is the rational force of a conciliatory response to disagreement. However, if I am

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228 Again, it is important for this parallel that I follow Allison (2001) in taking the pleasure of the free play to carry evaluative force just in the way it feels. In contrast, Guyer (1982) does not think that the pleasure of the free play can indicate, by itself, that others ought to share it. He argues a judgment must be made about the source of this pleasure (that it comes from the free play) in order to ground a judgment of beauty. If we took up a line like Guyer’s, the parallel I have drawn between reasons-to believe and the pleasure of the free play would be weakened. The pleasure itself would no longer be taken to have motivational force as a ground for judgment (instead, it would be a cognitive judgment about the pleasure that has motivational force). However, this also shows why Allison’s interpretation is so interesting, for it takes Kant to suggest that a feeling can play a reason-like role grounding judgment, yet without the application of a rule or concept.
interested in the motivational force of the reasons themselves (as we often are in philosophy) it would miss the point to form beliefs on the basis of someone else’s say so. I would need to take up those reasons in a first personal process of deliberation and see what motivational force I take them to have. In that case, it would be disappointing to have someone respond to disagreement by giving a third personal appraisal of the reasons at issue. If our disagreement is about the motivational force a given reason ought to have for forming or revising belief, then we need to remain first personally engaged so that we can come to the kind of agreement we are looking for – agreement in feeling the force of this reason for revising belief a certain way.

In the case of beauty, we form beliefs for the sake of the reasons we have to do so, rather than the other way around. On many subjects, having the belief is what is important – that result is what will help us to know the world better or make better decisions for how to act in it. Beauty is notable as an epistemic situation in which coming to have the belief is where the action is, the pleasure compelling the judgment is itself the point. We can use Kant’s view to clarify this idea that coming to have the belief is where the action is for beauty by remembering his point that judgments of beauty do not cognize a property of the object at all (which could serve as the content of a judgment separable from reasons for holding it), they only note that the object occasions a pleasure that itself justifies expecting others ought to feel it with me.\(^{229}\) It also resonates with Dewey’s distinction between intellectual experience, where the point is to reach a take-away result that can be used in further reasoning, and aesthetic experience where the cumulative, experiential whole is the point. As Dewey describes it,

In an intellectual experience, the conclusion has value on its own account. It can be extracted as a formula or as a ‘truth,’ and can be used in its independent entirety as factor and guide in other inquiries. In a work of art there is no such single self-sufficient deposit. The end, the terminus, is significant not by itself but as the integration of the parts. It has no other existence.\(^{230}\)

Still, even when what we primarily care about is the motivational force of reasons, or the pleasure of the free play, testimony and disagreement are not for nothing. So long as we recognize that

\(^{229}\) CJ, 5:203.

\(^{230}\) Dewey (1934), 57.
another’s reason-to believe, or pleasure, ought to be shared by other rational thinkers or aesthetic judges, we should feel some rational pressure to test another’s reason or pleasure for ourselves, in our own first personal deliberation or aesthetic experience. If we care about the first personal force of a reason (say we are doing philosophy), the transpersonal function of reason puts some standing pressure on me to help you see how my reasons are relevant in your own first personal deliberations, and you are under some pressure to recognize the legitimacy of these efforts (and your own in turn, if I need correction). Similarly, we should acknowledge some standing pressure to test one another’s claims about beauty in our own aesthetic experience, if we recognize that we are talking about a pleasure other judges ought to share. I am under some pressure – however attenuated – to show you that there is this pleasure to be had, and you are under some pressure to recognize the legitimacy of such efforts (and your own in turn, to show me that the object is not beautiful if that is what you believe).

I think this can be helpful for reflecting on Hopkins’ defense of what he calls Unusability Pessimism, the idea that testimony makes knowledge about beauty available to us in the normal way, but we are barred from using it to form beliefs by a nonepistemic norm governing the aesthetic sphere. On this view, aesthetic testimony presents us with a peculiar situation where “one takes the propositions in question to be true and takes oneself to stand to them in epistemically satisfactory relations” but a nonepistemic norm bars “the idea that meeting these conditions is sufficient for a proposition to merit one’s belief.” If we think about the pleasure of beauty paralleling having a reason-to believe, it becomes clear why simply standing in epistemically satisfactory relations to a proposition is not enough, since it fails to attribute the pleasure to a perspective within which its force

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231 Hopkins (2011) suggests the norm could be that we need to have the right kind of ‘aesthetic reasons’ for aesthetic beliefs and testimony doesn’t cut it (what he calls the Requirement). Or perhaps a more restrictive norm is at work according to which aesthetic beliefs must be based on reasons found within first person experience (the Acquaintance Principle). Unusability pessimism about aesthetic testimony is contrasted by Hopkins with Unavailability pessimism, according to which the failure of testimony about beauty is due to an epistemic failing: “aesthetic testimony fails to meet the conditions that, quite generally, govern testimony’s ability to act as a source of knowledge.” (139)

is felt. This matters if the judgment is about the force the pleasure has for grounding belief (not just that the pleasure exists).

I think this is why we are reluctant to form judgments of beauty on the basis of testimony and change them in response to disagreement. We are reluctant because we sense that someone who relied upon the hearsay of others to form beliefs about beauty would be missing something crucial about the kind of judgment they are gathering information about. And the fact is, one can miss it. It is possible to settle for a set of logical judgments about the occurrence of some kind of feeling, beliefs that take the form, ‘Someone else has the right kind of pleasure, so I have some reason to believe X is beautiful.’ However, to be content with third personal access to reasons for believing something is beautiful, and not feel some pressure to share the pleasure first personally, would be to ignore the aesthetic nature of judgments of beauty. In effect, it would show that one understands beauty as little as the person who fails to recognize the transpersonal function of reason understands what it is to have a reason to believe.

In this discussion I have suggested that first personal engagement will be ineliminable for disagreements about beauty because the content of such judgments concerns pleasure as a reason-to believe, as the motivating grounds for judgment. If we return to Enoch’s quick distinction, we can see why it is initially plausible that disagreements involving rational reflection are more likely candidates for the ineliminability of the first person perspective than disagreements about mere seemings. When we engage in rational reflection our concern is often with the motivating grounds of our judgment, not only with the judgment as a take-away result. This may be why a steadfast response to philosophical disagreements can be appealing. When I say ‘Pessimism about aesthetic testimony is true,’ the content of my claim could be expanded in a similar way to Longuenesse’s account of judgments of beauty: ‘The object (philosophical position) is such that apprehending it (rationally reflecting upon it) elicits in me a pleasure (reasons to believe) such that all judging subjects, in apprehending this same object, ought to experience the same pleasure (reasons) and agree with my judgment.’ The content of my
judgment is not just that there is ‘a reason’ out there supporting this philosophical position, it is an evaluative claim about the first personal force of the reasons I have for it, a force that feels universal and ought to be recognized by other judges as well. In contrast, if what I want is an accurate belief about the temperature of a bucket of water, another’s testimony or reading a thermometer work just as well, if not better, than the first personal seeming I could get from sticking a hand in. The content of the judgment ‘The water is cold’ does not require an expansion to include first personal reasons for coming to have it – having and assessing the force of those reasons isn’t what the judgment is about.233

What we can learn from the case of beauty is that the difference Enoch wants to get at isn’t a matter of different kinds of reasons (sensory seemings versus rational reflection), but a difference in the role those reasons play in our judgment. Are they a means to an end (a take-away judgment) or are the reasons themselves the point (included in the content of the judgment)? If all we cared about in philosophical discussion were take-away beliefs about what is true and rational, I believe we could eliminate the first person perspective in reaching them (by accepting testimony) and responding to disagreement (by being conciliatory). On the other hand, if the motivational force of a ‘mere seeming’ for grounding belief is itself the point of making the judgment, the first person perspective will not be eliminable, ruling out basing belief on testimony and allowing for a steadfast response to disagreement. I believe this is the case for beauty, one of the few times when a pleasure carries the full engagement of the believing self at work in rational reflection just in how it feels.

233 In cases like this, I may voice my judgment in the first person, on the basis of how the water feels to me (‘Oh, that water is cold!’) and with the expectation that others will agree, this is not just my own idiosyncratic feeling (assuming my sense of touch is working okay). There is an important difference to note between this kind of case and the pleasure of the free play, or other judgments I will refer to as being made in the ‘plural first person’ below. As I have pointed out, it is not necessary for a judgment about the temperature of the water to be made on the basis of first personal experience, whereas the free play of beauty (and the force of reasons as reasons-to-believe) cannot be adequately captured from a third personal appraisal of the situation. When I talk of the ‘plural first person,’ I will have in mind times when we need to employ this perspective to have access to the kind of judgment under discussion.
If we recall the example of Pellinore and Arthur’s framework disagreement about justice from Chapter 4, we will remember that Pellinore’s dogmatic commitment to resolving disputes by sword whacking made him the buffoon of the scene – a fate we all wish to avoid in responding to our peers. Yet I believe Pellinore’s protest to Arthur’s new invention of the jury system, “How can you get a fair decision from people so impartial?” deserves further thought. I have argued that taking up the impartial standpoint of a third person observer places us outside the arena wherein we can judge beauty, and prevents us from giving our attention to the kind of claim another makes when she disagrees about beauty. Instead, a particular sort of first person perspective – the plural first person – should be prioritized. With the help of Enoch’s account of the importance of the first person for justifying either a conciliatory or steadfast response, this gives us a justification for responding to disagreements about beauty by remaining steadfast. However, it would be too quick to stop here without turning the discussion back onto the question of what it means to be steadfast, now that this response is based on the use of the plural first person.

My purpose in the rest of this chapter will be to support the idea that being steadfast can be an expression of taking the other seriously, rather than dismissing her disagreement as epistemically insignificant. I take the basic features of a ‘steadfast’ response to be 1) largely maintaining confidence in one’s judgment in response to disagreement and, what goes along with that, 2) considering the other to have made a mistake, to have somehow missed the truth. Since 2) sounds a lot like ‘dismissing her disagreement as epistemically insignificant’ it is important to consider the difference speaking in the plural first person makes to the role others play in my epistemic endeavours. It is possible to think another is mistaken without thereby rendering her irrelevant to my – or rather, our – epistemic situation. The first part of this chapter focused on establishing 1), that we can maintain confidence in our judgments of beauty when we meet with disagreement. Thinking further about the kind of
community with others that is at stake in speaking in a universal voice will help prepare us for shifting to 2) in the coming chapters.

What is particularly important about the plural first person is the way it allows for first personal confidence in our judgments while inherently orienting us toward community with others. This orientation towards others keeps us sensitive to the crisis of disagreement, making our efforts to convince others a matter of attending carefully and imaginatively to their perspectives. If we are trying to agree with one another about a plural first personal judgment, maintaining confidence shows that we understand the kind of agreement we are seeking. Far from dismissing the disagreement as epistemically insignificant, being dogmatic about beauty offers an invitation to engage with one another’s claims in a way that is not possible from a third personal, dispute-independent standpoint. If I did step back to a third personal assessment, I would be turning a deaf ear to the other’s claim that I ought to feel something with her, not just rationally assess which one of us is more likely to be right. The idea that maintaining confidence in some cases of disagreement may not only be rationally justifiable, but actually a positive requirement for taking the other seriously, hasn’t appeared yet in the debate between the steadfast and conciliatory positions. For this reason, I think that exploring the plural first person perspective at stake in judgments of beauty can enrich the terrain of the disagreement debate.

To help flesh out our understanding of the plural first person, we can turn to Cavell’s discussion of Kant in “Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy”. Cavell describes Kant’s idea of the universal voice as a perspective that is first personal and yet also plural, in the same vein as the ‘we’ ordinary language philosophers use when they make claims about what we say. I will maintain that Cavell’s ordinary language philosophers, Kant’s judgments of beauty, and Burge’s transpersonal function of reason all share an important idea that I will call the ‘plural first person perspective’. The basic idea is that some kinds of necessity are recognized from within the first person (how to use a word, the free
play, having a reason), and this grounds an expectation of community in a different way than third personal reasoning about ourselves and others. In these cases we can’t treat the first and third person perspectives as interchangeable due to the different kind of access to community and agreement they offer.

Let’s look at the passage where Cavell introduces the language I am picking up on in talking about the ‘plural first person’:

The philosophy appealing to everyday language turns to the reader not to convince him without proof but to get him to prove something, test something, against himself. He is saying: Look and find out whether you can see what I see, wish to say what I wish to say. Of course he often seems to answer or beg his own question by posing it in plural form … But this plural is still first person: it does not, to use Kant’s word, ‘postulate’ that ‘we,’ you and I and he, say and want and imagine and feel and suffer together. If we do not, then the philosopher’s remarks are irrelevant to us. Of course he doesn’t think they are irrelevant, but the implication is that philosophy, like art, is, and should be, powerless to prove its relevance; and that says something about the kind of relevance it wishes to have. All the philosopher, this kind of philosopher, can do is to express, as fully as he can, his world, and attract our undivided attention to our own.”

What does Cavell mean when he says that if another does not imagine or feel or suffer together with me, my remarks will be irrelevant to her? I take him to mean that I cannot show the relevance of my feeling in some other way than by having it resonate with her own, when she tests my claim against her own experience. When I ask another, “Don’t you see, don’t you hear, don’t you dig?” there is no substitute for sharing the dig, or trying to – I am powerless to ‘prove’ the relevance of my experience except through further experience. And, as Cavell says, this shows us something about the kind of relevance my claim she should dig it aims to have – a relevance advanced and motivated on first personally appreciated grounds. It’s not that we cannot test judgments of beauty in other ways, by thinking third personally about the virtues or failings that we have as aesthetic judges, say, or by considering how many others agree or disagree. But if we do not at some point test against ourselves

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235 Ibid., 93.
whether we “say and want and imagine and feel and suffer together” we have chosen, in a certain sense, to make the other’s claim irrelevant to us.

Cavell emphasizes that what we know about ‘we’ from speaking our own experience in a universal voice is not to be confused with a statement of fact, such as the result of surveying a large number of us and drawing conclusions. If we think of claims made in the plural first person as substitutes for the results of empirical surveys we will be disappointed in them, for they will appear to jump the gun, making a claim that should result from observing many others without first having done that work. Cavell’s point, then, is that claims spoken in a universal voice are not substitutes for claims about survey results, they do not aim at the same kind of knowing about the world and others that survey results give; they play a different role in the ‘grammar’ that guides our sense of sharing a world with a community of others.

One way we could think of the difference is that survey results record the facts of community as something that has occurred in either agreement or disagreement; they are the products that come out the back door of an already established community. On the other hand, claims spoken in a universal voice come into community through the front door, they voice the expectation of community that is in place before any surveys of the results are had, an expectation that actively orient us towards one another as a community wherein agreement or disagreement will be significant. This is why claims in the plural first person can sound more like claims about who we ought to be than claims about who we are in fact – the expectation of community they carry sets the terms within which we can make sense of the results empirical surveys give us (are these mere differences of opinion, genuine disagreements, how significant are the divisions or resonances that the results show?).

The fact that the expectation of agreement spoken in a universal voice is the foundation of community, rather than an empirical result of community, helps to explain why encountering disagreement does not disprove or dissolve the claim a plural first personal judgment makes upon
others. If I did not have this expectation of community and assume my ability speaks for ‘us’, your differing opinion would just be that, a difference, not a troubling breach in the understanding we expect to have with one another. In this vein, Cavell observes that it is

a phenomenological fact about philosophizing from everyday language that one feels empirical evidence about one’s language to be irrelevant to one’s claims. … I am not saying that evidence about how (other) people speak can never make an ordinary language philosopher withdraw his typical claims; but I find it important that the most characteristic pressure against him is applied by producing or deepening an example which shows him that he would not say what he says ‘we’ say.236

The important point here is that it would be inappropriate to treat a belief I have come to by looking for the universal within myself as if it were a belief I came to by polling an undergraduate student population. Looking within for what is fundamentally sharable about myself is a different way of orienting myself within a community of others, and requires different approaches for criticizing, defending and revising beliefs than those we would bring against empirical surveys. It would be inappropriate for instance, to criticize someone speaking in the plural first person by pointing out how small her sample size is (one, it would seem), but it would not be inappropriate to question her sincerity, the care of her reflections, or the depth of her self-knowledge. It also would be inappropriate to question the depth of her self-knowledge by citing survey results, perhaps by pointing out that most people have come to a different view and she likely shares all the factors that led them to that different result. To be appropriate to the kind of claim she has made, my criticism needs to engage with the basis of her judgment – her feeling – to bring her to see something about her own experience that allows for my criticism.

Sibley makes a similar point in his account of what a critic aims to achieve by offering explanations of his judgments:

Since, as I emphasized at the start, aesthetic perception is what is really vital, a major occupation of critics is the task of bringing people to see things for what, aesthetically, they are,

236 Cavell (1969), 95.
as well as why they are. … The critic is successful if his audience began by not seeing, and ends by seeing for itself, the aesthetic character of the object.\textsuperscript{237}

It is the success of shared aesthetic experience that a third person perspective cannot achieve by itself. If I disagree with the claim a critic makes about what I should see in a painting, or hear in a piece of music, and respond by shifting to a third person perspective on the situation, I have removed myself from the arena wherein his aim of agreement in feeling can get a grip on me. I have switched from thinking about the world (transparently experiencing the painting or the music) to thinking about myself and the other as epistemic agents with certain track records and virtues as judges. Thinking about us third personally may legitimately change an intellectual judgment I make about how likely it is my original aesthetic judgment is true, but can no longer consider the challenge posed to what I believe is true at the level of aesthetic feeling itself.

The crux of my argument against applying the conciliatory view of disagreement to beauty is that if agreement in experience is at stake in aesthetic claims, our criticisms and revisions must address that experience, and effect change within it. Sibley and Cavell direct this point towards the way we talk about the aesthetic object. As Cavell says, at some point we have to ask “don’t you see, don’t you feel, don’t you dig?”\textsuperscript{238} What I want to stress is that this is equally a point about how to address and engage the other’s perspective. The prompt “Don’t you dig?” directs attention to an aesthetic object as the appropriate site for testing aesthetic claims, but it also asks another to apply her first person perspective in an effort to dig what is seen or heard. I have not shifted to thinking of the other primarily in terms of her reliability for forming beliefs of this kind, a third personal assessment, because that would be to close off the open question of what she is seeing or hearing now, with our perspectives in tension.

By continuing to be first personally compelled by our judgments of beauty in the face of disagreement, we show we are serious about the kind of agreement at stake. But relating to the object and the other in the first person also shows I take her experience to be relevant to my judgment as a

\textsuperscript{237} Sibley (1965), 141.
\textsuperscript{238} Cavell (1969), 93.
challenge that is appropriate to the kind of plural first person claim I have made. In fact, we could think of the conciliatory response to disagreement as effectively avoiding this kind of tension between perspectives as overlapping first person windows on the world. A challenge is not realized in the same way by noting her judgment as a psychological fact about her with a certain probability of being true based on a third person assessment of her track record.

However, if agreement in aesthetic experience requires continued engagement with the first person perspective as I have suggested, this carries consequences for responding to disagreement. If I must engage first personally in order to address the other’s challenge in its intended arena – revising or transforming aesthetic experience – in the meantime my perspective will continue to reveal the truth about the object’s beauty or lack there of. To use Enoch’s phrase, remaining in the first person maintains an asymmetry between the truth (as I believe) and the other’s mistaken judgment, an asymmetry that heads off a conciliatory response. Enoch presents this as the difference, within my perspective, between a truth of the world and a psychological fact, which is useful as a handy way to get a grip on the asymmetry present, but shouldn’t lead us to lose sight of the force of the other’s disagreement as a break within the plural first person. Should we try to avoid the asymmetry present in first personal reasons for belief by encapsulating them in a belief safely considered from a third person point of view, we pay the price of no longer engaging with the other person and her belief in a way that will allow successful communication and agreement within aesthetic experience. On the other hand, if we do not appreciate that the first person perspective we maintain in response to disagreement is plural first personal, we would pay the same price, failing to recognize that engaging with the other’s perspective is a requirement of the kind of agreement that is at stake.

Is this aim of agreement within aesthetic feeling really an epistemic concern? Sibley’s distinction between “aesthetic judgments” that must be supported by aesthetic perception and “attributions of aesthetic quality” or “aesthetic statements” that depend only on good reasons for
thinking an aesthetic quality is present, could provide a handy way for dividing up aesthetic concerns into those that admit of epistemic rationality and those that do not. Perhaps agreement in aesthetic experience or feeling is not something epistemic rationality needs to concern itself with. However, I don’t think we can easily give up concerns with epistemic rationality for judgments of beauty spoken in a universal voice.

Judgments of beauty pose an interesting case where belief and feeling are intimately joined. As I stressed in my initial treatment of Kant, the feeling of the free play is best understood as a medium of judgment in itself. Aesthetic experience of beauty culminates in statements of belief about what ought to hold for the community of judges addressed, how we ought to feel and judge. These are claims that others (and ourselves) can make mistakes about, that can be disputed, tested and revised, the same as other beliefs. The only difference, as Cavell points out, is in the means employed for disputing, testing, and revising – rather than getting our bearings by clearing our heads in the cool air of an impartial third person perspective, we get our bearings by trying to see ourselves more clearly from within (remembering that this will involve a rhythm of interaction between our response and the object in our environment as Dewey describes, not a purely introspective scrutiny).

Although the methods for disputing, testing and revising judgments made in the plural first person are different from those we would apply to beliefs based on gathering empirical evidence from a group, or making logical inferences, they still indicate an epistemic concern with a judgment that ought to hold for other judges.

This is the crux of the aesthetic up-ending of the conciliatory position’s prioritizing of an independent standpoint: to really listen to the other person in the way demanded by her claim, I must

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239 Sibley (1965), 137.
240 It should be noted that responding to disagreement in the plural first person need not rule out all consideration of third personal factors effecting judgment. I can, for example, listen to my daughter’s violin recital with an attempt to monitor and counteract my bias as a parent (a nervous tendency to focus on mistakes, or a sympathetic blindness to them). In this case, the point of holding a third personal view of myself in mind is to have a first personal experience that more clearly presents the world to me as it is, not just for me, but as I think it ought to be for any attentive listener. My point is that third personal considerations of myself as a judge must pass through first person aesthetic experience in order to be relevant to the community of aesthetic experience another’s judgment demands. On the other hand, if adjusting confidence in response to disagreement is restricted to third personal considerations, a concern with agreement in feeling is effectively cut off.
take what she says into a more careful listening to *myself*, in order to discover whether or not what she says about me is true. For her claim is about me, as part of the ‘we’ her plural first person perspective speaks for. She can make this claim because she has access to me through the ‘we’ she knows in herself, not by making me an object of impartial observation.
Chapter Seven: Imagining Others in Response to Disagreement

In the next two chapters I will argue for what I will call an ‘empathetically steadfast’ response to disagreement about beauty. I have argued for the steadfast part of this response in the previous chapter, on the basis of the aesthetic nature of judgments of beauty (grounded on a pleasure that speaks ‘with’ others from a plural first person perspective). On the face of it, such a steadfast response to disagreement seems incompatible with continuing to recognize disagreement as presenting a troubling challenge. I will try to show one way this could be possible, which suggests that understanding the other’s claim about beauty – and hence, her disagreement – engages us imaginatively with each other's aesthetic experience. While I am motivated to try to imaginatively grasp the other’s view in order to guide her towards the beauty (or lack there-of) that I see, and so correct her judgment, in doing so I also open myself to her attempts to better understand and correct me. As something imagined, her experience does not immediately give me reason to revise my aesthetic experience and resulting judgment. Nevertheless, our imaginative efforts are part of a joint project of epistemic correction that we take on together, with the hope that in the end, we will come to agreement and empirically realize the plural first person perspective we assume in speaking our judgments.

My task in this chapter is to argue that understanding the other’s claim about beauty requires engaging with her first person experience imaginatively. In the last chapter, I discussed the need to stay in the plural first person in order to take a claim seriously as aesthetic, both grounded on a feeling of pleasure and aiming at agreement in a shared feeling we ought to have. Now I want to add that the first personal nature of aesthetic judgment has a further dimension: to understand the content of the other’s claim I must imagine what her first personal experience is like. In the next chapter, I will argue it is this imaginative engagement with her perspective that gives epistemic significance to our disagreement, a significance that comes from my efforts to correct her view and opening myself to her efforts to correct me.
In the first section below, I will set out my reasons for thinking that responding to disagreement about beauty should include an attempt to enter imaginatively into the other’s first personal aesthetic experience. For this purpose, I will draw heavily upon Isenberg’s argument that critics offer descriptions of artworks in order to guide the audience’s first personal aesthetic apprehension of those particular works, not to provide a causal account of the connection between stimuli and response (or at least, this is how the task of the critic should be properly understood). I will add a further claim of my own that we not only need to fill in the critic’s description of the work with our own first personal experience of it, but we also need to imagine what the critic’s first personal experience of the work is like in the case that we disagree.

Secondly, I will go into further detail about the kind of imaginative project I think disagreement about beauty requires, drawing upon the helpful taxonomy of different kinds of imaginative perspective shifting that has been set out by Coplan in her overview of recent work on empathy.\(^{241}\) Crucially, I will argue that we need other-oriented perspective shifting in response to disagreement about beauty, that is, perspective shifting that tries to imagine the other person’s point of view from the inside, rather than simply swapping out her perspective for my own in a given imaginative scenario. To give a quick example, as I watch my young nephew try a pickle for the first time I could try to imagine the experience I would have eating the pickle (salty, sour and delicious), or I could imagine the experience he is having (salty, sour, and gross!).

On the face of it, we might not think there is any necessary relationship between other-oriented imagining (or any other kind) and the plural first person perspective. I can make claims about beauty, voicing a first personal feeling we ought to share, without imagining anyone else’s experience of the beautiful object as part of the process of judgment. My own feeling is enough. Other-oriented imagining is also a phenomenon that extends well beyond cases of plural first personal claims. As we

\(^{241}\) Coplan (2011).
can see in the pickle example, I need not be imagining an experience that carries a normative sense for what we ought to feel or believe. Any kind of experience another has can figure in other-oriented imagining, so long as I am imagining what it is like for her to have it, rather than myself.

Still, I am going to argue that there is a crucial connection between other-oriented imagining and the plural first person perspective when it comes to understanding claims others make about beauty and responding to disagreement. I may not need to imagine anyone else in order to make my own judgment at the outset, but I may very well need to do so in order to understand another person’s descriptions of the aesthetic object when they are given as directions for how to see its beauty (or lack there-of) in response to disagreement (and she will need to do the same for me). I will make a case for this with the help of Isenberg’s account of critical communication, which is concerned with bringing about a shared perception of aesthetic qualities, not beauty, but I think the point extends to beauty once it has been made. In the second half of the chapter, I will defend other-oriented perspective shifting against Goldie’s charge that it distorts my imagining of the other person and can even usurp her rational agency in certain cases. This defense is important if I am right that other-oriented perspective shifting plays a central role in the way we raise challenges, test claims, and reach agreement about judgments made in the plural first person.

7.1 Imagination, Mind Reading and Aesthetic Claims

Let’s start with this question: what do I need to understand Louise’s description of Alessandro Cortini’s experimental drones in “Di Passaggio” as irritating (and certainly not beautiful)? The question of what is required for thinking about others’ thoughts is taken up in a general way by philosophical accounts of imagination. There are two broad accounts of our ability to form beliefs about what another is about to do or believe. According to the ‘simulationist’ view, I can do this by running an ‘off-line

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simulation’ of the other’s thoughts for myself, seeing through her eyes, as it were, to reach a conclusion about what is coming next. In contrast, the ‘theory theory’ view suggests there is no need to try to share the content of the other person’s thoughts in a first personal way. I can anticipate the mental states another will have by applying a theory about how her present states connect with others causally. On Heal’s description of the latter view, “To possess the concept of some particular mental state is to grasp the particular causal-explanatory role associated with that state.”

There are many thoughts I might have about Louise’s inability to appreciate “Di Passaggio” that could be captured by this kind of causal-explanatory view. Perhaps I could anticipate that she will describe the music as ‘irritating’ ‘flat’ and ‘going on forever’ from other things I know about her, together with a general theory about the causal-explanatory role of the mental states I take her to have. Crucially, on this view I wouldn’t need to try to imagine how she hears the tones, or how her irritation feels, in order to predict that she will want to leave the party early, complaining about our host’s odd taste.

But is this kind of third personal explanation of the causal links between her mental states really enough to grasp what she means when she says the song is terrible, particularly if it is given as a critical comment, an appeal to my own evaluation of “Di Passaggio”? Isenberg argues that the kind of communication we aim for when we take on the role of an art critic requires something else: first person experience of the qualities described. To use Isenberg’s example, when a critic describes the ‘wavelike contour’ present in The Burial of Count Orgaz, he is not referring to a quality that could be found in other paintings that also fit the description of having a ‘wavelike contour’. He is only referring to the wavelike contour present in The Burial of Count Orgaz, something that cannot be communicated by descriptive concepts alone (no matter how exhaustively detailed and precise). According to

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243 Heal (2003), 28.
Isenberg, “the critic’s meaning is ‘filled in,’ ‘rounded out,’ or ‘completed’ by the act of perception, which is performed not to judge the truth of his description but in a certain sense to understand it.”

The main point I want to take from Isenberg is that understanding critical claims, such as my friend’s claim that the drone is irritating, requires first personal experience of the particular qualities described. I also want to make the further claim that when we disagree, we must try to see or hear the work as the other person does in order to ‘fill in’ her claim (an attempt she will reciprocate if she is also trying to understand our dispute). Why would this be necessary? We have listened to the drone of “Di Passaggio” together, and so we share an experience of the sound that (at least potentially) allows us to identify and discuss its qualities – that particular sustained buzzing in the background and its subtle fades and swells. But we do not share a judgment of its beauty. What is needed to understand one another’s reasons for this difference? Can my friend say, ‘The drone is boring because we get no relief from that wavering vibration’? Having heard the drone myself, I know the ‘wavering vibration’ she means, but what about her description that we ‘get no relief’ from it? I find the drone surprisingly engaging, even beautiful, and so the tension it builds is not something I want relief from, it is exactly that hovering edge of exhaustion that enriches its ominous, meditative atmosphere. How can my friend use the qualities of the drone to support her claim that it ought to be found irritating rather than mesmerizing?

244 Isenberg (1949/1995), 367.

245 There are difficult questions to ask here about how far our aesthetic experiences overlap and diverge. We seem to share an experience of the drone to a certain extent, far enough I think to fix points of reference in our first person experience of the drone’s qualities – this consistency, that small change. But are we really sharing an experience of the sound if we judge its beauty differently? This problem about how to mark off the identity of an aesthetic experience (is this the same experience with some slight differences, or do those differences mean they are no longer ‘the same’ experience at all) is shared by Dewey, and I cannot do better at present than offer Dewey’s fairly vague idea that aesthetic experiences can share a ‘form’ even when the ‘matter’ is different (each of us bringing a different history of memories and experiences to bear). No two aesthetic experiences will be exactly the same, and yet we can still talk about ‘the’ experience afforded by a work of art. There is also the problem that the parts of aesthetic objects, how they form a whole, and then how that whole moves us, all seem to intimately interpenetrate, and yet we often talk about aesthetic qualities as if they could be identified independently of the whole they make and how we experience it (which could be different between us). However we try to settle these issues, my point is that working in the trenches of identifying parts and how they contribute to aesthetic experience when we disagree is a task that requires 1) first personal engagement with the aesthetic object so that we have even a chance of sharing the relevant points of reference we need and 2) imagining one another’s first person experiences in order to consider how those points of reference could figure in a different judgment than our own.
This question is Isenberg’s main concern. He argues that we get into trouble (critics included) if we take the critic’s task to be giving a causal explanation for how a work with certain properties gives rise to a certain felt response. That kind of explanation would seek to identify particular qualities as the causes of particular feelings by appealing to general principles of psychology, sociology, perhaps even “certain propositions about my nervous system”. For example, Louise might speculate that the sustained buzzing in “Di Passaggio” has a causal relationship with a feeling of irritation – that is just how organisms with our kind of sensory apparatus and overlapping aesthetic background are likely to respond to this kind of stimuli. However, Isenberg warns us not to get mixed up in thinking that this sort of explanation is the primary task of critics (although it could be one of them). He writes that “[t]his procedure … 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”. Isenberg argues that the critic’s task is to get us to perceive the artwork a certain way, guiding and deepening successive experiences we have of it. He calls this communication “at the level of the senses” because it does not employ concepts with the aim of picking out qualities that could be realized across multiple artworks (and so could figure in causal principles). Instead, by her description of the artwork, the critic brings us to see or hear qualities that are directly perceived by both the audience and herself a certain way, guiding aesthetic apprehension in relation to that one thing.

It is important to emphasize that Isenberg’s account of the critic’s task does not require us to think it is impossible to find psychological laws that could fully explain aesthetic responses, nor that it would be impossible to develop a vocabulary so detailed and precise we could apply these laws to

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247 Ibid., 369.
248 I think Dewey (1934) anticipates this point when he writes, “Not only is it impossible that language should duplicate the infinite variety of individualized qualities that exist, but it is wholly undesirable and unneeded that it should do so. The unique quality of a quality is found in experience itself; it is there and sufficiently there not to need reduplication in language. The latter serves its scientific or its intellectual purpose as it gives directions as to how to come upon these qualities in experience.” (224)
descriptions of aesthetic objects in the absence of first person experience. Perhaps we could find such laws, and develop such a vocabulary. Isenberg’s point is that doing so would not help us to carry out the task of the critic any better. For one thing, we already have examples of successful criticism even with the rudimentary state of our aesthetic vocabulary. We often don’t need precise language in order to effectively bring someone to see for herself why an artwork should be taken to have a certain aesthetic quality, or give pleasure. For example, Isenberg says that an effort to convince another of the beauty of the line, “But musical as is Apollo’s lute,” would likely talk about “the pattern of u’s and l’s which reinforces the meaning with its own musical quality”. He points out that, “this formulation … is so vague that one could not tell just what general hypothesis it is that is being invoked or assumed; yet it is quite sharp enough for critical purposes.”

The lesson here is that psychological laws that could explain Isenberg’s response to this line are incidental to the critic’s purpose. I could fail to be convinced by this attempt to bring me to hear the line as musical (the critic’s purpose) and happily accept there is some causal explanation for Isenberg’s pleasure in it.

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249 For an example of a contemporary voice presenting this line of objection, see Livingston (2003). Livingston’s iteration of this criticism is directed towards Sibley, who does take a stronger line that descriptions of non-aesthetic properties cannot provide an adequate basis for judging the presence of aesthetic properties (see Sibley’s ‘Aesthetic and Non-aesthetic’ and ‘Particularity, Art, and Evaluation’). Nevertheless, Sibley and Isenberg make similar distinctions between causal explanations of aesthetic response, and the kind of justification critics aim to give that can only be taken up and assessed in first person aesthetic experience. Here we can think of Sibley’s distinction between an “attribution of aesthetic quality” and an “aesthetic judgment” (1965, 137).

250 Isenberg (1949/1995), 364-365. I describe the critic’s concern as convincing another of the beauty of this line because, somewhat surprisingly, Isenberg does mention beauty in relation to this example. Isenberg is not specially concerned with beauty, but it nevertheless appears to fall within the scope of critical concerns that require ‘communication at the level of the senses’ as opposed to giving causal, psychological explanations.

251 Ibid., 365. We could still demand an explanation for why judgments made on the basis of first person experience are given such a central role in aesthetics. Livingston (2003) demands an account of our motivation for this in his response to Sibley (267-268), as does Hopkins (2000) when he writes that “We have no understanding of what is distinctive about beauty until we know why judgments of it must be made on the basis of the judge’s own responses.” (214) It is not enough for these authors that Sibley and Kant tell us it is in the nature of properly aesthetic judgments to be grounded upon aesthetic perception, or one’s own pleasure, this is just a stipulation. There are various explanations that could be given, including that there is something epistemic at stake in aesthetic perception, some kind of knowledge we cannot access through testimony or third person descriptions. Another is to think that while there is nothing epistemic at stake, we simply value having our own experiences and basing judgments upon it more in aesthetics than other areas of interest. (Both Livingston (2003) and Hopkins (2011) find the second idea more sensible.)

However, I have always found there to be something a bit odd about this demand for an account of why we reserve ‘aesthetic judgment’ proper for those made on the basis of first person experience. What sounds like a stipulation to Livingston sounds like a description of the framework within which aesthetic claims are intelligible to me, and it would be wrong-headed to ask for a vindication of this aspect of the framework as if it were a specific claim that could somehow be justified within it. If someone does not see that aesthetic judgments based upon first person experience set up different
The lesson I will draw from Isenberg is that what I need in order to understand Louise’s description of the drone is not a theory that tells me how certain mental states (experiencing aesthetic qualities) are related to others (feelings of pleasure, particularly of the free play), a theory that would employ general principles aimed at explaining causal connections. Rather, I need to ask the question “Why does this not please her?” in a different way, a way that looks for an explanation in first person experience of the sound – her first person experience of it. What I need is to let her communicate with me “at the level of the senses” by paying attention to the aesthetic object in the same way she does.

To put this another way, if I am engaging with my friend’s claim as an aesthetically grounded judgment, it would be off track to think that what I need to understand about her experience (the way it differs from mine) could be captured by a theory about how different mental states are functionally related. I could give that kind of explanation for some other purpose, but it doesn’t help me to grasp the import of our disagreement as a matter of diverging aesthetic experiences, two different sets of critical direction for aesthetic apprehension. To do that, I need to ‘put on’ her perspective and imagine how the drone sounds to her.

patterns of justification, challenge, and successful agreement than claims made on the basis of testimony, or laws applied to third person descriptions, I’m not quite sure what to say. I am in the position of Arthur staring at Pellinore, or Anne staring at Beth. I would need to bring a dissenter into the framework I am seeking to justify in order to be able to give arguments that would have traction for her.

I think this is why both of the above options for offering an explanation seem inadequate, or unsatisfactory. It is because one senses they are trying to justify something that cannot be justified in this way. It’s not exactly wrong to say that we care about judgments made on the basis of first person experience because we value aesthetic appreciation, for example (see Livingston (2003), 277), but this fails to capture the way this value sets up a whole realm of inquiry with its own standards for judging what is relevant, what is a good defense of a claim, when agreement has been reached, etc. I think this is why we are drawn back to the first explanation, that there is something epistemic at stake in making aesthetic judgments in the first person, even though it is quite hard to say exactly what kind of special knowledge this is, and why it cannot come from other sources. We lean towards this option because it is so clearly not just a matter of valuing first person aesthetic experience that places it at the center of aesthetic concerns. I am reminded again of Cavell’s attempt to explain the kind of necessity that judgments of beauty have, and that the claims of ordinary language philosophers have, in the face of those for whom these claims sound like nothing more than bits of psychology, not logic (Cavell (1969), 90-92). It wouldn’t bring the dissenter’s views any closer to seeing the necessity of judgments of beauty, the particular kind of justification they demand, to say that we do highly value experiencing in the first person the bits of psychology at work in aesthetic judgment.

I am going to set this matter aside for now and think about it more in the future. At present, what matters is that, as Isenberg says, “when we speak of ‘justifying’ or ‘giving reasons’ for our critical judgments, we refer to something which patently does go on in the world and which is patently different from the causal explanation of tastes and preferences. … Hence, at the least, there exists the purely ‘phenomenological’ task of elucidating the import and intention of words like ‘insight,’ ‘acumen,’ ‘obtuseness,’ ‘bad taste,’ all of which have a real currency in criticism.” (365, footnote 3)
Talking about the drone in “Di Passaggio” alone wouldn’t be enough to establish a general principle that every buzzing drone of the same sort will lead to the same eerie, echoing beauty I find in this one. But talking about this single drone could be enough, according to Isenberg, to carry out the critic’s purpose of “clarifying and altering” the aesthetic experience we have of this particular song. Since I am suggesting that understanding disagreements about beauty involves the same kind of task, it is worth pausing to think further about what kind of purpose this is. Isenberg offers this description:

> When, with a sense of illumination, we say ‘Yes, that’s it exactly,’ we are really giving expression to the change which has taken place in our aesthetic apprehension. The post-critical experience is the true commentary on the pre-critical one … There is no objection in these cases to our saying that we have been made to ‘understand’ why we liked (or disliked) the work. But such understanding, which is the legitimate fruit of criticism, is nothing but a second moment of aesthetic experience, a retrial of experienced values. It should not be confused with the psychological study which seeks to know the cause of our feelings.  

The key idea here is that the ‘experienced values’ artworks offer are tested (supported or undermined) by developments within further first person experience of the work, rather than third personal reasoning about it. When Louise says that the drone in “Di Passaggio” offers no relief, this is something I would come to understand as insightful or not by coming to hear the drone that way. That I ought to have such a revealing change in my aesthetic experience is the content of her claim. She isn’t saying “unchanging tones are always irritating,” as a general principle that I could potentially understand and investigate third personally. She is saying “this unchanging tone is justly found irritating” and to understand that I have to take up this unchanging tone as something justly found irritating (this requires imagination, since it isn’t actually irritating to me at present).

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253 Here is Dewey (1934) making a similar point: “Two men meet; one is the applicant for a position, while the other has the disposition of the matter in his hands. ... [A]n interplay may take place in which a new experience develops. Where should we look for an account of such an experience? Not to ledger-entries nor yet to a treatise on economics or sociology or personnel-psychology, but to drama or fiction. Its nature and import can be expressed only by art, because there is a unity of experience that can be expressed only as an experience.” (44) If we are interested in understanding something as an experience (such as the other’s judgment of beauty), only another experience can adequately capture the unity, rhythm, and consummation that characterizes it (an experience I try to imagine, since it does not as yet coincide with my own).
The imaginative work required in response to disagreement may not be very involved, the most basic requirement is just to grasp her claim as something that must be understood and assessed ‘from the inside’. I think this point extends from Isenberg’s work on guiding perception of aesthetic qualities to beauty, for the feeling of the free play also occurs in response to first personal experience of an aesthetic object. My efforts to bring another to share a feeling of the free play will likewise be concerned with trying to guide her aesthetic experience towards that feeling. There is the added difficulty that the goal in this case is to share a feeling of free reflective activity that cannot be pinned down to a particular feature or quality of the object in question. It can already be difficult to figure out how to guide another’s perception towards an aesthetic quality that can be anchored in particular non-aesthetic features (such as drawing attention to the buzzing echo of the drone in “Di Passaggio” in order to hear its reverent quality). Nevertheless, we do often succeed in getting others to see and hear aesthetic qualities they didn’t at first, using the kinds of strategies Sibley identifies.\(^\text{254}\) I believe the same is true of beauty, and that many of the same methods apply – pointing out non-aesthetic properties, repeating and re-describing aesthetic qualities, using analogies, gestures, tone of voice, evoking a certain memory or mood that could spark a new illumination of what is seen or heard. In the case of beauty we will be directing perception in particular ways in the hopes of sparking something that goes beyond any particular feature or quality we could point out or describe. Nevertheless, the free play will take up those features in its indeterminate reflective activity, and so this direction still has a purpose.

At this point, our discussion intersects with an on-going debate in philosophy of mind about how imagination works, particularly our use of imagination in understanding and making predictions about the beliefs and actions of others. I have suggested that when I think about Louise’s claim that “Di Passaggio” is not beautiful, I have to grasp the content of her claim ‘from the inside’ by trying to hear

\(^{254}\) See Sibley (1959), 442-444.
the music as she does. I try to take up the experience she describes for myself, in an attempt to imagine what that it is like. We might think this kind of imaginative process often helps us to figure out what another person is going to think or do. For example, if my friend is deliberating about where to plant her pepper seeds, I might take up the beliefs I know she has about peppers and her desire to plant them in the best spot, and then run them through an imagined process of decision making to arrive at the belief she too is likely to reach.

The debate in philosophy of mind focuses on whether or not our ability to predict what others will think or do involves taking imaginary versions of their beliefs and desires and running them ‘off-line’ through our own mechanisms for belief formation and decision making. The opposing ‘theory theory’ suggests this kind of simulation is not essential for explaining our grasp and use of psychological concepts. Instead, we make predictions about what others are going to believe or do by applying a folk theory we have about how thoughts. To predict where my friend will plant her seeds I don’t need to run through an imagined version of her decision making process, I just need to know what her beliefs are, and how those belief-states enter into relations of implication with others. A strong version of ‘theory theory’ would hold that all of our competence and use of psychological concepts can be explained by applying a theory about thoughts, without employing our own grasp of the content those thoughts may be about (and it’s important to remember that thoughts-about-peppers are quite a different subject matter than peppers). I prefer Heal’s term ‘co-cognition’ to describe the basic idea that thinking about others’ thoughts often involves thinking about the content of their thoughts for ourselves. Heal argues that understanding others’ psychological states involves deploying the same cognitive competency and grasp of subject-matter we use to believe, imagine, and intend for ourselves.

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255 Heal (2003) identifies the boxological account of imagination given by Nichols and Stich (1995) as an example of a strong ‘theory theory’ account, and we can turn to Gordon (1986) for a classic statement of the ‘simulationist’ view. 256 Here is one characterization Heal (2003) gives of a ‘strong theory theory’ view: “For strong theory theory to be defensible we need to make plausible the idea that we actually grasp (even if only tacitly) some principles about how particular contentful thoughts are connected, principles which have nothing to do with connections between the states of affairs these thoughts are about, and that this grasp is our major resource in generating successful predictions of others’ thoughts.” (103)
Those who co-cognise exercise the same underlying multifaceted ability to deal with some subject matter. So, for example, two persons M and N co-cognise when each has the same beliefs and interests and reasons to the same further belief. … Or, M and N may co-cognise if M actually believes what N entertains as mere fantasy, but each exercises the same grasp of the subject matter and so the same patterns and linkages are detectable in their thoughts.257

To take the pepper seeds example again, when I ask myself, “Where will she think the peppers should go?” I will arrive at an answer by asking myself at some point, “Well, where should they go?” Heal does not deny that a folk psychological theory plays some role in our grasp and use of psychological concepts, but she argues such a theory cannot do the entire work of explaining that use, co-cognition must also come into it (in other words, a strong version of the ‘theory theory’ approach must be rejected). Heal also separates our basic capacity to co-cognize the content of mental states with others from specific accounts of how this capacity could work, such as the simulationist idea that it works by running pretend versions of another’s mental states through our own belief forming mechanisms.258

I won’t go over Heal’s arguments in favour of co-cognition in detail, but I will say that if we accept Isenberg’s account of critical communication, I think that would lend interesting support to the co-cognitive or simulationist side of the debate about imagination.259 If we must look at the same object as the critic in order to grasp the content of her claims, it looks like a general theory about thoughts – even thoughts about aesthetic objects – is not going to be enough to predict or understand where the critic goes next in her aesthetic apprehension. Simulation or co-cognition would be needed to explain a full grasp and use of psychological concepts in the arena of making and contesting aesthetic claims.

257 Heal (2003), 97-98.
258 For a brief sketch of an alternative account of how co-cognition could work, see Heal (2003), 110-111. She points out that the standard simulationist picture assumes we need to work with pretend versions of another’s beliefs in order for co-cognition to get a grip on the inferential connections that allow us to predict further beliefs or actions. However, we could find that the mind has the capacity to work out inferential connections between different contents in separation from taking up doxastic attitudes towards it. In that case, we could co-cognize the content of another’s thought, work out the inferential connections between it and further content, and then attribute a certain doxastic attitude towards it on the part of the other. There would be no need to run pretend versions of belief through this mechanism. The main point to take away is that Heal is on the side of the ‘simulationist’ view in the debate, but she takes co-cognition to be a more fundamental idea than any particular account of how this ability actually works. She thinks that a priori arguments can be given for the need to include co-cognition as part of our grasp of psychological concepts, but that it is an a posteriori matter how exactly our minds carry it out. See Heal (2003), 92-94.
259 For others who argue for a simulationist account of imagination of our response to aesthetic objects, particularly fiction, see Currie (1995), Currie and Ravenscroft (2002), and Goldman (2006).
(judgments of beauty in particular, for my purposes). Thinking about the critic’s thoughts is not a task that can be fully delivered into the hands of a third personal theory about thoughts as a separate subject-matter. Just like thinking about peppers plays a role in thinking about my friend’s thoughts about peppers, it is part of thinking about Louise’s descriptions of “Di Passaggio” to try to co-cognize the music with her.\textsuperscript{260}

Now, disagreement introduces the additional complication that while we can both identify many features of “Di Passaggio” as we listen to it, its beauty, at least, is not something we are managing to fully co-cognise. I say ‘fully’ because Heal points out that co-cognition is not always neat and tidy, we can have varying degrees of success.

Ability to co-cognise is not an all-or-nothing matter. M and N may both have some grasp of a given subject matter, but M in a richer and more adequate way than N. N will then be capable of some co-cognition with M, but there will be other of M’s thinking with which N cannot co-cognise.\textsuperscript{261}

I think this description of the varying degrees of co-cognition fits the aesthetic case quite well. I take myself to have a “richer and more adequate” grasp on “Di Passaggio” than Louise, while still taking her to co-cognize the music with me in a significant sense. In fact, I think the example of critical communication could help theorists like Heal think further about the ways we try to expand our ability to co-cognize with others. Heal asks, “what, if anything, fills the gap when easy co-cognition fails. Are we forced to give up? Can we simply at that point abandon anything co-cognitive and successfully

\textsuperscript{260} Applying Heal’s idea of co-cognition to the aesthetic case does require taking there to be “patterns and linkages” to be found in the given subject matter. This would naturally lead into a discussion of whether or not there are normative links between non-aesthetic and aesthetic properties, and between aesthetic properties and aesthetic appraisals, but I am going to resist pursuing the interesting ways Heal’s work could intersect with those discussions for now. My primary concern at the moment is a Kantian account of beauty, on which there certainly is a normative link between the form of an aesthetic object and the pleasure of the free play, albeit one that is recognized on the basis of the feeling itself. However, I do wish to include this comment from Heal on what she means by ‘rational’ or ‘intelligible’ linkages that co-cognition requires: “the simple word ‘rational’, narrowly understood, may not serve our purpose very well. Phrases like ‘such that some intelligible sense or point can be seen in it’ or ‘such that some justificatory account of it can be given’ might serve better to summarize the simulationist’s notion.” (79) With this broad view of what ‘intelligible’ means, she can include potentially ‘irrational’ aspects of mental life like botched processes of reasoning and emotional states among those that are open to co-cognition. So long as what we make of aesthetic qualities is the kind of thing we can see some point in when we consider another’s experience, it looks like co-cognition could be on the table.

\textsuperscript{261} Heal (2003), 98.
switch to pure theory instead? Do we have techniques for extending our co-cognitive range?”262 When I hear these questions I immediately think of Sibley’s account of the ways critics try to guide the perception of their audience, or Cavell’s description of trying to bring someone to appreciate a poetic line that cannot be explained or paraphrased in different words, what he calls “touchstones of intimacy”.263 Critics may have more reason than most to be concerned with discovering “techniques for extending our co-cognitive range” since they are trying to bring others to hear or see an object as they do, and they must do so without the help of general principles.

We should also remember that both of us do not need to actually believe “Di Passaggio” is irritating in order to co-cognize it as irritating, since our competency with a subject matter can be employed in many ways other than believing, including imagining, daydreaming, planning, questioning etc. So long as she is believing and I am imagining the same thing, we could be successfully co-cognizing it. When I imagine “Di Passaggio” as irritating rather than beautiful, I consider the subject matter under a particular lens (how she sees it), but I would still be trying to think about that subject matter that enjoys our joint attention, rather than setting it aside in favour of applying a theory about how thoughts about beauty work. If I “switched to pure theory” as Heal puts it, I believe I would this would amount to abandoning the kind of communicative project Louise seeks to engage me in, the kind of project Isenberg attributes to the art critic.

We have seen that there are two broad ways of explaining how we think about the thoughts of others: according to the first, we use a theory about thoughts to explain and anticipate the development of another’s beliefs, desires and behaviour. According to the second, we use the resources of our own perspective and the competency we have thinking about a subject-matter to ‘simulate’ or ‘put on’ what the other person is thinking and feeling. Drawing on Isenberg’s account of critical communication, I have argued that understanding another’s claim in aesthetic disagreement is best taken as a matter of

262 Ibid., 99.
263 See Sibley (1959), and Cavell (1969), 81.
imagining her experience first personally. At the minimum, this involves taking the subject-matter of her claim to be an aesthetic experience that cannot be adequately communicated by a third personal grasp of concepts alone. As I try to understand our disagreement better, I would need to engage in a richer imaginative effort to re-create her experience.

7.2 Imagining Another’s Aesthetic Experience: Other-Oriented Perspective Shifting

Above, I have argued that to understand Louise’s description of the drone in “Di Passaggio” I would need to listen to it while trying to imagine how she hears it. What kind of epistemic relevance could this kind of imagining have? It is striking how familiar two ideas about imagination are: 1) I do not believe what I imagine is real, and 2) what I imagine can nevertheless teach me something real. The first can explain why simply imagining another’s perspective does not itself appear to give me reason to revise my belief, and the second can explain why imagining her perspective may still be relevant to epistemic concerns with revision.

How does imagining another’s perspective lead to real growth and change within my own? How we learn from imagination (and how much, and whether we should) is a wide-ranging philosophical question that I cannot do justice to here. But a few things can be said to get us thinking about the role of imagination in responding to disagreement. First, we can draw upon work that has been done on empathy at the intersection of ethics and philosophy of mind to understand our options for what we mean by ‘putting on’ the other’s experience better. In this context, ‘empathy’ should be understood as an “imaginative reconstruction of the other’s experience” that does not tell us anything, by itself, about the imaginier’s attitude towards what is reconstructed.\textsuperscript{264} For example, Nussbaum points out that empathizing with someone in pain could evoke compassion, but it could also evoke glee (if one

\textsuperscript{264} Nussbaum (2001), 302.
happens to be a sadistic torturer).\textsuperscript{265} It is also important for the following discussion to bear in mind that successful imaginative re-construction requires “a kind of ‘twofold attention,’ in which one both imagines what it is like to be in the sufferer’s place and, at the same time, retains securely the awareness that one is not in that place.”\textsuperscript{266} In empathizing with another, I am aware that I am doing the imagining, and what I am imagining is someone else. If I get so caught up in my imagining that I forget myself and am only aware of the other’s experience, I will not be in a position to properly empathize with her, as I can no longer take up an attitude of my own towards what I have imagined (for example, I am consumed with pain myself, rather than sympathizing with another’s pain). On the other hand, imagining another person’s experience requires a kind of immersion, or suppression of my own perspective.\textsuperscript{267} Without this, I could simply fail to imagine someone else at all, merely re-creating myself in her place. Coplan describes the “two-fold attention” empathy requires as a clear self-other differentiation:

one keeps separate one’s awareness of oneself and one’s own experiences from one’s representations of the other and the other’s experiences – in both directions. One thus remains aware of the fact that the other is a separate person and that the other has his own unique thoughts, feelings, desires, and characteristics. This enables deep engagement with the other while preventing one from losing sight of where the self ends and the other begins and where the other ends and the self begins.\textsuperscript{268}

It is easy enough to say that we should keep an eye on where the self ends and the other begins, and in many cases of imagining others I think this process is fairly straightforward. However, we might think complications are introduced into a clear self-other differentiation by the plural first person, when I not only try to re-create the other’s perspective, but evaluate what she finds compelling about it as well. If I am imagining her for the purpose of assessing her experience critically, I seem to import crucial parts of myself into my re-construction, such as my sense for what ought to be found rationally compelling

\textsuperscript{265} Ibid., 329.
\textsuperscript{266} Ibid., 328. Nussbaum credits the phrase ‘twofold attention’ to a description Wollheim (1980) gives of the way in which we are both aware of what an artwork represents and that it is being represented.
\textsuperscript{267} Coplan (2011) writes that other-oriented perspective-taking “relies on regulatory mechanisms to modulate our level of affective arousal and suppress our own perspective.” (13)
\textsuperscript{268} Ibid., 16.
or aesthetically striking. This is the problem I will consider below. I will argue that while I do need to draw upon my own evaluative perspective in re-creating the normative force the other gives to her reasons and feelings, this does not necessarily compromise my effort to imagine her (not myself).

Maintaining the self-other differentiation is particularly crucial and nuanced when I try to re-create the other’s perspective in a “full-blooded” way, including the presence and influence of her characteristics, moods, and ways of valuing that I do not share (Coplan calls this other-oriented perspective taking). In fact, Goldie argues that there are such troubling limitations on our ability to do this we should try to avoid it. Instead, he proposes that we prioritize what he calls in-his-shoes perspective shifting (in Coplan’s terminology, self-oriented perspective taking), by which I imagine myself in the other’s circumstances with no presumption that I can accurately re-create what it is like for her to be there, only what it would be like for me to be in her place. Of course, I will often arrive at imagined beliefs, feelings and decisions that the other would not, if our differences are relevant to the imagined scenario. Whereas Coplan frames this mismatch in outcomes as a drawback to self-oriented perspective shifting, Goldie argues it is a problem easily fixed by taking the belief or behaviour I would come to under the imagined circumstances and adjusting for our differences after the fact.²⁶⁹ He gives us this example to illustrate:

(‘Well, I wouldn’t give up my seat to someone older at the start of such a long train journey, so I presume B wouldn’t either’). At this point, ‘adjustments for factual information about interpersonal differences’ – namely in this case for B’s being a kind person – will be necessary in order correctly to predict what B will do (‘Well, I wouldn’t give up my seat, but B is a kind person, so I expect he would’).²⁷⁰

Goldie argues I need not pursue a more accurate result within my own imagining by deepening and expanding my re-construction of the other “from the inside”, I can get to an accurate result by taking the response I imagine I would give and then adjusting it in light of what I know about her after the

²⁶⁹ Coplan (2011), 13: “To summarize, personal distress, false consensus effects, and general misunderstandings of the other are all associated with self-oriented perspective-taking. When we imagine ourselves in another person’s situation, it frequently results in inaccurate predictions and failed simulations of the other’s thoughts, feelings, and desires.”
imagining is over. This adjustment after the fact would apply the same kind of reasoning I use for other kinds of predictable things “from the outside”.

Goldie describes this as the difference between taking up a first personal stance that is practical or deliberative, and taking up a third personal stance that is theoretical or empirical. This distinction plays an important role in his argument supporting the superiority of self-oriented perspective shifting. Goldie argues that when I go to imagine the first person deliberative stance of another, I will have to consciously hold in mind all the things that I know are different between us – things I know about her from a theoretical or empirical stance. Aspects of her character, mood and other relevant quirks that operate in the background of her deliberations will need to be held front and center in my imaginative re-construction. Goldie describes this as “double-minded” thinking, and he believes it introduces a problematic distortion into my re-construction of the other’s perspective.

The distortion of B’s thinking in empathetic perspective-shifting can then be summarized as follows: A, in foregrounding B’s characterization in the process of empathetic perspective-shifting – as she will have to do where there are relevant character differences – will be foisting onto B (in A’s imagination) this kind of ‘double-minded’ thinking, both deliberative or practical and theoretical or empirical.\(^{271}\)

I take it Goldie’s idea is that I arrive at a distorted imaginative re-construction of the other by awkwardly combining an empirical inventory of all the ways she is different from me with a simulation of her deliberative perspective.

I will challenge two claims Goldie makes here, first that trying to account for our differences within an other-oriented imagining will lead to a distortion in what I imagine, and second that this does her perspective a problematic disservice. First, I don’t think holding in mind how different we are leads me to imagine her as performing such ‘double-minded’ thinking. The ‘double-minded’ thinking I perform is rather a recognition on my part of the mental preparation needed to make my imaginative recreation of her view possible. Holding in mind all the things that are different about her, I try to

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\(^{271}\) Goldie (2011), 310.
imagine someone for whom such things are working in the background. This is difficult, and I may not
be very successful at it, but I am not trying to imagine her as carrying out double-minded thinking. I
am double-minded, while imagining someone who isn’t. In other words, I think the self-other
differentiation saves this from being a distortion of the other’s perspective.

Secondly, it is not clear to me that making a (possibly bumbling) attempt at re-creating the
other’s perspective does a disservice to her view. Basically, Goldie is arguing that no attempt to
understand what it is like to be her from the inside is better than a distorted or imperfect one. However,
his reasons for thinking one option is worse than the other are not made clear beyond his use of the
term ‘distorts’. One important reason to question the way he values these options is that if we follow
his suggestion, the only practical or deliberative stance I would ever experience or try to understand
from the inside is my own. The appropriate way to consider everyone else would be as a set of facts
that play out in a series of causal relations, tracked third personally from my theoretical or empirical
stance. In a strange way, I would be alone, the only first person reasoner. I would reason about others,
but never imagine them reasoning about me, for I would modestly presume I could not adequately
imagine this kind of reasoning on their part and so refrain from doing so. As a result, it seems to me
that following Goldie’s suggestion would lead to a far more serious distortion in my thinking about
others.

Why think that this peculiar sort of isolation as the lone first personal reasoner I ever imagine
would introduce its own distortion into how I think of others? I find Heal’s articulation of the oddity of
such an attitude particularly telling. She writes:

It is often taken for granted in the discussions of philosophers and psychologists that the central
role of psychological concepts is to enable us to predict inner states in others so that we can, in
turn, predict and sometimes influence the behaviour those states bring about. But this is a
serious distortion. Our relations with other people do not have the same structure as our
relations with inanimate objects, plants or machines. We do not deal with our family members,
friends, colleagues or fellow citizens as we do with volcanoes, fields of wheat or kitchen
mixers, namely, by trying to figure out the nature and layout of their innards so that we can
predict and perhaps control them. … What we hope of another with whom we interact is not
that he or she will go through some gyrations which we have already planned in detail, but that he or she will make some contributions to moving forward the joint and co-operative enterprise in which we are both, more or less explicitly, engaged.\textsuperscript{272}

I think Heal gives us a more substantial reason to talk of ‘distortion’ than Goldie does. Heal points out that we don’t share joint projects with fields of wheat or kitchen mixers. We may carry out projects about them, or upon them – we study, harvest, fix and use them – but they do not join us in these projects as fellow participants with perspectives of their own. To limit ourselves to thinking of others in the same way we do wheat fields and mixers would be a serious distortion because it misses the structural difference to the way we relate to people that having their own first person perspectives makes. I think this stands as a general point well made by Heal and Coplan, but it has a more specific application in the case of claims made in the plural first person. I have suggested that when we encounter disagreement about beauty, we need to imagine one another’s grounds for judgment ‘from the inside’ in an effort to reach agreement on aesthetic grounds, those given and tested in the plural first person. That gives other-oriented imagining a crucial role in our ability to test and revise judgments of beauty in the appropriate way, a role that cannot be replaced by Goldie’s suggested combination of strictly self-oriented imagining and theoretical corrections to account for differences after the fact.

Before we abandon other-oriented imagining as problematic, and the bulk of our ability to navigate critical communication and disputes about beauty along with it, we would need to hear quite a clear and compelling reason to do so from Goldie. I don’t think he has given us a good enough reason yet, and the aesthetic case shows the way in which the stakes might be higher for accepting his argument than he has considered.

I quote Heal at length above because this passage clearly captures a worry I have about the attitude towards others that is often taken for granted in philosophical work on both imagination and the epistemological significance of disagreement. When we ask ourselves what the rational thing to

\textsuperscript{272} Heal (2003), 43.
believe is in response to disagreement, we can be tempted to write out a script that settles any uncertainty about what to make of the other’s beliefs, much like she is providing input into a simulation or epistemic-revision machine. But other people are not merely sources of evidence to be computed by my first personal epistemic agency. They are themselves first personal epistemic agents. Empathizing, in terms of imaginatively re-creating another’s first-person perspective from the inside, allows us to recognize this as part of our rational response to another. Coplan makes a similar point to this, jumping off from Gilbert Ryle’s observation that in Western thought, “the mind is its own place and in his inner life each of us lives the life of a ghostly Robinson Crusoe.” She continues, “by providing us with an experiential understanding of other people, however imperfect, empathy promises to rescue us from the island of such a ghostly experience.”273 However, taking others seriously as first personal epistemic agents, not just bits of evidence for our own use, has implications for what disagreement will mean for us. In the next chapter I will emphasize that imaginatively re-creating another’s perspective opens up our idea of a rational response to include an explorative uncertainty about where our joint enterprise will take us, no matter how confident we are in the beliefs that motivate us to care about correcting each other.

According to the argument I gave at the start of the chapter, restricting ourselves to self-oriented perspective shifting as Goldie suggests would also keep us from trying to understand the claims and directions given by art critics and those who disagree with us about beauty. Isenberg’s point is that we could try to give a causal (psychological or physiological) explanation of why aesthetic objects lead to the responses they do, but this is not the kind of task a critic means to undertake. He aims at getting us to re-experience the object in a certain way for ourselves. It might help me to see or hear what he is talking about to bear in mind at the outset any relevant differences between us, but I would argue that this is preparation for the imaginative task ahead, not strictly speaking a part of it. If I become overly

perfectionist in bearing these theoretical-empirical matters in mind, I may distract myself from the kind of first personal attention to the object that both of us are concerned with (much like we can be thrown out of an aesthetic experience by having read a particularly memorable review beforehand). How to strike an effective balance between preparation for and immersion within imagining another is not an exact science, but we can see that thinking too much about our preparations while in the midst of taking a swing at it could be counterproductive, just as it can be in learning how to swing a baseball bat. Getting better at this may not be a matter of carefully calibrating and consciously controlling the imagining as it occurs, but preparing as best we can, and then diving into an immersed attempt.

7.3 Further Problems from Goldie: Other-Oriented Imagining as Usurping Rational Agency

In the above argument, I criticized Goldie for suggesting it would be better not to try to imagine what the motivating force of another’s pleasure or reasons are like for her, as this would effectively isolate me as the only first person reasoner or aesthetic judge I ever try to understand from the inside. But what is it like to imagine the force of a reason or pleasure for her? We might think there is a problem here, which is that I can only access my own feeling for rational connections and aesthetic pleasures. I could try to bring this feeling for what ‘fits’ into imagining the other person’s perspective, but wouldn’t I be returning to self-oriented imagining, then, at least with respect to the imagined thrust of a reason or pleasure? In other words, perhaps there is something inherently mine about feeling the force of reasons and pleasures such that using this capacity in my imagining – as if it also belonged to her – would be an inaccurate imagining at best, and at worst doing her some kind of disservice.

Goldie argues along the second line, suggesting that we not only face practical limitations in our ability to carry out other-oriented imagining, but that doing so carries the deeper, conceptual problem of attempting to usurp the other’s rational agency. Goldie offers two examples of other-oriented imagining that would be problematic for conceptual, not just practical, reasons. One of them is trying to
re-create imaginatively the perspective of someone who is confused about what she is feeling, and must settle the matter by a process of internal reflection and decision. Another is re-creating the perspective of someone facing a major life decision that requires weighing different factors and considerations for herself. I take it that in both cases Goldie thinks there is something to get right about oneself in settling these matters, or to get right about another in trying to imagine her decision. This is a basic requirement both Heal and Goldie recognize for the ability of our imagining to predict how the thoughts or actions of another will develop. There must be rational or intelligible linkages within the content that we co-cognize in order to direct us towards the thoughts or actions another would arrive at in thinking about the same thing. Nevertheless, Goldie thinks that in the two cases described we each have a special, first personal responsibility for shaping the thing we are trying to get right (how we feel, the decision to be made) that cannot be taken over by another in her imagining. As he puts it, in these cases the self-interpreting deliberative stance [at issue] is essentially first-personal: one has an authority here which others cannot usurp, because each of us is uniquely able to take the deliberative stance towards our own mind – and also because each of us uniquely has an insight into our own confusion.

The idea is that even if I could perfectly re-create your perspective, it would still be problematic for me to try to imagine settling the matter of what you are feeling, or to imagine making the life decision that faces you. According to Goldie, if I try to imagine myself as the other person making that decision, and simulate arriving at some kind of conclusion, I would be ‘usurping’ the authority of the other’s self-interpreting deliberative stance.

While this is a fascinating claim, I will argue against it as well. It is important for me to try to articulate what has gone wrong here because, in a way, Goldie has called into question the very idea of the plural first person, at least in relation to these cases of immersive other-oriented imagining. What is it about attempting to evaluate the other’s perspective ‘from the inside’ in these cases that leads to the

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274 Again, we should remember that Heal (2003) qualifies how strictly rational these linkages must be: “Phrases like ‘such that some intelligible sense or point can be seen in it’ or ‘such that some justificatory account of it can be given’ might serve better to summarize the simulationist’s notion.” (79)

charge of usurping her agency? It is important to repeat that Goldie is not here commenting on the practical difficulty of accurately imagining such a unique perspective, but a conceptual problem with assuming that “all thoughts, feelings, decisions, and choices can be ’processed’ by any agent, impersonally, just so long as that agent is minimally rational.” Goldie believes that even if I could pull off imagining what it is like for the other to face this specific confusion, it would still be problematic to take the further step of imaginatively predicting (or evaluating) the way she settles it. Perhaps I can simulate her perspective as a matter of descriptive fact, but I cannot simulate the first personal process of making the decision. That is hers alone.

As far as I understand it, if there is a problem of usurping agency in these cases, it would not be exclusively introduced by immersive other-oriented imagining, but would also occur if I tried to work out how she should settle her feeling some other way. The problem isn’t how I’m trying to understand and evaluate her decision, but the presumption that I could try to understand and evaluate it at all. The idea seems to be that in such cases it would be wrong-headed to try to give advice, or critical feedback, upon the other’s exercise of agency. However, this suggests to me that, whatever kind of agency this is, it is a bit odd to call it rational agency.

As we have seen earlier in relation to Burge’s transpersonal function of reason, it is central to having a reason-to believe that one’s process of rational deliberation is taken to be relevant to the reasoning of others in giving corrections (and taking them in turn). Reason is impersonal in the sense that I take the first personal capacity to be moved by reasons to be something we share in common; it is ours, not just mine (hence my expectation I should be able to correct your reasoning if it goes astray). However, this kind of impersonality is compatible with being exercised within a mental and emotional environment that is highly personal, nuanced, and complex. I can reason about things it would be very difficult for another to re-create exactly, since they have to do with my particular life. But if I claim to

be using reason, it means I speak in the plural first person – this is what anyone ought to decide, if she too were in this highly specific situation. This builds an openness to critical evaluation by others right into our rational agency. If that openness to evaluation is not present, at least in principle, it isn’t clear to me why we would continue calling it a rational process of deliberation or decision. For this reason, I find the idea that there is a kind of rational agency that is inherently personal quite odd – particularly if this is not due to the practical difficulty of re-creating the other’s perspective in enough intimacy and detail to get a good bead on what it is one is trying to evaluate. I am ready to accept that kind of problem as a daunting matter for other-oriented imagining, but it gives us no reason to think we are problematically usurping the other’s agency just by giving it a try.

I have been talking about ‘rational agency’ in quite a general way here, and it is good to remember that rationality or intelligibility is not a monolithic capacity that gets deployed in the same way for every kind of subject matter. Different kinds of judgment require different ways of recognizing what is relevant, testing claims, and reaching agreement. For example, in the previous chapter, I offered Cavell’s idea that it is central to making intelligible aesthetic claims (including beauty) that at some point we are prepared to ask and answer the question ‘Don’t you hear? Don’t you see? Don’t you dig?’ We may not want to call this process of appealing to first person aesthetic experience ‘rational’ in a strict sense, but it is part of an established practice or pattern of justification by which we open aesthetic claims to the evaluation of others. Perhaps there could be a similarly intelligible (if not

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277 I am reminded here of Nagel’s claim in The Last Word that no matter how many contingent and personal idiosyncracies we recognize about ourselves, we can always ask again what anyone ought to do in our place, given our specific features and situation. He describes reason as “[t]he unquenchable persistence of the conviction that it is up to me to decide, all things considered, what I should do … the permanent capacity we have to contemplate all the personal, contingent features of our motivational circumstances and ask, once again, ‘what should I do?’” (117)

278 Here is the passage where Cavell (1969) gives this description of the pattern of justification required by aesthetic claims, in response to a critic who considers our efforts to bring others to see and hear as we do a matter of ‘psychology,’ not ‘logic’: “Those of us who keep finding ourselves wanting to call such differences ‘logical’ are, I think, responding to a sense of necessity we feel in them, together with a sense that necessity is, partly, a matter of the ways a judgment is supported, the ways in which conviction in it is produced: it is only by virtue of these recurrent patterns of support that a remark will count as – will be – aesthetic, or a mere matter of taste, or moral, propagandistic, religious, magical, scientific, philosophical…. It is essential to making an aesthetic judgment that at some point we be prepared to say in its support: don’t you see, don’t you hear, don’t you dig? … I do not know what the gains or disadvantages would be of unfastening the term ‘logic’ from that constant pattern of support or justification whose peculiarity is that it leads those competent at it to this
rational) link between a confused feeling and the self-interpretation that clarifies it. What is interesting about Goldie’s presentation of this case is the idea that this intelligibility can only be assessed by the first person perspective giving the self-interpretation. Perhaps I could imagine the link between your feeling and the self-interpretation you give to it once the process is over. But I take it I couldn’t question the intelligibility of that link, or try to understand it as something that makes sense or not, for this would creep into the territory of usurping the special first personal authority you have over this interpretive matter.

This is, indeed, an interesting thought. However, roping off the intelligibility of a certain linkage so that only one perspective can assess it naturally invites wondering if this is really an intelligible matter at all. As loose and various as our use of ‘intelligible’ can be for different areas of interest (covering both reasoning and guiding aesthetic perception, say) it seems to mark a basic distinction between things that can only be described, and things that can also be understood or made sense of. Goldie seems to be suggesting that there are some acts of self-interpretation that only the first person perspective making them can ‘get’ or find intelligible, and others must merely look in from the outside, unable to comment upon that intelligibility.

I suspect that what is really important for the first personal authority at stake in these cases is that the interpretations given or the decisions made must be based upon each person’s own sense of the feeling he is confused about, or the factors to be weighed in the decision. As we have seen in the aesthetic case, this does not necessarily mean that others are barred from weighing in on the intelligibility of the interpretation or decision, including imagining how it should be made and offering guidance. It only means that the relevance of the assessments of others must always go through the first personal experience of the deliberator in question. Only he can give the self-interpretation that will clear away his confusion and settle what this feeling is, but another could help him to do this with kind of agreement, and extending it to patterns of justification having other purposes and peculiarities. All I am arguing for is that pattern and agreement are distinctive features of the notion of logic.” (93-94)
greater insight and clarity, in much the same way as a critic can bring another to see or hear an artwork with greater depth and intelligence. The aim of the critic is not to usurp the audience’s aesthetic judgments by dictating to them what should be seen, heard, or believed, for that kind of dictation won’t lead to an aesthetically grounded judgment. The case of interpreting a confused feeling could work the same way. When I try to imagine this feeling and what kind of intelligible interpretation can be given of it, I don’t seek to usurp the agency of the person I imagine, but bring to light something he could see more clearly about this feeling for himself.

This holds for the plural first person of deliberative reasoning as well. If the aim is to correct another’s process of reasoning, it won’t do for her to accept that she is mistaken on the critic’s say-so, without understanding for herself where she has gone wrong. The correction, when she makes it, is a recognition of how things ought to have gone by her own rational lights. There can be guidance, instruction, and correction here, but not, I think, an usurping of agency. The other’s agency is rather always presupposed in the mutual attempts we make to bring about revision on the basis of intelligible grounds, whether they are aesthetic, self-interpretive, or rational.

In summary, I think we have two options for how to understand the cases Goldie presents, and neither one suggests a problem of usurping the other’s agency. First, the cases Goldie describes could involve some kind of intelligible judgment that is open to re-construction and evaluation by others. In that case, it may be difficult to re-create the other’s perspective accurately in order to give her good advice, but the attempt to do so aims at guiding her own exercise of agency, not usurping it. Second, these cases could describe a kind of personal, private process of decision making that we do not expect others to be able to evaluate. If that is the case, I am in no danger of usurping her rational agency because I don’t think there is a rational, or intelligible, process of deliberation for me to usurp. I could still try to accurately imagine her psychological experience in order to understand what she is going through as a matter of fact, but this re-creation would not engage my powers of assessment, or critique.
7.4 A Complication: How Do I Imagine Someone Who is Both Rational and Mistaken?

In the previous section I resisted one problem Goldie seeks to raise against other-oriented imagining, namely the possibility of usurping the other’s rational agency. However, there is a second related concern that the first personal nature of reason and aesthetic feeling could introduce further complications into our attempt to accurately re-create the perspectives of others. As we see in Goldie, there is a temptation to consider the deliberative force of reasons and the free play to be mine. For example, we might worry that I cannot really simulate being moved by a reason as another. No matter how sophisticated my imaginative re-creation of the other is, if I am carrying out an evaluation of a reason or a feeling of pleasure within my imaginative effort, I will have snuck in a crucial and critical part of myself. We might think this compromises the accuracy of my re-creation, and blurs the self-other differentiation successful empathy aims at. This is particularly tempting, I think, when disagreement is added into the mix. Clearly, my sense of the force that reasons and feelings have should not be imported into my imagining when we disagree, since the disagreement shows that we are different precisely in that respect, in this particular case.

This is the dilemma of imaginative perspective-shifting in response to disagreement: it is not enough to simply re-create what, I gather, it is like to be her in a way that remains normatively neutral. In Chapter 4 I proposed that this is all I can do with Foil Hat Guy: re-create his perspective as a psychological set of facts, but without the purpose of understanding his mistake and correcting it by appealing to reason. This is because the kind of mistake he is making is not open to that kind of correction (it may require help of a different kind, like mental counselling). If I am imagining as a way to carry out a normative assessment, simply re-creating the other’s view descriptively is not enough. And yet, if I am trying to understand the normative force of her reasons or feelings, my re-creation of
her deliberative stance is going to hide my own within it. Isn’t it? That, at least, is the question we need to ask.

I will argue that importing my own ability to reason and feel the free play does not necessarily blur the self-other differentiation needed for successful other-oriented imagining. First of all, when I import the ability to reason or feel the free play into an imaginative re-creation of another, I am importing something of myself – but as far as possible, I seek to make this a part of myself that voices a shared capacity, one I continue to attribute to her. Now, we do disagree about the result reasoning should bring us to in this case, but that does not transform the basic capacity I possess into something that is mine alone – if it did, I would lose my reason to be concerned about her disagreement.

I face a challenging imaginative situation in responding to disagreement because I do take the other to be reasonable, and this means that imagining her accurately requires taking her to reason as any reasoner ought to (assessed, though this may be, by my own lights). And yet I must also attribute to her a result that cannot be squared with reason. I am not going to figure out what has gone wrong with her by assuming the disagreement means we no longer share the basic capacity to reason (it has suddenly become only mine) – this would throw me into an evaluatively neutral re-creation of psychological facts (like with Foil Hat Guy), which is unfair to her. I also am not going to figure it out if I imagine inaccurately by importing my own sense that the judgment she has come to is false. I am in the awkward and intriguing position of needing to imagine something, someone, who in this moment does not make sense to me.

Luckily, that is just what imagination is good for. As Gendler points out in her work on imaginative resistance, we can imagine things we find mistaken, bizarre, even conceptually impossible. To do this, “we imagine them in ways that disguise their conceptual impossibility. … It is as the result of lots of local bits of conceptual coherence that the global incoherence is able to get a foothold.”279 For

this reason, we can imagine things like singing snowmen, holding together the idea of something made of snow and emitting musical sounds by letting what is incoherent about this escape our ‘imaginative eye’ so to speak. So long as there is something coherent to hold onto and ‘hide’ the incoherence, this is possible.  

I can imaginatively reconstruct the perspective of someone who disagrees with me, then, and seek new insights into how she understands things, by moving the focus of my imagining onto different parts of her view, seeing how much of it I can hold in coherence at once. Sometimes this will mean allowing her reasoning to grow fuzzy (because I cannot make it fit with her judgment), and at others it will be her judgment I lose focus on in order to bring some part of her reasoning into greater clarity. The point is, I will not be trying to imagine someone who has a different basic capacity to reason than myself – I take us to share this capacity so long as the transpersonal function of reason (or aesthetic feeling in the free play) continues to motivate my imaginative engagement. I am trying to imagine how a capacity we both share could fit together (or not) with her judgment.

When I first start imagining another’s framework or aesthetic experience, the relationship between parts will require the kind of imaginative cup-and-ball game Gendler describes, because at that moment her view is not convincing to me, I can’t make sense of it as really compelling. However, I am actively looking for potential changes to what can be found compelling through my imaginative engagement. I am doing my best to feel the experiential whole she describes in new ways, from new angles, with enough subtlety and richness that a light might come on that turns over all the cups and

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280 Ibid., 69: “one of the main points of pretense and make-believe and reading fiction and viewing art is to take on various ways of seeing things – ways that focus on certain elements of the situation, while ignoring others.” This would seem to imply that a degree of complexity is required in the things we imagine that don’t make sense, so that there are bits of coherence for our imaginative eye to move among. In an interesting footnote, Gendler offers a possible explanation for why we may not be able to imagine some things, such as that bad milk smells good. She writes that “In these cases, we may have too ‘direct’ a grasp on this feature of the subject matter to abstract away from it in imagination.” (79) This could present a problem for imagining that something I find beautiful is not beautiful, for I surely have quite a direct grasp on my feeling of pleasure. However, Kant’s formalism could help us find a reply to this, for if the free play must respond to something with form, some kind of arrangement of parts, my imaginative eye could focus on parts of the beautiful thing and not others, and so break the hold of the pleasure, at least in imagination. I could imagine that a rose is not beautiful by focusing only on some of its features, for example, and letting others fade, as I can imagine a singing snowman by blurring out the properties of snow that would make this impossible.
shows her experience to me fully, as it is for her. Then I might see something that transcends imagination and becomes part of what I actually experience in the object (or I might discover how to help the person who disagrees with me turn all of her cups over at once and see the truth of what I claim). What kind of a challenge is already present in acknowledging rational pressure to look for a challenge? Notably, I think it is a challenge that is felt in moving forward with confidence rather than hanging back in scepticism, a willingness to see a risk and take it, fully, rather than trying to avoid the possibility of being humbled by recognizing a mistake later on.281

When we ask ourselves, ‘How much of myself should I use in imagining the other?’ I believe the right answer is to use however much I think she shares with me, whatever would help to build a more thorough and accurate reconstruction of her perspective. So long as I do not lose track of the twofold attention that indicates I am imagining someone else, this will not blur the self-other differentiation I need to maintain. I have argued this answer also applies to the evaluative capacities of reason and aesthetic common sense. While it may look like extra complications arise when I import the main engines of my own aesthetic or deliberative stance, in doing so I am not importing capacities that are problematically mine and not hers. The belief I come to by exercising these capacities in a particular case may not be shared when she disagrees, but I have not imported my assessment of her result into my imagining of her (I will try to imagine that her belief is right). Imagination allows me to do something that does not make sense, which is attribute to her the same basic capacity to reason or

281 This discussion is indebted to the work and conversation of Gurpreet Rattan, particularly the idea that responding to disagreement may require an active mental state, rather than a passive one (such as a state of revised confidence), and that this active state oscillates between trying to grasp what is compelling for the other about her view, and assessing it by our own rational lights. As Rattan (2014) puts it, reflective disagreement presents us with “jointly unsatisfiable epistemic norms that require one (1) to think as clearly as one is able about the subject matter of disagreement, and (2) to understand fully the challenge that the attitudes and epistemic evaluations of the other party to the disagreement pose for one.” (44) He argues that insofar as I swing towards (1), I will take the other to be irrational, and really in disagreement with me (since thinking clearly about the subject matter will lead me to think she is mistaken). Whereas when I swing towards (2), I will suspect an equivocation is occurring somewhere that could make it possible for her to be both rational and compelled by her view. In that case, however, we would not really be disagreeing over claims we understand to mean the same thing. I cannot do full justice to his argument here. The main divergence between Rattan’s view and mine is that rather than focusing on a suspicion of equivocation, I have located the oscillation mentioned within an imaginative effort to re-create the other’s view. In order to accurately imagine her perspective, I must try to bring together someone who is rational (or rather, who shares the capacities that ground judging beauty), and someone who holds a view I don’t take those grounds to support.
judge beauty that I am using, and to attribute a belief I don’t think that capacity supports. This is an imaginative puzzle, one that does involve an imaginative smearing to get from clearly grasping her process of reasoning to this particular (mistaken) result. But it does not involve blurring the line between myself as the one who imagines and her as the target of my re-construction.

In this chapter I set out to explain the kind of imaginative activity I think is called for in responding to disagreement about beauty. I first needed to establish that imagining the other person’s aesthetic experience would play an important role in responding to disagreement, and I did this by drawing upon Isenberg’s account of critical communication. He argues that critics aim at describing and achieving communication about particular qualities of an artwork that is first personally experienced by both the audience and critic. The critic’s aim is to guide the audience’s perception in ways that will transform or illuminate their aesthetic experience. I argued that when we disagree with the person who is attempting to direct our aesthetic apprehension by describing the object, to follow her meaning properly we need to go beyond our own first personal acquaintance with its properties (an experience that might not show us the features that she means, or the way she wants to direct our attention upon them). An imaginative exercise is needed, where we try to see or hear the object according to the first personal experience she is describing to us.

With the role of imaginatively considering the other’s experience in place, I then drew upon Coplan and Goldie’s work on empathy to clarify that other-oriented perspective shifting is the kind of imaginative work I think is needed. However, Goldie raises the objection that other-oriented perspective shifting may distort our imagining of others and also usurp their rational agency in a problematic way. I thought it was important to address these concerns, as they could raise conceptual reservations about the very idea of a plural first person perspective. However, I argued that rather than usurping the rational agency of others, imaginatively re-constructing the other’s experience from the inside with the purpose of critique actually presupposes that we continue to share the plural first
personal capacities of rational deliberation and aesthetic judgment. While my imagining of someone who disagrees contains a tension between attributing to her the same capacity for reason or judgment by which I find her to be mistaken and the belief she takes to be true, we can imagine things that contain incoherencies. The fact that I am *imagining* her perspective allows me to examine and seek to understand it while keeping both her capacity as a reasoner and her judgment intact. Rather than doing her a disservice, I argued along with Heal and Coplan that this kind of other-oriented imagining is a crucial part of relating to others as fellow first person perspectives, not simply things to be explained in causal or functional terms. If we ruled out the kind of imagining I think is important for making and testing claims within the plural first person we would be heading towards a troubling distortion of the way we form a first personal ‘we’ with those to whom we direct normative claims about reason and beauty. In the next chapter, I will consider what kind of epistemic significance attaches to our efforts to imagine one another’s aesthetic experiences in response to disagreement over plural first personal claims.
In previous chapters, I have argued that beliefs about beauty cannot be based on testimony or lost in response to disagreement because such sources of evidence cannot directly transform first personal aesthetic experience. This is important, because we are looking for agreement grounded upon first personal aesthetic experience when we dispute claims about beauty. This means that disagreement about beauty does not have one kind of epistemic significance, namely the kind that requires revision on the basis of third personal considerations, such as track records. In this respect, my view lines up with that of Enoch and Hopkins who argue in different ways that there are circumstances within which I do not have to reduce confidence in my judgment significantly despite the fact that another equally well-placed judge disagrees.

Hopkins (2011) comes at this issue by defending pessimism about aesthetic testimony. On this view, there is some kind of barrier that prevents us from gaining knowledge of aesthetic matters through testimony, either because aesthetic testimony fails to offer knowledge in the usual way, or because something about our interest in aesthetic judgments bars us from using the knowledge that testimony does offer. Hopkins calls the first ‘Unavailability Pessimism’ and the second ‘Unusability Pessimism’. He defends the second in part because of its ability to explain why we do think aesthetic testimony is worth something in certain contexts (such as when a friend recommends a movie I haven’t seen). In contrast, an optimist about aesthetic testimony would hold that there is no special problem attached to aesthetic testimony, and we can ground beliefs about an object’s aesthetic merit upon the testimony of reliable judges just as we can, say, for its colour or location.

Let’s look at a longer version of a quote I gave earlier, where Hopkins describes a pessimist’s view on how much weight I should give to another’s testimony once I have experienced an aesthetic object for myself:
Consider a case in which seeing the film leaves me uncertain what to think. My own experience fails to settle the matter. Can I then continue to appeal to my friend’s recommendation, in forming my view? The pessimist will say not, and I am strongly inclined to agree with her. For all that the recommendation rightly had weight with me before, I must now discount it altogether. Optimism is at a loss to explain why my friend’s testimony should have lost all significance in this way.\(^2\) Hopkins’ wording here is quite strong.\(^3\) I must discount the other’s view altogether, her judgment has lost all significance for my own epistemic task. This is too extreme to ring true for me, as much as I agree with the pessimist’s claim that judgments of beauty cannot be changed directly by noting another’s testimony once I have had my own experience (a scenario that will often overlap with disagreement). But what kind of significance could the other’s view continue to have, if it plays no part in helping to ground my judgment, or revise my confidence? In this chapter I will argue that disagreement continues to have epistemic significance as a call upon me to engage further with the other’s experience and judgment. The motivation for this further engagement is the confidence I have in my own judgment and my sense that the other ought to share it. Nevertheless, I will also discuss the standing possibility that trying to understand the other’s perspective imaginatively will lead to new insights or growth within my own aesthetic experience and a revision to my judgment.

It might look like I aim to defend a steadfast response while giving up the fruits of that view. After all, the upshot of remaining within the first person perspective is that I believe the mistake explaining our disagreement is the other person’s problem (recognizing the asymmetry between the truth (as I believe) and the other’s mere belief). This is what made rejecting the conciliatory view of disagreement appealing: we don’t have to be conciliatory! We don’t have to revise confidence, we can continue on just as we were. While I will defend the first part, the idea that we can carry on just as we were ignores the full picture of speaking with a universal voice. If we look closer at the idea of the plural first person, we see that in this case being able to stick to our guns inherently draws us beyond

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\(^3\) Although we should bear in mind that on the Unusability Pessimism Hopkins espouses, testimony is still epistemically significant once I have had my own experience, I am just barred from using it to form my own belief due to a nonepistemic norm governing aesthetic belief-formation.
ourselves to a concern with each other’s experience, rather than isolating each of us in a stubborn insistence on being right.

I have built a foundation in the preceding chapters for us to see that judgments of beauty made in the plural first person are bound up with a joint concern for what we ought to believe about the object before us. What I mean by ‘joint concern’ is that my aim in the enterprise of forming this kind of belief is not just to arrive at my own correct judgment, but our correct judgment. This is the way the feeling of the free play occurs to me, as something intimately mine but a ‘mine’ that ought to belong to every judge who can respond to the world with a free play of imagination and understanding. The feeling of the free play tells me that I and other judges ought to be a ‘we’ at the level of this special kind of felt pleasure (in the free play). When this fails to happen, and we disagree about whether or not it should, we exist in a peculiar kind of tension.

At the level of the judgments we are expressing first personally, we are still in community with one another, my feeling of pleasure still expects or looks to other judges as those who ought to be together with me in it. Empirical disagreement does not change this, and in fact, the interest and force disagreement has for us comes from our continuing sense that we ought to be in community. However, the judgments we hear one another report, third personally, tell us we are not in fact a ‘we’ in this case. The plural first person perspective we take ourselves to speak for is in a state of tension similar to a Moorean paradox, “I believe that p, but not p.” In this case, “I believe that p” could be replaced by my expression of belief “p” (“X is beautiful”) given in the plural first person, and “but not p” could be replaced by the reported judgment of another who is also speaking for that plural first personal perspective. As Heal notes about Moore’s paradox, this is not simply a matter of noticing that I have conflicting beliefs. I am not just observing about myself that I believe “I am speaking for us” and also “I am not speaking for us”. There is a more interesting kind of tension here between the first and third person perspective that sustains the sense of paradox. It is a tension between expressing a belief as the
culmination of first personal aesthetic experience (the equivalent of first personal deliberation on some matter, ‘Ah, I see it – beautiful!’) and attributing belief through some third personal means of observation or report. In this case, I third personally observe the belief of another, but since I have expressed a judgment in the plural first person, this observation is still relevant as a description of the perspective I am speaking for. Jointly, we are in a kind of Moore’s paradox. Something has to give or grow to resolve this tension, whether it is my judgment of the object, or of the other person as a competent judge in this case, or that her judgment is really in disagreement with mine. Whatever it is, we are in a state of (at least mild) rational tension so long as it persists.

This problem is at the heart of the disagreement debate, and the standard approach taken there is that I will resolve the tension as a lone epistemic agent by re-jigging the confidence I have in my various beliefs. Throughout this project, I have argued that this re-jigging should not require reducing confidence in our judgment at the outset when the disagreement is about beauty. We might think that the likely belief to revise, in that case, is my assessment of the other person and indeed, I think Kant is often understood to be giving us permission to be quite dismissive of those who disagree. For example, Nehamas is critical of both Kant and Mothersill for holding that others must be in error when they disagree with us about beauty, in part because of the way it frames those who disagree as defective. Carl Wilson takes up this impression of Kant and repeats it in popular writing when he talks of the need

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284 I would like to note again that this point is indebted to Gurpreet Rattan’s work. Rattan (2014) suggests the tension we find in peer disagreement comes from oscillating between thinking we are genuinely in disagreement and suspecting that an equivocation is responsible for the appearance of conflict.

285 Mothersill (1984), 165: “From my upstairs window I see a panorama of potato fields and farm houses and in the distance a bit of Mecox Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. The winter landscape is very different from the spring or summer, but at all seasons I find this panorama beautiful. In my apartment building in the city there is a woman I would judge to be in her seventies with whom I have discussed the weather once or twice a week for fifteen years. She is so marvelous looking that although I have neither talent nor training, I try from time to time to sketch her face from memory … I have strong convictions about my potato fields and my old lady; someone who found nothing remarkable in either would strike me as slightly defective – as if something blocked his perception or impaired his sensibility.” (my emphasis) Nehamas (2007) quotes the last part of this passage from Mothersill in support of the idea that “The price for thinking that aesthetics speaks with a universal voice is in any case too high.” (79) After sketching a few scenarios that would indicate another is defective (such as failing to notice the difference between dreaming and being awake), he adds “But I can’t begin to imagine what it would be like to consider that everyone who disputes my judgment of Proust, Oz, or Manet is at least slightly defective.” (80) I quote the full passage from Mothersill because I think it makes a difference to have in mind the kind of experience she is talking about when we go to assess her claim (and Kant’s).
for music lovers and critics to steer away from “the Kantian mechanism that causes us, when we find something beautiful, to want everyone else to agree, and to consider them defective (satisfyingly, Bourdieu might add) if they don’t.” However, in this chapter I’m going to steer our understanding of Kant’s account in a different direction. Rather than taking our ability to base judgments of beauty on our own feeling as allowing us to be dismissive of others, I’m going to suggest that it builds an inherent orientation towards others into our judgment due to the plural first person perspective it speaks for.

Here is Beatrice Longuenesesse describing what I have just called an orientation towards others:

This sense of a universal communicability (capacity to be shared) of a pleasurable state of mutual enhancement of imagination and understanding is the source of the second-order pleasure that results in the aesthetic judgment: ‘this is beautiful.’ This is why the pleasure includes the peculiar kind of longing (the demand we make upon others, to share in the pleasure we experience and to agree with the judgment we ground on that pleasure, ‘this is beautiful!’) that is characteristic of aesthetic experience.

It seems particularly apt to me to describe the demand we make upon others to agree with us about beauty as a peculiar kind of longing. Perhaps it is because in this case (unlike the plural first person we employ in reasoning) we are demanding a community of feeling; a community that we first come to look for through a feeling and that will be realized in feeling when it is found. I don’t just believe that we ought to be together in admiring the night sky, I feel that we ought to be. As we have remarked before, this is an unusual role for feeling to play, acting as a kind of evaluative faculty and source of judgment itself, rather than having evaluations and judgments made about or upon it (Kant would call the latter cognitive, or logical judgments, rather than aesthetic). However, it lies at the heart of Kant’s account as I have understood it, and I believe it makes it odd to think of responding to those who disagree dismissively. While it is true that their disagreement does not undercut my feeling they ought to agree, I am still feeling that feeling. I still long for them to share the feeling of pleasure that itself indicates they ought to do so. My concern as a judge of beauty is not simply to arrive at correct judgments by myself, for my correct judgments are what keep me looking expectantly at others for

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287 Longuenesse (2006), 278.
their agreement, and feeling the fracture, the rational tension of disagreement, if they do not. Rather than resolving the rational tension between beliefs by dismissing the other, another option is to try to resolve it together, as the ‘we’ that is presupposed in making our judgments. That is, it could be rational to live with the tension, so long as we acknowledge the prima facie pressure it exerts on us towards further communication, aesthetic experience, and imaginative efforts to understand those addressed by the ‘plural’ in our plural first personal judgments (even if that pressure can be overridden by other demands on our time and efforts).

In this chapter, I will offer Carl Wilson’s fascinating effort to understand the taste of Céline Dion fans as a concrete example to help us think further about two main claims I wish to make.

1) Disagreement about beauty continues to have epistemic significance due to the way that the plural first person perspective prompts us to try to understand the perspectives of others better in order to show them the beauty or lack thereof they are missing.

2) Seeking to understand imaginatively the perspectives of others opens the possibility that our own aesthetic experience and judgment could grow and change in unexpected ways.

I will argue that this epistemic vulnerability should not be taken as a threat to our confidence in the judgment that is at stake, but rather an integral aspect of making a judgment of this kind. Because judgments of beauty are made in the plural first person, they always open us to re-experiencing aesthetic objects through the eyes of those who both agree and disagree, as we take ourselves to be looking at the beautiful thing not just with our own eyes, our own pleasure, but with the eyes and pleasure of an aesthetic judge as such. To shut out the way that other people are looking or listening would be to turn away from the kind of judgment we are making.

I say that this involves epistemic vulnerability because further experience carries an open-ended and indeterminate risk (or, put more positively, opportunity) for new revelations, disappointments, and revisions in what we believe. In a way, this vulnerability is just what it means to be a human subject who is constantly learning about her environment as she explores it. For instance, we will never be finished opening ourselves to the possibility of correction by reading more philosophy, studying the
natural world, and talking to others. However, disagreement about beauty focuses this general sort of epistemic vulnerability upon a particular judgment made, yet without giving us particular reason – from the first person – to think it is mistaken, or in what way. Rather than reducing confidence, we can acknowledge this vulnerability by welcoming the way the plural first person directs us out into the perspectives of others, imaginatively exploring the ‘we’ that both makes it possible to look for agreement, and could be empirically realized by finding it.

8.1 Imagining Another in Response to Disagreement: A Case Study

It would be helpful to have an example of imaginatively trying to enter another’s aesthetic experience in order to explore the epistemic significance such imaginative activity could have. Carl Wilson offers a particularly rich example in his short book describing a sustained effort to understand what Céline Dion fans find compelling about her music. He describes his efforts as “an experiment in taste, in stepping deliberately outside one’s own aesthetics”\(^\text{288}\). This is a good example for us because beauty is plausibly at issue here, even a natural beauty if we think about the tendency Wilson notes to admire Dion’s ‘pipes,’ “as if she were a conveyance system, a set of tubes to pump music through, more a feat of engineering than a person.”\(^\text{289}\) This example is also easily accessible. If one lived through 1997 when the film \textit{Titanic} came out and “My Heart Will Go On” was nearly inescapable, it’s a good bet putting the song on again will bring a smile or wince.

Wilson begins as someone inclined to agree with those who call Dion’s voice “just furniture polish”\(^\text{290}\) and charge her with “grinding out every note as if bearing some kind of grudge against the

\(^\text{289}\) Ibid., 64.
\(^\text{290}\) Indeed, this description might ring true for those who feel Dion’s music falls more aptly under the category of ‘agreeable’ pleasures rather than beauty, on Kant’s account. However, a disagreement about which kind of pleasure we should take Dion’s music to give is itself a disagreement about the music’s beauty, so long as one party does sincerely judge the work to be beautiful. Although no doubt there are many who would be happy to take Dion’s albums as little more than
very notion of economy.” He comes at the puzzle of understanding those who disagree from many angles, trying carefully to construct an experience of her music that could illuminate the pleasure her fans describe. He sets the stage for his imaginative efforts by paying attention to the cultural and socio-economic context of Dion’s emergence in Quebec, and digging into the musical lineage of ‘schmaltz’ that connects her work to “a long line of ethnic ‘outsiders’ who expressed emotions too outsized for most white American performers but in non-African-American codes.” He conducts interviews with fans, goes to her live show in Las Vegas, and painfully breaks down the shame he feels blasting her music through thin apartment walls.

Let’s take a detailed look at one of Wilson’s imaginative efforts. Here he has targeted a particular aspect of his aesthetic experience: the impression that Dion brings no sense of her own personality to her music.

I have been trying to imagine why, to some listeners, to Céline herself, this might be a good thing. Why, like a gambler addicted to losing, Céline seems so eerily eager to disperse herself into her music, squandering more than the surplus until nothing remains but special effects: all that is solid melts into schmaltz. …

Céline’s main form, the power ballad, was the 1970s arena-rock invention that did most to recover the schmaltz impulse after its 1960s exile from pop’s main street. … when she sings a ballad she is alone with the hulking presence of her voice, even as the lyrics refer constantly back to themes of interpersonal connection and love. The dynamic is perfectly tailored for a teen avoiding homework with her face in the pillow, headphones on. … [Céline] musically incarnates the woman who takes care of everybody but herself. … If she sings without personality it is because it would be selfish for her to come not so much between listener and song but between the listener and her own voice.

… This ego vacuum makes her seem phony to her detractors … but perhaps it seems more honest to her devotees … The authenticity is in the gift, not the giver. Perhaps the receiver feels honoured by this, a bit more solid herself.

Yet this makes for an unusual absence of musical tension. As her songs rocket to their predestined apexes, she does not resist, she goes along for the ride, leaning on the accelerator and seldom the brake, emphasizing intensity not difference. It reminds me of nothing so much as current ‘underground’ metal … maybe Céline Dion is metal on estrogen.

pleasant elevator music, I am going to proceed on the assumption that many fans do sincerely find it beautiful in the same way they would admire a waterfall or a rose.

292 Ibid., 58.
293 Ibid., 66-68.
In this passage we see the cup-and-ball game of imagination I used earlier to describe Gendler’s account of our ability to imagine things that don’t make sense. Wilson starts off his imagined aesthetic experience with the pieces of the puzzle he is familiar with: a powerful voice dispersed in the song like a musical special effect, the context of schmaltz and the power ballad. He then tries to bring them together in a way that would be moving. He puts his headphones on, buries his head in a pillow and tries to hear something compelling in the juxtaposition of a solo singer who is belting out themes of connection, and to find a maternal sacrifice in the selfless intensity of Céline’s voice. But this requires leaving a lack of musical tension in the background, under one of his imagination’s other cups. If he brings that into focus he needs something else – a parallel with underground metal – to get back in the swing of something that could move him. Can he bring them together and lift both cups at once? He tries: “Céline Dion is metal on estrogen.”

Does he succeed? This particular imaginative effort does not appear to change how Wilson really feels about Dion. A few pages later we find him confessing, “By this halfway mark in my experiment, for all the sense I’ve been able to make of Céline, why am I still bored?” I think it is noteworthy that he acknowledges his persisting judgment as a question. It addresses the fact that when we don’t succeed in understanding the other by imagining her view we still face rational pressure to keep trying. Wilson’s experiment is woven together with a crisis of faith in the role of the critic, questioning his ability (and even the appeal of being able) to give authoritative pronouncements on what is in good taste. This crisis is important, but for now I want to emphasize that there is something right, on my view, about presenting his continuing boredom as the opening for further investigative efforts, something left unfinished. That his boredom is still compelling keeps up the pressure to engage imaginatively with the perspectives of those who find it beautiful (a pressure that can be overridden by other concerns, as can Burge’s transpersonal function of reason). The crucial point for my view is that

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294 See Gendler (2000), 68-71. For my discussion, see Chapter 7, 176-177.
continued confidence in my original judgment is the motivation to keep trying to imagine the perspective of someone who disagrees. The fact there are always new arguments, experiences, and opponents to try to imaginatively unravel doesn’t change the nature of the judgments that introduce the pressure – however attenuated – to keep going.

That pressure could be relieved if we changed our minds about the kind of judgment that is at stake. For example, if Wilson came to see his boredom as little more than a personal tick (and he does wonder if this is the case sometimes) he would no longer need to imagine the fan’s perspective as part of a serious attempt to bring her to see something she ought to. He could still pursue the imaginative exercise for fun, but he wouldn’t face rational pressure to do so unless the judgment that the music is boring includes a plural first personal concern with sharing the relevant feeling. However, if I am right that Wilson is starting off with a plural first personal claim about Dion’s music (how I feel in this instance is how everyone ought to feel), then his imaginative efforts are motivated by more than mere curiosity. In this case, imagining the other’s perspective takes on the role of considering the merit of another’s reasons in an argumentative dispute. Both involve evaluating the first personal force of something – a reason or an imagined experience – with the potential for revision of a belief or judgment at stake.

It is important to emphasize that on my view, when we undertake this task, we expect that it is the other person’s belief that stands in need of revision, for each of us is still compelled by the truth of our own judgment as we listen to the quavering wail of “My Heart Will Go On.” Since I pursue an empirical realization of the plural first person from within my own first person perspective, I will start off continuing to be compelled by the truth of my judgment, and looking for a way to show the other what she may be missing. However, a crucial part of this task will be seeking to understand her experience better so that I can more effectively try to guide her aesthetic apprehension of the object, and this opens a two-way communicative effort between us. The very exercise that opens her
perspective to my correction (imaginatively seeking to understand it) will open me up to her in turn. She too is seeking to help me more accurately and perceptively imagine her aesthetic experience, just with the opposite goal of showing me something I had not appreciated previously. There is an open-ended risk in imagining one another that the direction of new insight and guidance could turn in unexpected ways (from me to her, or from her to me). This is not a risk I can avoid, because it is opened by the very same imaginative exercise that will move forward my own efforts to revise her judgment, efforts that the confidence I have in my judgment prompts me to undertake.

For this reason, I think it would be out of place to respond to the potential for revision opened up by imaginative engagement by reducing confidence in my judgment at the outset of disagreement, as if it were possible to be confident about beauty without taking such a risk. Speaking for ‘us’ inherently engages me in imagining other perspectives and sets me on the path to learning more about the ‘us’ I speak for. When I make a confident judgment it is because I think there really is an ‘us’ to learn more about, an ‘us’ that I can and will be able to speak for through further development of my first person aesthetic experience.

It is important to be clear that according to the view I have taken, I am not initially motivated to imagine the other by a suspicion that I may be mistaken. A central claim of my account of disagreement is that seeking to understand the other better can come apart from fearing I have made a mistake on the basis of probabilistic reasoning from a dispute-independent standpoint. I can also be motivated to understand another better by my confidence, my sense that there is something here she ought to share with me. Another way to put this would be to say that fearing I have made a mistake is not the only way in which I can accept epistemic vulnerability, I may also accept that vulnerability in order to fully embrace the task of seeking agreement that is prompted by a plural first person claim.

I have said that imaginatively seeking to understand the other in order to bring her to agree with me involves an inherent vulnerability to unexpected revisions in my own experience and judgment.
Does Wilson give us an example of this kind of transformation of his actual aesthetic experience as a result of imagining Dion’s fans? There is at least one important way in which I believe Wilson’s imaginative engagement with Dion’s music does lead him to an unexpected revision. He goes from resisting the sentimentality of her music to recognizing that “Feeling emotions fully, bodily, as they are, may be sentimentality’s promise, one too readily mistaken for a threat” and that “It is what’s done with sentiment, like any other inspiration, that can be an aesthetic liability, not sentiment itself.”

Wilson finds his reluctance to give way to sentimentality and his critical ‘snobbery’ challenged together in trying to understand Dion’s fans. He confesses, “I cringe when I think what a subcultural snob I was five or ten years ago … how vigilant I was against being taken in – unaware that I was also refusing an invitation out.”

I see this comment as a reflection on one idea of what it means to speak with authority – with confidence – which is to be impenetrable, well fortified against potential challenges. The contrast is with being open to invitations into “a larger world, one beyond the horizon of my habits.”

It isn’t quite clear what happens to the possibility of authority on Wilson’s view when the focus shifts to invitations out. There is a remaining and important ambiguity about this lingering at the end of his experiment. However, my purpose has been to use Kant’s aesthetics to argue that for beauty at least, speaking with authority – with confidence in the plural first person – has an invitation out built right into it.

Wilson’s experiment in taste raises questions for him about his ability to make authoritative pronouncements of good taste as a critic. This discomfort is familiar from reactions we might have to the steadfast account of disagreement, and is rightly (at least on some level) directed at Kantian aesthetics. As I mentioned at the start, Kant is a go-to theorist for the view that dissenters about beauty can be dismissed as defective, and I think it is this dismissive attitude that Wilson finds increasingly untenable over the course of his experiment. It is untenable because it downplays sincere and dedicated

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297 Ibid, 151.
298 Ibid, 151.
efforts to take one another seriously. He says, “This is what I mean by democracy – not a limp open-mindedness, but actively grappling with people and things not like me, which brings with it the perilous question of what I am like.” Rather than seeing such active grappling as at odds with Kant, I have argued that the universal voice of Kantian judgments of beauty provides rational motivation to engage in it. I have argued that the steadfast component of Kant’s account actually leads to a concern with understanding the judgments of others, sustaining rational motivation to engage imaginatively for as long as a judgment is confidently brought to bear in the plural first person.

I highlight Wilson’s point about a fear of being taken in because it is relevant to a way of thinking about confidence in the disagreement debate also. On this way of thinking, confidence is secure when there is no reason to expect revision, and it is eroded by recognizing that such revision could occur. For many kinds of beliefs this may be the right approach, but I don’t think it is for judgments of beauty. If I am right that confidence about beauty inherently engages us with imaginative efforts to understand, and along with that the potential for revision, it cannot be the case that the latter always erodes the former. Risking further growth (the invitation out) is built into making judgments of beauty in the plural first person, and so is compatible with confidence – it can even be an expression of confidence – rather than a threat to it.

In the next section I will explore the idea that imagining the aesthetic experience of others requires us to be willing to accept a certain kind of disorientation. This imaginative task is not simply a matter of considering what the other has to say from the stable frame of my own experience, it requires that I try to step into her way of seeing and hearing things for a moment. I will draw upon Wilson again to illustrate this kind of disorientation, along with the doubts and fears we might have about going so far down the rabbit hole of another’s experience that we lose our bearings on what we think should be found compelling. I will argue that we can take these worries to play a different role in our response to

299 Ibid, 151.
disagreement than prompting revisions of confidence at the outset. Instead, I will suggest that they help us to prepare for the imaginative task we are considering.

In the final section, I will bring the discussion back to the issue of peerhood, and argue that the disorientation peers face is further emphasized by the fact that they are both seeking to guide one another and be responsive to one another’s guidance at the same time. In other cases, when we are dealing with those who are more experienced than ourselves, or less so, we enter our imaginative efforts with a shared idea of who will be giving direction and who will be following it. Although it is still the case that both parties engage in this enterprise from the first person, and so with their confident judgments intact, knowing that one is imagining the perspective of an expert or a beginner, for instance, can inform the imaginative effort undertaken.

8.2 The Invitation Out: Confidence as Motivation for Taking on Imaginative Disorientation

In this section I will further discuss the epistemic significance we should give to the possibility that our own views could change as a result of imaginatively engaging with others’ perspectives in an effort to bring them to agree with us. As I have set out above, although our motivation to take on this risk is the confidence we have in our judgments (not a dispute-independent worry of having made a mistake), imagining each other always opens us to the possibility that our experience and judgments could grow in unexpected ways. Here I want to discuss further the disorientation we take on when we try to imagine another’s aesthetic experience charitably, and further defend my claim that opening ourselves to the possibility of unexpected revisions should not be taken to mean I must revise confidence in my judgment at the outset.

I have said that when I imagine the experience of someone who disagrees with me about a particular beauty I purposefully try to disorient myself and then put back together a compelling aesthetic whole with her guidance. This imaginative re-envisioning of the object may require re-
envisioning things about myself as well, and the world as I see it. This is a difficult process, one that stands out to Wilson as something he gained from his experiment in taste:

[A]s I suspected, looking closely at her seemingly mundane music has focused me on another set of virtues – not so much the fidelity and devotion she sings about, but the persistence and flexibility it takes to translate between her terms and mine.\(^{300}\)

I think the use of ‘translation’ here can be both helpful and misleading. On the one hand, ‘translation’ suits the process of using imagination to move between aesthetic experiences and use whatever resources I have to try to find something that ‘makes sense’ in the other’s experience. On the other hand, translation suggests that if we just found the right correspondence between elements or terms, we could fully capture one aesthetic experience in the terms of another. The act of translation would work like a third person perspective that can hold two different aesthetic experiences side by side and compare them. I don’t think that is possible when we are dealing with aesthetic wholes that must both be taken first personally, on their own terms, in order to be appreciated. It may be possible to recognize intellectually the possibility of two different patterns of emphasis, for example, in the way aesthetic experience could develop (say one experience of “My Heart Will Go On” that culminates in a sincerely moving emotional climax and another that can only thrill along with it in fun). But it is not possible to feel both simultaneously, or if we could feel some sort of hybrid between the two (feel both moved and feel like laughing) this would be a new, third possibility for how aesthetic experience could develop, not really an experience that carries out a comparison of the previous options.\(^{301}\) This is why

\(^{300}\) Wilson (2007), 151.

\(^{301}\) In the background of this point I have in mind both Hirsch’s arguments about literary interpretation and Dewey on the rhythm of aesthetic quality in aesthetic experiences. Dewey points out that intellectually seeing that an object has a certain rhythm, or could give rise to a certain rhythm in experience, is not the same as having that experience. He writes, “this rhythm in what is experienced is something quite different from intellectual recognition that there is rhythm in the external thing: as different as is the perceptual enjoyment of glowing harmonious colors from the mathematical equations that define them for a scientific inquirer.” (169) Hirsch (1960) argues that when we are presented with two interpretations that give different patterns of emphasis to the same poem, say, to simply accept them both would be to accept a distinct, third interpretation that takes the poem to be ambiguous between those two patterns of emphasis. Accepting that the poem is ambiguous between two possible readings is not quite the same thing as taking either pattern to be correct by itself (472). In a similar way, I believe that trying to combine two rhythms of aesthetic experience together will give you a new, distinct aesthetic experience, not one that really grasps or considers either of the two original experiences. We have to take each one on its own terms in order to give a proper assessment, and this must be done by shifting between a first personal experience of each, facilitated by imagination.
‘disorientation’ is appropriate, for it captures the idea that I am trying to lose sight of the familiar markers of my own aesthetic experience in my imagining before searching for new ones by whatever navigational skills I possess (most notably, the compass offered by the ‘feeling of fit’ of the free play). I am trying to re-orient myself within the other’s experience so that we can find our way to empirically realizing the ‘we’ of aesthetic feeling that we both claim to speak for.

Again Wilson offers a helpful example. Wilson’s attempt to hear Céline Dion’s music as beautiful requires him to accept the vulnerability of giving in to “big, dumb emotion[s] on a gut level”.\(^{302}\) He tries to imagine a world where the sentimentality of schmaltz is just as worthy of attention as the more intellectually challenging, counter-cultural music he prefers:

My usual, more ‘sophisticated’ listening can help me reflect on such feelings, to scrutinize them from all angles, but I’m fine at that kind of analysis on my own. I am probably less skilled at just feeling an emotion without wanting to mess with it and craft it, to bargain with it until it becomes something else. Feeling emotions fully, bodily, as they are, may be sentimentality’s promise, one too readily mistaken for a threat.\(^{303}\)

I don’t think we can translate between giving way to sentimentality and bargaining with it intellectually. In fact, Wilson’s talk of ‘translating’ sounds like the kind of intellectual strategizing we would need to give up (at least imaginatively) in order to be swept away by undiluted gushes of sentiment. The imaginative task at issue here might be giving up the familiar strategy of treating feelings and problems like codes to be cracked in favour of simply throwing one’s head back and singing to the sky.

To see the difference between translating another’s experience into our own terms and attempting to disorient ourselves by stepping into the other’s terms, we can compare imagining another’s aesthetic experience to the process of evaluating another’s reasons and arguments in response to disagreement that Kelly describes. Kelly argues that assessing how well I and a peer have reasoned

\(^{302}\) Wilson (2007), 130.
\(^{303}\) Ibid., 130.
about our first order evidence should play a role in deciding how it is rational to respond to disagreement. He writes,

[S]uppose that I confidently hold a philosophical thesis on the basis of arguments and considerations that are inadequate to support it. I cite these arguments and considerations in defense of my thesis, attributing my confidence in the thesis to them. Recognizing my reasons as inadequate, you come away unimpressed. In these circumstances, there is a sense in which you have witnessed the malfunction occur. … In cases of peer disagreement, one gets to go underneath the hood, as it were.\textsuperscript{304}

The idea here is that my response to another’s disagreement should include my own assessment of the substance of her view, not just the psychological fact that she holds it, but also how it works, how and why she thinks it is justified. To use Heal’s way of putting things, he is insisting that even when we encounter disagreement with peers, we should continue to hear ‘I believe X’ as the result of first personal deliberation, not merely as facts noted about ourselves through higher-order reflections.

Considering an opposing belief as the result of first personal deliberation can also be done for hypothetical dissent, where there is no psychological fact that another person actually believes it. We can still think through for ourselves why someone would endorse the opposing view and consider if there is anything worthwhile in it.\textsuperscript{305} Notably, how I experience my own initial reasoning isn’t questioned or disrupted on this picture, I simply extend my rational lights to further considerations a dissenter could pose. If there is something to those considerations by my rational lights, this may be reason to revise my view, but it is a fairly smooth continuation of the deliberations that brought me to my initial belief.

Imagining the other’s aesthetic experience in response to disagreement has both an important similarity and difference from Kelly’s suggestion outlined above. The similarity is the idea that discovering the significance of another’s disagreement could lie in thinking through her reasons in the way she does (trying my best to imagine her view). However, an important difference is introduced by the fact that I am not \textit{thinking} something through, but trying to \textit{see} or \textit{hear} it differently. As Sibley

\textsuperscript{304} Kelly (2010), 154.
\textsuperscript{305} Kelly (2005), 181-182.
describes it, I am trying to grasp the “perceptual proof” another is offering in support of her claim, and trying to give my own in turn.\textsuperscript{306} This kind of proof is not a matter of presenting the other with reasons for thinking something, reasons that she will assess by her rational lights and decide if they support the judgment at issue. It is rather a matter of guiding perception so that the other person sees or hears for herself something she didn’t appreciate before.\textsuperscript{307} There are many different ways of failing to hear or see something relevant to an aesthetic judgment. If we are both attentively listening, most of the time our disagreements will not involve failing to hear basic nonaesthetic qualities like the pitch of Dion’s vocal quaver, or how long she holds the note, but a failure to hear aesthetic qualities such as the swell of romantic feeling in the quaver, or the haunting drift of holding the note for just that long. The point is, I cannot hear a Céline Dion song as both emotionally moving and boring at the same time, I have to at least imaginatively switch perspectives in order to consider the opposite view. Unlike the reasoning case Kelly takes as his model for responding to disagreement, I cannot bring the other’s way of hearing into my perspective in order to assess how much it might be worth without doing a little de-stabilizing of my own experience so that I can hear it the way she describes (or at least, imagine it). To even consider the justification she gives for her judgment, the perceptual proof she is offering, I’ve got to lose my bearings on my own way of hearing for a moment and imaginatively take up her way of hearing it.

\textsuperscript{306} Sibley (1965), 143: “If he then finds himself agreeing with me, I have vindicated my claim in the best possible way, by getting him to see for himself. There is no reason not to say, if one wishes, that I have supported, justified, or even proved my original judgment. One might refer to this activity therefore as \textit{perceptual proof}.”

\textsuperscript{307} For his part, Sibley (1965) does not think we can call this process of bring another to see or hear something in an aesthetic object reasoning. He writes that the critic’s “aim was to bring his audience to agree with him because they perceived for themselves what he perceived; and this is what, if successful, he achieved. But an activity the successful outcome of which is seeing or hearing cannot, I think, be called \textit{reasoning}. I may have reasons for thinking something is graceful, but not reasons for seeing it is.” (143) For an opposing view on this particular point, we could turn to Hopkins (2006) who offers an interesting defense of the idea that critics are giving a kind of rational argument when they guide our perception. Since Hopkins believes this kind of rational argument is inextricable from a process of first personal perception, I think the point I am making here would still stand. Unlike other kinds of rational argument where we lay out all the relevant reasons within a single perspective and then weigh them up, an argument made in aesthetic perception requires shifting imaginatively between first personal ways of seeing or hearing.
Sibley’s discussion of perceptual proof is specifically related to claims made about the presence or absence of aesthetic qualities, without touching upon beauty, but we see a similar idea offered by Scarry in relation to beauty specifically. Scarry describes two ways we can make mistakes about beauty, by either “overcrediting” or “undercrediting” the object in question due to an excess or failure of “perceptual generosity”.308 Errors about beauty occur when “One lets things into one’s midst without accurately calculating the degree of consciousness required by them.”309 What I am suggesting here is that trying to assess the degree of consciousness another has applied to an aesthetic object requires more than an attempt to translate what the other is describing into the terms of our own experience and weighing them against each other from within a single perspective that stays stable. Instead, it requires taking on the disorienting task of imagining a different perspective as charitably as I can. This introduces a more dynamic chance for growth and change in my own view than we would expect on Kelly’s, where I simply deploy a single perspective (my own).

What epistemic significance does anticipating this kind of disorientation have? I don’t think it has the kind of epistemic significance that calls into question particular aspects of my present aesthetic experience and judgment. Because imagining the other’s experience is a matter of disorienting myself by taking up unfamiliar tools for listening or seeing, rather than dismantling her experience with tools I already trust, I cannot use my present perspective to assess the ways in which this exercise might organically change my view from within.310 According to what I presently find compelling, nothing about my experience may seem more or less likely to change through further imaginative re-

308 Scarry (2001), 14.
309 Ibid., 15.
310 What I have in mind by talking about ‘organic’ growth from within are revisions that are not simply a matter of coming to see how something I already accepted applies in this case (perhaps I didn’t see how a certain rule should come into play, or that the object falls into a certain category I have ready to use). In contrast, an organic change in experience comes to find something meaningful in a new way by feeling out a rhythm or relationship between parts as it goes, without the benefit (or constriction) of a given rule dictating what should be found. We can find this sort of contrast drawn by Kant between determining and reflective judgments, and by Dewey between mere recognition and perception (as discussed in Chapter 3). Since we arrive at judgments of beauty through an organic kind of mental activity in the first place, not the application of a given rule, it makes sense that realizing we are mistaken would occur through further organic developments in experience as well.
experiencing of the object. Still, the sense that I cannot anticipate what I might find in imagining another’s perspective is its own open-ended concern.

In fact, acknowledging that my judgment could change by imagining others’ perspectives may seem like even more of a risk because it can’t be focused on one suspected weak link in my aesthetic experience and contained there. I don’t know how much of myself will become vulnerable to transformation through the disorientation I take on. I hear Wilson worrying about this when he observes that

[S]entimentality is also the most formidable barrier between Céline’s music and me: it’s not just that the Hallmark card messages are unappealing, but a fear that yielding to them may turn my brain and principles to mush. Can that really be just learned prejudice, like so many other cultural filters?311

Wilson is worried that he will not just disorient himself by trying to understand Dion’s fans, but lose his bearings entirely, his compass for aesthetic response will turn to mush. There are two sides to this worry. First, he realizes his disdain for Hallmark card emotions could be mistaken; this is a doubt about his present judgment. Second, he thinks that coming to see his disdain as mistaken could itself be a terrible mistake (his brain and principles could turn to mush); this is an assessment of a possible revision from the perspective of his present confident judgment. The final question repeats these layers of doubt and confidence at a deeper level, wondering if the potential revision is not just about sentimentality but the very idea of making aesthetic judgments according to principle. Could something so clear and compelling, that feels so much like it is not learned prejudice, turn out to just be that? It is so clear and compelling! But could it be?

There are two ways to take these questions. First, we could think of them as the result of ‘stepping back’ to a third person perspective on which Wilson recognizes he is fallible about aesthetic matters (such as the aesthetic potential of Hallmark card emotions) and about himself (that his previous judgment is not a matter of learned prejudice). The disagreement of Dion’s fans raises questions that

the conciliatory theorist would warn against begging by simply maintaining his present judgment. I
have argued it would be inappropriate in the case of aesthetic judgments to take up that warning by
reducing confidence on the basis of such dispute-independent considerations.

But there is a second way of taking them. We can hear these questions as coming out of
Wilson’s confidence. Wilson’s questions anticipate the imaginative disorientation his confidence
commits him to undertaking, along with its potential for unexpected growth. Wilson suspects
embracing excessive sentimentality will turn his brain to mush, but questions himself as preparation
for, and a way into, imagining an aesthetic experience (plus perhaps a self and world) where that is not
the case. The point I want to make is that questioning our beliefs is not restricted to third personal
reflections geared towards revising confidence, this activity can play a different role limbering us up to
embrace the disorientation of really trying on another’s view, complete with the chance that this could
lead to new judgments about what is true about beauty and ourselves. If we only hear Wilson’s
questions as heading towards the ‘step back’ of third personal reflection, we will miss a crucial aspect
of epistemic life, namely the questions that can be raised and considered from within first personal
engagement. It is particularly important not to miss hearing such questions as directed towards first
personal engagement in the case of disagreement about beauty (and frameworks), for in these cases the
‘step back’ of third personal reflection removes us from the ability to make the kind of judgment we are
interested in.

The requirements of imaginative engagement might give us another reason, then, for suspecting
that someone who refuses to question her beliefs about beauty is running epistemically afoul somehow.
She is making the error of refusing the invitation beauty extends out into the experience of others.
Sometimes we fail to take that invitation because we are too busy or tired, or haven’t come face to face
with those who disagree. It is a worse failure to refuse the invitation out because we are unwilling to
risk ourselves, either because we aren’t taking others seriously when we should be, or because we are
confused about the way beauty makes us vulnerable. It is a mistake to think we can avoid the vulnerability of new discoveries that revise our previous judgments by ignoring others. What we really avoid by doing this is the transpersonal function of the feeling of the free play, and what we ignore is the nature of the judgment we are trying to make. When we are really compelled by beauty, or the lack thereof, we are inherently tuned to others in our feeling that this ought to be felt together. Confidence in beauty pushes us out onto the unstable ground of imagining others’ perspectives, keeping us searching there for a way to bring to light what ought to be felt again, this time through another’s eyes.

I believe imaginatively stepping out onto that unstable ground has epistemic significance, for it comes from the confidence we have in our beliefs and carries the potential for changing them. These are epistemic concerns. But it isn’t a kind of significance easily captured by the present terms of the disagreement debate. There hasn’t been much discussion yet of a kind of confidence that opens up pursuit of challenge and change rather than being weakened by the prospect of revision. Perhaps this is because the possibility of this kind of confidence requires the sort of disconnect between third personal reflection and first personal judgment that I have argued beauty involves.\(^\text{312}\)

What does recognizing the potential for change, even looking for it, do if not revise confidence upon discovering disagreement? For one thing, it changes our relationship to others as pieces in the epistemic game. Others become sites of potentially significant disorientation, rather than easily digestible bits of new evidence to bring to bear in revising our beliefs. The pressure to understand others better that comes from the plural first person perspective is not primarily motivated by my task to have a set of consistent beliefs as an individual, it is driven by the sense of community that distinguishes the kind of judgment I’m making. I think this signals a deep shift in the concerns that are familiar from the disagreement debate in epistemology. The shift is from caring primarily about the truth and consistency of my beliefs as an individual (peerhood is important insofar as it strengthens the

\(^{312}\) Considering the parallel I argued for earlier between beauty and framework disagreements, it is possible that frameworks are another place confidence could go along with accepting the epistemic vulnerability of imaginative disorientation rather than being threatened by it. This is a possibility that could be explored in further work.
probability I have made a mistake) to caring about sharing an ‘us’ I can make true claims about by voicing my own experience (the possibility of having made a mistake is important insofar as it removes confirmation that you and I are a ‘we’ in this feeling).

8.3 Peerhood and the Disorientation of Imagining Others

The last problem I want to consider briefly is what has happened to the question of peerhood that is so central to the disagreement debate in epistemology. While my discussion of disagreement about beauty takes the peerhood case in its scope, it has not focused on a special problem raised by peerhood. Imagining the other person’s perspective is something I have suggested comes into understanding anyone’s aesthetic claims. Nevertheless, peerhood does add an extra twist to the disorientation we take on in imagining one another’s aesthetic experiences, for it slows down the process of accepting explanations we can find for why or how another’s judgment is at odds with our own.

Let’s start with an example. My twin sister and I grew up listening to our father read “The Stone,” by Wilfred Wilson Gibson, a macabre story poem that follows the nightly labours of a man carving a gravestone, watched all the while by the deceased’s young lover who is slowly slipping into death herself. Hauntingly paced, it is still a favourite of mine, and I was caught off guard when she recently informed me that she never liked the poem, despite going along with popular familial opinion that it was wonderful as a child. Between the two of us, my judgment that the poem has a dark, melancholy beauty is, apparently, mine alone. It is hard for me to imagine two people who have more reason to think 1) they are having quite similar aesthetic experiences of the poem in question, 2) they have similar histories of aesthetic education and exposure informing their judgments, and 3) they would be equally likely to arrive at a correct or perceptive assessment of beauty. In other words, we appear to share the same evidence, the same capacities for evaluation, and the same likelihood of
arriving at true beliefs on the matter, as judged by our own lights. We are what the epistemology debate would call ‘peers’ on the question of the poem’s beauty. And yet, we disagree.

Persisting peer disagreement has a rhythm of imagining possible ways to make sense of the other’s experience and realizing they are inadequate. I could imagine that my sister’s dislike for the poem is defensive, perhaps suspecting that she still hears it through the distortion of our early rejection of anything uncompromisingly sad and painful. But I cannot turn over all the cups in this imagining, for it is an inadequate imagining of her, someone whose mature willingness and interest in engaging with difficult things is as well known to me as my own. Who I take the other person to be (my peer, an expert, a beginner) enters into my imaginative engagement with her perspective, shaping what I will accept as a successful effort to make sense of what happened in our disagreement.

In other words, my imaginative effort must not only keep in touch with what I believe about the object – testing to see if I have discovered something real about it in my simulation of her experience – but also with what I believe about the person whose experience I imagine. If I take the other person to be someone I can give guidance to in their aesthetic perception, or alternatively, someone who can guide me, that sets a condition my imagining must answer to. With a peer, this condition is itself unsettled, my imagining must answer to both of us as prospective teachers and students, oscillating between those directions of guidance and opening a more daunting experience of disorientation. Disagreement with a peer is particularly disorienting because my imaginative efforts are ambiguous between being guided and guiding, and I continue to wonder if a lesson I think I can give will turn unexpectedly into a lesson given to me.

However, we should recall a point I made in Chapter 3 in case we are starting to think it would be appropriate to scale back the confidence I have in my judgment on the basis of who I think is most likely to be guiding whom. If we are disagreeing about beauty, it would be a disappointment to those trying to give guidance to have others revise their confidence on the basis of dispute-independent
considerations of who is most experienced, or most likely to be perceptive in this case. It would be disappointing because the aim of someone trying to correct an aesthetic judgment is to bring about a change in the way another person sees or hears the object in question for herself, and revise her view on aesthetic grounds. That means we must engage with one another’s instructions for how to see and hear beautiful things in the first person, complete with the confidence in our own judgments that this first personal engagement sustains (there is the beautiful or boring thing, plain as day!). The respect we owe others as peers, or as more experienced guides, or as those we wish to guide, is not a matter of adjusting confidence in light of track records, it is a matter of committing ourselves to looking, listening and imagining in response to their directions. Similarly, peerhood is not relevant here as an indication, by itself, of how I should adjust confidence, but it is relevant as I carry out my imaginative work, for it means the compass I am using in that imaginative effort could spin around on me in unexpected ways.

So what do I take the epistemic relevance of disagreement about beauty to be? Unlike many beliefs, judgments of beauty are based on first personal experience of a feeling, not tallying up all sorts of different evidence that could include psychological facts about what others believe. This means another’s disagreement is not significant as a piece of evidence to be counted up in an assessment of how confident I should be in my judgment from an independent standpoint. My confidence is settled by a feeling of the free play. On the ordinary picture of how disagreement figures in epistemic significance, that would mean disagreement does not have significance for judgments of beauty.

However, the feeling that grounds judgments of beauty does not occur to me as just my own, but as what everyone ought to feel; it speaks for ‘us’. This universal voice does not require empirical confirmation by others to get off the ground, but it does look for such confirmation. We long for it, as Longuenesse would say. Disagreement stumps this longing to confirm the community we presuppose in making our judgments, and calls for further work. When it is the transpersonal function of reason
that is stumped, that further work is more reasoning (working through your thoughts to find a way to show you the force of my reasons). When it is the transpersonal function of aesthetic feeling (the free play), the further work is more aesthetic experience (working through how you experience this to see how I could guide us together in the feeling we ought to have). In both cases there is the chance that imaginatively engaging with another’s experience will lead to unexpected transformations and discoveries that change what I actually think or feel. I take that chance because I believe in my present claim, that it ought to speak for us. It is this extension of myself through imagination to the different experiences of others that continues to give epistemic significance to disagreements about beauty.
Chapter Nine: Conclusion

When I first began thinking about the peer disagreement debate, I was struck by the way the options given appeared to rule out maintaining confidence in both my judgment and the other person as my peer. On the one hand, taking my own belief to give the truth of the matter required considering the other person defective in this case, responsible for the mistake that explains our disagreement. On the other hand, taking the other person to be a peer required doubting my judgment as the truth and revising confidence. These connections between confidence and revision made sense to me, but I couldn’t help the lingering thought that sometimes remaining confident in my judgment could itself show I am taking the other seriously in her disagreement. It seemed important to explore the possibility that for some kinds of judgment it could be the case that continuing to speak in a universal voice (speaking my judgment as true for both of us) gives the other person the chance to be heard, rather than taking her credibility away. I found initial inspiration for this lingering thought that a third option for the relationship between confidence in my judgment and my peer could be possible in Kant’s account of judgments of beauty. I will now review the steps I have taken, starting from Kant, in developing the “empathetically steadfast” account of disagreement I believe is needed for disagreement about beauty.

The first order of business for an account of responding to disagreement about beauty is to think about what kind of claims these are and how they are supported. Particularly if you want to argue, as I do, that something about this kind of claim warrants responding differently than we would to disagreements over how to split dinner bills. Why should this be any different? If claims about beauty are made, challenged and defended in much the same way as claims about an object’s colour or size, the case for thinking we should respond differently to disagreement about beauty is weakened considerably. There are at least two ways to argue aesthetic claims are not so different. The first is to suggest they are made on the basis of applying some kind of common measure in the form of laws or principles. The second is to suggest they are probabilistic claims that tell us how likely it is a certain
group of people will respond a certain way. I discussed Beardsley and Margolis as examples of the first approach, and Aiken and Harrison for the second.

To give it briefly, my reason for being unsatisfied with Aiken and Harrison’s probabilistic take on claims that objects are aesthetically ‘good’ is that it fails to address the question of whether the object ought to be considered good on the basis of what it is, the properties it has or the experience it makes available. I find it implausible to think that all of our aesthetic judgments, or even most of them, are purely a matter of accurately tracking how people will likely respond to things, without addressing whether or not they are right to do so. There is still room, then, for thinking that something about the way we make normative claims about aesthetic value requires responding differently to disagreement than we would to disagreement over probabilistic judgments. The principles or standards that Beardsley and Margolis argue for are supposed to support normative claims about how an object ought to be aesthetically judged or valued. However, I agree with Isenberg and Mothersill’s worries that the kind of principles Beardsley has in mind are a dead end, either because critics do not use concepts in the way such principles require, or because those principles will turn out to be innocuous, unable to identify good-making features in a way that is separable from the value judgments they are meant to support. At the end of this chapter, we are left with the question of how normative aesthetic claims can be grounded, and the hope that finding an account of this will help us decide how to respond rationally to disagreement.

In the later stages of the project, I offer Kant’s idea of speaking judgments of beauty in a universal voice as a basis for arguing that we can respond to disagreements about beauty, at least, with the combination I mentioned of maintaining confidence in our own views and taking the other seriously. I start this process in Chapter 3 by discussing the nature of the harmonious free play of imagination and understanding (influenced by Allison’s interpretation) and considering the potential of Kant’s view for contributing to a more contemporary conversation about disagreement. The most
important idea considered there about the nature of the free play is that it is a feeling for the increase or diminution of mental life that carries its own evaluation of how the purposive engagement between imagination and understanding is going.

That the free play is evaluative just in how it feels is important for the argument I go on to give about disagreement because it allows the basis of a judgment of beauty to be the feeling itself, rather than some kind of further reflection upon the feeling, and sets beauty apart from other kinds of judgment that occur by applying an explicit rule or concept. If judgments of beauty are really grounded upon the way our mental activity feels, what we ask others to share in requiring that they agree is not just the application of a rule, or knowing something about an object, but being moved in the same way by that feeling. As we have seen, I think this has important consequences for the role of the first and third person perspectives in responding to disagreement.

However, there are challenges to bringing Kant’s view into a contemporary debate about beauty. Kant argues that the free play can ground universally valid judgments because of its connection to the kind of purposive mental activity that leads to regular cognitive judgments, but there are a host of potential problems in working out exactly how it would be best to construe the relationship between aesthetic and cognitive ‘feelings of fit’ in mental activity. If these two kinds of ‘fit’ are collapsed into one another we have a strong case for the universal validity of beauty, but it starts to sound like every representation that can be efficiently cognized will also be beautiful. If these two kinds of ‘fit’ are clearly distinguished, it allows beauty to evaluate something other than ease of classification (perhaps an excess of mutual enhancement between the faculties that goes beyond what is useful for cognition) but also re-opens the question of beauty’s claim to universal validity. In the third chapter I do not

313 This talk of ‘excess’ is inspired by Longuenesse’s description of what separates the free play from cognition: “Although of course the object judged to be beautiful can be recognized under concepts (e.g. ‘this rose is yellow,’ ‘this rose is in bloom,’ and so on), expressing an aesthetic judgment (‘this rose is beautiful’) is expressing something different: the fact that in the mutually enhancing play of imagination (appréhending the object) and understanding (thinking it under concepts) no concept can possibly account for the peculiarity of my experience in apprehending the object. What remains in play to
take up this problem in its full complexity, which I think one would have to do in order to robustly defend the plausibility of Kant’s view. Instead, I take the plausibility of Kant’s view largely for granted, and turn to the question of whether that view can be made relevant to the kinds of disagreement about beauty we typically have.

The relevance of Kant’s view for contemporary discussions of beauty comes into question due to the perceptual formalism he appears to endorse at times, and the fact that mistakes about beauty are largely cast as an introspective failure to get something right about our own feeling (that it is purely pleasure in the free play). It isn’t clear how such an introspective concern relates to the various conversations we have about aesthetic objects and their features in response to disagreement. I followed a fairly standard line given by Allison for arguing that Kant’s formalism can be expanded to include orderedness found within many different kinds of relationships between parts and wholes, including ones that are colourful and emotionally charged.

My approach to the second problem is basically to accept the idea that a judgment of beauty can be trusted if it is properly grounded on a feeling of free play. There are two main avenues for explaining disagreements about beauty, then. The first is that at least one of our judgments is not primarily based on a pleasure in the free play. The second is that our perception of the object is different in some significant way, and possibly one of us is failing to apply the “degree of consciousness,” as Scarry puts it, that we ought to (whether or not these disagreements can fall under my account will be considered below). In other words, there can be problems with what I take the object to be, and there can be problems with what I take my feeling to be, but there cannot be a problem with the operation of the free play if a judgment of beauty is really grounded upon it. This requires accepting a picture on which our basic capacity to experience beauty is given, and what we have to improve are our perceptual capacities both in terms of experiencing aesthetic objects and our account for this experience is only the mutually enhancing or enlivening agreement of imagination and understanding itself, and its universal communicability (its capacity to be shared).” (2006, 277)
own feelings. I think it is fair to have reservations about this, because it seems a bit forced to separate these two aspects of aesthetic response, holding one constant while the other absorbs mistakes and makes improvements. Perception and evaluation seem too intimately connected for that to sit entirely easily.

This reading of Kant’s view can be questioned by looking at a passage where he poses a question about the nature of the common sense that makes judgments of beauty possible:

This indeterminate norm of a common sense is really presupposed by us: our presumption in making judgments of taste proves that. Whether there is in fact such a common sense, as a constitutive principle of the possibility of experience, or whether a yet higher principle of reason only makes it into a regulative principle for us first to produce a common sense in ourselves for higher ends, thus whether taste is an original and natural faculty, or only the idea of one that is yet to be acquired and is artificial … this we would not and cannot yet investigate here …

A faculty that needs to be acquired sounds like something that would make mistakes in its growing development, whereas an original faculty would fit better with the idea that the free play is a reliable fixed point around which other pieces move to accommodate mistakes. It is curious that Kant offers this question without answering it, as if it does not have important consequences for our understanding of the common sense. The question appears to be given with the presumption that what is presupposed by judgments of beauty is the same whether we think of it as natural or acquired. And what is presupposed, on the reading I have taken, is an ‘indeterminate norm’ that allows for making universally valid judgments on the basis of a special evaluative feeling alone. I don’t think this sits comfortably with the idea that confidence in these judgments requires annexing to that feeling further information about the education, experience and reliability of the judge.

This is the puzzle that remains at the heart of my work: how can we make judgments based on a feeling alone, while acknowledging that we get better at this sort of thing, and make mistakes along the

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314 Although a similar distinction between perceptive skillfulness and judgment appears to be in Dewey’s comment that “Control of the subject-matter of perception for ensuring proper data for judgment is the key to the enormous distinction between the judgments the savage passes on natural events and that of a Newton or an Einstein.” (310)

315 CJ, 5:240.
way? Surely what we know about ourselves as judges has to come into how seriously we take our judgments. And yet what we are trying to get better at is making judgments that are based on a feeling alone, that are made in a different way than weighing bits of evidence against each other to come up with what is most probable, given who the judge is. That approach to oneself as a judge is at odds with the nature of this kind of judgment, and yet it seems inescapable for a learner who is fallible, as we all must be. How do I get better at speaking in a universal voice? The universality of that voice doesn’t seem to admit itself as part of a messy, fallible learning process. This is why it is important to ask what kind of learning we do in getting better at judging beauty and discovering mistakes. Is there a kind of learning, a kind of acknowledgment of my fallibility, that is compatible with speaking in a universal voice, even built into that attitude towards myself as a judge?

To answer this I found it helpful to expand our resources beyond Kant and the apparent introspective thrust of his view. Kant leaves us with the idea that responding to disagreement will largely be a matter of figuring something out about myself (is the source of my pleasure the free play?) and I think this can invite the application of a conciliationist strategy, maintaining or revising confidence on the basis of whose judgment I think is more likely to be impure. One reason to talk about Dewey, then, is to support the idea that questioning the pleasure I feel (is it the right kind?) contributes to becoming a better judge by continuing to engage me directly with the object and others’ experience, rather than thinking about myself third personally. In the course of this discussion, the relationship between aesthetic perception (as emphasized by Dewey) and judgment (emphasized by Kant) becomes important and hopefully clarified.

Of course, actually learning to become better judges by testing our judgments to see how they will grow or stand up under further scrutiny may not be considered relevant to the strictly epistemological question of how to revise confidence in light of peer disagreement. That question is focused on the response I should give to new evidence I may have made a mistake that disagreement
provides, regardless of how I would go on to discover or correct the mistake in practice. We need some reason to think that what is required by the practical matter of growing and correcting aesthetic experience is relevant to the epistemic question of responding to disagreement about beauty. Put briefly, the reason I give is that we cannot do justice to the kind of judgment we make about beauty without maintaining a first personal concern with finding community of feeling through the object, and this holds even for the bare epistemological question of how to respond to new evidence of possible mistakes. If that epistemological question is asked in relation to possible mistakes about beauty, it cannot be cleanly disconnected from an ongoing involvement with the growth of aesthetic experience.

Before I could make this argument more fully, we needed to have a better idea of what options are given in the disagreement debate, and what problems would be raised by applying those views to the case of beauty. In Chapter 4 I consider the ‘conciliatory’ account of rationally responding to disagreement offered by Christensen and Elga. Disagreement gives each of us new evidence we may have made a mistake, and to avoid begging the question, the conciliatory view argues that we should set aside our reasons for believing as we do and determine how to revise confidence on the basis of dispute-independent assessments of who is more likely to be right. If that dispute-independent assessment shows that we are equally likely to be right (we are peers), we ought to put just as much stock in the other’s belief as in our own. If we are equally confident in opposing views, this would mean suspending judgment.

One worry that Christensen and Elga acknowledge is that the conciliatory view might lead to widespread suspension of judgment, and they both argue this is not an inevitable result. Before considering those efforts, I argue that ‘spinelessness’ would be a particularly troubling problem for beauty due to the peculiar way that feeling and judgment are joined in Kant’s account (at least, as I have interpreted it). If the very pleasure of beauty carries a sense of universal validity, suspending judgment would seem to require interference with that pleasure in some way – feeling it differently or
distancing ourselves from it. If widespread suspension of judgment were called for, we would be put in the unattractive position of trying to empty our lives of beauty. In trying to make judgments of beauty properly we would be removing the reason we have for being concerned with that kind of judgment in the first place.

My second aim in the chapter is to address Christensen’s strategy for avoiding conciliation in ‘framework’ disagreements that would otherwise rapidly lead to widespread suspension of judgment. The most important idea to come out of this discussion is that thinking about the other’s view – imagining it – could be an additional way disagreements raise questions against us, besides thinking about how likely it is each of us will be right from a dispute-independent standpoint. Christensen argues that disagreement fails to introduce rational pressure to be conciliatory when a dispute-independent assessment of credentials gives me no strong reason to think the other could be right – as will often be the case for deep ‘framework’ disagreements that leave little beyond their scope. However, I suggested that in some cases this lack of dispute-independent resources for assessing reliability indicates the disagreement is troubling for being so deep we are forming beliefs in different ‘worlds’ of reason-giving, without an independent means of adjudicating between them.

Judgments of beauty and frameworks share a lack of external, third personal resources for determining how confidence should be adjusted (in the frameworks case because there is so little that falls outside their scope, in the aesthetics case because the nature of the judgments requires being grounded on a feeling, not a rule – even rules about how track records should effect confidence). Rather than placing them outside the conversation about rationally responding to peer disagreement, I think this feature puts these disagreements in the position of expanding the kind of questions and rational responses the discussion about disagreement needs to consider.

What seems unsatisfying about the conciliatory view is that it restricts us to a third personal perspective on ourselves as a rational requirement for responding to peer disagreement across the
board. Why is this unsatisfying? In Chapter 5 I answer that it is unsatisfying because it can only address one of the ways we use ‘I believe that p,’ as a self-description made on the basis of observing my behaviour and history. Yet as Heal points out, ‘I believe that p’ can also be a self-ascription of belief made on the basis of thinking something through about the world. In that case, the self-description simultaneously constitutes a first order expression of belief voiced without surveying myself third personally. Heal uses this observation about the dual role played by ‘I believe that p’ to explain how the Moorean sentence ‘I believe that p, but not p’ can at times sound paradoxical (when we hear the first clause as an expression of belief) and at others sound like the rational observation of a regrettable contradiction between the beliefs held by someone (when we hear the first clause as third personal description).

I suggested it can also help us to understand our response to the positions in the peer disagreement debate: when we hear ‘I believe that p’ as a third person description, the symmetry that motivates the conciliatory view is compelling. But, when we remember that there are epistemic situations where ‘I believe that p’ voices an expression of belief as the result of first personal deliberation, the asymmetry Enoch points out gains traction. In other words, as Kelly argues, it is intuitive that a rational response to disagreement could include both thinking about what is true of ourselves and thinking directly about what is true of the world. Kelly argues for combining these perspectives in an assessment of the ‘total evidence’ to see what is appropriate in each case of disagreement, but there is something awkward about this. The problem is that once we have taken up a third personal perspective in order to tally up each kind of evidence, symmetry and the problems of question begging and double counting appear. I think Kelly is right that we need to be able to judge in particular cases whether the considerations of first or third personal thinking are most important (‘outweigh’ the other), but we need a better account of this than trying to combine those perspectives (which basically leaves us in a third personal mode of assessment). We need an explanation that
respects and keeps separate the different roles the first and third person perspectives play in our epistemic endeavours.

Enoch offers a better explanation in this vein. He argues that so long as I remain first personally engaged in response to disagreement, an important asymmetry is in place between the truth (as I believe) and the psychological fact about the other that she believes otherwise. He points out that sometimes the first person perspective is ‘ineliminable’ (such as when we are judging peerhood itself) and so continuing to maintain confidence in the truth (as I believe) is rationally justifiable in response to disagreement. Effectively, in these cases no question to be problematically begged arises.

However, using Enoch’s view in support of a steadfast response to disagreements about beauty requires further work arguing that beauty is a case where the first person perspective should be considered ‘ineliminable’. That is the task I turn to in Chapter 6. Enoch himself offers the preliminary idea that it is appropriate to take the kind of epistemic distance called for by the conciliatory view when we disagree about ‘mere seemings,’ but such distance is inappropriate for disagreements about reflective beliefs held by the ‘fully engaged believing self’. I suggested that thinking about the case of beauty can help to clarify what is promising in this idea, and correct its shortcomings.

What seems to matter more to the ineliminability of the first person perspective than subject matter (seemings vs reflective beliefs) is the role that the motivating grounds of judgment play in what we are seeking agreement about. Do we only want to agree about the truth of a proposition (our motivating grounds are dispensable as soon as the take-away result of that belief is achieved), or do we care about agreeing in the experience of being moved by our motivating grounds? As per my discussion of Kant in Chapter 3, I believe beauty is a case where we claim others ought to share the feeling that motivates our judgment, it is about agreement in experience not only in assenting to the truth of propositions. That is why the first person perspective is ineliminable for beauty, despite the fact that it appears to be about a ‘seeming’ of pleasure, for it is a seeming that draws upon the ‘fully
engaged believing self in a reflective activity that provides motivating grounds for judgment. Other times, reflective activity will lead to judgments we are happy to sever from the process of grounding them and treat as disconnected bits of knowledge to be passed around in other ways, perhaps by testimony. I don’t see why the first person perspective would be any more ineliminable for such beliefs than for ‘seemings’ like sticking one’s hand in a bucket of water to see how cold it is. What the first person perspective is really ineliminable for is experience of being motivated a certain way, by certain grounds.

For beauty, those motivating grounds are a feeling, and it could seem that insisting on the importance of the first person perspective – that the object should evoke this pleasure I feel – relativizes the judgment (an objection drawn from Hopkins). However, I argued that including a reference to first personal pleasure in the content of a judgment of beauty does not necessarily relativize it if we understand that pleasure to function as a reason-to-believe in Burge’s sense. Having a reason-to-believe requires locating the reason within a perspective engaged in reasoning, where its force for forming or revising belief can be felt. However, reasons also have a transpersonal function. The fact that it is explicitly my reason does not stop its motivating force from extending to what I think should hold for others as well. With both reasons and the free play we can assent to truths about their presence third personally, but we would miss something crucial about what it is to have a reason, or to feel the free play, if we did not recognize rational pressure to share with others the motivating force of reasons and pleasures we ought to have.316

In the second part of Chapter 6 I further develop the idea that claims about beauty seek agreement in feeling, and that this feeling requires remaining first personally engaged without leading us to simply dismiss those who disagree. With the help of Sibley and Cavell, I argue that the feeling of

316 This can help to explain the way aesthetic testimony seems to be useful without being able to properly ground judgments of beauty. Assenting to the truth of a proposition about beauty on the basis of testimony gives us a direction of rational pressure to fulfill in aesthetic experience, without having done the further work called for (much like assenting to the truth that is a good reason without yet feeling motivated by it in one’s own reasoning).
the free play carries an expectation of our ability to form a community that would be lost in the switch to thinking about ourselves third personally, as is called for by the conciliatory view. In claiming things are beautiful, we not only seek agreement in the feeling that motivates our judgment, we seek confirmation of the community it voices. It might look as if an easy (and third personal) way to confirm that others are or are not in community with me about a beautiful thing would be to send out a poll to see how many people actually agree, but this would be to miss something important about the kind of expectation of community we are dealing with in the free play.

First, it is important that a claim that the free play ought to be shared is established by the feeling itself, not as the result of a poll, an inference from empirical similarities a group of people have, for instance. The conditions that Kant thinks make this possible are fundamental aspects of our cognitive apparatus, our ability to be a community of judges in the first place. Our expectation of agreement about beauty voices a condition of the possibility of community, rather than an observation of some of its results (how many people do or do not feel this way in fact). Judgments of beauty are concerned with a feeling that establishes a basic expectation of community that needs to be in place before things like survey results can become meaningful as confirming or disconfirming the empirical state of our being in agreement or not. To switch to the third person perspective is to think about one’s judgment as a piece of evidence to be surveyed alongside the results of others, and so is to start thinking of the pleasure involved as a result of community, rather than voicing a condition of its possibility. This is a significant shift in what is at stake in the pleasure, what we are saying about ourselves and others when we claim that they ought to agree. The full thrust of the pleasure as a direct reason for taking others to be capable of sharing it is lost in the switch to the third person.

The difference between thinking of the pleasure third personally as a result to be surveyed and first personally as motivation for thinking community is possible in the first place, also makes a difference to how it is appropriate to criticize, test and confirm our judgments. For instance, it would be
a sign of misunderstanding the kind of claim at issue to criticize a plural first personal judgment for its small sample size (one person), but not for being hasty, unimaginative, or inarticulate – criticisms that engage the feeling that grounds the claim, with the aim of bringing the person to see it in a different way for herself.

At this point in the project, I have made a case for thinking that beauty requires us to remain first personally engaged when we encounter disagreement. I was initially inspired to discuss disagreement about beauty in the hopes that it shows us the possibility that we can respond rationally to some kinds of disagreement by both maintaining confidence in our judgments and continuing to take our peers seriously as presenting a challenge. If Enoch is right that remaining first personally engaged justifies maintaining confidence, it would seem that headway has been made on the first part of that hope. In Chapters 7 and 8 I tackle the second. The task there is to explain how maintaining confidence in a judgment of beauty continues to engage me with the other’s perspective in a way that can be challenging, or can lead to further growth, yet without requiring immediate revision.

Ultimately, my argument for this depends upon the claim that understanding another’s judgment of beauty requires ‘perspective shifting,’ an attempt to see, hear or feel the way she does in her experience of the aesthetic object. To support this, I drew primarily on arguments given by Isenberg that we cannot fully grasp the properties a critic describes without ‘filling in’ the concepts used with our own perception. Sometimes, this will require trying to see something the critic is talking about before I understand what he means – putting on his perspective as I look up at the painting or listen to the music. There are at least two possible outcomes to this exercise: 1) I see what he means, how one could see what he describes in the object, but do not agree with this vision in some way (I could still believe it involves a distortion, say, or an overemphasis on something), and 2) I see what he means, and this transforms my own experience of the object. I have come to see something I believe is really there
in the way described. My suggestion is that we similarly need to ‘fill in’ one another’s claims about beauty by trying to imagine experiencing the object in the way the other describes.

When we disagree about beauty, each participant must ‘put on’ the other’s aesthetic experience in order to grasp the substance of the disagreement, and because we disagree, it will inherently carry an evaluative dimension. At least initially, imagining the other’s experience will occur as something I do not believe, against the backdrop of my own confident judgment. This means I expect I should be able to discover something about her experience that explains why it differs from mine and offers a way to guide her back on track. However, the evaluative dimension cuts both ways between what I imagine and what I actually believe. Sometimes, coming to understand the other’s perspective better will lead me to a new insight, or transformed vision, that will change what I actually believe. In this way, seeking to understand the other in order to find a way to share a community of aesthetic feeling always opens me to the possibility of unexpected growth in my own experience that will require revising judgment.

There are two further possible outcomes to the exercise of imagining the other’s experience, and those are: 3) I keep trying to imagine and understand without success, and 4) I stop trying. On my view, we are under some prima facie rational pressure to pursue 3) when we encounter disagreement, and that standing rational reason to actively and imaginatively expand beyond our own experience is the epistemic significance that disagreement about beauty has. Of course, our acknowledgment of this rational pressure does not mean we are always interested enough, or able to meet it. Disagreements can run deep, and go unresolved indefinitely, and life must get along in the meantime. However, we could also arrive at 4) by failing to recognize the standing rational pressure we have to feel ‘with’ others about beauty, and the imaginative invitation ‘out’ into the experience of others that goes with it. If so, we will have missed something crucial about the kind of claim that is at stake, and what a response to disagreement requires of us.
In Chapter 7 I argue that we need ‘other-oriented’ perspective shifting in particular in response to disagreement about beauty, and I defend this kind of imagining against Goldie’s criticism that it involves a problematic distortion of the other’s perspective, or usurping of her rational agency. In order to grasp another’s claim about beauty I must try to imagine what her experience of the object is like for her, not merely taking how I would experience it myself and then adjusting the result of my imaginative effort after the fact, according to information I have about her (such as the ways in which she is different from me). This is important because it goes to the heart of my argument that one can remain first personally engaged (and so steadfast) and yet still face a crisis of disagreement that is epistemically significant, and requires a response. If I did not have to step outside my own first person perspective in order to assess her view, there would be no crisis here. One way to step outside my perspective would be to step back to a third personal assessment of the epistemic situation, but there is another way to leave it for a moment, and that is to imagine another’s first person perspective. Imagining another’s experience does not give me reason to revise the confidence I have in my own judgment at the outset, in fact it is spurred by the confidence I continue to have that I am right. Nevertheless, it requires actively trying to disorient myself so that I can understand how the other has reached her judgment from the inside. This disorientation comes with epistemic vulnerability, for I could discover that my own experience changes and grows in ways I couldn’t expect from the outset of the exercise.

As an example of someone who makes a remarkably concerted effort to imaginatively make sense of dissenting aesthetic judgment, I looked at Carl Wilson’s short book *Let’s Talk About Love*. While Wilson does not become an ardent Dion fan by the end of his experiment, he does gain a respect for the demanding task of letting one’s guard down in trying to understand those who disagree, as he puts it, accepting an ‘invitation out’ into very different ways of assessing and valuing things. A central point I make is that for beauty, at least, this kind of sincere and active grappling with the experience of
others should not be set in opposition to confidence in one’s own view, but can actually be an expression of it.

9.1 Looking Ahead: Expanding to Further Disagreement in Aesthetics

I have made my case for responding to disagreement about beauty with a combination of steadfast confidence and imaginative openness by focusing on Kant’s account of the nature of such judgments. Now I want to consider whether the account I have given can be applied to other kinds of aesthetic disagreement, including disagreements about how to conceptualize and experience the objects we can then judge to be beautiful or not.

As I mentioned in Chapter 3, Cohen (1990) also considers the problem of relating Kant’s view to aesthetic disagreements that go beyond a correct diagnosis of the occurrence of the free play. His suggestion is that aesthetic disagreements could also include times when disputants use different empirical concepts to grasp what they are judging. To make his point, Cohen gives an analysis of the subject-predicate structure of logical judgments vs. judgments of beauty. He argues that both kinds of judgment can employ empirical subject concepts to grasp what they are about without compromising the freedom judgments of beauty have from applying predicate concepts.\(^{317}\) The crucial difference between ‘The rose is red’ and ‘The rose is beautiful’ is that ‘beautiful’ is not really a predicate concept even though it occupies that position, for it does not lead to a further cognitive determination of the object.

Cohen’s main point is that lacking a determining concept in the predicate position does not require omitting a subject concept too, such as ‘rose’. He argues that “the conceptual activity which grounds the determinate, logical judgment is the act which compares the predicate-concept with the

\(^{317}\) See Cohen (1990), 142.
subject-concept. It is this activity which must not occur in a judgment of taste.”318 In other words, judgments of beauty should not further determine the subject (‘rose’) under a predicate concept (such as ‘red’ ‘alive’ ‘blooming’ – ‘beauty’ appears there instead). But this is perfectly compatible with grasping the subject conceptually in some way to begin with, say as a rose. Once we accept this, there can be disagreements that have to do with using different subject-concepts, and not necessarily a problem with the exercise of taste (for example, both our feelings of the free play could be pure, but I take ‘rose’ to mean something different than you do).

As it stands, I don’t think Cohen’s suggestion successfully expands the range of aesthetic disagreements. This is because disagreements over how to conceptualize the subject of a judgment of beauty do not necessarily rest on aesthetic grounds. There are many considerations relevant to grasping what we are judging that do not seem to depend upon aesthetic feeling, and so do not require us to employ the plural first person, nor require a steadfast response to preserve the nature of the judgments at issue.319 For example, Walton argues that we experience a work as having different aesthetic properties depending upon how we categorize it (as a painting, a sculpture, a ‘Guernica’, etc.). For example, a flat artwork could be quite dynamic as a painting, but rather lifeless as a sculpture. Walton believes there are correct and incorrect ways to categorize and so to perceive aesthetic objects, but not all of our reasons for thinking that a work falls within a certain category will themselves be grounded upon an exercise of aesthetic feeling or sensitivity. Some of them have to do with knowing which categories were prevalent at the time of a work’s creation, or whether the artist intended his work to be taken that way or not.320 This means that we could disagree about how to categorize a work, and so

318 Cohen (1990), 142.
319 As I mention in Chapter 6, we can use the plural first person to voice any judgment we believe others ought to agree with us about. For example, I could say “Feel that warm sun! It sure is bright today.” In this case I am making a claim in the first person, based upon the warm feeling of the sun on my face, and I mean to voice a belief about the sun that everyone else on the beach ought to share if their sensory equipment is working okay. However, first personal feeling is not required for making this claim, I could also read a thermometer, or check how much light is absorbed by a solar panel, or take someone else’s word for it. It is not necessary for me to employ the plural first person in grounding this kind of claim, whereas it is necessary for judgments of beauty.
about what aesthetic properties we should take it to have, without this disagreement really coming
down to a difference in aesthetic sensitivity. It could come down, instead, to what to make of certain
historical facts. Although this disagreement would result in perceiving different aesthetic properties, it
would not really concern an exercise of aesthetic sensitivity. The point is, so long as our reason for
conceptualizing an aesthetic object differently is not itself rooted in aesthetic grounds, we haven’t yet
expanded the range of disagreements of taste in the way Cohen hopes.

Nevertheless, I do think Cohen gives us a helpful starting place for thinking about how to
expand the range of aesthetic disagreements my account could cover. In talking about the subject-
predicate structure of judgments of beauty, we have already separated the task of grasping what it is we
are judging from the judgment of beauty itself. This separation must be possible in order for us to make
different judgments about the same object/experience. The question we have raised is whether or not
grasping what we are judging itself involves aesthetic grounds – specifically, aesthetic grounds we
think are normative for others.

There are lots of possible directions to take here. For example, Walton offers other
considerations for determining how to correctly categorize an artwork that do appear to involve an
exercise of aesthetic sensitivity, such as thinking about which category yields the most rewarding
aesthetic experience of the work.\textsuperscript{321} We could also look at Sibley’s view that aesthetic sensitivity is
required for applying aesthetic concepts like ‘serene’ and ‘lifeless’ to artworks.\textsuperscript{322} Another option
would be Kant’s discussion of aesthetic ideas, for we need to be able to see that an artwork does
present an aesthetic attribute of its subject matter in order for a free play to take it up (such as seeing

\begin{footnotes}
\item[321] Walton (1970), 357-358. Walton lists four considerations that would count positively towards a category being correctly
applied: 1) If many of the works features would be ‘standard’ within that category, 2) If the work is better or more pleasing
as a member of that category, 3) If the artist thought the work fell in that category, or saw it that way, and 4) If the society
of the artwork’s time perceived it as falling within that category.
\item[322] Sibley (1959) on the idea that using aesthetic concepts involves a sensitivity beyond perceiving with the five senses:
“Often, it is true, people with normal intelligence and good eyesight and hearing lack, at least in some measure, the
sensitivity required to apply them; a man need not be stupid or have poor eyesight to fail to see that something is graceful.
Thus taste or sensitivity is somewhat more rare than certain other human capacities; people who exhibit a sensitivity both
wide-ranging and refined are a minority. … But almost everybody is able to exercise taste to some degree and in some
matters.” (313)
\end{footnotes}
that white is an aesthetic attribute of innocence). In this case reflective activity yields an aesthetic result (appreciating an aesthetic idea) that contributes to the settled character of the object (it expresses that idea). We could also turn to Dewey’s account of aesthetic quality. If our disagreement is due to a difference in the way aesthetic quality brings together a whole in our experience, this would be a disagreement over what object/experience we are dealing with that has aesthetic grounds, and potentially, grounds that we think others ought to share.

Walton’s categories, Sibley’s aesthetic sensitivity, Kant’s aesthetic ideas, and Dewey’s aesthetic quality are all potential candidates, then, for aesthetically grounded ways of determining what an aesthetic object/experience is, what features it has. In this respect they all differ from the pleasure of the free play, which cannot help to determine the character of the aesthetic object due to the freedom of its reflective activity. This activity isn’t beholden to any cognitive purpose beyond the general principle of purposiveness between the faculties in their play, and so it can’t be pinned down as having a particular character for different aesthetic objects, or between different judges. All that it can contribute to our cognition of an object, or the description we give of it, is the judgment of beauty itself.

I am reminded of the difference Cavell draws between metaphor and uses of language he refers to as ‘touchstones of intimacy’. Metaphors like “Juliet is the sun” can be explained or paraphrased in numerous ways, such as “Romeo means that Juliet is the warmth of his world; that his day begins with her; that only in her nourishment can he grow.”323 Like aesthetic quality, I can give an account of a metaphor’s meaning that is accessible from the third person. It has a kind of result that can be separated from the first personal experience of it. In contrast, a ‘touchstone of intimacy’ like the line “the mind is brushed by sparrow wings” is a use of language that feels meaningful, but cannot be explained or elaborated in the same way as the metaphor.

Paraphrasing the lines, or explaining their meaning, or telling it, or putting the thought another way – all these are out of the question. One may be able to say nothing except that a feeling has

323 Cavell (1969), 78-79.
been voiced by a kindred spirit and that if someone does not get it he is not in one’s world, or not of one’s flesh. The lines may, that is, be left as touchstones of intimacy.324

Like the free play, a touchstone of intimacy offers a feeling of meaningfulness that cannot be separated from a first personal experience of it; it cannot be described in a way that would be helpful for someone who is not presently moved by it.

This is an important difference between them, but it may not be as great as first appears. Although I can list a bunch of ways to paraphrase a metaphor, and I can describe the dramatic tension that led to the feeling of loss at the end of a film, these descriptions do not actually capture the metaphor or the aesthetic quality at issue. An important feature of metaphors is the “and so on” at the end of the possible explanations that indicates a sense of pregnant meaning that could continue to be spelled out, perhaps indefinitely.325 I won’t get this “and so on” from a third person description of a few of the ways, I have to experience that pregnant sense of being able to go on first personally. It is a matter of being moved a certain way, like being moved by a reason to believe something. Aesthetic quality is similarly a way of being moved. This is important, because it ties aesthetic quality (including agreement and disagreement about it) to the first person perspective, and would allow my account of disagreement to apply.

One problem with this expansion of my view to disagreements that concern aesthetic quality is that Dewey does not attribute the same iron-clad normative force to aesthetic quality as Kant does to the free play. The claim that the aesthetic quality of another’s experience should develop along the same lines as my own has weaker legs to stand on. This could also be the case for Sibley’s account of aesthetic sensitivity.326 Kant takes pains to trace the free play back to basic, universal cognitive

324 Ibid., 81.
325 Cavell suggests this is an important difference between metaphors and similes, where the ‘like’ primes us to wait for the particular ways you think one thing is like another. (79)
326 For example, McGonigal (2006) argues that we could explain the autonomy of aesthetic judgments from the testimony and disagreement of others by accepting that people may have different aesthetic sensitivities than our own. Hopkins is another who offers this as a possible explanation for why testimony fails in relation to aesthetic matters (if people can have different sensibilities, we could be in the position of receiving conflicting testimonials that are equally warranted, and this would defeat the standing entitlement we have to rely upon testimony in this area). It is, however, a bit tricky to maintain
capacities in order to explain how it is possible to claim that others ought to feel the same way. But what reason do we have for thinking that the aesthetic quality of another’s experience will bring together a whole in the same way as mine, or that it ought to?

Dewey certainly is not concerned with finding a priori grounds for demanding that others agree with us about aesthetic matters. Still, our ability to share aesthetic experiences with some kind of normative force is present for Dewey. This is shown in Dewey’s concern for our ability to educate aesthetic perception, the ability of criticism to articulate and guide the development of vital experience. As an educational effort that must be tailored to the ins and outs of an individual’s experience, the critic’s aim is not furthered by trying to impose rigid standards that pay no attention to the way a particular experience is developing. But neither is it served by reducing judgment to reporting mere impressions had at a particular moment, unable to comment upon or direct the experiences of others.

Dewey tries to establish the common ground required for one person’s aesthetic experience to guide another by pointing out that even in our personal impressions we are responding to a shared the idea that we genuinely disagree about aesthetic claims if conflicting claims can be equally warranted on the basis of differing sensibilities. For discussion, see Hopkins (2000), 233.

327 Dewey (1934) uses the term “judicial criticism” to describe the idea that critics can pronounce artworks good or bad according to general rules. Dewey is critical of this approach: “Much criticism of the legalistic sort proceeds from subconscious self-distrust and a consequent appeal to authority for protection. Perception is obstructed and cut short by memory of an influential rule, and by the substitution of precedent and prestige for direct experience. … A judgment as an act of controlled inquiry demands a rich background and a disciplined insight. It is much easier to ‘tell’ people what they should believe than to discriminate and unify.” (312)

328 See Dewey (1934), 317: “The blundering ineptness of much that calls itself judicial criticism has called out a reaction to the opposite extreme. The protest takes the form of ‘impressionist’ criticism. It is in effect, if not in words, a denial that criticism in the sense of judgment is possible, and an assertion that judgments should be replaced by statement of the responses of feeling and imagery the art object evokes. … [S]uch criticism reacts from the standardized ‘objectivity’ of ready-made rules and precedents to the chaos of a subjectivity that lacks objective control, and would, if logically followed out, result in a medley of irrelevancies”. Dewey advocates for a middle road between the extremes of judicial and impressionist criticism, arguing that the critic does not proceed by ready-made rules, but can still direct the experience of others in disciplined and insightful ways. I see Dewey pre-figuring Isenberg’s account of critical communication in passages such as this one: “Criticism is a search for the properties of the object that may justify the direct reaction. … It is a survey. The critic may or may not at the end pronounce definitely upon the total ‘value’ of the object. If he does, his pronouncement will be more intelligent than it would otherwise have been, because his perceptive appreciation is now more instructed. But when he does sum up his judgment of the object, he will, if he is wary, do so in a way that is a summary of the outcome of his objective examination. He will realize that his assertion of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ in this and that degree is something the goodness or badness of which is itself to be tested by other persons in their direct perceptual commerce with the object. His criticism issues as a social document and can be checked by others to whom the same objective material is available.” (321)
environment by way of shared capacities and rhythms of experience. This is still an empirical grounding for expecting others to be like me, without the force of necessity, the ‘ought’ that Kant wanted to secure for judgments of beauty.

Nevertheless, I think speaking in the plural first person could also be supported by a sense of community that is rooted in empirical experience. We can think, for example, of Dewey’s observation that basic elements of perceptual experience such as lines, shapes and sounds, carry expressive properties from our shared environment:

lines express the ways in which things act upon one another and upon us … For this reason, lines are wavering, upright, oblique, crooked, majestic … The habitual properties of lines cannot be got rid of even in an experiment that endeavors to isolate the experience of lines from everything else. The properties of objects that lines define and of movements they relate to are too deeply embedded.

Say someone disagrees with me that a series of straight, vertical lines look stable, she thinks they have an anxious look instead. I believe I would be quite puzzled by this, not because there are a priori grounds for finding straight, vertical lines stable, but because the empirical grounding for this reaction in the rhythms of our shared environment runs quite deep, and plays a part in making us relatable and comprehensible to each other. It could be that she just reacts differently, and it is not so much that her reaction would be wrong as that it would place her outside the aesthetic community I belong to, one in which it is a basic touchstone to find that vertical lines look stable.

In this case, the crisis of disagreement might be just as much about the truth of our being in community with each other as it is about the aesthetic properties of the lines (this time it is a community rooted in empirical rhythms of experience, unlike the a priori community felt in the free play, but as I say, this could still be quite an

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329 See Dewey (1934), 86: “A poem and picture present material passed through the alembic of personal experience. They have no precedents in existence or in universal being. But, nonetheless, their material came from the public world and so has qualities in common with the material of other experiences, while the product awakens in other persons new perceptions of the meanings of the common world.”

330 Ibid., 105.

331 Wittgenstein (1953), §240-241: “Disputes do not break out (among mathematicians, say) over the question of whether a rule has been obeyed or not. People don’t come to blows over it, for example. That is part of the framework on which the working of our language is based (for example, in giving descriptions). ‘So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false’ – It is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the language they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life.”
important kind of community for making sense of one another. So long as the agreement I am looking for involves first personal experience of how the lines look (not just assenting to the truth of a proposition about their aesthetic properties), the account of disagreement I have given could be extended to this kind of dispute.

The main requirement for extending my account beyond beauty is that it would defeat the purpose of the kind of judgment we are making, or the kind of agreement we are looking for, to shift from the first person to the third person in response to the dispute. Or, as we saw in Chapter 4 with framework disagreements, if it is the case that shifting to the third person would leave us with so little to go on for assessing how likely it is that the other is right, we can’t come to any view about this, positive or negative. In that case, insisting on retreating to the third person in order to decide how to respond to disagreement seems to do the other a disservice, getting us off the hook on a technicality (this kind of disagreement doesn’t allow for the sort of dispute-independent assessment the conciliatory view requires, so we don’t have to be bothered by it). If all we have available for a substantial assessment of the other’s view is a first personal attempt to re-construct her perspective imaginatively, we should at least be allowed to make the most of it.

As a final thought, I would like to apply the account of disagreement I have developed in a response to Nehamas’ criticism of Kantian aesthetics in his work Only a Promise of Happiness: The Place of Beauty in a World of Art (and echoed by Wilson).\(^{332}\) Nehamas claims that Kantian aesthetics dreams of a world where aesthetic difference has been eliminated. If aesthetic judgment makes a claim to universal agreement, then, ideally, everyone would accept every correct judgment: in a perfect world, we would all find beauty in the very same places. … But that dream is a nightmare … Imagine, if you can, a world where everyone likes, or loves, the same things, where every disagreement about beauty can be resolved. That would be a desolate, desperate world.\(^{333}\)

\(^{332}\) Wilson (2007), 155: “The goal is not that we all end up with the same taste, no matter how broad. That seems to be the tacit wish when someone claims to know a work’s true value, or when Kant and Hegel suggest that under ideal conditions, we’d all reach aesthetic agreement. As philosopher Alexander Nehamas said in a 2001 lecture, this is an awful vision, out of Invasion of the Body Snatchers. To say everyone ought to like what I like is to suggest everyone should be alike.”

\(^{333}\) Nehamas (2007), 83.
Nehamas suggests that there is something deeply disturbing about imagining a world where everyone actually agreed about what is beautiful, and that this is what a Kantian account of beauty aims for. Nehamas’ point gains traction for me, at least, when I imagine a world in which every movie review says basically the same thing, and everyone I ask about a new kind of music simply repeats my own evaluation of it. Desperate and desolate, indeed. However, there are a number of ways a Kantian theorist could respond.

First, she could agree that imagining a world where everyone finds the exact same things beautiful is a bleak vision, and try to set it off from Kant’s view somehow. One way to do this would be to point out that it is extremely unlikely universal agreement could ever become an empirical reality. In other words, we don’t have to choose between making judgments of beauty in a universal voice and a world with a rich diversity of opinions, for there are many factors that interfere with our efforts to bring about universal agreement by confusing our judgments, or preventing us from experiencing aesthetic objects the same way. These factors co-exist with the a priori conditions that make it possible to offer judgments of beauty in a universal voice, and we may even value them in their own right for the variety and interest they add to life. In a similar way, there might be a kind of dystopian monotony to imagining a world where everyone agreed about what is rational in philosophy, and each person you asked about the strength of an argument repeated your own assessment. And yet, I am not worried that this will actually come to pass, and it does not change my view that it is in the nature of rational judgments to look for universal agreement. In fact, how I would feel about a world in which everyone agreed about what is rational seems quite irrelevant to understanding the nature of rational judgments. I don’t think it becomes any more relevant when it is the nature of judgments of beauty we are considering.

334 Béatrice Longuenesse gave me an answer in this vein when I had the chance to ask her about Nehamas’ criticism. The response I give here is indebted to that conversation.
However, I am not entirely satisfied with this kind of answer to the criticism. I want to dig deeper, and address the very idea that universal agreement would be disturbing if it ever came about. I think this bleak vision misses something important about the community of feeling Kant describes. To start with, it has never struck me as a problem that pretty much everyone I meet agrees about the beauty of waterfalls, cherry blossoms, and the starry night sky. I am still interested in looking at the stars myself, looking at them with others, and looking at them in the ways others describe to me in their enthusiasm. Not only does the feeling of the free play the stars inspire never get old for me, neither does the agreement I find with others about it (an empirical realization of the community that is always there as an a priori presupposition of my judgment). The freedom of the free play means that our attempts to describe it won’t all be the same, as the reflective activity and pleasure we are trying to voice has no determinate character for us to repeat. This could address Nehamas’ worry that universal agreement about beauty paints a rather relentless picture of us all being the same, a monotonous chorus of agreement. However, the freedom of the free play suggests that even in agreement, we would not all have the same things to say about what we find beautiful. There could be great variety in our efforts to voice our shared feeling, which may be why we continue to be interested in poems and songs about cherry blossoms and the stars, even after hundreds of years of writing and singing and agreeing with each other about their beauty.\textsuperscript{335}

To defend Nehamas for a moment, it could be that particular instances of universal agreement aren’t troubling, it is imagining that everything we find beautiful would be universally agreed upon that is disturbing. However, once we have a good grip on the kind of community of agreement we are talking about, even this does not seem troubling to me. I don’t find it disturbing to imagine that I might stare in contented silence with others at all the things I find beautiful, in the same way as I do with the stars, for in each case it would come with a pregnant sense of sharing a feeling of endless, playful life.

\textsuperscript{335} The idea that agreement about beauty will be far from a monotonous repetition of opinion due to the freedom of the free play is indebted to conversations with Sonia Sedivy, and is discussed in her forthcoming book \textit{Beauty and the End of Art}. 

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don’t think the number of things we collectively find beautiful would change this sense of connection into something that is flat, boring or sinister. If that happens, what we are imagining starts to pull away from beauty for me. For instance, it does feel desolate to imagine universal agreement about pop music, including that of Céline Dion. But I think this is because I do not really find much pop music beautiful, in Kant’s sense. To imagine us all having the same opinion about it requires some kind of dystopian mechanism for ironing out harmless and arbitrary differences between us. This is disturbing, but would not be the case if the music were genuinely beautiful. Then the sameness of universal agreement would not have to be imposed by frightening and artificial means, it would come from the a priori conditions that make experiencing a shared world possible in the first place, the cognitive faculties and their principle of purposive activity that guides the free play. Far from a disturbing closing down of individual expression, the sameness that is presupposed by agreement about genuinely beautiful things is what allows other judges to be intelligible to us in the first place, a background against which a curious interest in our myriad empirical differences could gain traction. And unlike cognitive judgments that likewise presuppose the same basic cognitive set-up in other judges, judgments of beauty always surprise us with this feeling of community, for they are not made according to a rule or concept that could fade into the background of routine empirical cognition. Beauty offers a sense of community that occurs as an unprecedented gift, and I think that is another reason we do not get tired of discovering that others agree with us about it. Nehamas’ criticism seems to miss the kind of community presupposed in judgments of beauty in these two ways: 1) that it would be the realization of a community that is rooted in a priori conditions of possible experience, not an arbitrary imposition of sameness, and 2) this sense of community comes through a feeling of pleasure that cannot be pinned

336 See CJ, 5:187: “To be sure, we no longer detect any noticeable pleasure in the comprehensibility of nature and the unity of its division into genera and species, by means of which alone empirical concepts are possible through which we cognize it in its particular laws; but it must certainly have been there in its time, and only because the most common experience would not be possible without it has it gradually become mixed up with mere cognition and is no longer specially noticed.”
down in a determinate way and so is endlessly interesting in our feeling of it, and talking about it with others.

It might seem odd for me to wrap up this project with a love letter to agreement about beauty, for I have been arguing for an enriched account of what disagreement requires of us, an account on which it is not simply a matter of taking another’s belief as a bit of evidence that I may be mistaken, but puts pressure on me to take up her perspective in an imaginative effort to understand. We might think this ‘active grappling’ with the other’s view ends when we reach agreement. However, as we have just seen, I do not think this is the case for beauty. I am not finished with the perspectives of other once we come to agreement, for my feeling of pleasure in the free play is not finished with grounding a judgment that speaks for us together, in the plural first person.

By bringing this out, Nehamas’ criticism has given us a final opportunity to see that the kind of agreement we are looking for with others should inform our account of how it is rational to respond to disagreement. When we disagree about beauty, we are already thinking of each other as members of a community within which agreement would be endlessly interesting. I am already looking to her as someone who ought to be writing poems and singing songs with me in praise of this beauty. If that is the kind of agreement I aim for, it makes sense not to respond to disagreement either by simply dismissing her view (because I think I am right), or by treating her belief as evidence about the likelihood that I am mistaken. Neither of those responses address her as a perspective I am trying to speak for in making my plural first personal claim, a perspective I must try to understand if I am going to show her that my judgment can indeed speak for us.

In conclusion, when we encounter disagreement about beauty we face a choice: should I become less certain in what I believe, or should I remain confident? I have chosen to address this question in conversation with the debate in epistemology because we are often under pressure or inclination to apply standards of rationality found in such discussions to the realm of aesthetic
experience, or alternatively, to discount aesthetic experience entirely from the arena of standards for rationality. Neither option is satisfactory – we do need to think about what a rational response demands of us when we encounter disagreement about beauty, but those demands must also be tuned to what is at stake in aesthetic claims. By placing the debate from epistemology alongside a Kantian account of judgments of beauty I hope I have shown that the debate about disagreement in epistemology is relevant to a broad and profound question about how we relate to others as a community of judging subjects. I have also argued that Kant’s account of beauty offers a richer vision of what disagreement requires of us than the dogmatic dismissal of others he is often associated with. Maintaining confidence in the face of disagreement does not always mean that we are dismissing a peer, in the case of beauty it means we are continuing to engage with the other’s experience in the first person, just as her claim requires of us.
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