

## Evaluative Properties

Values are certainly among the properties which are of most importance to us. The specific significance of values for our lives arises primarily out of three widely recognized aspects of their nature. First, values are possessed by entities (persons, things, actions, mental phenomena, etc.) closely related to us. The non-evaluative features of these entities provide us with reasons to value their bearers; and the respective evaluative properties supervene, or otherwise depend on, the relevant non-evaluative features (Goldman (1995); Zangwill (2001)). Second, values exist only because human beings or communities exist. This is often spelled out in terms of the thesis that values are response-dependent: objects instantiate values just in case and because humans would, under appropriate circumstances, respond to them in a distinctive way (Wright (1988)). And third, values are inseparably linked to norms: instantiations of value imply that we ought to think or act in certain ways by prescribing us how to treat their bearers or related entities (Scanlon (1998)).

In this research, we aim to contribute to a better understanding of these three aspects of values and, hence, their significance for us. More specifically, we will be concerned with four important and interrelated issues: (a) the *value-theoretical question* of what, if anything, constitutes a reason for why entities possess value; (b) the *epistemological question* of how, if at all, we come to know of instantiations of value; (c) the *metaphysical question* of whether values are really dependent on our responses to, or on other values or features of, their bearers; and (d) the *normative question* of which kinds of norm are inseparably linked to value. Our main focus will thereby be on non-practical values, notably on aesthetic and certain epistemic values. There is already a very rich, diverse and well-developed debate concerning the nature of practical values (cf. Darwall et al. (1992)). In contrast, accounts of non-practical values have often neglected some or all of the four issues just mentioned, or simply presupposed without debate certain standard answers to them. Our hope is to remedy part of this lack of discussion.

This sub-project consists of three parts. The first seeks to provide answers primarily to the epistemological and the normative questions regarding aesthetic value. The second intends to address mainly the value-theoretical and the epistemological question regarding the epistemic value of justification, as it pertains to the reliance on *modus ponens* and to the application of concepts in reasoning. The third part aims to answer the metaphysical question regarding the relationships between the values of wholes and the values of their parts, and between evaluative properties and the underlying non-evaluative features.

### 1. Aesthetic Values (Fabian Dorsch)

*1.1. The state of the art.* This part of the sub-project aims to formulate a rationalist account of the epistemology and normativity of aesthetic value and to defend it against the orthodox sentimentalist view.

There is wide agreement in aesthetics on how to answer the *value-theoretical* and the *metaphysical questions*. We value artworks aesthetically because of certain facts about their appearance, content, history, and so on. These facts, or our experiences of them, provide us with evidence for aesthetic worth. Whether objects possess a certain aesthetic value depends then on our responses to their non-evaluative features. And aesthetic value is intrinsic in the sense of not being instrumentally linked to non-aesthetic values, such as practical or sentimental ones (Budd (1995); Goldman (1995); Dorsch (2000); Zangwill (2001)).

With respect to the *epistemological question*, there exists a similarly orthodox answer, namely sentimentalism (e.g., Hume (1985); Kant (1987); Budd (1995); Goldman (1995); Levinson (1995)). According to this view, it is our emotional responses which provide us with primary access to aesthetic merit, figure as grounds for, or constituents of, our aesthetic evaluations, and determine, under appropriate circumstances, which objects instantiate which aesthetic value. Sentimentalism is often motivated by the following considerations: (i) it can make sense of the fact that emotional reactions play a central role in aesthetic experience; (ii) it promises to explain the fact that the relevant emotional responses show some sensitivity to evidence for aesthetic worth - for instance, that our feeling of admiration may be heightened by the recognition of originality; and (iii) it supplements very well the uncontroversial particularist insight that aesthetic assessment is typically not the matter of deductive inference on the basis of judgements about non-aesthetic features (Kant (1987); Sibley (1965); Budd (1999); Dorsch (2000)).

However, sentimentalism does not combine very easily with the idea of the intersubjectivity of aesthetic evaluations, another view widely endorsed both by sentimentalists and in aesthetics in general (Hume (1985); Kant (1987); Budd (1995); Levinson (1995)). The problem is that experienced judges seem to be able to differ in their emotional reactions to artworks, even under appropriate circumstances and despite being equally highly sensitive to marks of aesthetic worth. But since appropriate emotional responses determine the aesthetic values of objects, the differences in response would lead to a relativization of aesthetic values to particular subjects (Budd (1999); Dorsch (2000)).

Traditional answers to this relativist challenge argue that the satisfaction of high enough standards (e.g., demanding full information, high expertise, great discriminatory ability, etc.) or, alternatively, the proper use of the rationality and cognitive faculties common to all human beings can ensure sameness in emotional disposition among critics (Hume

(1985); Kant (1987)). More recently, it has become common to accept, or at least to seriously entertain, the possibility of faultless disagreement (Goldman (1995); Budd (1999); Hopkins (2001)). Often, the strategy has been to discount the significance of this possibility - for instance because it is seldomly or never actually realized; or because it applies only to a certain few aesthetic values or evaluations (ibid.).

The debate about the *normative question* focusses almost exclusively on the thesis that the normativity of aesthetic values consists primarily in the demand (taken to be inherent to aesthetic judgements) that we should make or accept aesthetic evaluations just in case they are appropriate (e.g., have the right emotional grounds). The justification of this demand is thereby typically derived from the intersubjectivity of aesthetic judgements (Kant (1987); Zangwill (2001); Budd (1999)) and hence, too, faces the relativist challenge. However, whether this demand is characteristic of aesthetic value, or whether aesthetic value gives also rise to other norms, is not very often discussed.

*1.2. Previous research.* The research culminating in my MPhil thesis (Dorsch (2000)) on aesthetic experience and value concentrated on some of the metaphysical and value-theoretical issues mentioned above. My main results have been that aesthetic value is: (i) response-dependent; (ii) supervenient on the non-evaluative features which provide us with reasons for aesthetic assessment; and (iii) closely linked to the intrinsic value of the experiences that its bearers offer us. In my PhD dissertation (Dorsch (2005a)), I defended the Wittgensteinian view that imaginative phenomena (e.g., visualizing, supposing, or daydreaming) are mental actions allowing us to voluntarily control what, and how, they represent. In the light of this result, I have more recently begun to argue that many of the aspects of aesthetic experience often held to be imaginative - such as our awareness of what music expresses or paintings depict - in fact do not involve imagining (Dorsch (2005b); Dorsch (2006)). My current aim is to show that the imagination nonetheless plays a central role in aesthetic appreciation - for instance, by providing us with valuable access to significant experiences portrayed in artworks (e.g., concerning the death of a beloved person), without the cost of having to actually undergo them.

*1.3. Research plan.* In the first year of my research, I will try to show that sentimentalism and related views cannot answer adequately the *epistemological question*. On the one hand, I will defend the intersubjectivity of aesthetic assessments and therefore reject relativism, which conceives aesthetic values to be relativized to (groups of) subjects - for instance, those with the same set of emotional dispositions. I shall argue that this approach cannot explain why we often do take our disagreements to be genuinely concerned with who is at fault, and not merely with expressions of differing preferences; and why sufficient scrutiny and discussion often does lead to a convergence in aesthetic opinion, irrespective of emotional differences.

On the other hand, I will argue that both the traditional and the more recent replies to the relativist challenge are unsuccessful. The traditional answers are untenable because they cannot demonstrate how the invoked factors (e.g., rationality, expertise, etc.) can have such an impact on emotional dispositions as to rule out any divergence under appropriate conditions (Dorsch (2000)). The more recent attempts to accept the possibility of faultless disagreement, but only as limited to a small number of cases, are also bound to fail. The main problem is that there is no good reason to restrict the possibility of faultless divergence in emotional responses only to certain cases. For all our emotional dispositions are equally partly responsive to non-rational, causal factors. I maintain that this undermines the capacity of emotional responses, postulated by sentimentalism, to ground or constitute aesthetic evaluations.

The second year is reserved for the development and defence of my own answer to the *epistemological question*. I will argue for the rationalist view that aesthetic assessment is a matter of true or false judgements about the aesthetic worth of artworks, made on the basis of inductive considerations and inferences to the best explanation concerning the non-aesthetic features of the objects. My contention is that this approach fares much better than sentimentalism or relativism in explaining why our aesthetic evaluations often converge, and why competent judges can vary in their responses to artworks (cf. Bender (1995)). On this view, we determine the aesthetic merit of artworks in the same way in which we, say, estimate the number of spectators in a stadium just by looking and guessing, or judge someone's talent for basketball by taking into account his bodily features and sporting skills. Warranted opinions about the latter issues may differ considerably, but are still liable to converge under favourable circumstances. I shall argue that the same is true of aesthetic evaluations.

In the third year, I aim to argue that the rationalist approach is also best placed to answer the *normative question*, that is, the important, but often ignored challenge to identify the distinctive norms arising from aesthetic values. My aim is to demonstrate that aesthetic value is best understood as giving rise to norms governing our emotional attitudes towards the assessed objects (e.g., that we should admire or respect valuable objects). Following tradition, I shall argue that aesthetic worth does not establish norms governing our actions towards the evaluated objects (e.g., that we should create or preserve valuable objects; Kant (1987)). But contrary to tradition, I maintain that norms governing our treatment of our own and others' aesthetic evaluations, or of the underlying experiences of the respective objects (e.g., that we should seek or prolong appropriate or otherwise worthwhile responses) stem from values distinct from, and not instantiated by the bearers of, aesthetic value, namely the appropriateness of judgements or the values of experiences.

The problem for sentimentalism is now that it can assume norms demanding certain emotional responses towards artworks only if these responses would constitute or support an appropriate appraisal of them - that is, only if these norms are instrumentally linked to the demand that our aesthetic evaluations should be appropriate. The rationalist view, on the other hand, has no problem in keeping the two kinds of norms separate. Moreover, it can account for the centrality of emotions in aesthetic experience by assigning to them the role to draw our attention to those features of artworks which are evidence of their aesthetic merit. I shall argue that this is the best explanation of why our emotional responses to artworks, despite not constituting aesthetic grounds, are sensitive to reasons for aesthetic assessment (cf. the *value-theoretical question*) and subject to norms intimately linked to aesthetic value.

## 2. The Justification of Modus Ponens and of Concept Use (Gian-Andri Töndury)

[...]

## 3. Evaluative Properties and their Mereology (some doctoral student)

[...]

## 4. Conclusion

To sum up, we aim to provide and defend (i) a rationalist account of our knowledge of aesthetic and certain epistemic values (cf. the *epistemological question*). This approach is furthermore designed to accommodate and explain the following facts: (ii) that non-evaluative features figure both as reasons for evaluations and as supervenience bases for evaluative properties; (iii) that values are dependent on our judgemental responses to the non-evaluative features; and (iv) that the intrinsic values of a whole depend on the intrinsic values of its parts and the non-evaluative relations between them (cf. the *value-theoretical* and the *metaphysical questions*). In addition, we intend to argue (v) that, while aesthetic values are essentially non-practical in their normative dimension, the epistemic values considered are closely linked, if not reducible to, certain practical values (cf. the *normative question*). And finally, we aim to show (vi) that modal claims are best understood as evaluations of the sort discussed. What still remains to be seen is whether the proposed view can be extended to other epistemic and to practical values.

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