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Aesthetic and moral judgments: analogies and differences, real and apparent

In the history of philosophy going at least as far back as Hume, philosophers have assumed strong analogies between moral and aesthetic judgments, and sometimes some differences as well. Anti-realists or subjectivists such as Hume argue from what they take to be the obviously subjective nature of aesthetic judgment to a subjectivism in regard to moral judgments as well (although Hume posits universal principles in both domains; see Hume 1987). Realists tend to argue in the other direction, from assumed objectivity or truth in the moral domain to truth in aesthetic evaluations or real aesthetic properties. In a recent book Peter Kivy, for example, argues for realism in aesthetics in that way, although, unlike most others, he takes the realist's case in aesthetics to be in some respects the stronger of the two (see Kivy 2015).

Analogies there are, which is why we characterize both aesthetic and moral evaluations as value judgments, and differences too, although I take neither to be exactly as earlier philosophers have thought. My task in this paper will be to separate the real from apparent similarities and differences. I will do so in regard to aesthetic and moral properties, supposed principles, phenomenology, and most centrally, the nature of argument in the two domains, the latter indicating an

important difference in how we should characterize the nature of truth in aesthetic and moral judgment.

1. *Properties*

Both aesthetic and moral judgments, those ascribing aesthetic and moral properties, are expressive and normative at the same time as they purport to state facts. When we say that an artwork is beautiful or powerful, or that an action is right or kind, we express approval and suggest that others ought to approve as well. If at the same time we ascribe real properties to the artworks or actions, these properties must therefore be relational, akin to secondary qualities such as colors, as many philosophers (most prominently Hume) have argued. Just as to ascribe a color to an object is to say that it is such as to cause a certain sensation in normal or competent observers, so to ascribe a moral or aesthetic property, a value property, to an object or action is to say it is such as to elicit approval or disapproval in competent judges. On one side of the relation is the objective property that elicits the approval, the lines in the paintings or acts of giving aid; on the other side is the expression of approval and demand that others approve as well. The latter demand equates in part with an implicit claim that the evaluator is a fully competent judge.

Thus aesthetic and moral judgments, as value judgments, are structurally similar in the types of properties they ascribe. Differences lie in the nature of the objective properties that elicit the approvals or disapprovals and in the competencies that ideal or fully competent judges must possess. Before elaborating on those differences, one further similarity should be noted. Both aesthetic and moral properties may be thinner or thicker, the former being more purely evaluative, proper-

ties such as beauty or rightness, the latter suggesting more specific objective bases, properties such as gracefulness or cruelty. A judge will justify her ascription of the thinner properties by appealing first to the thicker evaluative properties, and ultimately, if necessary, to the purely objective properties that give rise to the judgments in the particular instances. An object can be beautiful because graceful, and graceful because of its smooth and gently curving lines. Similarly, an act can be wrong because cruel, and cruel because it inflicts harm without any perceived benefit. In all cases the more broadly evaluative properties are fixed for the evaluators in question by the more specifically objective properties (but we will consider later whether this implies universal principles linking these properties).

As noted, despite the structural similarities between aesthetic and moral properties and in the ways that ascriptions of them are justified, differences lie in the nature of the base or nonevaluative properties to which judges in the two domains respond, and in the competencies that these judges must possess. In the case of moral properties qualifying actions, the class of objective base properties is easily specified: the morally relevant properties are those features of agents' actions that significantly affect the interests of others, that potentially cause them harm or benefit. Aesthetically relevant objective properties form a far more diverse class. In my theory of aesthetic value, an aesthetically good work is one that simultaneously engages all our mental faculties: perceptual, emotional, imaginative, and cognitive. Thus formal properties of works engage us perceptually and cognitively, while expressive properties engage us emotionally, as we imaginatively project ourselves into the worlds of the works. Representational features

also require perceptual, cognitive, and imaginative apprehension. The properties of works that ultimately underlie these formal, expressive, and representational features are virtually boundless although unique to each work in their combinations.

The competencies of the judges who react appropriately to these morally and aesthetically relevant properties also differ. While moral sensitivity takes a substantial period of time to develop through various stages, it is mainly a matter of increasing emotional maturity, and especially of developed empathy, the capacity to place oneself in others' shoes so as to impartially take into account all of the effects on their interests of various actions. Only through such empathetic identification can one grasp all the morally relevant features of situations, beyond which a moral agent needs to acquire the will to act on his moral judgments. In order to grasp these morally relevant features, one must also avoid bias, inattention, and distorting personal emotions. There is finally a further requirement of coherence in ideal moral judges, which will be explained in a later section.

Evaluators of aesthetic merit need to be sensitive to the aesthetically relevant features of works, and this often requires moral sensitivity, especially to the plights of fictional characters. But beyond emotional sensitivity to expressive properties, competent aesthetic evaluation typically requires an extensive knowledge base that includes the history of the genre in question, technical knowledge of the relevant materials, a comparative base of other works embodying similar artistic intentions, and so on. Even to meet the perceptual challenge of complex works, to perceive all the relevant formal re-

lations often requires such technical knowledge, little of which is required for judges of morality.

To summarize in concluding this section, an action's being right can be analyzed as its being such as to elicit approval, in virtue of its thicker morally relevant properties, from impartial, coherent, and empathetic judges. An artwork's being aesthetically good consists in its being such as to elicit approval (or cause pleasure), in virtue of its thicker aesthetic properties (formal, expressive, representational), in unbiased, sensitive, and knowledgeable critics.

2. Principles

If one goes by majority opinion, there is a difference between moral and aesthetic judgments in that the former are backed by principles while the latter are not (see Mothersill 1984: 100-115). Most moral philosophers believe that moral judgment consists in applying principles to particular cases, while most aestheticians since Kant deny that aesthetic evaluations are rule governed. But in this case majority opinion is wrong: the difference is only apparent, not because, as some others believe, principles apply in both domains, but, at least in regard to interesting and generally useful principles, they exist in neither. Since, as explained in the previous section, both moral and aesthetic properties are relational or response dependent, and come in thicker and thinner varieties, principles could exist at two different levels, and they could be stronger or weaker. They could link thicker evaluative properties, those with more specific objective sides, to thinner or more purely evaluative properties such as beauty or rightness; or they could link purely objective properties to proper evaluations. Only the latter would provide ultimate justifications. In regard to strength,

principles could state necessary and sufficient conditions, only necessary or only sufficient conditions, or they could indicate only that certain conditions count only in one direction, positively or negatively, toward proper evaluations.

As noted above, we do justify ascriptions of thin evaluative properties by appeal to thicker ones, and ultimately by appeal to purely objective base properties. But is this a matter of implicitly appealing to universal principles? In ethics we can find principles linking thick properties to thin ones, but these principles are trivial and not useful in moral reasoning. Murder is always wrong, but that is only because murder is defined as wrongful or illegal homicide. The real task in controversial cases is to determine whether an act of killing is murder, i.e. wrong, and the principle is of no use there. Killing other humans is usually wrong, but there are open-ended exceptions and so no useful principles even in this case linking nonevaluative properties to proper evaluations.

Mine may be a minority opinion, but I don't believe there is even a *prima facie* principle here, that in so far as an act is a killing, it is to that extent wrong, that killing always counts negatively. Killing Hitler in 1941 would have been simply right and good, or, to take a more common case, mercy driven assisted suicide does not strike me as *prima facie* wrong. Admittedly, we can find other cases in which a certain kind of act is universally wrong. Torturing babies for fun would certainly be a case in point. But principles capturing such rare cases are so narrowly defined as again to be of little use generally in moral reasoning. Thus, we generally find neither strong nor weak principles linking nonmoral or objective properties to moral rightness and wrongness, and the principles that link thicker

moral properties to proper evaluations are tautologous, too trivial to be of use.

The situation is almost identical in aesthetics. But here first of all it is more difficult to find any principles linking even thick aesthetic properties to thin evaluations. Elegance, for example, is usually a good-making property of an artwork or performance, but an elegant performance of *Sweeney Todd* or *The rite of spring* may be no better, in fact worse, for being elegant, and the same might be said of the elegant prose of some adventure tale or horror story, if the elegance detracts from the story's power or its effect on our emotions. It is true that when a critic simply calls a work elegant, she usually implies that it is good, but this is a conversational implication reflecting only a usual connection, not a universal principle. Being powerful might be a lone exception in being always good-making or counting positively in an artwork, but that might be because it is synonymous with being all-engaging, my criterion of aesthetic value. In cases where it is not synonymous, I doubt that being powerful is always good, since a powerful work might move us only to disgust or revulsion, generating mixed reviews from competent critics depending on whether the revulsion turns us off from other engagement with the work. A rule to create an all-engaging work might broadly guide an artist, but he will not find principles that tell him how to satisfy it.

Nor do I see any reason to posit *prima facie* principles here any more than in the moral domain. Frank Sibley famously argued that while strong principles are lacking in aesthetics (in his terms, aesthetic concepts are not condition governed), there are what I am calling *prima facie* principles, in that certain features count always positively or negatively (see Sibley

1959). But I see no reason to agree. Once again, an elegant or graceful performance of a violent horror story may be no better at all for that. Hume cites interruptions of narratives as defects in story telling (see Hume 1987: 232), but then George Eliot and Herman Melville must be weak novelists. Another slight difference between the two domains, however, is that whereas, as pointed out above, principles linking objective properties to moral judgments must be very narrowly stated, in the case of aesthetics, such principles would be very broadly stated (if it is all-engaging, it is good), and perhaps unique. In neither case are these principles of much use in settling disagreements. The analogies between the two domains here are far more salient than the differences.

The reasons for a lack of useful principles in the two domains are also very similar. First, there is the ubiquitous effect of context on particular features of acts or artworks. A beautiful phrase, theme, or movement in a Mozart symphony would sound terrible in a symphony by Stravinsky, and the example generalizes throughout art. Similarly, that a benevolent act is made better by being pleasurable is reversed when the act is sadistic. Benevolence itself can be bad when overdone, as in spoiling a child; mercy can be out of place when someone deserves to be punished, etc. This effect of context in reversing usual good- or bad-making features is the strongest argument for particularism in ethics, and the point is more obvious in aesthetics.

The second reason for the lack of universal principles to which one could appeal in settling arguments is the effect of different tastes in art or, in the case of ethics, commitment to different moral values or priorities among them. That an artwork is good means that it would earn approval from ideal

critics, but judging from the most competent and knowledgeable critics we have, even ideal critics will disagree. Even the greatest paradigms in the canon – Mozart, Beethoven, Shakespeare – have their detractors. Taste is an ineliminable element in evaluation at every level of sophistication, and tastes diverge. What one critic finds powerful another finds strident or grating. There may be limits to such faultless disagreements – what strikes one as powerful another will not find weak or insipid – but these limits do not generate universal agreement or the principles that would require it.

In ethics, what a libertarian approves a utilitarian does not; what a retributivist approves a consequentialist does not; what a liberal approves a conservative does not. Of course, if being good is being approved by an ideal or fully competent observer, there must be causal laws linking properties of acts to such approvals. But these laws will differ for different observers (i.e. the commitments of the observers enter into them). Again, what principles we can find are too few and narrowly stated to be of use in settling these major disagreements. In aesthetics the causal laws will link unique works to particular critics or again link only responses (emotional, cognitive, etc.), not objective properties, to evaluations. The differences between the two domains are minor in this regard.

3. *Phenomenology*

This section can be brief. In his aforementioned book Kivy argues for a difference in the phenomenology of experiencing aesthetic versus moral properties that makes the case for realism in regard to the aesthetic properties the stronger of the two. We seem to perceive aesthetic properties in their objects, while it is more questionable whether we seem literally

to perceive rightness or goodness. Of aesthetic properties Kivy writes: "Their phenomenology seems right, unproblematic, in this respect, for real properties in the external world [...]. We see the graceful movements of the ballerina" (Kivy 2015: 130-131). It is noteworthy, however, that he speaks of graceful movements and not simply of gracefulness itself. Yes, we see the graceful movements, but do we literally see, or seem to see, the gracefulness in them, as opposed to the seemingly effortless, smooth, and light steps (the objective base properties)?

Hume argues in the opposite direction, from the phenomenology of aesthetic experience to that of moral experience, and hence to a subjectivism in regard to both kinds of property, presupposing that aesthetic experience more obviously precludes literal perception of the evaluative properties. He writes: "Euclid has fully explained all the qualities of the circle, but has not said a word of its beauty. In vain would you look for it in the circle or seek it [...] by your senses [...] in all the properties of that figure". Similarly, he then argues: "in moral deliberations we must be acquainted, beforehand, with all the objects and all their relations to each other; and from a comparison of the whole fix our choice or approbation. No new fact to be ascertained, no new relation to be discovered" (Hume 1957: 108-110). Just as we see the circle and then feel pleasure and express approval, so we see the robber draw his weapon and demand payment, and then we express our disapproval.

I side with Hume here. The argument might appear to be simple. Once we realize that aesthetic properties are relational or response dependent, that ascribing them expresses approval or disapproval, it might seem obvious that we cannot

simply perceive such properties in objects. We perceive only the objective sides of these relations, not our own responses, in the objects. But the point in regard to the phenomenology, or experience itself as it seems to us, is not quite so straightforward. Colors, all agree, are also response dependent properties, but we surely seem to see them on the surfaces of objects. We infer to response dependence from other premises, not directly from the phenomenology of color perception. Thus, conversely, we cannot infer directly from response dependence to a subjectivist phenomenology.

But the case is different in regard to colors versus aesthetic and moral properties. The objective sides of color properties cause sensations of color in viewers, and these appearances or experiences of color on surfaces are easily seen as properties of the objects themselves. But attitudes of approval and disapproval do not seem to be on the surfaces of objects. Once we recognize that feeling these attitudes, or feeling pleasure and displeasure, is part of the experience of aesthetic and moral properties, this experience no longer seems to be straightforward perception of objective features of artworks or actions. And the feeling of pleasure or pleasurable response is more salient in the case of beauty than it is when judging an action to be right. I conclude that Hume is on the mark in arguing from aesthetic to moral phenomenology.

The apparent difference that Kivy claims depends on his citing an example of a thick aesthetic property and its object (graceful movement), which we can be said to perceive. But that we perceive a graceful movement does not imply that we perceive or seem to perceive the gracefulness itself in the movement. In the same way we can be said to perceive a wrong action (the robbery) without literally perceiving its

wrongness. The case is clearer with beauty or artistic merit, the thin aesthetic evaluative properties. There is no real difference in phenomenology¹.

4. *Argument: realism*

Realists argue from the very fact of argument in the two domains to the reality of moral and aesthetic properties. Why would we argue about our moral and aesthetic judgments unless we assume that there is a truth to the matter, a truth that is independent of the beliefs or evaluations, of the tastes and commitments, of the disputants? If a judgment can be true for me and false for you, what would be the point of arguing about it? In disagreeing, if we are, we would not be contradicting one another. Even if they are not correct, those who argue about aesthetic and moral judgments must at least believe there is an objective truth to the matter. And if we argue, as we all do, it might be sufficient to convince us that we must believe in realism, must be realists ourselves. If we are not, it is argued, we would be irrational in lacking reasons to argue. In this respect judgments in both domains differ from matters of pure taste, as in foods. We do not argue about the taste of bacon, since we know it is just a matter of taste, and there is no truth to be found. In the case of moral and aesthetic judg-

¹ For the sake of the relevant argument, I have accepted here Kivy's assumption that phenomenology or perceptual experience is an indication of the reality or unreality of properties. But under the currently popular definition of realism, real properties are those the ascriptions of which are true independently of the subject's other beliefs or evaluations, or of how things appear to the subject. Thus, response dependent properties can be real, if we all respond in the same ways. Hume, by contrast, can be seen as arguing only for response dependence on the ground of phenomenology. This section has been concerned with whether there is a significant difference in phenomenology between moral and aesthetic experience.

ments, by contrast, we have a reason to argue, and there is none, realists hold, other than the attempt to determine the truth.

But in fact we have very good motives for arguing in both domains other than the hope to settle on an objective truth. I argue about moral and aesthetic evaluations, and I do not consider myself irrational to do so, even though I am not a realist about either. In ethics, our judgments are intended to move us to action. Thus, even if those judgments express only our subjective values, we want others to act in accord with them, and so we try to get them to share the judgments and act accordingly. In addition, sharing values is important in itself, as it creates a community and a sense of community that is crucial to our mental health. As social beings, we need to feel part of a community, to have our identities confirmed and supported by others, and sharing values, including prominently moral values, is a large part of that feeling.

Kivy argues that no such motives exist for argument in aesthetics, since it does not matter so much whether others agree with our aesthetic judgments, and since aesthetic judgments do not move us to action as moral judgments do. According to him, there is therefore no explanation left for aesthetic argument other than the search for truth or the objective fact of the matter. But he can be argued to be wrong on both counts. In regard to motivating action, when we enjoy a movie, for example, we might well want our friend to go see it as well. We try to move him to act accordingly and to enjoy the experience as we did. Appreciation itself can be construed as an action, or if not, it certainly involves mental actions such as paying attention, clearing one's mind, etc.

Of course Kivy can ask, and does, why we care whether another person appreciates what we do. But again the answer is not hard to come by, appealing, as in ethics, to shared values and the role they play in developing and maintaining a sense of community. Thus our reasons for trying to convince others to share our aesthetic judgments are both altruistic and self-regarding. If we care about other people, we want them to have the pleasure that appreciation of good art affords. And we want the bond with them that comes from shared taste. Shared pleasure is greater pleasure, which is why we hear canned laughter in TV comedies.

It is true that we criticize others' positive as well as their negative evaluations of works. It might seem that the altruistic explanation does not apply in the former case. After all, we are then criticizing the enjoyment they are deriving from works that we consider inferior, not seeking to promote that enjoyment. But we may still have an altruistic motive, if we believe that deeper enjoyment comes from appreciating better works with improved taste. In criticizing the positive evaluations of others, we aim to improve their taste. And the second motive of sharing taste certainly still applies, the bonds of shared community.

There is a subtle difference here between morality and art in that the desire for shared aesthetic values as the ground of community seems more tribal than the similar desire to share moral values. We want everyone, even those in distant cultures, to share our moral values and act accordingly, to respect the rights that we honor, etc. We want this even when we know it is unlikely. But when it comes to aesthetic taste, we want only certain others to share our taste, and we are perfectly happy to distinguish ourselves from others who do

not, and whom we don't particularly care about. In both cases our values help to define who we are, our personal identities and the images we project to others. But while we want others to be as moral as we are according to our view of morality, we are very content to have better taste in art than others, to be part of the aesthetic elite.

To summarize, even if we are not realists, we want others to share our moral judgments and act accordingly, and we want at least certain others, those with whom we are inclined to argue, to share our tastes in art. If we admire another person's aesthetic taste generally, we might also want confirmation in the particular case, to know that one with good taste would approve as we do. On the other side, we can question whether realists always have more reason to argue. Kivy seems to assume that realism in regard to some subject matter is a sufficient reason for arguing about it. But that is not the case either. First, I know many truths that are too trivial or inconsequential to try to convince others to believe. Second, even important truths that affect people's lives may not be worth disputing, if there is little chance of success in resolving the dispute. I believe there is a fact of the matter as to whether God exists and evidence that is quite conclusive, but I very rarely argue with my religious friends since I have little hope of convincing them, and, for all I know, they may be better off for clinging to their false belief. Similarly, realism in regard to aesthetic judgment, belief that there is an objective truth about the worth of artworks, does not in itself make it worth arguing. I must still care whether the person disagreeing with my judgment is able to be persuaded and is worth persuading. I need not care what you believe any more than I care what you favor.

Not only is realism neither a necessary nor a sufficient reason in itself to argue about value judgments in either domain, but the course that arguments take in both better supports the anti-realist's position. I refer to the fact that at a certain point arguments in these areas break down or cease, when the search for an objective truth would not. Once one points to all the objective features of an artwork that she takes to be relevant to its worth, once the other person recognizes these features, and once it becomes clear that their tastes generally diverge, they simply agree to disagree. Judging from real critical practice, even ideal critics who are apprised of all the relevant facts or objective properties will continue to diverge in interpretations and evaluations, and therefore real disputants cannot hope always to agree when all the evidence is in. Nor, if ideal critics will disagree, is it always a matter of better versus worse taste (which is not to say that all tastes are equally good).

Moral commitment is like taste in this regard. If a libertarian values freedom over welfare, and a utilitarian the converse, argument between them will break down despite agreement on the facts of the given case. When it comes to disagreement over facts themselves by contrast, there is always the hope that further evidence might be found or acknowledged. The argument may be postponed without being terminated. Thus the course and outcomes of arguments indicate a contrast between the search for objective truth and disagreements in value judgments, both in ethics and aesthetics. There is again a subtle difference here, however, in the fact that aesthetic arguments will break down before moral arguments do, reflecting in part the greater need to settle moral disputes. More on that in the next section.

5. *Argument: methods*

In the previous section I pointed mainly to similarities between moral and aesthetic arguments regarding implications for the debate between the realist and anti-realist. The methods of arguing in the two domains also begin similarly, but diverge at an important point. If good artworks and right actions are those that elicit approval from ideal critics, then the first thing to check in arguments of both sorts is whether your opponent is a competent judge. Thus you will check whether he is attentive, unbiased, empathetic (in morally judging), and knowledgeable (in aesthetically judging). In regard to being sufficiently attentive, you want to know whether he is attending to all the relevant features of the artwork or action. You will therefore draw his attention to the features that prompt your evaluation and see whether his reaction changes. These features may include complex relations that take considerable knowledge or experience to comprehend.

We might pause to ask why one needs to be a competent critic in these respects. Why not just enjoy whatever you enjoy? The first obvious answer is that one wants to respond to the work or action as it is, taking note of all its relevant features. After all, one is judging the work or action itself, not simply free associating. Missing some relevant feature is not being fair to the work or the artist, to the action or actor. And missing something relevant to evaluation is missing a possible source of appreciation and enjoyment. For that reason those who judge positively usually present the bulk of the argument. Second, as pointed out earlier, in the case of art deeper enjoyment comes from reacting in a knowledgeable way to works that present some challenge to our mental faculties,

engaging us on different levels simultaneously. We enjoy meeting such challenges.

In both domains, then, argument begins in similar ways, not by finding universal principles and applying them to the case, but by pointing to relevant features of the case and checking that one's opponent can take account of them properly. These initial steps are similar despite the fact that the relevant qualifications of the judges are somewhat different in the two domains. In both cases the relevant features will likely be at first thick normative properties, and then, in support of those, the objective base properties that ultimately elicit the reactions or thin evaluations. Much of the argument will concern the facts or features that must be apprehended before proper evaluations can be made.

Now, however, differences between the two domains emerge. In aesthetics there is a very significant step between noting objective features of works and evaluating them, namely interpreting those features. This is not the place to defend a theory of interpretation, and I have done so elsewhere (see Goldman 2013). In my view interpreting a work is explaining its features by showing how those features contribute to the aesthetic values of the work. There can therefore be incompatible but equally acceptable interpretations that bring out different values that the work can instantiate. Arguments about interpretation can therefore break down when the interpreters' priorities among those values differ, although there are certain objective criteria for acceptable interpretations, such as how well interpretations of different features or parts of a work cohere into an intelligible interpretation of the whole. Competent but opposing evaluations will often result from opposing interpretations of a work, although both will ultimately result

from different priorities among aesthetic values, or different tastes.

Interpretation is a much less prominent antecedent to moral evaluation. Morally relevant interpretation of a person's action is mainly a matter of trying to discern whether her motive was malicious, benevolent, or morally neutral. There is a fact of that matter, no matter how difficult to determine. Hence moral argument should not break down irrevocably at that point. More important, even when there is agreement on all the relevant facts and opposition only in evaluation, moral argument need not break down as aesthetic argument does. This is because of a requirement of consistency or coherence in moral evaluation that does not exist in the aesthetic sphere. When we judge two moral cases differently, we must be able to cite a morally relevant difference between them, a feature that generally makes a moral difference elsewhere as well. There is no such requirement in judging artworks, since, as many aestheticians point out, they are evaluated as unique wholes. In judging that Haydn's 104th Symphony is better than his 103rd, I need not, and indeed cannot, point to objective sequences of notes that would make other symphonies better as well. But pointing to some generally relevant difference between fetuses and infants is exactly what I must do in arguing that abortion is permissible, while infanticide is not. We evaluate actions morally according to their repeatable objective features, while that is not the case with evaluating artworks.

This difference means that there is a way of settling disagreements in ethics that does not exist in aesthetics. Even when disputants do not share an entire moral framework, as long as they are willing to argue from a base of settled judgments on which they do agree, they can argue to the decision

on the controversial case that is most coherent with that base. As long as they agree, for example, that contraception is permissible but infanticide is not, they should in principle be able to reach agreement on abortion, if they can agree on facts about the fetus. They would need to agree also on the features of the infant that make killing it wrong in order to determine whether the fetus has those properties or when it acquires them. On the other hand, if they do not agree even on the moral status of contraception or on the relevant features of the infant, the argument will most likely break down or be futile².

The point here again is that no such method is available in aesthetics. There one is limited to pointing to what one takes to be the aesthetically relevant features of works and hoping to elicit the same reactions from one's disputants. Settled cases or paradigms therefore function differently in the two domains. In ethics, as noted above, they function as a base from which to argue by analogy and difference. In aesthetics they function only to indicate the general tastes of the disputants, what they take to be model works of art. This is useful to know since there is less chance of success in arguing with one who does not generally share one's taste.

6. Conclusion: truth

I have noted similarities between moral and aesthetic judgments in the structure of the properties to which they refer, in the lack of universal principles supporting the judgments, in the anti-realist implications of the methods of arguing for these judgments, and in the initial steps those methods em-

² For a more complete description of this method of argument, see Goldman 2002, chapter 4.

ploy. Differences exist in the qualifications of the judges, in the nature and functions of interpretation as a preliminary to evaluative judgment, in the extent of the need or desire to share aesthetic tastes and moral frameworks, and most important, in the later steps of arguments to support the evaluative judgments, the requirement of coherence only in one's entire set of moral judgments.

The latter requirement in the moral but not aesthetic domain implies a different account of truth for the two sorts of judgments. That the roles of taste and moral commitment cannot be factored out means that truth must be relativized in both (if one does not abide by the concept of relative truth, we can speak instead of acceptability). In aesthetics we can say that a true or acceptable judgment is one that would be endorsed by an ideal critic who shares one's taste. This allows for error if one is inattentive, lacking in relevant knowledge, or biased.

In ethics a judgment is true if a member of some maximally coherent set endorsed by an ideal observer who generally shares one's prioritized values or moral commitments. This allows for error not only in the above mentioned cases, but when one judges any two cases differently without being able to cite a generally (but not necessarily universally) morally relevant difference between them. Correct judgment is both easier and harder to come by in the ethical domain: easier because one need not have arcane knowledge in order to be a fully competent judge (although one does need a developed capacity for empathy and a broad impartial perspective); harder because one needs to be coherent in a way not applicable to aesthetic judgment.

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