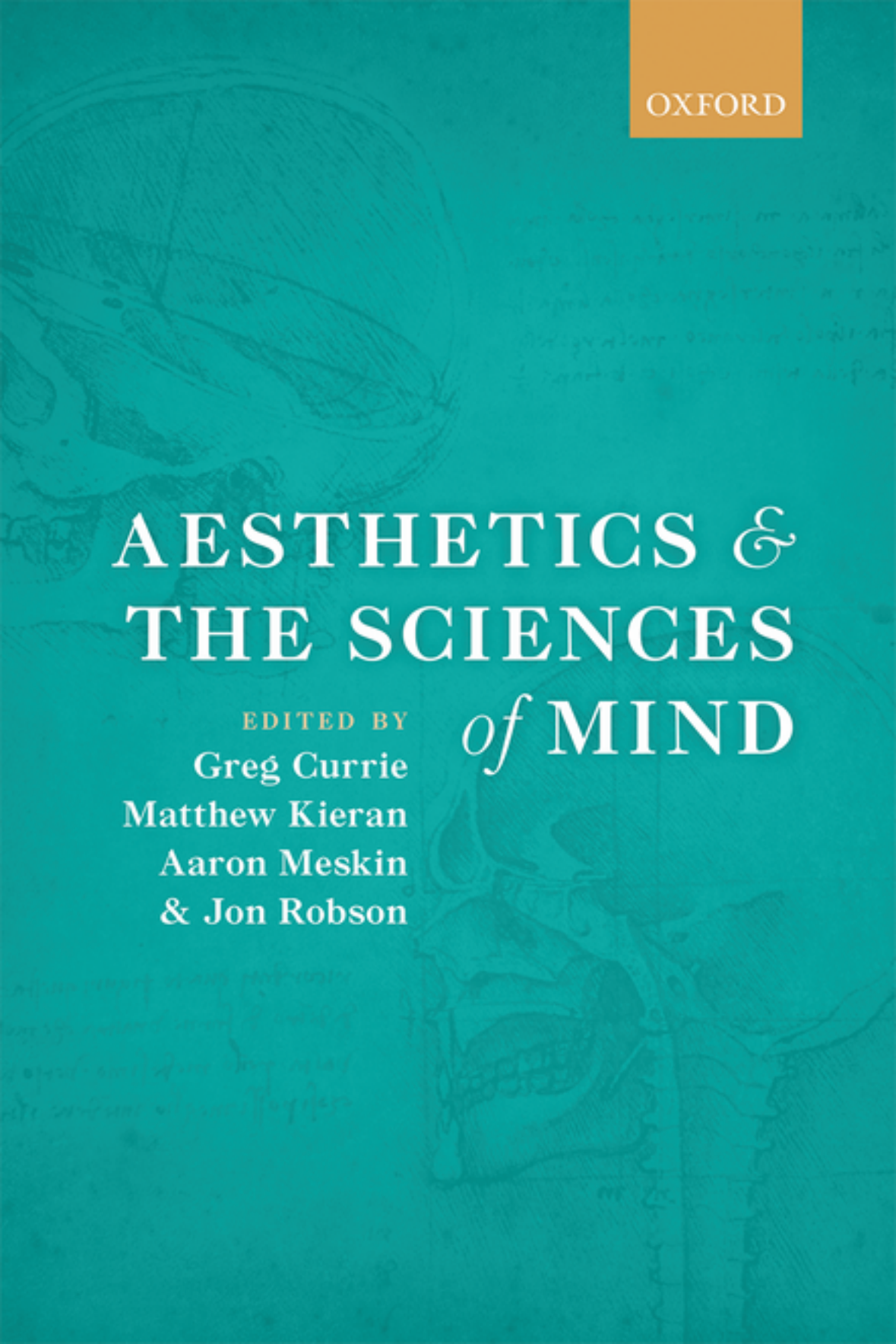
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AESTHETICS & THE SCIENCES of MIND
EDITED BY
Greg Currie
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Aesthetics and the Sciences of Mind

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# Introduction

*Greg Currie, Matthew Kieran, Aaron Meskin, and Jon Robson*

Are the traditional methods of philosophical aesthetics adequate, or should we supplement—even replace—them with some of the methods employed by the natural or social sciences? Many of the contributors to this volume argue that we should pursue some version of the latter course, while others express scepticism about such a transformation of the discipline.

Some of the chapters in this volume confront this issue head-on; others address it indirectly by trying to show how adopting their favoured methodology can help cast some light on a particular first-order issue. Later, we summarize the contributions to this volume; before that we try to put the contemporary debate about method in context.

## I.1 Historical Context: Philosophical Precursors and Sceptics

A brief examination of the thought of a few key figures shows that there is no simple answer to the question of how philosophers of art have thought about the relationship between philosophical and scientific approaches to the study of the aesthetic domain. Some historical figures were comfortable making empirical hypotheses—hypotheses straightforwardly amenable to scientific investigation—while others were profoundly resistant to this approach.

### *I.1.1 Aristotle*

An emphasis on the relevance of the sciences to philosophical enquiry about aesthetics and the arts can be traced back to Aristotle. Although Aristotle did not think that the empirical sciences, as we now think of them, determine how we should answer philosophical questions, he believed that such answers should at least be consistent with what we know (or have best reason to think) is the case. Aristotle's science of the soul, to adopt Brentano's phrase (1874), aimed at an account of, amongst other things, the

workings of our faculties and mental processes. Hence Aristotle's views often depend upon empirical assumptions about the kind of creatures we are and how we typically respond. Thus his response to Plato's criticism of the cognitive value of the arts relies on some substantive empirical claims. He suggests that we naturally take pleasure in imitation or pretence (Tatarkiewicz 1970/2005: 141–4) and that this pleasure is, at base, a cognitive one—rooted in learning (*Poetics* IV). In virtue of poetry's capacity to represent not just how things are but also how they could be, poetic works can represent general underlying patterns of human thought and action. We may glean insight from such representations and take pleasure in doing so. Contra Plato, enjoyment and learning are closely intertwined in the realm of the arts.

Or consider Aristotle's strictures on the best kind of tragedies (*Poetics* XIII–XV). Whilst his account is strongly normative it implies certain empirical commitments about our emotional responses; for example, that only certain kind of actions and situations can produce pity and fear and, perhaps more fundamentally, that tragedies can and do traffic in the production of full-fledged character-directed emotions (a view which has come under some criticism in recent years; Walton 1990: 195–204; 1997).

Most intriguingly, there is Aristotle's difficult notion of catharsis (*Poetics* VI). Whatever catharsis is—emotional purgation, purification, or transformation—it appears to be intended to pick out a real but contingent psychological phenomenon—a phenomenon that should be open to systematic empirical investigation.

### *I.1.2 Hutcheson and Hume*

Whilst eighteenth-century British Aesthetics gave birth to a variety of approaches to the nature and standard of taste (Shelley 2013) the most celebrated are those of Hutcheson and Hume. Inspired by Shaftesbury, Hutcheson (1726/2004) argues that we have a sensitivity to beauty which is independent of the senses, since we appreciate the beauty in theorems and ideas as well as in pictures and music; and anyway the workings of our externally directed sense organs alone do not guarantee the appreciation of perceived objects as beautiful, since not everyone with good eyesight sees the beauty in a picture. This sensibility to beauty is disposed to respond to (i.e. apprehend and take pleasure in) certain kinds of interrelations between properties that may be possessed by ideas, nature, or artworks, and Hutcheson goes on to identify the master principle governing it as the apprehension of uniformity amidst variety. For Hutcheson, this reflects a decision of the creator: just as God could have disposed us to see colours other than as we do see them, so God could have disposed us to respond to different properties and relations with pleasure. But God's choice imposes a law-like regularity upon the responses of our sensible nature to features of the world, and it is this response which constitutes beauty.

Hume (1777/1985) can be understood as taking this key feature from Hutcheson whilst severing the divine connection. Taste, which is the capacity to respond pleasurably to certain features, just is constituted by human nature. Hume spells out his account in terms of an object's being naturally fitted to give rise to certain kinds of

subjective responses. This affords an element of objectivity given the recognition that human nature can be defective. However, unlike the case of colour—where the standard observer is fixed by standard human nature—Hume recognizes that in the case of taste our judgement can go wrong not just because our human nature is defective but also because our sensibility may lack the refinement needed to appreciate or pick out appropriately relevant interrelations and features of the relevant object. This emphasis on refinement highlights the need to understand the variability we find in appreciators. Appreciator differences in capacities, processing, or discriminative refinement may have distinct sources and be more or less blameless. To take an obvious example, blindness is a visual incapacity which puts someone in a bad position to appreciate paintings. This much is obvious. But what the psychological and social sciences may offer are further ways of identifying less obvious incapacities, deficiencies, refinements, or sources of variation and difference which may be more or less problematic (Kieran 2010).

### *I.1.3 Kant*

Aristotle, Hutcheson, and Hume make substantive claims about beauty and taste that seem open to empirical investigation. Kant, on the other hand, rejects the idea that empirical investigation is relevant to understanding the aesthetic (1790/1987). In essence Kant's problem is this: aesthetic judgements are based on subjective feelings and yet it seems internal to one important class of those judgements that they claim necessary and universal validity. To say 'x is beautiful' does not merely imply 'x pleases me' but that 'x must please all others'. In the 'Analytic of the Beautiful' Kant aims to reconcile these two seemingly inconsistent intuitions.

Hume's mistake, according to Kant, was to seek the grounds for consistency in the judgements of critics in human nature. Such an inquiry is appropriate to understanding the merely agreeable, which affords pleasure due to the particular desires, interests, and appetites we happen to have. These will typically vary, though it may be that some of them are shared by all; what is crucial is that the pleasure depends upon our contingent empirical nature. By contrast, that which is truly beautiful, or more broadly aesthetic, affords pleasure by engaging mental capacities we all share in virtue of being rational embodied minds.

Kant held that in order to apprehend the world at all, the imagination gives form to the influx of sense data in the application of basic categories. Standardly, when we pay attention to what we perceive, we are interested in whether the object exists and what it exists as; such an approach is necessary for the satisfaction of our desires. Thus in ordinary perception and cognition we seek to grasp the nature of the object by the application of determinate concepts. However, in the judgement of taste we are interested in the form of the object for its own sake; here our imagination and understanding are engaged in free play and the object is not brought under determinate concepts. Hence a true judgement of taste (e.g. beauty) has the features of disinterestedness, universality, purposiveness without purpose and necessity. The pleasure arises as a function of

the way an object engages the capacities we share as rational embodied minds, which are a precondition for knowledge, in harmonious free play. This is why Kant claims that 'there is no science of the beautiful, but only critique; and there is no fine science, but only fine art. For in a science of the beautiful, whether or not something should be considered beautiful would have to be decided scientifically, i.e., through bases of proof, so that if a judgement about beauty belonged to science then it would not be a judgement of taste' (1790/1987: 172). While science may turn up empirical generalizations about what human beings tend to find agreeable and why, such as the taste of sweetness or saltiness, it does not reveal anything interesting about the nature of aesthetic judgement.

### *I.1.4 Wittgenstein*

Much later, Wittgenstein's very different approach to philosophy generated a similar scepticism, based in part on his conviction of the fundamental mismatch between the nature of science and the proper aims of philosophy:

> Our craving for generality has [one] source…our preoccupation with the method of science. I mean the method of reducing the explanation of natural phenomena to the smallest possible number of primitive natural laws; and, in mathematics, of unifying the treatment of different topics by using a generalization. Philosophers constantly see the method of science before their eyes, and are irresistibly tempted to ask and answer in the way science does. This tendency is the real source of metaphysics, and leads the philosopher into complete darkness. I want to say here that it can never be our job to reduce anything to anything, or to explain anything. Philosophy really is "purely descriptive." (Wittgenstein 1958: 17)

Wittgenstein's point here is a general one, but it has had an important influence on aesthetic thinking at various points. One is a suspicion of the idea that we might, through the project of seeking a definition, find what is essential to art—a suspicion from which was born the idea that art is a 'family resemblance' concept. Another relates to the alleged differences between the styles of reasoning employed in the sciences and those proper to aesthetics (Wittgenstein 1970: 19–28). When we ask for reasons in aesthetics, the kind of questions we have in mind are 'why is this picture better than that?', 'what makes this door frame elegant whereas that one is squat and heavy?', or 'why is the smoothness of the wine a virtue?'. The sort of reasons that address these kind of questions are not of the straightforward causal kind nor, indeed, do they involve making the predictions we associate with scientific explanations. The appeal to reasons in aesthetics is an attempt to get us to see or hear the object in a certain way and to see that response as appropriate. We ask whether you hear the piano as percussive and, if so, how that relates to what the drummer is doing. Psychological experiments might tell us what is popular, or what is liked, and even, possibly, get us some way into investigating the causal explanations for these facts. What they cannot do is cast light on what makes something aesthetically good, elegant, squat, gaudy, or sit right. As Wittgenstein puts it, 'people still have the idea that psychology is one day going to explain all our aesthetic

judgements, and they mean experimental psychology. This is very funny—very funny indeed . . . Aesthetic questions have nothing to do with psychological experiments, but are answered in an entirely different way' (Wittgenstein 1970: 19).

In Kant and Wittgenstein, then, we see an explicit rejection of the relevance of scientific investigation to philosophical enquiry about the aesthetic domain. This tendency to reject the role of scientific enquiry was dominant during the heyday of traditional analytic aesthetics. It is to that body of work that we turn to next.

## I.2 Analytic Aesthetics

'Analytic aesthetics' is a label for work done in roughly the last sixty years, mostly in the English-speaking academic world, and arising out of the broader movement of analytic philosophy. This latter has no easy definition, but a few themes tend to recur: a respect for clarity in expression that sometimes extends to the use of formal logical expressions where ambiguity threatens (clarity in this sense does not always mean easy intelligibility); an approach which is orientated to problems rather than to historical understanding; a focus on detail in argument rather than grand vision; a high level of sensitivity to distinctions between kinds of cases and a corresponding suspicion about claims of a very general kind; and, perhaps most characteristic, an interest in the analysis of concepts. According to some, analytic philosophy is defined by its commitment to the idea that a philosopher must understand the world through reflection on the language we use to describe it (Dummett 1993). Other philosophers broadly within the analytic tradition deny the necessity for such mediation (Heil 2003), but the philosophy of language remains central to the analytic project, along with a cluster of subjects with high analytical profiles in virtue of the importance that analytic methods, and in particular conceptual analysis, have had on their development.

Aesthetics, by contrast, has rarely been seen as central to the enterprise of analytic philosophy, though analysis has played a role in some of its debates. The most enduring of these is the debate over the nature of art itself. Straightforward analyses of art such as 'something is art if it is a beautiful artefact' fail rather obviously because a great deal of what we make is, and is intended to be, beautiful without being art—much clothing for example. Conversely, and more controversially, much that is regarded as art now is not beautiful, elegant, balanced, or in any other way aesthetically appealing. Also, allowing that there is found art requires us to see that not all artworks are artefacts, at least not in any ordinary sense of that term. Conceptual analysis aims to find informative, necessary, and sufficient conditions for the application of a concept, but the problems that people encountered with *art* suggested to some that in this case at least the project is hopeless rather than merely difficult. It was suggested that we can find necessary and sufficient conditions only for 'closed' concepts, and that art is, on the contrary, open. As with *game* and *family resemblance*, we do not find that there are properties necessarily possessed by all and only artworks; we find only overlapping 'strands of

similarities' (Wittgenstein 1953: 66, as quoted in Weitz 1956). Yet, as some were quick to point out, the idea that art is an open concept, and hence that there is nothing common to all artworks, holds only so long as we suppose that the concept of art must be definable in terms of properties manifest in the appearance of the object itself. But why should we expect that art is definable in this way when so many other concepts are not? Being a Member of Parliament is not a matter of having a certain appearance but of having been through a process of election. We cannot tell whether someone is an MP simply by looking at her, and it may be that we cannot do that for works of art either; being a work of art may depend on complex relations that a thing bears to other things, including, on some accounts, institutions (Mandelbaum 1965). Since then, *relational* theories of art of one kind or another have been developed—theories which comport well with the declining emphasis on the role of beauty and other aesthetic features in the characterization of art. The two most prominent relational theories are the institutional theory, according to which artworks are things recognized as such within the institutions of the art world (Dickie 1984), and the historical theory according to which artworks are things which stand in certain recursively specified relations to prior artworks, with this chain of relations traceable to a body of originating or 'ur-art' works (Levinson 1979). Theories of both these kinds come in different versions, though no one of them represents current orthodoxy (see Carroll 1993; Currie 2010a); nor does any other theory (see Shelley 2003).

In the light of this lack of convergence of opinion, one might be inclined to write off conceptual analysis as a failure in aesthetics (and perhaps in most other fields of philosophy). But even if no analysis has got things exactly right—and perhaps no analysis ever will—it is possible to see a good deal of philosophical progress arising from the attempt. We have had our attention drawn to deep and interesting connections between art and the institutions of art, and between art and the history of art; if these connections do not amount to the materials for a successful conceptual analysis they seem to be ones that merely empirical investigation might not have uncovered. We have also been forced to confront the question of how far art is related to beauty and other aesthetic concepts. It would be a bad thing if all philosophers of art ever did was propose conceptual analyses of *art* and provide counter-examples to discomfort their rivals, but in a discipline where much else is going on, the effort that has gone into conceptual analysis has helped to motivate and inform other kinds of theory building. The accusation, commonly heard against analytic philosophy generally, that it is a complex reiteration of what passes for common sense, is to that extent unjustified.

Additionally, a good deal of work within the analytical framework aims at reconfiguration rather than analysis. This is even more clearly the case in connection with what is perhaps the most influential theory to come out of analytic aesthetics: Kendall Walton's reconfiguring of the idea of mimesis as pretence, make-believe, or imagining (Walton 1990). Walton does not claim that the concepts central to his theory are the same as or even particularly close to those to which we pre-theoretically appeal: his concept of fiction is the concept of something which prescribes certain imaginings,

and includes, according to him, pictorial representations of all kinds. Nor do the concepts to which he appeals always get much in the way of analysis or explanation: while Walton is keen to distinguish between kinds of imaginings he does not offer us an account of what imagining or imagination is. Yet this theory has found application in metaphysics and the philosophy of language, particularly in relation to the problem of reference to non-existent things (Evans 1982: §10.2).

## I.3 Recent Debates

### *I.3.1 Broader trends in analytic philosophy*

These are some of the leading themes of analytic aesthetics as practised over the last sixty or so years. During this period many analytic philosophers have become increasingly sympathetic to the idea that no clear separation between philosophical and empirical inquiry is desirable or even possible. This naturalizing tendency has its origins in Quine's replacement of the analytic/synthetic distinction with a picture of gradations of revisability for belief in terms of distance from the 'sensory surface' (Quine 1951), while the emerging discipline of cognitive science encouraged philosophers and scientists to describe the architecture of mind without attempting to keep track of disciplinary distinctions (Block 1983). In this area what starts, apparently, as a piece of armchair philosophy may develop quickly into a battle between rivals to explain the empirical data. Thus while the debate between theory theory and simulation theory began as a dispute between rival philosophical conceptions of how we know the minds of others, some simulation theorists saw in this an opportunity to connect philosophical debate about the imagination and its role in the arts with empirical psychology. And some of the disputants even occupied positions in the debate over the characterization and explanation of autism (Currie 1996; Carruthers 1996; Gordon and Barker 1994).

Recently thinking about the relation between philosophy and empirical work has been further provoked by the debate over the role of intuition in philosophy. Conceptual analysis typically proceeds by testing the proposed analysis of a concept against supposed counter-examples: this case satisfies the conditions of being a justified true belief but is not a case of knowledge, so knowledge cannot be justified true belief (Gettier 1963). But what tells us that the example in question is not a case of knowledge? One answer is that we possess intuitions about whether something is or is not knowledge—intuitions which do not depend on the acceptance of any particular analysis of that concept—and these intuitions are a reliable guide to whether something is in fact a case of knowledge. But when people look closely at our intuitive reactions to cases, it seems that they vary rather worryingly across different groups. Thus East Asian subjects are said to be much more inclined than westerners are to respond to so-called Gettier cases by saying that they are, after all, cases of knowledge (Weinberg et al. 2001). If people's intuitions vary systematically, and we cannot find any principled reason to discount the intuitions of one group, how can we rely on

intuition to adjudicate between rival analyses? Studies comparing the intuitions of different groups were initially conducted by philosophers, and this practice has become institutionalized under the heading 'experimental philosophy'. While it remains a disputed question as to whether philosophers should leave the experimental work to the psychologists, many analytic philosophers now accept both the importance of empirical results in philosophy, and the idea that philosophical claims will sometimes have direct or indirect empirical consequences.

### *I.3.2 Methodological debates in analytic aesthetics*

To what extent, then, should the work of analytic philosophers of art be empirically informed? It is obvious that philosophers interested in the arts must know a good deal about the arts, and that requires them to do some modest empirical inquiry; they must look at paintings, listen to music, and read novels. Will it suffice then for the aesthetician to have knowledge of art*works*? Many require additionally a familiarity with the ways of art experts—those best equipped by knowledge, training, and sensitivity to understand, appreciate, and interrogate works of art. This is the requirement that one understands critical practice, and its justification is that the practices of art experts represent preferred ways of responding to works, without a knowledge of which one would not properly understand the works themselves.[1]

This much is broadly accepted as a requirement of responsible philosophizing about the arts. But the commitment here is to experience the world of artworks and their audiences as a lively and attentive but otherwise unexceptional member of that world: the philosopher of art is someone with a keen critical sense, an eye for detail, and degree of familiarity with works, genres, and their histories. It is not a commitment to adopt a scientific attitude which focuses on the mechanisms by which language is processed, or by which emotions are generated, or on scepticism about such notions as character traits, self-awareness, or people's capacity to give reasons for their preferences—including artistic ones. It is the invitation to take this further step to which our contributors here are responding, positively or negatively as may be.

One worry about taking this further step is that claims about the capacity of scientific inquiry to solve the mysteries of the aesthetic realm have sometimes arisen out of a failure to understand the nature of the aesthetic questions themselves—consider, for example, the complaints which philosophers such as John Hyman (2010) have raised against some recent work in 'neuroaesthetics' so-called. But even if these arguments are sound they should not make us assume that a scientific approach is never helpful. Let us begin gently down this path by considering a case where the science has itself been heavily influenced by philosophical thinking. We have referred above to the debate over whether the interpretation of artworks requires an inquiry into the maker's

[1] For example, see Davies (2004: 16–24) for a discussion of the 'pragmatic constraint' on ontological theorizing about the arts. Note that Davies focuses only on features of our critical practice that 'would withstand rational scrutiny' (2004: 18).

intentions. This debate, which centred, naturally enough, on the case of literature, has witnessed confident assertions to the effect that this or that is the right way to interpret. But is it responsible to make such assertions without reference to what we know about how people actually do interpret speech and writing, an area within which a great deal of careful empirical work has been done, much of it under the heading of 'pragmatics', the study of how people exposed to a certain linguistic input identified semantically then come to understand a communicated message which may be richer or in other ways radically different from the meanings of the word sequences they are exposed to? Interestingly, pragmatics as a field of empirical inquiry owes an enormous debt to the work of philosopher Paul Grice (1989), who revolutionized our understanding of communication by placing the idea of speaker's intentions at the heart of his theory and who showed how a process of inference based on assumptions about the speaker's rationality and cooperativeness could explain how we understand that a speaker who says 'I have eaten breakfast' means that they ate breakfast today and not merely that they have eaten breakfast at some time in their lives, and why we don't make the same inference when a speaker says 'I have eaten tiger'. Subsequently linguists and psychologists of language have elaborated and modified Grice's approach (revising quite radically in the case of what is called 'Relevance Theory'), suggesting for example ways in which mental machinery dedicated to purely linguistic decoding interact with parts of the mind sensitive to the intentions of others (Sperber and Wilson 2002). To the extent that scientific theories of communication assume the centrality of openness to intention, how is it possible for philosophers to advocate theories of interpretation in art (at least in the literary arts) which deny that sensitivity to the author's intention plays an important role?[2]

Worries of this kind surface in a number of areas. Analytic philosophers (and philosophers of other kinds) have made suggestions about the role of reasons in aesthetic judgement, yet there is a good deal of quite surprising empirical work which suggests that aesthetic and other forms of judgement proceed independently of reasons which often arise post hoc (see Lopes this volume). And philosophers—most notoriously Kant—have asserted that testimony is impotent for transmitting aesthetic judgements: one cannot judge that something is beautiful on the basis of testimony. Kant suggests that not only is this true but it is generally recognized to be true, as can be seen (he suggests) in our communicative practices about art (Kant 1790/1987: 147). But careful attention to the 'epidemiology' of aesthetic judgements reveals phenomena such as 'polarization' and 'echo-chamber effects' which, it has been argued, would be hard to explain if we assumed that people avoided taking on aesthetic opinions on the basis of testimony (Robson 2014).

Not all aestheticians, nor all those represented in this volume, are convinced that aesthetics needs to undertake a radically naturalistic turn in its thinking. These

[2] Arguments of this kind are considered by David Davies in this volume.

anti-naturalists, like some philosophers in other areas, are not persuaded that the empirical results often cited are as revisionary as they are sometimes portrayed, and they often complain that psychological research in these areas is infected with naive philosophical assumptions which justify suspicion and even neglect of the results. Others respond that such worries, even if well founded, will apply only to certain cases and in principle raise no barrier to incorporating empirical results in our aesthetic theorizing. They claim, for example, that one cannot declare that literature functions partly to deepen our understanding of the nature of human character, and refuse to take any interest in work which purports to show that character is non-existent or at best of minor efficacy in human affairs (Currie 2010b: 199–218). In the next section we look more closely at some of these contemporary opposing responses to the idea that the methods of empirical science have a place within philosophical aesthetics.

## I.4 Current State of Play

### *I.4.1 Contemporary scepticism concerning empirical methods*

One distinctly negative response argues that aesthetics and the philosophy of art are concerned with understanding rather than explanation—understanding the logic, structure, and coherence of our aesthetic and artistic experience, rather than explaining them in terms of psychological mechanisms that subserve them, or evolutionary forces that shape them. Hence, aesthetic experience, understanding, and the normativity of artistic reasons, principles, and values are to be accounted for in ways discontinuous with scientific explanation. The assumption of such discontinuity explains the scepticism of many philosophers concerning the philosophical relevance of putative discoveries in the empirical sciences. Thus Roger Scruton claims, in relation to the attempt to explicate musical meaning in terms of cognitive transformational rules associated with Lerdahl and Jackendoff, that 'you do not understand a piece of music by recuperating the process whereby it is generated from a "deep structure." Musical hierarchies are built up in the ear of the beholder, and not retrieved from the cognitive apparatus that operates behind the scenes' (Scruton 2009: 460).

This strategy is given a more general formulation by George Dickie, who asks whether psychology is relevant to aesthetics and answers with a resounding no (Dickie 1962). He grants an empirical aspect to aesthetics in that we look at works, listen to music, and so on, but claims this does not mean that scientific inquiry can take us further in understanding these things. Dickie argues that questionnaire surveys and studies of subject preferences for colours, sounds, and shapes, are unable to reveal anything interesting about aesthetic experience, while experiments designed to test how well ordinary subjects match up to the judgements of aesthetic experts presuppose the idea of good aesthetic judgement rather than cast doubt on it. Dickie identifies a major source of error as the psychologizing of the notion of aesthetic experience (as exemplified by Bullough's notion of psychical distance). He concludes that 'the mechanisms

involved in the appreciation of art are similar to such concepts as knowing, believing, oughtness—concepts which all mature users of the language know how to use. The same sort of difficulty is involved in saying that scientific information is relevant to problems of aesthetics and criticism as in thinking that we can discover what it means to know or believe something by instituting scientific inquiry' (1962: 300–1).

On this kind of view, whether we are concerned with the aesthetic, listening to music, interpreting art, or evaluating literature, what matters is the analysis of phenomenology and of concepts brought to bear in distinctively philosophical analysis. Work on the visual information processing system, for example, may be illuminating in explicating the basis for various (in)capacities. But, on this view, we should be extremely careful not to allow causal explanations about the workings of our perceptual systems to be identified as a solution to questions about what it is to see, hear, or smell something in certain ways and what makes them aesthetically good (or bad).[3] It may be interesting to know how and why certain incapacities arise but without the traditional methods of philosophical analysis the results will tend to lead to conceptual confusion (Hyman 2010).

### *I.4.2 Moderate empirical approaches*

A more revisionist conception tends to see traditional philosophical analysis as benefitting from being more substantively supplemented by empirical work. It is not just, say, that we have something of interest to learn in terms of our underlying (in)capacities. Rather, empirical work can force certain philosophical challenges upon us and thus enable us to see how theoretic accounts of, say, aesthetic preference or judgement have to be refined, what kind of phenomena may have to be addressed or, indeed, explained away. On such a conception this will be especially true where we are concerned with claims about psychological mechanisms or processing involving perception, emotion, motivation, belief transformation, reasons, preference, or judgement. More broadly we might think that at least some traditional philosophical methods are themselves suspect and ought to be supplanted or replaced. Philosophical appeals to intuition or first-person judgements may be suspect because they are theoretically biased in problematic ways whilst nonetheless self-presenting as 'obvious'; we are typically unaware of our own, folkish biases and certain standard assumptions 'justified' by traditional philosophical appeals to intuition turn out to be mistaken (e.g. Nisbett and Wilson 1977). On this conception, then, the psychological sciences and cognate disciplines provide a broader range of tools for empirical insights into the phenomena philosophers often appeal to and an important corrective to the naive biases built into traditional philosophical methodology.

More strongly still, rather than view empirical work as a possible source of challenges, perhaps it is the responsibility of the philosophical theory builder to ensure that what is being claimed is consonant with or even supported by what best current

[3] See Hopkins (1997) on why theories of depiction are independent of facts about visual processing.

science tells us. Whilst phenomenological and conceptual analysis may tell us much about what we think we are doing, even aesthetic experts may be mistaken about what they are actually doing. And this, at least in principle, may be the object of scientific investigation. On such a line of thought one should not go around offering theories of interpretation which are not supported by what we know about semantic and pragmatic processing, or theories of pictorial perception that are not supported by the best vision science.

### *I.4.3 Radically empirical approaches*

The most radical stance of all would be to hold that traditional philosophical aesthetics is replaceable by scientific approaches to the questions we are interested in. Whilst it is hard to identify philosophers who hold such a stance, there are those outside the philosophical community who argue that traditional philosophical aesthetics is being superseded by empirical progress. Thus, to take one example, David Huron argues that cognitive science is giving us the answers to traditional philosophical questions (e.g. concerning the pleasures and value of music or musical expression). It is not that philosophy should wither away entirely, but rather that, at best, it is reduced to a minor advisory role in sharpening up and revising the relevant concepts, with cognitive science in a position to show how and why they apply in explaining our aesthetic responses and evaluations (Huron 2008). Indeed, more strongly, it has been argued that the deliverances of science, and in particular neuroscience, should supplant the speculations of philosophical analysis in giving rise to a neurobiological account of the nature and value of art (Zeki 1999).

At one end of the spectrum is the idea that aesthetic experience and philosophical issues concerning the arts are a matter of refined subjective experience and understanding. On such a view, scientific study of the mind's causal processes (and their origins) will yield little by way of interest to the philosopher. At the other end of the spectrum is the presumption that scientific study and analysis is in a position to improve upon and take over from the speculative postulations of philosophical analysis: philosophical aesthetics is supplanted by the advancements of science. There are more variagated positions in between which may differ both in emphasis at the general level and according to the particular issues involved. Bearing this in mind it is to the contributions to this volume that we now turn.

## I.5 Chapter Summaries

The chapters in the first section of the volume tend to focus on broad methodological issues in philosophical aesthetics. In the first chapter, 'Feckless Reason', Dominic McIver Lopes addresses some challenges which empirical research poses for aesthetic theories which seek to understand our ordinary aesthetic practices. Such practices are typically taken to involve the use of reason—in, for example, probing and refining our

responses to artworks. Moreover, a commitment to the importance of reason in the aesthetic domain is typically linked to the assumption that our aesthetic judgements are closely tied to critical reasoning. However, Lopes points to a range of results from social psychology which seem to cast serious doubt on this picture and, in particular, suggest that critical reasoning typically plays no role in our aesthetic judgements. Rather, critical reasoning—if it occurs at all—is typically used for post hoc rationalization of the judgements we have already made and (more worrying still) tends to distort, rather than improve, aesthetic judgement.

Sherri Irvin's chapter, 'Is Aesthetic Experience Possible?', also addresses the possible sceptical consequences generated by recent results in social psychology, focusing specifically on the challenge this work presents for accounts of aesthetic experience and aesthetic appreciation which require that we have second-order awareness of our own mental states. Irvin argues that everyday aesthetic experience and aesthetic appreciation do not require such awareness but that it is required for a more sophisticated form of aesthetic appreciation (which she labels 'deep appreciation'). She claims, however, that it may still be possible to achieve deep aesthetic appreciation, surveying a range of empirical evidence suggesting that certain Buddhist-derived meditation practices may assist us in achieving deep aesthetic appreciation.

David Davies's contribution, ' "This is Your Brain on Art": What Can Philosophy of Art Learn from Neuroscience?', argues that experimental research can play only a limited role in the philosophy of art. Davies does not deny the philosophical significance of such research, and he rejects armchair approaches since, on his view, careful attention to artistic practice is required for successful theorizing about the arts. However, he argues that many significant questions in the philosophy of art are normative and, hence, cannot be settled by appeal to experimental results. As a case study, Davies considers the recent appeals to neurophysiological evidence by philosophers of dance. Most of this evidence, he argues, is of little or no relevance in answering substantive philosophical questions.

Fabian Dorsch's 'The Limits of Aesthetic Empiricism' argues against the view that third-person empirical evidence provides evidence for aesthetic judgements. Without denying the relevance of empirical results to our understanding of works of art, Dorsch argues against a number of distinct empiricist theses. On his broadly rationalist view, third-person empirical evidence cannot justify first-order aesthetic judgements (e.g. 'that album is a masterpiece') nor can it justify judgements about the adequacy or inadequacy of our aesthetic capacities. If Dorsch is right about the last claim, recent empirical evidence which suggests ways in which our aesthetic judgement may be biased, irrational, or unreliable (see, e.g. Kieran 2010) does not support any sort of sceptical conclusion about our aesthetic capacities.

In 'Philosophy of Perception as a Guide to Aesthetics' Bence Nanay argues that a number of the most prominent traditional questions in aesthetics—which Nanay takes to be importantly distinct from the philosophy of art—fall within the remit of philosophy of perception. Accepting this claim, Nanay argues, will have a number

of important implications when it comes to pursuing answers to such questions. In particular it provides an important reason for aestheticians to employ an empirically informed methodology since, he claims, there is considerable evidence to show that those research projects within philosophy of perception which employ such methodologies are typically more progressive (in Lakatos's sense) than their competitors.

Philosophers attracted by aesthetic theories of art, which hold that aesthetics features or functions are necessary for art status, have tended to be fairly sceptical of naturalistic and empirically informed approaches to the philosophy of art (and vice versa). Perhaps this partially explains why in recent years aesthetic theories of art have fallen on hard times (but see Zangwill 2002 and Iseminger 2004). In their contribution to the volume, 'Portrait of the Artist as an Aesthetic Expert', Christy Mag Uidhir and Cameron Buckner present the case for a reconfigured aesthetic theory of art which makes aesthetic concept possession an important necessary condition for artistic production rather than for being art. One consequence of such a theory, Mag Uidhir and Buckner argue, is that it points to a wide range of empirical work on expertise to which philosophers of art should attend. In the final sections of their chapter, the authors provide an overview of some of this research.

The contributions in the second part of the volume focus on the investigation of first-order issues in philosophical aesthetics although methodological issues are also of concern for many of these authors. Jesse Prinz's 'Seeing with Feeling' presents an analysis of evaluative seeing within aesthetics. Prinz claims that the simple view of aesthetic perception according to which perception of an artwork (or other aesthetic object) always precedes evaluation and assessment is mistaken. Rather, on his account, evaluative properties such as beauty are sometimes literally part of what is seen. In particular Prinz proposes a view according to which experiences of evaluative emotions such as wonder impact and infuse perception, and he surveys a range of empirical evidence in support of this view.

In his chapter 'The Arts, Emotion, and Evolution', Noël Carroll presents a speculative evolutionary explanation for the important role of the arts in human history. In particular Carroll aims to address the question of how our art-making practices—which are often extremely costly to engage in and offer no immediately obvious adaptive advantage—have been able to endure from prehistory to the present day. On Carroll's account the answer to this puzzle lies, at least in part, in the important role of the emotions within art. Our emotional responses to art can, Carroll argues, serve an important function in uniting groups of *Homo sapiens* around common goals and this ability to work in unison provides us with an important adaptive advantage.

Debates about methodology have been central to much recent philosophical discussion about the nature of the cognitive imagination and its relation to fiction. One particular area of debate has had to do with the appeal to 'box diagrams' (i.e. diagrams representing the functional organization of human cognitive processes) made by a number of broadly naturalistic philosophers working on pretence and the imagination (Nichols and Stich 2000; Meskin and Weinberg 2003). In his contribution to this volume, 'All

Your Desires in One Box', Jonathan Weinberg addresses the challenge to the use of these boxes and to the broadly naturalistic approach to philosophical investigation of the imagination. He argues that the use of such boxes, and the cognitive architectures they represent, is philosophically useful and that a correct understanding of the relationship between cognitive architecture and folk psychological categories is crucial for evaluating theories about the imagination. In particular, it is crucial for evaluating the hypothesis that there are imaginative correlates to desires just as there are imaginative correlates to beliefs. Weinberg concludes that we have no reason to posit the existence of such desire-like states.

In her chapter 'Physiological Evidence and the Paradox of Fiction', Kathleen Stock offers a robust challenge to the appeal to experimental results in recent philosophical work on the so-called 'paradox of fiction' (i.e. the puzzle of how we can come to have affective responses which are directed at entities we know to be fictional and what the nature of those affective responses are). Stock focuses especially on two claims that have played a significant role in recent debates about these issues: (1) that there are important physiological similarities between our affective responses to imagining and our affective responses to what we believe; and (2) that there are important physiological similarities between imagining and perceiving. She argues that neither claim is well-supported since the empirical results have been misinterpreted and misapplied by philosophers whilst other relevant results have been neglected.

Stacie Friend's chapter 'Believing in Stories' considers the widely held view that we are able to learn facts from fiction. It is a common thought that one can learn about the mafia from watching the *Sopranos* or about nineteenth-century whaling practice from reading *Moby Dick* but such a view faces a number of sceptical challenges. In particular Friend argues that various recent psychological studies suggest that readers are not especially careful in forming beliefs on the basis of fiction. This generates a significant and underappreciated challenge to the possibility of knowledge via fiction since it seems as if the beliefs that readers form on the basis of fiction (even when true) are unsafe (that is, they could easily have been mistaken). Friend argues that such worries do not ultimately show that we cannot learn facts from fiction but merely that a certain level of experience and expertise concerning fiction (and different genres of fiction) is required.

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