




Aesthetic Disagreement with Oneself as Another

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ABSTRACT

Can disagreement with my past self about aesthetic matters give a reason to reconsider my present aesthetic verdict and if it does, under what conditions? In other words, can such a disagreement be a sign of my failing in my present aesthetic judgement? In this paper, I argue that revising one's judgement in response to disagreeing with one's former self is appropriate but only when the former and the present self share the same aesthetic personality. The possibility of failure in one's aesthetic judgement is therefore bound up, among other things, with facts about one's aesthetic identity over time. The resulting view has implications for our understanding of the scope of the autonomy in aesthetics and is consistent with empirical evidence regarding the way in which people evaluate aesthetic judgments.

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Over the course of a life, a person's aesthetic attitudes towards some object of aesthetic concern can change quite radically. Some artworks and artists that I used to appreciate when I was younger count for me as aesthetically admirable up to this day. There are some other artworks and artists, however, that I am not able to find value in anymore. For example, I used to appreciate the Swedish progressive death metal band Opeth because I judged their songs to be both intricate and majestic. However, although I can still see how someone could take their music to be intricate and majestic, I do not value Opeth's music anymore because those very same features that I used to appreciate have started to sound unappealing. Or take Arun, who used to think that Quentin Tarantino's films were the pinnacle of cinema because of their irreverence and humour but has later started to see them as shallow and unimpressive. Or, as an example from the other direction, consider Nadja, who used to think that Béla Tarr's films were aesthetically worthless, because she considered them boring and pretentious due to their slow pacing, but who now finds them mesmerizing and insightful exactly because of this.

Such changes in taste and resulting changes in aesthetic judgements that one is disposed to make are quite common. If a person goes through such a change, it makes sense to say that there is an *intrasubjective* aesthetic disagreement between her former and present selves. As with intersubjective disagreements, we can ask whether a disagreement with one's former self indicates that one should be doubtful about one's present judgement. At least in cases where the former self does not seem to be less aesthetically competent than I am now – that is, when they count as my peer – such a question is not ridiculous. Why should you think that it is the past self who is mistaken and not you right now? However, in ordinary cases, I take it that most people are inclined to consider it to be quite ridiculous if someone began to reconsider their aesthetic judgement just because they used to have a different opinion in the past.

Since the intuitions are unclear on this matter, intrasubjective aesthetic disagreements deserve to be analysed further. This is exactly what I intend to do in this paper. The question is: does disagreement with one's former self about aesthetic matters give a reason to reconsider one's present judgement and, if it does, under what conditions? In other words, can such a disagreement be a sign of my failing in my present judgement? As I will argue, revising one's judgement in response to intrasubjective disagreement is sometimes appropriate but only when the former and present selves share the same aesthetic personality. The possibility of failure in one's aesthetic judgement is therefore bound up with, among other things, facts about one's aesthetic identity over time. The resulting view has implications for understanding the scope of autonomy in aesthetics and is consistent with empirical evidence regarding the way in which people evaluate aesthetic judgements.

The paper is structured as follows. In Section II, I will explicate the kind of disagreement that is the focus of this paper and define what I mean by 'intrasubjective aesthetic peers'. In Section III, I will consider the principle of aesthetic autonomy as a justification for not changing one's mind in the face of disagreement and argue that an appeal to that principle faces a peculiar complication in the case of intrasubjective peer disagreements. Then, in Section IV, I will argue that we can respond to this complication only by limiting the scope of the principle to cases in which there is a sufficient difference in the aesthetic personality between the former and present selves. Finally, in Section V, I will consider some possible issues with the resulting view.

To delineate the specific kind of disagreement that this paper focuses on, we need to do some stage-setting. We are interested in cases where a person judges that an artist or an artwork has aesthetic de/merit while she judged it differently in the past, so that the present and former judgements contradict each other.

We can express the situation as follows:

S_1 judges O to be P

S_2 judges O to be not P

' S_1 ' and ' S_2 ' refer to the person's former and later selves, respectively. ' O ' refers to the aesthetic object. O can refer to a variety of things: artworks, genres, artists. Here my focus is on artworks. It may seem that my examples in the introduction concerned artists (Opeth, Béla Tarr) but they in fact concerned the work (that is, a set of artworks) of those artists. ' P ' refers to an evaluative aesthetic property. Applying this to my example, my former self (S_1) took Opeth's music (O) to be aesthetically good (P), while I now (S_2) judge it to be not aesthetically good (not P). When I talk about aesthetic judgements in this paper, my focus is on aesthetic verdicts: attributions of thin evaluative properties like '(aesthetically) good', '(aesthetically) bad', 'beautiful', 'ugly', and so on, in contrast with substantive aesthetic judgements, which attribute thick evaluative properties.¹

Cross-temporal intrasubjective disagreements come in different shapes, some of which are not interesting for our purposes. For instance, there are cases in which disagreement is such that S_2 knows that O does not have the aesthetically relevant features that S_1 took it to have. In such a situation, S_2 can say that S_1 has made a factual error. As a result, S_2 has a right to dismiss S_1 's aesthetic verdict.

In this paper, the focus is on aesthetic disagreements, in which such a dismissal is more difficult to justify, given that the disagreement cannot be traced back to one side making a factual error regarding O . In such cases, S_2 understands what the aesthetically relevant features of O are that her former self took to warrant her aesthetic verdict. However, she no longer thinks that those features warrant the aesthetic verdict in question. Another way to put it is that S_2 is still able to understand S_1 's reasons for attributing aesthetic value or disvalue to O but does not think that these reasons overall justify that attribution. This is what happened in my case: I can understand the reasons for valuing Opeth's songs but I do not take them to suffice to warrant the positive aesthetic verdict. In fact, I rather take them to count as aesthetic demerits and to warrant a negative verdict.

As a further specification of the type of disagreement at issue here, we are interested in intrasubjective aesthetic disagreements where S_1 and S_2 count as aesthetic peers. Peer disagreements have been discussed extensively in epistemology, where the main issue has been whether one should revise one's judgement if a peer disagrees

1 James O. Young, 'Introduction', in *Semantics of Aesthetic Judgements*, ed. James O. Young (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 8; Christy Mag Uidhir and Luis Oliveira, 'Aesthetic Higher-Order Evidence for Subjectivists', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 63 (2023): 235–49.

with it.² An agent's epistemic peer is someone who is at least approximately equal to the agent in terms of their exposure to evidence, their intelligence, and their freedom from bias.³ Similarly, an agent's aesthetic peer with respect to *O* is someone who knows the same aesthetically relevant facts about *O*, who is equally competent in making aesthetic judgements about *O* on the basis of discerning its aesthetically relevant features and who is equally familiar with the aesthetic category in which *O* is to be appreciated.⁴ For instance, Rob and Alicia count as aesthetic peers with respect to a brutalist building if they know equally well the aesthetically relevant properties of the building in question, have comparable capacities of cognitive and perceptual discrimination regarding brutalist architecture, and know equally well about the history and paradigmatic exemplars of brutalism. I take it that the concept of aesthetic peer is intuitive enough not to require a sharp definition.

If there can be two separate persons who are aesthetic peers, there can also be intrasubjective aesthetic peers where both are parts of the same person. If there has not been any substantial change between t_1 and t_2 in the person's competence of aesthetic evaluation or any change in what she knows about the aesthetically relevant features of *O*, it makes sense to think that the self at t_1 and the self at t_2 count as aesthetic peers. In cases where aesthetic peers disagree with one another as to whether *O* is *P*, there is between them an intrasubjective aesthetic peer disagreement. I think that intrasubjective aesthetic peer disagreement is a quite common phenomenon. When it comes to aesthetic matters, people change their minds often, probably more often than in the case of moral convictions, for example. And, when they change their minds, it is sometimes the case that their aesthetic competence does not change in any significant respect.

In sum, the focus of this paper is on intrasubjective disagreements in which an agent disagrees with her former self with respect to an aesthetic verdict about some artwork, where she cannot presume that one side has made a factual error and where the former and latter selves count as aesthetic peers. The question now is: from the first-person perspective, if I encounter an intrasubjective peer disagreement, how should I react?

III. HOW TO RESPOND TO INTRASUBJECTIVE AESTHETIC DISAGREEMENTS?

When I disagree with my former self's aesthetic verdict, when I do not think that I used to be less competent than I am now, and when I have done all in my power to identify the grounds for my present and past judgements, how should I respond to the fact of disagreement? Should I revise my present judgement or at least lower my confidence in it, given that I have no reason to think that I have more aesthetic insight into *O* than my former self? Or should I persist in my present verdict?

2 David Christensen, 'Epistemology of Disagreement: The Good News', *Philosophical Review* 116 (2007): 187–217; Adam Elga, 'Reflection and Disagreement', *Noûs* 41 (2007): 478–502; Thomas Kelly, 'The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement', in *Oxford Studies in Epistemology*, vol. 1, ed. Tamar Szabó Gendler and John Hawthorne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 174–75.

3 Robert M. Simpson, 'Epistemic Peerhood and the Epistemology of Disagreement', *Philosophical Studies* 164 (2013): 561–77.

4 For the significance of aesthetic categories for appreciation, see Kendall Walton, 'Categories of Art', *Philosophical Review* 79 (1970): 334–67.

We can distinguish between two options. Let's call revising one's present verdict in light of intrasubjective peer disagreement 'Adjustment' and sticking to one's present verdict 'Persistence'.⁵ Adjustment does not need to entail that I suspend my verdict entirely. Lowering one's confidence in the verdict suffices for Adjustment and for ruling out Persistence. Adjustment and Persistence are thus mutually exclusive.

Although Persistence might look like an appropriate response, the cases of intrasubjective aesthetic peer disagreement are such that it is not immediately apparent how the present self can dismiss the former self's aesthetic verdict and stick to her own. I suspect that the intuition that Persistence is the appropriate response might be due to the general dominance of one's present evaluative perspective over the past one. However, this dominance does not seem to amount to a good justification for sticking to one's present judgement. After all, it might just be an irrational bias. We should not be confident that our aesthetic taste is always improving and maturing over time and that we can always look back at our older selves and feel a justifiable sense of superiority. Given that my former self counts as an aesthetic peer who is equally competent and equally aware of the aesthetically relevant facts about *O*, doesn't that disagreement give a reason to think that my present judgement might be mistaken?

It could be argued in favour of Persistence and in favour of prioritizing my present perspective that I should trust my own judgement and assign different evidential weight to my present experience on which my current verdict is based. Applying this kind of reasoning to the intrasubjective case is problematic, however. It is a reasonable idealization to think that the present self can also have equal access to the former self's experience. On the assumption that an agent's memory is functional, she can continue to have access to the experience of those properties that grounded her former self's judgement. Given this assumption, it is unclear how the present self can dismiss the former self's judgement, whose basis she still has access to. Are there any other ways in which to justify Persistence?

One possible way to justify Persistence in the aesthetic context in particular is to appeal to the acquaintance principle. According to the acquaintance principle, the precondition of a warranted aesthetic judgement about *O* (or perhaps even aesthetic judgement as such) is that one must have had first-hand experience with *O*.⁶ Could it not be argued that I have a right to dismiss my former self's verdict because my present self is acquainted with *O*? I do not see how this argument could work given that, in the case of intrasubjective aesthetic peer disagreement, my former self could have been as fully acquainted with *O* as I currently am. If the reasons of my former self's aesthetic verdict are still available to me, I take it that my former self and I are equally acquainted with *O*.

Luckily, there is better justification available for Persistence. A prominent idea in philosophical aesthetics has been that aesthetic judgement should be autonomous, in that an agent has to arrive at aesthetic judgement by exercising her own capacities

5 In the epistemic context, it is more common to hear the label 'Steadfastness' and not 'Persistence'. I use the latter because I want to leave open the possibility that the rules of aesthetic peer disagreement are quite different from the rules of epistemic peer disagreement.

6 Richard Wollheim, *Art and its Objects*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 233.

of aesthetic evaluation.⁷ Autonomy is in conflict or at least in tension with deference to experts and peers, arguably in the case of not only aesthetic but also moral judgements.⁸ There are also good reasons to accept the autonomy principle in aesthetics because it accords with our intuitive conception of aesthetic practices. If someone bases their aesthetic verdict about an artwork on the opinion of others and does not make any effort to consider the merits and demerits of that work on her own, then, even if we grant that the judgement is true and based on reasons, there is something aesthetically missing in this way of making judgements. For instance, if Ambrosio claims that Autopsy's *Mental Funeral* is one of the greatest death metal albums and it turns out that he says this because all his metalhead friends have told him so and counted the reasons for that to him, then his judgement is arguably not appropriately formed. The plausible explanation of that inappropriateness is that Ambrosio has not exercised his own capacities for aesthetic evaluation in determining whether *Mental Funeral* is one of the greatest death metal albums. His judgement has not been made autonomously.

On the assumption that aesthetic judgements must be made autonomously, would letting one's present aesthetic judgement be swayed by one's former self's differing judgement contradict the autonomy requirement? There does seem to be at least a tension between such a reaction and the autonomy principle. For instance, if I changed my mind regarding Opeth after considering that my past judgement conflicts with my present judgement, my change of verdict would not be based on exercising my capacity to discern the aesthetically relevant properties of Opeth's music but on the fact of my former self having thought otherwise. I thus seem to be reacting in a way that is not permitted by the autonomy principle.

This is not to say that the autonomy principle is uncontroversial.⁹ Within the scope of this paper, a fuller defence of the principle is not possible. Note, however, that, if the autonomy principle does not apply to aesthetic judgements at all, then justifying Persistence may be out of reach entirely. Since Persistence enjoys some intuitive plausibility, this consequence would be a difficult bullet to bite.

However, applying the autonomy principle to intrasubjective cases has its own peculiar complication. Autonomy is supposed to hold with respect to *other* persons, but it is unclear if one's former self counts as another person. On the assumption that persons are continuous through time, one's present and former selves are proper parts of the same person. It thus seems that one's former self is not really another person with respect to whom one's present self can be autonomous, and, in that case, the autonomy principle does not seem to be applicable to intrasubjective peer disagreement. While autonomy recommends against the counter-testimony of someone else,¹⁰ in the case of intrasubjective disagreement the former self is not someone else.

7 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Samantha Matherne, 'Kant on Aesthetic Autonomy and Common Sense', *Philosophers' Imprint*, no. 19 (2019): 1–22; C. Thi Nguyen, 'Autonomy and Aesthetic Engagement', *Mind* 129 (2020): 1127–56.

8 For controversies on this issue, see Robert Paul Wolff, *In Defense of Anarchism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970); Karen Jones, 'Second-Hand Moral Knowledge', *Journal of Philosophy* 96 (1999): 55–78.

9 Jon Robson, 'Aesthetic Autonomy and Self-Aggrandisement', *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements* 75 (2014): 3–28.

10 Robert Hopkins, 'Kant, Quasi-realism, and the Autonomy of Aesthetic Judgement', *European Journal of Philosophy* 9 (2001): 166–89.

To put the same issue in slightly different terms, for S_2 to apply the autonomy principle in dismissing S_2 's verdict, S_1 and S_2 cannot be parts of the same person. It is highly plausible, however, that S_1 and S_2 are parts or time slices of the same person, S , as long as here we set aside the possibility that persons are not temporally extended. After all, I can still recognize my former self who loved Opeth as part of the person I am now. There does not seem to be such a substantial difference between us to make us different persons.

The issues with applying autonomy principle to intrasubjective peer disagreements do not stop here, however. Another issue with this proposal is that, if S_1 and S_2 really were different persons, the disagreement between them would not amount to an *intrasubjective* disagreement but should rather be seen as a case of *intersubjective* disagreement. It would be a case in which two distinct agents disagree with one another and not a case in which there is an aesthetic conflict within a single agent.

It could be argued in response that the objection can be avoided if we focus on the positive element in the autonomy principle – namely, that to exercise aesthetic autonomy one's aesthetic judgement must be self-legislating and self-determining. According to the Kantian conception of autonomy, in making an aesthetic judgement, an agent submits to a standard that she has set on herself.¹¹ Following this line of thought, it could then be argued that the principle of autonomy also applies to cases of intrasubjective disagreement because following that principle is a matter of the present self determining the standard on the basis of which to evaluate the aesthetic object.¹²

However, there are still good reasons to doubt that the autonomy principle is applicable to the intrasubjective case, given that the present and the past selves are parts of the same person. If they are parts of the same person, the self-determination of the present self should also entail the self-determination of the former self. If there is a disagreement between the two, this indicates that something has gone wrong with the person's attempt to self-legislate the standard of aesthetic judgement because there is a cross-temporal inconsistency in her attempt to do that. This gives the person a reason to think that something might have gone wrong with her present judgement and just dismissing her former self's judgement is unwarranted. Autonomy cannot be a basis on which to reject one's own judgement.

We can at this point raise a dilemma for someone who wants to appeal to the autonomy principle in order to explain why Persistence is appropriate. Either S_1 and S_2 are parts of the same person or they are not. If they are, then autonomy principle is not applicable because autonomy requires that S_2 distinguish herself from S_1 as a separate person. If they are not, then autonomy can be applied but it has the unpalatable implication that S_1 and S_2 should be taken to be parts of distinct persons and it would not make sense anymore to talk about intrasubjective disagreement because, owing to S_1 and S_2 being parts of different persons, the disagreement between is intersubjective instead.

This is an unfortunate situation. On the one hand, it seems plausible that not revising one's present aesthetic verdict in response to intrasubjective disagreement is a proper way to respond to that disagreement. On the other hand, the most promising explanation of that response that can be appealed to in the case of intersubjective

11 Matherne, 'Kant on Aesthetic Autonomy', 17.

12 I thank the anonymous reviewer for highlighting this aspect of the autonomy principle.

disagreement is problematic in the case of intrasubjective disagreements. To satisfy the demands of the autonomy principle, one has to give up the intrasubjectivity of the disagreement and turn it into an intersubjective disagreement instead.

In what follows, I will propose a way in which to alleviate the situation by arguing that Persistence on the basis of the autonomy principle can be appropriate in such situations but only when certain additional conditions are satisfied.

IV. AESTHETIC PERSONALITY

We saw from the previous discussion that not budging on one's aesthetic verdict in the face of intrasubjective peer disagreement is something that is difficult to justify by an appeal to the principle of autonomy, which otherwise seems like a promising ground for not budging in the face of intersubjective aesthetic disagreement. I will now suggest that this is exactly what we should have expected, given that Persistence in the face of intrasubjective disagreement is amenable to explanation in terms of the autonomy principle only if the disagreement is in important respects sufficiently similar to an intersubjective case. Let me explain.

It is noticeable that, while autonomy requires difference between persons, intrasubjectivity requires sameness. One way to reconcile the seemingly opposing demands of autonomy and intrasubjectivity is to disambiguate the senses in which autonomy requires difference and intrasubjectivity requires sameness. The idea is that S_1 and S_2 can be parts of the same person, considered in one respect, while they are not parts of the same person, considered in another respect. As a result, it could then be said that S_2 can be persistent in her aesthetic verdict because S_1 is in some sense a different person and S_2 can thereby be autonomous with respect to S_1 , but S_2 's disagreement with S_1 's verdict can still be intrasubjective because, in another sense, S_1 and S_2 are parts of the same person. If this move can be pulled off, the dilemma posed in the previous section can be avoided because the seemingly opposing demands of autonomy and intrasubjectivity would turn out to be only apparent. These demands do not apply to persons univocally.

I suggest that we can achieve this when we distinguish between *generic personal identity* and *aesthetic personal identity*. Generic personal identity is something that can characterize person stages at different times, relatively independently of their particular values and ideals at a particular stage. I say 'relatively' because I do not want to exclude the possibility that a sufficiently radical change in values and ideals entails the end of a person in the generic sense. We appeal to generic personal identity when we identify and reidentify an agent from her birth until her death, at least in normal conditions. This notion could ideally use more elaboration – for instance, I am here just ignoring the fission and transplant cases that complicate the possibility of reidentification¹³ – but it is sufficient for our present purposes to make it salient that there is a thin notion of personal identity that allows us to make sense of our practice of identifying persons across changes in their values and ideals.¹⁴

13 See Harold W. Noonan, *Personal Identity* (London: Routledge, 2019).

14 Compare this with the notion of persons as forensic units in Marya Schechtman, *Staying Alive: Personal Identity, Practical Concerns, and the Unity of a Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Aesthetic identity, on the other hand, is a thick notion of identity that is grounded in exactly those features of an agent that the notion of generic identity abstracts away from. It is the identity that is determined by one's aesthetic preferences and aesthetic ideals. It can also be called 'aesthetic personality'. Aesthetic personality is something that need not stay the same even if the person maintains her generic identity. If an agent's aesthetic preferences change in a sufficiently radical way, then their aesthetic identity also changes.

For example, take Myisha, who in her teenage years felt very passionately about classical music and devoted much of her time to seeking out interpretations of her favourite composers' works. During that time, she defined herself in terms of that passion and aspired to become an oboe player when she grew up. Then, when she went to college, she was exposed to ambient and noise music. At first, she treated those genres only as curiosities that barely counted as music for her. However, her close friends were really into both ambient and noise and Myisha, who frequently hung out with them, started to acquire appreciation for that kind of music the more she was exposed to it. By her sophomore year, she was hooked. Ambient and noise had become her new passions, to which she related in the same way as she had used to relate to classical music. At the same time, her interest in classical music faded and she could not find that same passion that she had had for it when she was younger.

Here we hopefully have a rather clear-cut example of a change in aesthetic identity/personality. What seems crucial about having a particular aesthetic personality is that one is disposed to have positive affective reactions to some set of artworks and often also neutral or negative affective reactions to some other set of artworks. In Myisha's case, the change in her aesthetic personality is grounded in the fact that she had earlier been disposed to be neutral towards or even dislike ambient and noise music and that later she was disposed to like it, while becoming indifferent towards classical music.

That the concept of aesthetic identity or personality is at least implicitly acknowledged in the everyday aesthetic discourse has empirical support. Joerg Fingerhut et al. studied people's judgements about changes in identity when one's taste in arts changes.¹⁵ Their findings suggest that people take a sufficiently radical change in taste to also entail a change in one's aesthetic identity. The central case they used was the change from liking classical music to liking pop music. They also considered changes in one's preference regarding visual art (for example, from traditional-representational to modern-abstract art) and uncovered a similar effect. More radical changes in genre preferences entailed a more radical change in the aesthetic self.¹⁶ For example, the change in genre preference from country to classical was taken to entail a more significant change in aesthetic self than the change in genre preference from punk to hip-hop.

Does aesthetic personality coincide with genre preferences? Myisha's case is like that and also Fingerhut et al. primarily considered cases in which an agent started to like a genre different from the one they had used to. Although genre preference is a robust indicator of aesthetic personality, I assume that the latter does not boil

15 Joerg Fingerhut et al., 'The Aesthetic Self: The Importance of Aesthetic Taste in Music and Art for Our Perceived Identity', *Frontiers in Psychology* 11 (2021): 1-18.

16 *Ibid.*, 9.

down to the former. Aesthetic personality is constituted by a set of dispositions to like or dislike different aesthetically relevant properties and their configurations and those properties are not necessarily defined by specific genres. The property of being graceful, for instance, is a property that can be identified across genres and which does not characterize just humans and their movements but even movements of certain non-human animals and shapes of some geometric figures.

As a more concrete example of a change in aesthetic personality that is not confined to changes in genre preferences, take an example from David Hume:

A young man, whose passions are warm, will be more sensibly touched with amorous and tender images, than a man more advanced in years, who take pleasure in wise, philosophical reflections concerning the conduct of life and moderation of the passions. [...] it is almost impossible not to feel a predilection for that which suits our particular turn and disposition. Such preferences are innocent and unavoidable, and can never reasonably be the object of dispute, because there is no standard, by which they can be decided.¹⁷

If we think of Hume's example in intrasubjective terms, it becomes conceivable that, when a person gets older, her aesthetic personality changes. Unlike the younger self who was positively disposed towards amorous and tender images, she is now disposed to enjoy philosophical reflections much more. Here we have a case of a change in aesthetic personality that is not defined by a change in genre preferences but by a change in different affective dispositions (dispositions to appreciate particular aesthetically relevant properties and their configurations), although the former generally indicates the latter.

I take it, thus, that having an aesthetic personality is constituted by affective dispositions. Myisha's aesthetic personality changes because what she is disposed to like changes to a sufficient extent. The protagonist's aesthetic personality in Hume's example changes because he is disposed to like different kinds of aesthetically relevant properties from those he used to appreciate when he was a young man.

The affective disposition view of aesthetic personality might not be precise enough. Does any affective disposition count as a constitutive element of one's aesthetic personality? Perhaps we need to introduce something above and beyond an affective disposition to exclude those elements of one's pattern of affective dispositions that do not belong to one's aesthetic personality. According to Nick Riggle, for instance, aesthetic personality is not constituted by all the preferences and likes that a person has but by the person's aesthetic love.¹⁸ Aesthetic love reveals the kind of person one is and what one cares about and deems important. To love something is to have a meaningful attachment to it.

For the present purposes, however, it is not so important whether attachment needs to be added to our account of aesthetic personality. It is possible that affective disposition view needs to acknowledge the role of attachments in (partially) constituting those dispositions anyway. If that is the case, having the relevant kind of affective disposition with respect to an object of one's aesthetic concern entails

17 David Hume, 'Of the Standard of Taste', in *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary* (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1987), 226–49.

18 Nick Riggle, 'On the Aesthetic Ideal', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 55 (2015): 433–47.

being attached to it and by virtue of this attachment having various commitments with respect to it (for example, to cherish it, to engage with it in a proper way, to sustain a community around it, and so on) anyway.¹⁹ What matters for now is that there is a coherent notion of aesthetic personality and that there are cases in which a person's aesthetic personality changes to the extent that the former and the latter selves should be seen as distinct aesthetic personalities.

Importantly, a change in aesthetic personality does not entail that the past and former selves cannot count as aesthetic peers. As I stated above, aesthetic peerhood should be understood in terms of equal aesthetic competence and background knowledge. Aesthetic competence (with respect to a genre, for example) is primarily a matter of sufficient sensitivity to the aesthetically relevant properties (within the genre in question), where sensitivity is understood in terms of the ability to identify those properties and to base one's judgements on those properties. Aesthetic personality, however, is primarily a matter of what one is disposed to like or dislike or be indifferent towards. As I stated above, I understand aesthetic personality to be constituted by affective disposition (or a set of dispositions), while aesthetic competence does not entail such a disposition. A nice illustration of how aesthetic competence and aesthetic personality may diverge can be found in the case of Ernst Gombrich, who in his later years retained his competence in evaluating paintings but lost his affective disposition to take pleasure in them.²⁰ Gombrich's case counts as a change in aesthetic personality in the sense that I have in mind, without a change in aesthetic competence. As a result, Gombrich's younger and older selves count as aesthetic peers, while differing in aesthetic personality.

Having a coherent notion of aesthetic personality on the table, we can now return to the case of intrasubjective aesthetic disagreement and see how this notion is applicable to it. Let's elaborate on Myisha's case first. It seems that, if Myisha were to think of her former self's aesthetic judgements about music and found herself disagreeing with those judgements, then, given that Myisha's aesthetic personality has gone through a substantial change, the autonomy principle would grant her the right to persist in her present judgement. She can treat her former self as a separate aesthetic personality, and she can thereby exercise autonomy with respect to her past judgements while continuing to be the same person, considered in the generic sense, and thereby has an *intrasubjective* disagreement with her former self.

In the case of Myisha, it can be argued that her former aesthetic self does not count as an aesthetic peer in ambient and noise music with respect to her present aesthetic self. After all, by getting acquainted with those genres, she presumably became considerably more competent in evaluating their merits. As a result, her disagreement with her former self about ambient and noise music would not count as aesthetic peer disagreement.

I grant that Myisha's relation to ambient and noise music might have changed to the extent that her former self does not count as an aesthetic peer with respect to those genres. That said, it makes sense to think that her former self counts as an aesthetic peer with respect to classical music because there is no reason to think

19 I have my doubts as to whether aesthetic personality is constituted by the agent's attachments because I take it that aesthetic personality can manifest itself in ways that transcend (occasionally perhaps even contradict) one's attachments.

20 Bence Nanay, *Aesthetics as Philosophy of Perception* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 15.

that Myisha became more or less competent in identifying the aesthetically relevant properties of the latter. Because of this, we can at least say that, by appealing to the autonomy principle, Myisha has a right to dismiss her former self's verdicts about classical music.²¹

Consider also the intrasubjective modification of Hume's case. As in Myisha's case, it makes sense to think that the change in the person's aesthetic personality, understood as a set of affective dispositions, grants autonomy to the old man with respect to his younger self. The old man therefore has a right to dismiss his younger self's verdicts if there is disagreement between the two, because his younger self had a different aesthetic personality. Furthermore, there is much less reason to think, compared to Myisha's case, that there is a relevant difference in aesthetic competence between the older and younger selves to discount them from being aesthetic peers. That being said, both the older and younger selves count as parts of the same person, considered in the generic sense.

Our earlier examples allow for the same treatment. When I disagree with my former self regarding Opeth's aesthetic merits, for instance, whether I can dismiss my former self's verdict depends on whether I still share the same aesthetic personality with my former self. On the one hand, if I still share the personality-constituting affective dispositions with him, then my appeal to autonomy is not satisfied and I should suspect that my present verdict might be wrong. My judgement has failed to be an expression of a consistent aesthetic personality.²² On the other hand, if my personality has changed to the extent that the personality of my former aesthetic self is not recognizable to me anymore, I can appeal to autonomy and just persist in my present verdict.

V. OBJECTIONS AND ELABORATIONS

V.1. METAPHYSICAL IMPLICATIONS

Does the previous discussion have any implications for the metaphysics of aesthetic value? It may seem that if the appropriateness of an aesthetic judgement can change, depending on the facts about one's aesthetic personality, then this commits us to an anti-realist position, according to which there are no facts about aesthetic value. After all, according to the present view, whether one has a reason to doubt in one's aesthetic verdict does not seem to be determined by the features of the object of appreciation but by the facts about one's subjectivity.

This is a somewhat vague way of presenting the challenge. To make it more precise, consider an argument that has been raised in the context of moral peer disagreement. In the case of the latter, it has been argued that anti-realism makes better sense of why steadfastness can be appropriate in the moral case, unlike in the case of descriptive matters, because anti-realism implies that moral disagreement does not

21 If Myisha disagrees with her former self regarding, say, whether Haydn was a great composer, does it really make sense to argue that she can exercise autonomy with respect to her former self's judgement? After all, most music experts would probably insist that Haydn was a great composer. However, we are not here evaluating whether Haydn was a great composer or not. We are only evaluating whether Myisha can dismiss her former verdict.

22 On interpersonal consistency, see Ted Cohen, 'On Consistency in One's Personal Aesthetics', in *Aesthetics and Ethics: Essays at the Intersection*, ed. Jerrold Levinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 106–25.

provide evidence of unreliability regarding objective moral facts. After all, according to anti-realism, there are no such facts in the first place. Moral realism, on the other hand, may seem to be committed to the idea that peer disagreement is a sign of unreliability and therefore steadfastness cannot be the proper response.²³ Similarly, it could be argued that the fact that one can be persistent in the case of aesthetic intrasubjective peer disagreement when the former self does not share the same aesthetic personality indicates that anti-realism is true, otherwise such a response would not be apt because, if aesthetic realism were true and there were aesthetic facts, peer disagreement would constitute evidence that one's judgement is unreliable with respect to such facts. As a result, Persistence would never be appropriate in the case of peer disagreement.

I would like to suggest, however, that the present view is consistent with realism. To see that it is consistent, what we need to show is that there is available a promising non-metaphysical explanation of the appropriateness of sticking to one's judgement in the case of differing personalities. According to that explanation, that the agent can be persistent only means that it is an aesthetically appropriate response, where the appropriateness in question can be understood in terms of autonomy as a higher-order rule of aesthetic judgement.

I am here indebted to Karl Schafer, who has defended the compatibility between faultless disagreement and aesthetic realism. Schafer has argued that, in cases of seemingly faultless disagreement, the disagreeing parties accept the same second-order norms regarding first-order belief formation where these norms are functions from aesthetic sensibility to aesthetic belief. A single second-order norm can output different aesthetic beliefs/judgements, depending on one's sensibility. As a result, two agents may disagree about an objective matter of fact, while neither of them is at fault, given that the shared second-order norm allows for different judgements, given different aesthetic sensibilities.²⁴

Similarly, in cases of aesthetic intrasubjective peer disagreement when parties to the disagreement have different aesthetic personalities, the appropriateness of sticking to one's judgement can be explained by the fact that, given the aesthetic personality of S_2 , it is appropriate for S_2 to stick to her judgement because the principle of autonomy counts as a second-order norm, which permits sticking to one's judgement, given one's aesthetic personality. There may be objective aesthetic facts but they do not (fully) determine the appropriateness of our aesthetic responses because the latter are also governed by higher-order norms, such as the principle of autonomy.²⁵

Note that I have not tried here to defend aesthetic realism. It is entirely possible that aesthetic realism is still false. Here I have only tried to insist that the present view of aesthetic peer disagreement can be neutral as to whether aesthetic realism is true.

23 Mark Eli Kalderon, *Moral Fictionalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). For a critique of such an argument, see James Fritz and Tristram McPherson, 'Moral Steadfastness and Meta-Ethics', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 56 (2019): 43–55.

24 Karl Schafer, 'Faultless Disagreement and Aesthetic Realism', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 82 (2011): 265–86.

25 Similarly, Hopkins has suggested that aesthetic principles may function as higher-order norms that render it appropriate or inappropriate for an agent to use her knowledge of aesthetic facts in forming aesthetic beliefs. See Robert Hopkins, 'How to Be a Pessimist about Aesthetic Testimony', *Journal of Philosophy* 108 (2011): 138–57.

My account has appealed to facts about aesthetic personality as a complex affective disposition (or a set of dispositions). It can be argued, however, that we are in a poor epistemic position to recognize whether and to what extent our affective dispositions have changed.²⁶ In that case, a question can be raised: how do I know that my personality has changed to the extent that my former self counts as a separate aesthetic personality? If I cannot answer that question, then I am not in a position to evaluate whether it is appropriate for me to stick to my verdict or revise it in cases of intrasubjective aesthetic peer disagreement.

I am not sure how damaging this objection is, however. What we appreciate and why we appreciate it are often opaque to us.²⁷ Identifying changes in one's aesthetic personality is admittedly difficult but this pertains to a broader epistemic challenge of knowing our aesthetic preferences and their grounds. In addition, the present issue only constitutes an objection if we expect from an analysis of disagreement cases that it provides practical guidelines regarding how one should respond to those cases. However, as far as I am aware, this has not been a burning issue in the peer disagreement debate anyway. The aim of the present analysis was just to make explicit the difference between two kinds of intrasubjective peer disagreement and the grounds of that difference.

V.3. EMPIRICAL OBJECTION

It could be objected on empirical grounds that the idea that an agent should revise her confidence in an aesthetic verdict in the case of intrasubjective peer disagreement where two parties share the same aesthetic personality is a claim that the common sense would reject. For instance, studies by Cova et al. have suggested that most people, or at least most non-aestheticians, think that aesthetic disagreements are disagreements in which neither side is wrong.²⁸ Given these results, one could argue that aesthetic disagreements do not give a reason to revise one's aesthetic judgement, even if the parties to the disagreement share aesthetic personality.

The first thing to say in response is that we need not assume that folk intuition trumps the philosophical argument. However, even when we look at the empirical evidence and intrasubjective disagreement in particular, things are more complicated than Cova et al.'s diagnosis lets it seem. The empirical data does not unanimously show that, according to folk intuition, aesthetic judgements can never be incorrect. In his recent paper, Andow investigated lay judgements about cases of intrasubjective disagreements across different timescales (among other factors) and his results indicate that people at least in some contexts attribute incorrectness to aesthetic

26 In fact, this is what I have argued in another paper. See Uku Tooming and Kengo Miyazono, 'Self-Knowledge and Affective Forecasting', in *Emotional Self-Knowledge*, ed. Alba Montes Sánchez and Alessandro Salice (New York: Routledge, 2023), 17–38.

27 Dominic McIver Lopes, 'Fekless Reason', in *Aesthetics and the Sciences of Mind*, ed. Gregory Currie et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 21–36; Kevin Melchionne, 'On the Old Saw "I Know Nothing about Art but I Know What I Like"', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 68 (2010): 131–41.

28 Fabian Cova et al., 'De pulchritudine non est disputandum? A Cross-Cultural Investigation of the Alleged Intersubjective Validity of Aesthetic Judgement', *Mind & Language* 34 (2019): 317–38.

judgements.²⁹ In fact, the briefer the period over which the agent changes her mind, the more inclined are people to think that the agent might have made an error either before or after the change. This pushed Andow to speculate that perhaps the correctness conditions of aesthetic judgements are relativized to very fine-grained circumstances.³⁰ This would be in line with the present account because it makes sense to think that the agent's personality does not change if the temporal difference is only minor. And, as long as personality has not changed, the fact of intrasubjective disagreement suggests that one might have made a mistake.

VI. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have analysed cases in which an agent disagrees with her former self in her aesthetic verdict, where both the present and former selves count as aesthetic peers. I have argued that persisting in one's present verdict in light of such a disagreement can be justified by appealing to the autonomy principle but only if there is a difference in aesthetic personality between the former and present selves. If our judgements are not attuned to nuances in our aesthetic personality over time, they can easily fail because it may happen that an agent dismisses the verdict of their former self, while lacking the right to dismiss it because the former self is still recognizable as sharing the same aesthetic personality.

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